

Wrath 1311

Chapter 1311:

Outside, Aiden waited in agonizing silence, receiving updates about Glenn and Orson, each message confirming that they too were nearing the end of their journey.

Inside the delivery room, Janice's mind became a blur as her body was wracked with excruciating contractions, the pain so intense it nearly caused her to faint multiple times.

"The baby is positioned in a way that makes a natural delivery impossible. We need to step in with urgent manual intervention."

"The mother's emotional state is overwhelming, and she's showing clear signs of shock."

The noise was deafening.

Why was it all so loud?

Janice felt herself slipping into a whirlwind of chaos, drifting further away from reality, as if giving in would offer her some kind of relief. But then, an aged hand reached out and gently grasped hers, halting her fall.

"Janice, it's not your time yet."

Janice's heart clenched as a familiar, gentle face appeared before her, soft and reassuring.

"Glenn, is that you?"

"Janice, your journey has just begun; you can't stop here."

“Glenn...” Janice sensed something, a wave of bitterness and heaviness washing over her.

The descent seemed to continue, but then another hand reached out, grasping her other hand firmly.

Janice’s eyes fell on another kind, familiar face.

“Grandpa!” she gasped in recognition.

“Glenn and I have reached our final destination; it’s time for us to go. But you and your child are just beginning your journey.” Orson’s voice was soft yet filled with wisdom. “We may not be here in body, but we’ll always be with you. People may grow old and die, but memories stay forever. Death may seem like an end, but it marks the beginning of something else. Live your life well, so your child will never be alone.”

“Never be alone...”

These words ignited a surge of strength within Janice, pulling her back from the brink of despair.

She had once been alone, longing for love and family, bearing the weight of countless struggles. But now, with her own child, how could she let that cycle repeat itself?

While she couldn’t alter her own fate, she could shape her child’s future.

Outside, Aiden was on the edge of madness with worry, especially after hearing that the situation in the delivery room was dire and he was asked to sign a consent form acknowledging the risks.

Janice’s earlier check-ups had all been fine, so why was this complication arising out of nowhere?

The doctors explained that Janice’s overwhelming emotions had impacted the baby, leading to its difficult position.

Chapter 1312:

“Save the mother!” Aiden commanded without a moment’s hesitation. He had always promised that, no matter how many children they had, Janice would always be his top priority.

After all, it was their love that had created this child.

“Mr. Green! Mr. Green!” Gerda’s panicked voice broke through Aiden’s phone.

Aiden’s heart faltered, a wave of unease crashing over him like a storm.

“I’m here,” he replied, his voice tight with worry.

“I just got word from the operating room; Glenn has passed away.” Aiden went silent, his body shaking uncontrollably. Gerda’s next words sent him spiraling deeper into despair, as though one more step would drag him into eternal darkness.

“Orson has also gone.” Aiden’s mind went completely blank.

Why had everything fallen apart so suddenly?

How could he break this news to Janice when she emerged?

He felt himself sinking into darkness, but then, a baby’s cry pierced the heavy silence.

In that instant, a beam of light shattered the darkness, banishing it completely.

“Aiden, it’s a girl! Janice has given birth!” Nina cried out, her tears of joy mingling as she grasped Aiden’s hands.

“Congratulations to all, both mother and daughter are doing well,” the doctor said with a warm smile as he stepped out from the delivery room.

Aiden hurried in, and when his eyes landed on Janice’s pale, yet radiant face, his heart tightened with emotion.

“You were amazing, Janice,” Aiden whispered, his hand softly brushing her face with tender affection.

Janice smiled, her gaze softening as she looked at their newborn. “Aiden, look—this is our daughter.”

“Yes,” Aiden replied, his eyes fixed on the tiny, wrinkled bundle of life that wailed loudly. “She’s definitely going to keep us busy.”

“Have you thought of a name for her?” Janice asked softly.

Aiden nodded, his voice filled with warmth. “I had two names in mind.”

“If it was a boy, he’d be Chayce Green, and if it was a girl, Nancy Green.”

Janice blinked in surprise, her eyes filling with tears. “Glenn and Grandpa...?”

Aiden inhaled deeply, his fingers tightening around Janice’s hand to offer her comfort. “They both passed away, but they went peacefully.”

Janice closed her eyes, the image of the two elders pulling her back from the edge flickering in her mind.

Maybe, in that moment, it was the two elders who guided her back from the edge of the unknown. Channeling their final reserves of strength and will, they brought her back to this world, to welcome the new life awaiting her.

Janice opened her eyes, gazing at her newborn daughter. “Maybe this is what life is all about.”

“Nancy! Return here at once!”

A thunderous shout ripped through the street as a little girl bolted away, quick as a shooting star.

Behind her, a visibly winded woman tried desperately to catch up, her shouts growing increasingly futile.

Chapter 1313:

“Nope! I’m not returning!” Nancy taunted back, her voice filled with childish glee, her tongue poking out in defiance. “I want to be free! You’ll never cage me! That’s the life I choose!”

If an adult had said those words, it might’ve sounded like the proud cry of a free soul. But hearing it from a little girl barely five or six only made her seem playful and a bit defiant.

Nancy’s figure soon vanished into the distance.

Her exhausted chaser, Sierra, halted, breathless and overwhelmed by the young girl’s boundless vigor.

Just then, the sudden sound of a sleek black car pulling up broke the stillness.

The door swung open, revealing a woman whose grace and allure captivated immediately, her eyes shimmering with an enigmatic allure.

“Janice, Nancy’s escaped again,” Sierra said, her cheeks tinged with embarrassment. “I’m terribly sorry—I couldn’t keep her inside.”

“It’s alright,” Janice responded, offering a gentle smile that barely masked her underlying lack of concern. “Nancy’s been overly indulged. It might just be time for her to realize how fortunate she is.”

Despite her role as a mother, Janice maintained an enviable, youthful figure.

“What’s your plan, Janice?” Sierra inquired, her curiosity piqued.

“Don’t fret. Just send Nancy to her father when she returns.” With that, Janice got back into the car and drove off.

Sierra frowned, contemplating the nature of the lesson Janice had in mind for Nancy.

The gravity of Janice’s tone suggested it was no light matter. She couldn’t help but hope it wouldn’t leave an emotional mark on the young girl.

Nancy, a perfect blend of her parents’ traits, bore Aiden’s sharp, assertive charisma and Janice’s breathtaking beauty.

Born into a life of affluence and doted on by all, she became the center of attention wherever she went. However, this very adulation might have fueled her defiant nature, pushing her to constantly test the boundaries set by adults.

At that moment, Nancy found herself wandering into a nearby amusement park.

Her presence immediately captivated the other children, who flocked to her side, bombarding her with their affection and curiosity.

“There you are, Nancy! I’ve missed you like crazy!”

“Where are we off to today, Nancy?”

“Guess what, Nancy? I just had three huge hamburgers for lunch. Pretty cool, huh?”

The relentless barrage of questions and comments from the children enveloped Nancy, buzzing incessantly. Her patience wearing thin, she blurted out sharply, “Enough! Listen up, everyone. I ditched

school to get here. It's only a matter of time before my parents send someone to haul me back. So, I've decided—today, I'm running away for good!"

Running away?

The children stood motionless, their faces clouded with hesitation. The buoyant energy that had filled the air moments earlier now dissipated into a tense silence.

"What's with those faces? Isn't this exciting? Isn't it a blast?" Nancy swept her gaze across the group, her eyes alight with fervor. "You're cooped up in this orphanage day in, day out. How do you expect to accomplish anything noteworthy if you never venture beyond these walls?"

Chapter 1314:

"Nancy, I think I'll pass," a boy mumbled. "I don't want to cause Gerda any worry."

"Yeah, we're okay back at the orphanage," another chimed in. "Running away sounds risky. Maybe we shouldn't."

As the other children recoiled from the idea, Nancy's expression shifted from fiery enthusiasm to scornful irritation. "You're all just a bunch of cowards! Fine, then. I won't waste my time with you anymore!"

With that, Nancy turned on her heel and stormed out of the amusement park.

The children watched her departure, their faces clouded with concern.

"Should we inform Gerda?" one queried, voice tinged with worry. "If Nancy really runs off, it could turn quite perilous."

"Agreed, we should definitely alert Gerda."

With that, the children hurried back toward the Loving Hearts Orphanage.

Strategically nestled beside the amusement park—a result of Aiden’s foresighted planning—the orphanage was a haven of joy and laughter, providing the children with a serene and jubilant place to call home. Meanwhile, Nancy ventured into the bustling heart of the city. This place was usually a family affair, and being here alone injected a thrill of excitement into her veins.

“Now, I can indulge in whatever I want, buy anything that catches my eye,” Nancy whispered to herself, her pulse quickening with the freedom. The world around her seemed more enticing than ever. Freed from adult supervision, she felt unstoppable, ready to embrace whatever adventures lay ahead.

Nancy’s eyes sparkled as she caught sight of an ice-cream stand not far off. With youthful eagerness, she dashed toward it, her expression alight with excitement.

“Sir, could I please have an ice cream?”

“Absolutely, young lady!” The vendor, taken with her charm, grinned back and got her an ice cream. “Here it is, little one.”

“Thank you so much!”

Nancy’s grin widened as she grasped the ice cream.

The vendor reminded her, “Wait a minute, you’ll need to pay for that.”

“Pay?” A realization struck Nancy; she had never actually bought anything on her own before. Everything had always been provided by her parents.

“You don’t have any money, huh?” The vendor’s smile faded into a frown, his tone becoming firm. She might’ve been adorable, but she wasn’t getting away without paying.

“Of course, I have money!” Nancy exclaimed, her voice brimming with indignation as she thrust her smartwatch forward proudly. “I’ll use this to pay!”

The vendor's eyes widened in recognition upon seeing the watch. It wasn't just any watch—it was the latest release from the prestigious White Group, boasting cutting-edge AI designed to safeguard children like Nancy. Clearly, she was no ordinary child; her affluent background was almost palpable.

"Alright then, that will be ten dollars."

"Ten dollars? Is that all? I assumed it would be in the hundreds!" Nancy promptly scanned the vendor's payment code, but to her surprise, the watch responded in a mechanical voice, "Insufficient balance. Please try again."

"Insufficient balance?"

The words echoed in her mind, leaving her stunned. The watch was linked to her mother's bank account; if there was no money, it could only mean her mother had disconnected the device.

Chapter 1315:

"Seems like you don't actually have any money, do you?" The vendor's brow furrowed, his initial patience turning to skepticism. "You dress up fancy and strut around, but are you just trying to swindle some free ice cream from me?"

"I'm not!" Nancy shot back, her voice sharp with anger. A sudden idea sparked in her mind, and she quickly peeled off her coat. "Here—I'll leave this as collateral, alright?"

"No chance! That ragged coat of yours isn't worth a dime!" The vendor sneered, his face twisted with contempt.

Nancy's eyes flew wide in utter disbelief. "This was designed by JE herself! Do you even know who JE is?"

"Of course I know! She's one of the top fashion designers in the world. But you're trying to tell me this coat is her work? Not buying it," he scoffed.

Nancy could hardly believe it. That coat—a precious, one-of-a-kind piece her mother had designed for her fifth birthday—was priceless to her. Yet this man dared to call it worthless.

“Sir, I’m not paying with it; I’m just leaving it here for now. I’ll come back for it once I get the money!”

“Not a chance! Absolutely not!”

The vendor flat-out refused, slamming the door shut on any chance Nancy had to negotiate.

It hit Nancy all at once—without her parents by her side, it was a thousand times harder to be taken seriously.

Back when her parents hovered nearby, her word was as good as law; no one ever dared doubt her. Now, free from that gilded cage, her voice seemed feather-light, barely stirring the air.

“Little girl, where are your parents?” the vendor asked, his voice growing stern. “Go fetch them to pay for you.”

“No!” Nancy shook her head with fierce determination. She had fought too hard for her freedom. Crawling back now would only make her look pitiful. “I don’t have any parents.”

The vendor stiffened, then frowned deeply. His gaze softened as he studied Nancy. “So you’re an orphan, huh? Makes sense. A kid your age wouldn’t be roaming around without good reason.”

Guilt pricked at Nancy’s chest. She hadn’t meant to lie—it had just tumbled out. Yet here was the vendor, completely buying it. Still, this was the perfect chance for her to wriggle out of her sticky situation.

“Yes, that’s right! My parents passed away.”

“When I was really little,” Nancy said, forcing a few tears to glisten in her eyes as she sniffled pitifully. “I’ve been surviving thanks to the kindness of adults around me. Even my clothes and this watch—they were all gifts from them.”

“Alright, alright,” the vendor sighed. “Seems like today’s just not my lucky day, running into a poor little thing like you.”

“Sir, does that mean I get the ice cream for free?” Nancy asked, her eyes sparkling with sudden hope as she gazed up at him.

But the vendor quickly shook his head. “Free? Not a chance. You’ll have to work for it. Bring me ten customers, and then we’ll call it even.”

“What?” Nancy’s shoulders sagged in dismay. After spinning such a heartbreaking story, she still didn’t earn a free ice cream? Was she not miserable enough... or just not cute enough?

Chapter 1316:

With no other option, Nancy reluctantly agreed. She stationed herself beside the vendor’s stall, turning into a pint-sized mascot to reel customers in.

Sure enough, the adorable little girl drew curious people like moths to a flame. But after a while, her feet throbbed painfully, and her legs went stiff with numbness.

“Sir, can I please sit down for a minute?”

The vendor gave her a once-over and, seeing how tiny and exhausted she looked, finally relented. “Alright, go ahead.”

“Thank you so much!” Grinning with relief, Nancy dragged over a tiny stool and plopped onto it with a soft thud.

“Ice cream! Sweet ice cream!” Nancy shouted with renewed enthusiasm. She was determined to repay the vendor’s kindness by drawing in as many customers as she could.

Her cheerful voice carried through the air, pulling a lively crowd toward the stall. Some stopped to buy, while others just wanted an excuse to chat with the adorable little girl.

Nancy, however, found the whole situation rather irritating. Back when her parents were around, strangers were never allowed within an arm's length of her.

Now, hemmed in by unfamiliar faces, a wave of discomfort washed over her. But for the vendor's sake, she gritted her teeth and forced herself to put up with it.

"Oh my goodness, isn't she just the cutest thing?"

A woman, unable to resist, reached out playfully and gave Nancy's cheek a hearty pinch.

The woman clearly couldn't get enough of Nancy's soft, chubby cheeks. Seeing this, a few others eagerly reached out their hands to get a feel too.

"What are you doing? Stop it! Go away!" Nancy cried out, her voice sugary and soft, carrying no real weight against the crowd.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?" the vendor barked, his voice sharp with anger. "Didn't you hear the little girl? She said no! Do you really need to make her cry before you back off?"

Nancy felt a lump rise in her throat. She hadn't expected the vendor—someone she was practically freeloading off—to stand up for her so fiercely.

Shamed by the vendor's scolding, most of the crowd shuffled back, though a few shameless ones still tried to sneak in a quick poke. After all the commotion, the vendor's ice cream stash was nearly wiped clean, and he began packing up his cart for the day.

"Little one, thank you! I actually beat my sales target today," the vendor said with a broad grin. "Here, take this as your well-earned reward."

"Is this free?" Nancy asked hesitantly.

"It's free. Go on, take it," the vendor said warmly.

Nancy's whole face lit up with pure delight. "Thank you so, so much!" She licked the ice cream. It tasted sweeter than she remembered.

Maybe food really did taste better when you worked for it yourself.

After parting ways with the kind vendor, Nancy wandered into a nearby shopping mall. Since it was one of her family's properties, she figured she could shop without worrying about the bill.

Rubbing her tiny belly, Nancy realized she was rather hungry.

Before long, she found herself outside a pizza restaurant she had visited several times with her parents. The food was amazing, and the staff used to know her well. Surely, she wouldn't have to pay a dime here.

Chapter 1317:

"Excuse me, can I get some pizza?" Nancy chirped, standing on her tiptoes and stretching her tiny hands to reach the counter.

Hearing the tiny voice, the waitress glanced around in confusion. Seeing no one at eye level, she finally looked down—and spotted Nancy.

"Little one, you want some pizza? Where are your parents?"

"I don't have parents. It's just me."

The waitress frowned and said, "We can't serve a child like you unless you're accompanied by your parents. You need to go and bring your parents here first."

"No. It'll just be me," Nancy insisted, her voice firm. "I've been here before! Don't you remember me?"

The waitress peered at her for a long moment, then shook her head apologetically. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. We get so many customers every day. You're adorable, but I really don't remember you."

Nancy stood there, utterly stunned.

She clearly recalled how the waitress had eagerly wanted to hold her the last time they met. How could she not remember her now?

"Sweetheart, please don't cause any trouble, alright?" the waitress said kindly as she gently steered Nancy out of the restaurant. Without another glance, she returned to her work.

Nancy remained rooted to the spot, watching the waitress walk away, her mind struggling to grasp what had just unfolded. Gripping her hair tightly with both hands, she muttered to herself, "Is this a dream? How could no one recognize me anymore? My family owns this whole mall. How could they possibly not know who I am?"

Anger flared for a moment, but it fizzled just as quickly, leaving her deflated. With a heavy sigh, she decided there was no point in fighting it and set off in search of something to eat.

One hand on her grumbling stomach, Nancy wandered the mall aimlessly, only growing hungrier with every step.

Without a single coin in her pocket—and with stores refusing to serve children without their parents—she felt more helpless than ever.

"Oh, that's right! The supermarket will give out free samples!" Nancy's eyes sparkled with excitement as the thought crossed her mind. She hurried off toward the supermarket.

Inside, the supermarket buzzed with shoppers, their carts rattling along the aisles. Small and quick, Nancy slipped through the crowds like a shadow, drawing no attention at all.

As Nancy took in the sight of the many free samples around her, she found herself, for the first time, feeling an overwhelming temptation toward those simple and inexpensive treats.

“Miss, can I have a taste of that one?” Nancy asked, pointing eagerly at a sample cake displayed on the bakery counter. The warm scent of cream and butter made her mouth water.

The saleswoman’s eyes lit up at the sight of such a sweet-looking little girl. “Honey, where are your parents?”

Nancy opened her mouth to explain, then quickly remembered how that had backfired earlier. Thinking fast, she said, “My mom’s picking out vegetables in the produce section. I smelled this cake and couldn’t resist. If it’s good, I’ll ask her to buy some.”

Chapter 1318:

That should be convincing enough. Nancy flashed an innocent smile.

But instead of handing her the cake, the saleswoman gave an apologetic look. “I’m sorry, honey. We can’t give samples to children unless a parent is with them.”

“What? How could that be?” Nancy’s tiny brows furrowed in puzzlement. She pouted and said, “My mom is just over there by the fresh produce. What’s the big deal about letting me have a little taste?”

The saleswoman gave her a genuinely apologetic look. “That’s just the rule. Plus, children your age might not realize if they have allergies or other food issues. For everyone’s safety, we need an adult to be with you.”

The rule made enough sense. It protected both the store’s business and the children wandering around unsupervised.

“If you really want to taste it, sweetheart, just bring your mom over,” the saleswoman said kindly.

Frozen in place, Nancy stared at her, frustration bubbling under the surface. Why did kids have to rely on grown-ups for everything? She could think for herself, handle things on her own, and wasn't she a person too?

One sample station after another turned her away, and each rejection chipped away at her patience. By the time she left the last booth empty-handed, she was ready to scream.

With her stomach growling and delicious smells taunting her from every direction, Nancy felt like she might actually lose her mind.

In the end, she stormed out of the mall, silently blaming its ridiculous rules for her misery. Maybe, she thought, if she wandered around long enough, she would find a nicer shopkeeper willing to help her.

Out on the crowded sidewalk, Nancy drifted among the throngs of people, drawing more than a few curious glances. Passersby couldn't help but wonder why such a small child was walking alone.

A kind-looking young woman eventually broke away from the crowd and approached her. "Sweetheart, are you lost? Do you need help?"

Nancy cast a glance at the woman. Afterward, she shook her head and kept moving down the street. However, the woman, clearly taken with Nancy, trailed after her.

"Don't be afraid. I'm not a bad person. I just want to lend a hand. If you've gotten separated from your family, you can tell me, and I'll help you find them."

Nancy furrowed her brows and finally said, "There's no need. I can take care of myself."

"Your family didn't abandon you, did they?"

The unexpected question threw Nancy off balance.

Her thoughts spun. She had chosen to leave them herself. In a sense, wasn't she the one abandoning her parents? A heavy wave of guilt swept over Nancy.

Had she done something wrong?

At that moment, her stomach gave a loud, rumbling protest.

The woman laughed softly. "You must be starving! There's a small diner just ahead. Let me buy you something to eat."

Nancy wanted to say no, but the gnawing ache in her stomach left her with little choice. She gave a small nod, deciding it was safe enough with so many people around.

That comforting thought settled her nerves as she followed the woman. During their walk, Nancy learned her name was Khloe Gordon.

Chapter 1319:

"Thanks a lot, Khloe," Nancy said between mouthfuls, her cheeks puffed like a chipmunk as she bit into a huge slice of pizza. Smears of sauce decorated her round face, making her look both ridiculous and ridiculously cute. "If you hadn't helped me, I probably would've starved out there."

Khloe laughed gently before asking, "So, want to tell me why you're wandering the streets all by yourself?"

The question made Nancy shrink back a little. She opened her mouth, searching for words, but none came out.

"It's alright if you're not ready to talk about it. After you finish eating, I'll take you back home," Khloe said with a sigh, choosing not to push further. She then began to share a little about herself. "Honestly, I'm an orphan. My parents died when I was still very young. I spent my childhood growing up in an orphanage. No family ever chose to adopt me. Later on, I struck out on my own, managed to earn some money, and slowly built a life for myself. Still, somewhere deep inside, I've always yearned for a real family."

Khloe leaned over and softly dabbed Nancy's mouth with a napkin.

The warmth of her small gesture and her gentle words touched Nancy's heart, slowly melting away her guardedness.

"Nancy, you should treasure the moments you have with your family," Khloe said with a gentle smile. "Having a family is a gift. You might not see it clearly now, but keep this in mind. No amount of wealth can ever replace the happiness that comes from being with family."

Nancy grew quiet, her thoughts drifting to her...

Past. It struck her then that every comfort she had known was possible only because her parents had been there.

Under their care, she had lived so freely, so easily, never realizing how much they shielded her from the harshness of the world. That reckless need to prove she could do it all alone now seemed foolish. Without them, even getting a bite to eat felt like climbing a mountain.

At six years old, she wasn't equipped to survive without someone to catch her when she stumbled.

Nancy whispered, "Khloe, I want to go home."

"Then let's get you back where you belong," Khloe replied with a warm smile.

But the moment Nancy stood up, the room spun violently around her.

Before Khloe could catch her, Nancy crumpled to the floor in a faint.

In the final moments of consciousness before she collapsed, Nancy caught a glimpse of Khloe—the kind stranger who had smiled so gently earlier—now standing with a cold, menacing gaze that seemed to

freeze the room. She felt as if struck by lightning. Her parents' constant warnings echoed in her ears like thunder.

“Never speak to strangers when you're out. You're still a child—you don't know who means well and who doesn't. The safest thing is to stay far away from danger before it finds you.”

Back then, she had groaned and rolled her eyes, bolting the moment they started lecturing her.

But who would have thought she'd encounter the very kind of person her parents had warned her about?

When she finally regained consciousness, she scanned her surroundings. She was in a stark room, nothing but a bed to be seen.

Chapter 1320:

“Hello?” she called out, rising from the bed. There was no response.

The stale air pressed in on her, heavy with dread. “Is anyone there?” she shouted again, louder this time, though she feared it might attract the wrong attention.

“Who are you? Why did you take me?” she demanded.

Then a sudden click shattered the silence, followed by the creak of a door opening.

Nancy's eyes brightened with hope, and she rushed toward the door.

However, she was blocked by a tall man standing in the doorway. In her haste, Nancy collided with his chest, unable to stop in time.

“Well, look who's finally awake,” he drawled, his yellowed teeth bared in a grin that made her stomach churn. “Blame Khloe for the extra dose. You've been out cold for two days.”

Two days?

Nancy's knees nearly buckled beneath her.

Her parents must have been worried sick.

She had only planned to slip away for one day—just one—thinking it would be some harmless act of rebellion. But now, this wasn't just a runaway story anymore.

This was abduction. She had been kidnapped!

"My father is Aiden Green, and my mother is Janice Green. They're looking for me. If you think you can get away with this, you're wrong," Nancy snapped, summoning every ounce of defiance she had.

"I know exactly who they are. Why do you think you're here?" the man replied.

Nancy froze. So, this wasn't a random abduction. They had been targeting her. And they were demanding ransom.

"We've had our eyes on you for a while. If you hadn't been so headstrong and snuck out, we wouldn't have been able to take you from under your parents' noses. Guess you thought you were smart, huh? You could've lived your perfect little life. Like a pampered princess. But no—you just had to go chasing freedom, huh?"

Nancy's eyes welled with tears, regret washing over her. Why hadn't she listened? She had thought she was running toward something. Instead, she had run straight into a nightmare.

"Hey, don't cry," the man snapped, suddenly irritated. "I'm not trying to damage the goods. A bruised girl doesn't sell well."

"You're going to sell me?" Her eyes widened in horror. "I thought you wanted ransom!"

“Why not both?” He smirked devilishly. “Pretty little things like you go for a fortune overseas.”

“You’re disgusting!” Before he could react, she charged toward him, her heart pounding, legs trembling with adrenaline.

He lunged to catch her, but she ducked low—barely grazing his outstretched hand—and slipped through the doorway.

“Someone, grab that kid!”

Outside, heads jerked up as they spotted Nancy sprinting from the room like a startled antelope.

Her wide eyes darted around, and to her shock, she saw rows of rooms—some even held children.

This was it. The traffickers’ lair.