

## The Rewritten Love A Second Beginning Chapter 1 - 10

### Chapter 1

On February 14th, Valentine's Day, Madelyn Jent, a 31-year-old woman, lost her battle to cancer.

Inside a room in SereneCare Hospital in Ventropolis, the air was filled with a strong scent of disinfectant.

[Zach, the doctor inserted a painful dialysis needle in me today.]

[I'm on the verge of death. Could you spare a moment to visit me?]

[Please, Zach...]

Madelyn weakly turned her head and glanced at the text messages on her phone. Despite sending multiple messages, she had received no response from Zach.

IV drips were connected to her veins. Her face was pale, her eyes sunken, and her body emaciated. Cancer had ravaged her limbs, causing them to deteriorate. She was completely immobile, unable to perform even the simplest tasks unaided. The nurse assigned to care for her hadn't shown up for almost two weeks, citing that further treatment was unnecessary.

Madelyn was sensitive to the pain, but in the advanced stage of her cancer, she had to suffer with it every day. The only thing that kept her going was her love for Zach.

But now, her once overwhelming love for him had faded. She was left with nothing but a frail and ailing body.

Madelyn switched off her phone and silently awaited the embrace of death. The pain had nearly blurred her consciousness. She reminisced about the eight years she had devoted to being Zach's faithful wife. But what had she gained in the end? One by one, those around her had abandoned her, leaving her alone and destitute.

Madelyn couldn't help but think that Zach would perhaps feel the greatest relief upon her demise. With her gone, he no longer subjected to the sight of her face. He could finally satisfy his longing to bring Cecilia Samford home as his wife.

Eight months ago, on Zach's birthday, Madelyn sat on the couch, anxiously waiting for his return. It was well past two o'clock in the morning, and the carefully prepared meal on the table had grown cold. Instead of Zach, it was his assistant who arrived, bearing a divorce agreement. The assistant delivered the news hesitantly, saying, "Madam, Mr. Jardin had no choice. The Jardin Corporation is a vast enterprise that requires an heir."

Madelyn forced a pale smile. A few years ago, she had been pregnant, but an accident had tragically led to a stillborn child. Since then, she hadn't been able to conceive.

Zach, now in his early thirties, indeed needed an heir. That was why he wished to divorce her and seek a woman who could bear children.

Madelyn dismissed the assistant and trembled as she dialed Zach's number. She needed to confirm if those were truly his instructions. The call connected, but instead of hearing Zach's voice, it was Cecilia's voice that greeted her. In that instant, a dull ache pierced Madelyn's heart.

After she hung up the phone, Madelyn found herself laughing at her own expense. The laughter echoed through the room, mingling with tears that welled up in her eyes.

Zach owned the Jardin Corporation, while Madelyn's father handed over the Jent Corporation to him before passing. In less than five years of taking over the Jent Corporation, the Jardin Corporation somehow rose rapidly to become a prominent conglomerate in Ventropolis. Zach emerged as a commanding figure in the business world, renowned for his extensive connections in the underworld and government agencies. His undeniable charisma effortlessly drew a bevy of captivating women. Among them, Cecilia Samford was the one who had remained by his side the longest.

Cecilia came from a modest background and became Zach's assistant right after graduating from college. Her talent and methods were undeniable. The bond between Zach and Cecilia seemed destined, as they were the most compatible soulmates.

If it hadn't been for Madelyn in the beginning, Zach and Cecilia might have been together much earlier, instead of carrying on as clandestine lovers for numerous years.

A loveless marriage was undeniably a sorrowful circumstance.

Madelyn signed the divorce agreement, received a substantial sum of money, and was permanently banished from Ventropolis. She could never return without Zach's

permission. Just one week later, she received the devastating diagnosis of advanced-stage cancer.

BOOM!

It was Valentine's Day, and vibrant fireworks illuminated the night sky, casting a magical glow.

Madelyn roused from her reverie, her weary eyes slowly fluttering open. She shifted her gaze toward the window, and in an instant, her pale face froze.

On the colossal LED screen, Zach stood tall. His face was striking and breathtaking. Clad in a sleek black suit, he exuded a commanding aura.

Zach cradled a boy of around five or six years old in one arm, while his other arm encircled Cecilia protectively. The child bore a striking resemblance to Zach.

"Mr. Jardin, is this your child with Ms. Samford?" inquired a voice.

"Ms. Samford, you look absolutely stunning. You've waited for years for Mr. Jardin to marry you. Could you share with us your wedding date?"

Cecilia lifted her head from Zach's embrace, her smile sweet and enchanting, as she proudly displayed a diamond ring on her delicate hand. "From this day forward, please address me as Mrs. Jardin! We have officially tied the knot," she announced.

Madelyn closed her eyes, and tears streamed down her face. "Zach Jardin, I regret it! If only I hadn't loved you! If I could start over, I... I would never fall in love with you again!"

Outside, heavy snowflakes began to descend, accompanied by the resounding fireworks. The dazzling fireworks illuminated Madelyn's face through the window, as well as her teary eyes.

On the day Zach and Cecilia exchanged their vows, Madelyn's spirit waned and faded into the ethereal realm, departing from the mortal world.

Chapter 2

the middle of the night, Madelyn jolted awake from a terrifying nightmare. She sat up abruptly, her forehead drenched in sweat. In an instant, a familiar scent of disinfectant invaded her nostrils, the one she detested above all.

Madelyn paused for a brief moment, questioning herself, ‘Am I not dead? Why am I still alive?’

Just then, a click echoed through the once-dark hospital room, illuminating it with harsh, blinding lights that made it hard for her to open her eyes.

Breaking the silence, a man’s icy voice pierced the air. “Did you have a nightmare?” He strode forward with long steps, approaching her bedside. His tall figure blocked the light, engulfing Madelyn’s petite body completely.

“Z-Zach?” Madelyn looked up. As she caught a glimpse of the man’s face, filled with a profound disgust that seemed to penetrate her very being, her eyes widened, and a look of terror washed over her features. “Stay away!” she thought, ‘Why am I back in the clutches of this devil?’ Instinctively, she recoiled, resisting his presence.

Madelyn’s mind was in chaos. The sight of Zach filled her with overwhelming fear and despair, suffocating her.

Zach’s movement froze. His narrow eyes instantly glazed over with a chilling frost, glaring at her unpleasantly. His handsome face darkened.

“I’ll go get the doctor,” the man’s voice, cold and hoarse, devoid of emotion, carried an intimidating aura.

With the sound of the door slamming shut, Madelyn’s nerves finally relaxed. The man’s departure lifted the oppressive weight in the room. Anxious, Madelyn threw off the covers. Suddenly, a sharp, piercing pain emanated from her wrist. She lowered her head and noticed her wrist wrapped in gauze. She wondered, ‘Did I cut my wrists?’

Enduring the pain, Madelyn switched hands and reached for the cellphone on the bedside table. Pressing the buttons, she glanced at the calendar. The moment she saw the date, a wave of numbness washed over her, rendering her unable to process anything.

It was now the year 2000, the year she turned eighteen.

Struggling to piece together her fragmented memories, Madelyn realized that she was currently hospitalized, seemingly because she had resorted to cutting her wrists in an attempt to force Zach to be her boyfriend.

Zach had become Hayson Jent's godson when Madelyn was ten years old.

Her true feelings for him had blossomed when she was fifteen. It was during that time when their family's mastiff suddenly went into a frenzy and attacked her. In that moment of danger, it was Zach who came to her rescue. He shielded her with his own body, his arm firmly clamped in the jaws of the frenzied mastiff, blood flowing relentlessly.

His voice echoed in Madelyn's ears, "Don't be afraid! Close your eyes."

Trembling, she felt the warmth of his gaze upon her...

To this day, Madelyn couldn't forget the sense of security that Zach provided, creating a deep attachment within her.

In his twenties at the time, Zach exuded a mature aura beyond his years. His features were strikingly handsome, with well-defined eyebrows, sparkling eyes, broad shoulders, a slender waist, and a lean hip. However, he always maintained a cold demeanor, keeping his distance from others, rarely displaying a smile or engaging in extensive conversation.

Just a few days prior, it had been Zach's birthday, and Madelyn had planned to surprise him by becoming a gift herself. She had undressed and laid on his bed, convinced that she was now an adult capable of anything.

In the early hours of his return, Zach discovered her on the bed and immediately flung her off with disgust. He scolded her for her audacity, unleashing his anger toward her for the first time.

That night, Zach stormed out of the room, purposefully avoiding her, and disappeared for several days. No matter how diligently Madelyn searched, she couldn't find any trace of him. So, she resorted to this foolish act, cutting her wrists in a desperate attempt to make him reappear.

As Madelyn contemplated the repercussions of being entangled with Zach, fear gripped her...

A few minutes later, several doctors rushed into the room.

Zach stood at the doorway, his face clouded with gloom, his dark eyes coldly surveying Madelyn's pale countenance. He wondered, 'When Madelyn first woke up and looked at me, her eyes were filled with fear and despair. Why is she terrified of me?'

After assessing Madelyn's condition and consulting with his colleagues, the doctor delivered his verdict. "The patient's fever has subsided, and she can undergo the discharge process tomorrow. Regarding the wound on her wrist, please ensure she keeps it dry once she's back home. She can return to the hospital after a week to have the stitches removed."

A faint hint of relief softened the man's previously stern expression as he added, "Thank you."

The doctor didn't linger and left the room after providing a few instructions.

Left alone in the small room, Madelyn lay on the bed in an uncomfortable silence, keeping her eyes shut, unwilling to look at him.

Zach glanced at his wrist to check the time and spoke softly, "I have a meeting in half an hour. I need to return to the company. I'll come to pick you up tomorrow at eight in the morning to take care of the discharge procedures."

Madelyn pressed her lips together. Zach always acted this way—rejecting her on one hand, yet showing kindness on the other, to the point where it created an illusion that he deeply loved her.

She didn't want to speak, or more accurately, she didn't want to say anything to Zach. She didn't even want to look at him. The pain from her recent ordeal hadn't faded yet. She couldn't gather the strength to face Zach with such composure.

Seeing Madelyn's silence, Zach's eyes narrowed with a dark intensity. A trace of displeasure flickered in his gaze.

"Don't hurt yourself like this again. If you desire a relationship, seek someone else. I am not suitable for you," Zach declared firmly.

Madelyn's heart constricted at his words; they were exactly the same as what Zach had said in her previous life. She still vividly recalled that, after he had uttered those words, she wept inconsolably and even contemplated extreme measures, such as jumping off a

building. Yet, Zach responded with icy indifference, stating, ‘If you wish to die, it’s your choice.’

Madelyn had already experienced death once. Her love for Zach had been eroded by countless days of despair.

She opened her eyes, her face still pallid, and regarded Zach with a calm gaze. In her heart, she silently uttered, ‘Zach Jardin, from this moment onward, I no longer love you.’

### **Chapter 3**

Madelyn took a deep breath and smiled at Zach, her voice softening as she spoke, “Brother, I’m sorry! I was being stubborn earlier. I was wrong, and I shouldn’t have pushed you like that. I’ve realized my mistake now, and from this moment forward, I’ll always remember that you’re my brother.”

She refrained from arguing or causing a scene, maintaining a calm demeanor reminiscent of a lifeless doll.

Zach’s eyes momentarily lost their brightness, replaced by a cold smirk that curled his thin lips. He sarcastically thought to himself, ‘Is this her new approach?’

Speaking gently, Zach responded, “It’s good that you understand. Get some rest and don’t stay up too late. I’ll come to pick you up tomorrow.” With that, he reached out and gently patted her head, like an elder would.

Madelyn fought the urge to pull away from his touch and obediently nodded.

As Zach turned away, the tenderness in his eyes vanished instantly, replaced by an icy coldness. Leaving the hospital room, he retrieved a white handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the hand that had just made contact with Madelyn. He then walked toward the elevator and nonchalantly discarded the handkerchief into the nearby trash bin. Upon the opening of the elevator doors, Zach stepped inside and pressed the button for the underground parking level.

An Audi, its headlights illuminating the area, awaited his arrival. Seated in the passenger seat was a woman with long, wavy hair, dressed alluringly, with a cigarette delicately

held between her fingers. A puff of smoke escaped her sensuous red lips as her gaze followed the man's tall figure until he entered the car. Curiously, she inquired, "Did you manage to calm her down?"

Zach settled into the car and secured his seatbelt, a hint of disgust flickering in his eyes. He swiftly snatched the cigarette from the woman's hand and flung it out the window. His voice turned frigid as he admonished, "You're no longer allowed to smoke in my car!"

The woman responded with a seductive smile, crossing her legs. "If I can't smoke, how else am I supposed to mask the sweet scent of that girl's perfume?" Her eyes, enhanced by a touch of eyeliner, fixated on the pink perfume bottle placed in the car. A sticker on the bottle declared it as "Madelyn's exclusive seat."

She let out a light chuckle. "Who would've thought that an eighteen-year-old girl like her would be so possessive? Have you ever considered marrying into the Jent family and then manipulating the young girl? That way, everything you desire would be much simpler, without all the unnecessary complications."

Zach grasped the steering wheel and pressed down on the accelerator. As the car smoothly maneuvered out of the parking lot, he spoke, "For now, let Madelyn be. She still has her uses to me."

"Tsk, I thought you might have a soft spot for her and be unwilling to harm her. But it seems you're even more ruthless than I anticipated! It appears she's not as significant as I thought. After all these years, she still hasn't managed to capture your heart."

Zach's expression twisted with annoyance as he spoke in a cold, cutting tone, "Utter one more word and get out of my car!" Internally, he cursed, 'Madelyn? She's nothing but a naive fool! I have no interest in an immature brat.'

The car drove away, fading into the darkness until it vanished from sight.

Meanwhile, Madelyn lay on the hospital bed, her eyes wide open. She occasionally felt a subtle pain in her wrist. Serenely, she stared into the enveloping darkness, unable to discern anything. Her eyes remained open until the sun gradually ascended on the horizon. Unwilling to wait for Zach to pick her up, she took charge of her own discharge procedures and left alone at six-thirty in the morning.

In her past life, Madelyn had devoted herself entirely to Zach. However, in this new chapter, she yearned to live for herself...



Madelyn comprehended Zach's motive for aligning with the Jent family—nothing more than a quest for revenge. She knew she couldn't halt him, nor did she wish to try. She no longer desired involvement in the hatred between her father, Hayson Jent, and Zach. Their deadly conflicts held no appeal to her. She no longer harbored the foolish belief, as she had in her past life, that she could reconcile them, persuade them to release their grudges, and live harmoniously.

Now, Madelyn's sole aspiration was to navigate through college. She resolved to endure three more years before departing from the Jent residence, Ventropolis, and starting a new life of her own.

#### Chapter 4

After a lengthy hour in the taxi, Madelyn arrived at the entrance of the Jent residence.

Stepping inside the house, she caught the attention of the housemaid, Rosario Watson, who quickly approached her. "Ms. Jent, why are you alone? Didn't Mr. Jardin come back with you?" Rosario inquired.

Rosario, still youthful and without many wrinkles, received a warm embrace from Madelyn. Madelyn recalled how, in her previous life, Rosario had been the sole person who treated her like family after her father's passing. Rosario had shown her kindness when no one else did. However, circumstances led Rosario to serve the Jardin family at the behest of Zach, taking care of him and Cecilia.

"Rosario, I've missed you so much," Madelyn expressed.

"Oh... um, Ms. Jent, what's going on? Are you still not feeling well?" Rosario gently pushed Madelyn away and worryingly placed her hand on Madelyn's forehead, checking for signs of a fever. It became clear to her that Madelyn wasn't sick.

Rosario had a strange feeling about Madelyn today, but she couldn't quite pinpoint it.

"It's nothing, I just felt like giving you a hug," Madelyn reassured her.

"Are you hungry after returning? I've just finished preparing some porridge. Let me serve it to you."

“I don’t have much of an appetite. I want to go and rest for a while. Call me for lunch later!” Madelyn requested. Having stayed awake all night and endured a long journey by car, she felt a bit lightheaded.

“By the way, your father called earlier. He mentioned that once you got home, he wanted you to give him a call. Seems like he has something important to share with you. Also, he asked me to give you this before he left on his business trip,” Rosario informed, handing over a small item to Madelyn.

Madelyn accepted the platinum shopping card from Rosario’s hand and nodded. “Alright.” She understood that it was likely Hayson’s way of compensating her on behalf of Zach. Madelyn was well aware of what Hayson intended to discuss. Calmly, she dialed his number and made the call.

Madelyn found it difficult to express her emotions toward Hayson. While Hayson played the role of a caring father, it was nothing more than an act...

Hayson Jent was far from being a good father.

Madelyn knew that Hayson had always desired a son to carry on the family business, which led him to engage in numerous affairs. However, none of those relationships resulted in a child. Eventually, he adopted Zach as his godson.

Hayson regarded Madelyn, his own daughter, as a mere pawn to be used for advantageous marriages. He was willing to go to any extent, sacrificing his daughter’s happiness, to further his own interests and push her into the arms of other men.

From a young age, it was only Rosario who stood by Madelyn’s side.

If Madelyn had the means to escape from this family at this very moment, she wouldn’t hesitate to leave. The call connected. “Hello, Father.”

“Are you feeling better? What did the doctor say?” The voice on the other end of the line sounded like a superior casually inquiring about a subordinate’s well-being.

“I’m fine now, much better.”

“Madelyn, you are my daughter, and Zach is my godson. In this lifetime, you can only be his sister, understand?”

Madelyn silently chuckled. She knew that this was Hayson's warning to her. Even though he wasn't physically present, she could imagine the unfamiliar and distant coldness in his eyes. In his heart, her love for Zach was considered a family disgrace, a shameful act!

Madelyn's eyelashes trembled, and she obediently replied, "Yes, I understand! Father, I'm sorry. I won't engage in such things again in the future."

"Did you receive the card? Whenever you have time, go out shopping. If you come across something you like, just buy it. Don't stay cooped up at home painting all day. Go out and make friends."

"Alright, Father." After concluding the conversation with Hayson, Madelyn went straight to her room.

Her room, back when she was in her early teens, exuded shades of pink. The air was infused with a sweet, candy-like scent, and a grand princess bed adorned the space. It was a room that every girl dreamed of having.

At that moment, Madelyn's phone began to ring. When she saw that it was Zach calling, her hand trembled, causing the phone to slip from her grasp and fall to the floor. However, she didn't make an effort to pick it up. In fact, she even entertained the thought that it would be better if the phone broke!

It was only after the call ended on its own that Madelyn finally retrieved her phone and sent him a message.

[Brother, I'm sorry, I forgot to mention earlier that I've already arrived home. I was actually planning to message you.]

The message displayed as read, but he didn't reply. Instead, he called her.

Madelyn answered with an expressionless face, "...Hello, Brother..."

"Madelyn, this is the last time. Next time, before you do anything, call me!" His voice carried a tinge of anger, leaving no room for negotiation.

"Alright, I understand," Madelyn responded softly, her voice filled with compliant obedience that left no room for criticism.

In her previous life, Madelyn had been Zach's wife for eight years, and she knew him well. He possessed a dominating personality, and everything had to be done according to his way. He demanded that she never exhibited even the slightest trace of defiance toward him. Madelyn had grown accustomed to compliance in her past life, and she would obediently adhere to his every word, regardless of the circumstances.

## Chapter 5

After dinner, Madelyn went to bed early. Before drifting off to sleep, she indulged in a comforting cup of hot milk—a habit she had held onto for many years.

Beyond the thin curtains, the night enveloped the surroundings in darkness. A distant headlight cast a faint glow through the window, while the sound of tires rubbing against the road echoed harshly. Zach's Audi A6, a new car bestowed upon him as a reward by his company, was parked outside.

Stepping out of the car, Zach made his way into the foyer of the living room, placing his car keys on a nearby table. His keen eyes scanned the room, but the familiar figure he sought was nowhere to be found. Once, there used to be a slender silhouette perched on the sofa, engrossed in mundane soap operas. However, the space now sat vacant, with the coffee table immaculate, devoid of its usual assortment of snacks.

Zach's eyes dimmed a little. Rosario emerged from the kitchen and inquired, "Mr. Jardin, have you had dinner?"

Zach asked, "Where's Madelyn?"

Rosario replied, "She's not feeling well, so she went to bed early."

"I'll go check on her," Zach said, his hand in his pocket as he walked upstairs. A trace of weariness etched onto his face. He climbed three steps before halting, and uttered, "Jadie will return tomorrow afternoon. Prepare a few dishes she enjoys."

"Sure, Mr. Jardin," Rosario responded.

Zach made his way to the third floor, reaching for the doorknob of Madelyn's room. However, contrary to his expectations, it didn't yield. The door was locked from the inside. A furrow formed on Zach's brow, unable to hide his surprise.

Both Zach and Madelyn occupied rooms on the third floor, while Hayson's resided on the second floor. Ordinarily, the second floor remained off-limits to all. As for the fourth floor, it served as Jadie White's exclusive living space. Previously, Zach could freely enter and exit Madelyn's room, as she never bothered to lock it. Yet this sudden change caught him off guard. Zach couldn't help but wonder, 'Has Madelyn truly given up pursuing me?'

Zach rapped on the door and called out, "Madelyn, are you asleep?"

Upon hearing the devil's knocking, Madelyn clutched her covers and huddled in her bed, deliberately ignoring the sound. She had already been awake when she heard Zach's car pull up outside.

Zach had acquired a separate house nearby, boasting two bedrooms, two living rooms, two bathrooms, and a kitchen. He rarely returned to the Jent residence as long as Madelyn remained here. Zach had escaped from this home due to his aversion to her. The only reason he had come back now was because Jadie White, who had been undergoing treatment overseas, was due to return tomorrow.

Jadie had suffered from asthma since childhood, a condition she was born with. The medical facilities in Venturia were only average, prompting Zach to send her abroad for treatment. The reason Zach had approached Madelyn so late was to caution her against harboring any ill intentions toward Jadie.

Jadie happened to be Zach's childhood friend, and the two of them had grown up together in an orphanage. Rumor had it that they had endured countless hardships, spending nights on the streets and battling stray dogs for scraps of food. They had relied on each other for survival.

In Zach's second year of living in the Jent residence, he personally brought Jadie back with him. Hayson didn't object much. It simply meant having an additional person to take care of, and the Jent family was financially well-off.

Jadie and Madelyn were around the same age. Jadie had a natural beauty since she was young, with a pure and innocent appearance. She was the type that almost all boys in their teenage years liked. She preferred to wear white dresses, had long straight black hair that reached her waist, and her eyes were both innocent and captivating. Even Madelyn couldn't deny that Jadie surpassed her in attractiveness. She accepted it as normal for men to be enamored by Jadie's charm.

However, Madelyn's jealousy transformed her into an entirely different person. Behind Jadie's back, she would frequently subject her to bullying. Using thin needles, Madelyn would prick Jadie's waist, arms, thighs, and other vulnerable parts of her body. But Jadie didn't dare speak out due to a dark secret she harbored. It was this secret that gave Madelyn the audacity to relentlessly torment Jadie. But then... Jadie met an untimely demise.

She died at the young age of twenty. She took her own life by cutting her wrists...

To this day, the memory remains etched in Madelyn's mind. It was a day engulfed by pouring rain when Zach barged into her room, his hands stained with blood. Illuminated by flashes of lightning, his eyes carried a murderous glare. He appeared like a malevolent specter, clutching her throat tightly as he said, "Why? Why... couldn't you just leave her alone? Madelyn... why wasn't it you who died! Curse all of you, Jents!"

In that chilling moment, Madelyn realized that Zach truly intended to end her life.

Jadie's demise became an everlasting nightmare for Madelyn, haunting her throughout her existence. She bore indirect responsibility for Jadie's tragic fate. In the years that followed, Madelyn found no solace in sleep.

Driven by the profound remorse stemming from her actions in a previous life, Madelyn made a resolute decision to make amends to Jadie.

## Chapter 6

Madelyn's previous life, Zach's reason for marrying Cecilia was partly because she bore a slight resemblance to Jadie. He kept Cecilia by his side as a substitute.

From childhood to adulthood, Madelyn was inferior to Jadie in every aspect, whether it was grades or appearance, except for her family background.

The bond between Jadie and Zach was like an impenetrable fortress built with steel. Zach's love for Jadie ran deep in his bones. On the other hand, Madelyn was merely the daughter of an enemy to Zach, devoid of any trace of affection.

The knocking gradually grew louder. Madelyn anxiously bit her lip. Zach had never been patient with her. If she didn't open the door for him soon, he might even kick it down without a second thought.

Therefore, she flicked on the light switch, lifted the blanket, and slipped on her shoes as she rose from the bed. Opening the door, she put on a facade of just waking up and rubbed her eyes. “Brother? You’re back! Sorry, I was sound asleep and didn’t hear anything. Is there something you need?”

Zach’s eyebrows furrowed. However, as he observed her sleepy appearance and realized she had gone out of her way to let him in, his brows relaxed, and a hint of tenderness softened his gaze.

He extended his hand to touch Madelyn’s head, but she lowered her gaze, evading his touch by turning away. In an attempt to conceal her emotions, she walked over to a nearby table and poured herself a glass of water.

A coldness flickered in Zach’s eyes. He nonchalantly withdrew his hand and proceeded to enter Madelyn’s room. The moment Zach closed the door behind him, Madelyn’s uneasiness began to grow. But as she contemplated how the current Zach despised her and wouldn’t harm her in any way, her anxiety subsided.

Zach took in the sight of the girl’s room adorned in pink. It exuded a sweet fragrance, reminiscent of the perfume Madelyn had left in his car. A thought crossed his mind, ‘She hasn’t changed. She’s still the same old Madelyn.’ In a detached manner, he inquired, “Are you feeling better?” His voice lacked warmth, devoid of any inflections

Madelyn delicately returned the glass to the table and pulled out a chair, intentionally keeping her distance from him. “Thank you for your concern. I’m feeling much better now.”

Zach then approached her, and a blend of tobacco and alcohol wafted from him. It wasn’t pleasant, yet it wasn’t entirely unpleasant either.

Unlike others his age, the current Zach had already achieved success as a business elite. Perhaps it was his years of navigating the corporate world that bestowed upon him an air of pride, composure, and a chilly demeanor. Clad in a sleek black suit, the tall and well-built Zach exuded an undeniable charisma. His remarkable presence, combined with his striking looks, could easily capture the attention and favor of women.

However, Madelyn knew that beneath Zach’s handsome facade lurked a devil. He was like a malevolent spirit rising from the depths of hell, intent on destroying lives. He lay

dormant, awaiting the perfect moment to unravel her life and bring down the Jent family completely.

To keep Zach at a distance, Madelyn purposefully contorted her face in disgust and waved her hand in front of her nose. “Brother, have you started smoking again? And I can smell alcohol. I hate that scent.”

As expected, he halted his steps three paces away. “I apologize. I’ve been occupied lately and have had to tend to social obligations. I’ll be more mindful in the future.”

Without waiting for him to bring it up, Madelyn took the initiative to mention Jadie. “Brother, is Jadie coming back tomorrow? It’s been so many years since I last saw her, and I actually miss her. I’ve already had Rosario tidy up the upstairs room. She can move in directly when she returns.”

Zach’s gaze grew intense, a fleeting chill passing through his eyes. “No need. I intend to have Jadie move in with me.”

“I see,” Madelyn murmured, lightly touching the bandage on her wrist, feeling a faint twinge of pain in her heart. “That’s alright... Let me know if there’s anything you need help with.”

In Madelyn’s past life, Zach had also mentioned the idea of taking Jadie and leaving the Jent residence, but Madelyn had strongly objected. She vehemently opposed Jadie’s departure because it would mean losing her chance to torment her. Additionally, Madelyn’s love for Zach ran so deep that she couldn’t bear the thought of him living together with Jadie. As a result, Madelyn had managed to convince Zach to allow Jadie to stay with her at the Jent residence, using the excuse of wanting company.

“I have tomorrow off, so I’ll head to the airport to pick her up and bring her here for dinner. We’ll leave after she packs her things. In the evening, you can come along and spend time with us.”

Madelyn glanced up, flashing a smile at Zach, and declined, “I won’t be joining you guys. I want to take a day to relax at home. Exams are coming up, and I need to focus on reviewing my studies.” As she encountered Zach’s stern expression, a touch of nervousness crept over Madelyn.

She didn’t want to get caught up in his conflicts with others. Her goal was to play the role of an obedient and harmless sister, endure these few years, save money, and make her



escape. However, Zach was suspicious and unpredictable, leaving her uncertain if she could deceive him.

Zach calmly regarded Madelyn. The girl lowered her head, emanating an aura of submission and vulnerability, a stark contrast to the arrogant and defiant Madelyn of the past. He sneered inwardly, ‘She’s really doing a great job for keeping up this act for this long.’

A hint of enigma flickered across the man’s thin lips, followed by a gentle tone as he spoke, “Both you and Jadie are my sisters. I won’t show favoritism to either of you... When I return tonight, let’s have dinner together. I’ll also get you your favorite strawberry mousse cake. How does that sound?”

Madelyn didn’t dare let her guard down. She narrowed her eyes into a crescent shape and smiled, saying, “Okay, thank you, brother.”

“Get some rest early.”

“Mhm.”

## **Chapter 7**

After Zach departed, Madelyn found herself able to sleep peacefully. Perhaps it was because she knew Jadie was still alive in this lifetime, the terrifying nightmares no longer plagued her.

The following day, Madelyn was roused from sleep by the sound of footsteps overhead. She turned over and opened her eyes, feeling fully awake. In her previous life, during the months of chemotherapy before her death, a good night’s sleep had eluded her. Excruciating pain tormented her each night, preventing her from getting even a wink of sleep. To make matters worse, her hair had fallen out drastically—a consequence she hadn’t anticipated from chemotherapy.

In her previous life, Madelyn loved to sleep in and would get grumpy if disturbed from a restless slumber. But now, as she faced this unwelcome interruption, she somehow felt nothing. She reached for her cell phone, checking the time. It was just after eight o’clock. Rosario knew about her inclination to sleep in and usually refrained from disturbing her. Setting her phone aside, Madelyn forced her eyes closed and dozed off for a little while.

After all, Zach was a very suspicious person, and Madelyn couldn't afford to let him notice her drastic changes, or else it would raise suspicions.

By the time Madelyn woke up, it was already past eleven o'clock. After getting out of bed, she went to the bathroom to brush her teeth.

A knock on the door signaled Rosario's arrival, carrying a freshly laundered blanket. "Ms. Jent, lunch is ready. However, it might take a while since Mr. Jardin had to return his place before joining you for the meal later."

Madelyn nodded as she brushed her teeth, water splashing over her face. She gazed at her reflection in the mirror, noting her youthful and innocent appearance, with skin as smooth as silk—truly flawless. Her hand involuntarily reached up to touch her face, reminded of her withered self in her previous life before death. The memories of that past existence felt like a distant dream.

In truth, Madelyn wasn't unattractive. She possessed upturned eyes that, when devoid of expression, carried a hint of innocence, making her appear vulnerable and harmless—a quality that could easily be exploited. She recalled her personality in her past life, which was indeed quite unpleasant. Back then, she was the spoiled and headstrong daughter of a wealthy family, the kind of young lady that others would describe as bratty and privileged. As Hayson Jent's sole daughter, she used to believe she could have anything she desired, including... Zach.

"Got it," she replied to Rosario.

Since Madelyn had no plans to go out that day, she opted for a casual pink floral long-sleeved pajama set and left her slightly curled hair loose. Making her way downstairs, she stood in front of the refrigerator and poured herself a glass of milk. It was then that familiar voices filled with laughter reached her ears from the foyer. She knew without a doubt that it could only be them.

Madelyn glanced up and saw Zach standing in the doorway, accompanied by Jadie. They were both dressed in matching outfits. She couldn't help but wonder, 'Did they plan this?'

Today, Zach, who typically favored dark colors, wore a white jacket. Jadie, who had spent years abroad for treatment, appeared even more radiant. She donned a white dress that exuded purity and flawlessness, resembling an ethereal elf plucked from a painting.

Jadie's beauty provided Madelyn with a glimpse into why Jadie had held a special place in Zach's heart all these years. However, a twinge of discomfort lingered within Madelyn. Perhaps she hadn't entirely moved on from her role in her previous life as Zach's wife.

Madelyn only stole a quick glance at Jadie before diverting her gaze.

Zach leaned in and whispered softly into Jadie's ear, "It's alright, let's go have our meal."

Jadie, feeling a hint of uncertainty, tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and nodded. Holding a gift in her hand, she approached Madelyn, who was already seated at the dining table and began eating. Jadie handed the gift to Madelyn and said, "I bought this for you when I returned. I hope you'll like it."

Madelyn smiled warmly and replied, "Thank you. Please, have a seat and let's enjoy our meal. Rosario prepared something delicious today."

Jadie seemed taken aback by Madelyn's kind words. In the past, Madelyn would have flung the gift to the ground, grabbed Jadie's hair, and demanded that she leave. Zach would have intervened to defuse the situation and escort Jadie away.

In Madelyn's previous life, that's exactly what transpired at this moment. She had even scratched Jadie's face. The exact words of Zach's reprimand eluded her memory, buried in the distant past. However, she knew it hadn't been pleasant.

Jadie cautiously glanced at Zach, his expression remaining devoid of emotion.

Calmly, he handed his plate to Jadie and spoke in a low voice, "Let's eat. Later, I'll take you to see if there's anything you want to buy."

Jadie took the plate obediently, her voice soft, "There's actually nothing I really need to buy. I know you're busy, so don't worry about me. Focus on your own matters. I'll be waiting for you at home when you finish work and come to pick me up."

Zach served her some food from the plate, stating, "It's alright. I took the day off. It's rare for me to have a whole day with you. Opportunities like this may not come around often in the future."

They sat together while Madelyn remained seated alone across from them. She showed no interest in their conversation, simply nodding as she continued eating her meal. On her

plate, there was a chicken wing that Zach had served to her. “You’re really not joining us today?” he asked.

As Madelyn heard Zach referring to “us,” implying himself and Jadie, she came to the painful realization that she would forever remain an outsider in their eyes. The thought of accompanying them felt like being an unwanted presence, a perpetual third wheel. Moreover, in this fresh start, her main objective was to distance herself from Zach, making it necessary for her to reject his invitation.

With a light and cheerful smile, Madelyn responded, “No need, I still have some studying to do.” She had only eaten a little and felt no desire to linger. Taking a tissue to wipe her mouth, she stood up gracefully and ascended the stairs. As she turned away from them, her expression slowly changed.

In her heart, she whispered to herself, ‘Zach Jardin, in my previous life, my obsession consumed me, making you more important than my own existence. Trying to bind you to me through marriage was my mistake. In this lifetime, I’ll let you go and set myself free as well! I wish you both a peaceful, joyous, and blissful life...’

## **Chapter 8**

Madelyn sat at her desk, Jadie’s unopened gift before her. She already knew what it was; a Swarovski crystal hair clip—an opulent trinket from the year 2000, a time when the average wage was only a few hundred dollars. She had never cared for jewelry, feeling as if each piece was a chain that bound her. Perhaps it was all psychological, but it unsettled her nonetheless.

With a sigh, Madelyn tucked the gift into the drawer of her desk.

She pulled out her senior math review booklet. The problems were not particularly challenging for her, and the pages were still crisp, seldom flipped through. Once upon a time, Madelyn had been the bottom of her class. It was not until she sought help from Zach, having him tutor her outside of school, that she began to improve. Despite Zach

only having a middle school education, he was fluent in five foreign languages, all self-taught through his relentless dedication to learning. His intellectual prowess was almost otherworldly at her school. Even Ventropolis's top student could not compare. Zach, with his intelligence and determination, could always make miracles happen.

No wonder Hayson had taken such a liking to Zach. But Hayson had never showed any interest in her academic performance. Instead, he was more focused on her extracurricular activities. He treated her like a budding socialite, immersing her in an array of dance classes, piano lessons, golf, cooking, and embroidery. These were the skills Hayson wanted her to perfect most. After all, he had it all planned out; he was going to marry her off to a well-matched, wealthy business partner, merging their families in a corporate marriage. In his eyes, a woman's worth was in her virtue, not her intellect. Her role was to be a wife and mother, to stay home, not to be seen, only to serve and appease her husband.

Looking out the window, Madelyn watched a black sedan exit the front gate. It seemed they had finally left. Hayson would not be back for three days, leaving her with a rare period of freedom. Tossing her book aside, she resolved to do what she wanted, no longer shackled by the restrictions of the Jent family.

Rushing into the backyard, she sought out the jujube tree. Rosario had told her it was planted by her mother while she was pregnant with her. The tree now towered above the walls, a single branch as thick as an arm, winding its way into the neighboring mansion. Here, the mansions were connected, separated only by a few strategically placed trees. The jujube tree was laden with fruit, tempting Madelyn to climb up, enjoy the view, and munch on the sweet fruits.

However, she had overestimated her climbing skills and had to bring over a ladder. Sitting atop the wall, her figure obscured by the lush canopy of the jujube tree, she picked

a ripe fruit. Rubbing it clean, she popped it into her mouth, swinging her feet in utter contentment. She had never felt as free as she did now. With eyes closed, she reveled in the gentle breeze—keenly aware, fully alive.

Suddenly, the sound of shattering porcelain and a boy's angry voice erupted from the mansion next door. "Get out, all of you. Get out!" The voice came from the second floor. Madelyn looked up just in time to see a cane being flung out the window.

"Ethan, I'm just worried about you. Let's go for a walk, okay? You're always cooped up in the house, and it's really worrying."

"What's best for me? You all think I'm just a burden, don't you? Wouldn't it be better if I were dead? You wouldn't have to waste your time on this useless cripple. Get out! Everyone get out!"

"Ethan..."

"Didn't you hear me? I said get out!" The boy's voice roared.

The woman's voice finally yielded. "Alright... I'll leave, Ethan. Just don't hurt yourself."

'Who lives here? What a temper,' Madelyn thought to herself.

She recalled that about half a month after her own suicide attempt, Zach had taken her to the hospital for a checkup. When they returned, she saw an ambulance parked outside the neighboring mansion. Medical personnel were carrying out a body draped in a white sheet. The individual had died the same way she had tried to—suicide by wrist-cutting. His fate was even grimmer; his body was not discovered until two days later in the bathroom.

Rosario had told her that the suicide victim was Ethan, the future heir of the renowned Arnold family of Ventropolis. After a childhood car accident left him with crippled legs, he sank into a deep depression, becoming a recluse and eventually developing mental illnesses. He had always shown suicidal tendencies; he had just been lucky in his previous attempts and had been saved.

‘Such a shame to die so young, at only eighteen,’ Madelyn lamented.

Madelyn plucked a jujube from the tree and tossed it through the broken window.

## **Chapter 9**

Amidst the chaos of his room, a young man, Ethan, sat in his wheelchair. Unattended locks of hair cloaked his eyes, his gaze grimly tracing the spot where a craft knife was mixed in with the shards of shattered glass on the floor. A voice seemed to echo in his head.

“Why hesitate? One cut and the pain will be gone. It would only sting for a moment. Your parents already divorced and remarried. They have their own children now. They’ve abandoned you. Go on, end it! Find the sweet release of death!”

‘If you didn’t love each other, why did you marry? Why did you have me? You both have your own families now. What about me? What am I to you?’

Ethan’s gaze turned increasingly fierce, a firm resolution setting in. He pushed himself off the wheelchair, trying to stand. With no support from his legs, he fell onto the ground. Glass shards sliced his palm, blood spilling and staining the wooden floor. He reached out amidst the wreckage, grabbed the craft knife, and slid the button upward, revealing the

sharp blade. All it took was a single, swift cut across his wrist, and he would find his escape. As he laid the blade against his wrist, a jujube was tossed in through the window, landing neatly beside him. Then another, each bigger and redder than the last, their color matching the blood pooling on the floor.

Ethan squinted against the harsh sunlight pouring in through the window. The next moment, a jujube hit him squarely on the head. Pain flared. The fruit fell to the floor, rolling off into a dark corner of the room.

Ethan had no words.

Just then, a calm and pleasant voice floated in from outside.

“These jujubes are from our tree. Enjoy them. Don’t stay in there cooped up all day; it’s unhealthy. If you ever want more, just let me know. If you’re shy, toss something tasty from your house and we’ll trade. Oh, I’m Madelyn. I’ll come by and see you every day, okay?”

Perhaps Madelyn’s voice had been too loud; it stirred the household staff within the mansion. Someone quickly walked out.

“Who’s there? Who’s talking in the yard?”

Madelyn shrugged and quickly retracted her feet from the wall, hiding among the tree branches. If she could, she wished to alter his future. Perhaps it was because she empathized with him; she knew what it felt like to be abandoned by everyone—helpless and desperate.

As Madelyn’s voice receded, Ethan’s eyes, previously tight with distress, flickered.

‘She’ll come see me every day?’



Her words sparked something in him, a hint of a change. It was as if the dying embers of a fire that was about to go out had been stoked, rekindling a glimmer of hope.

The housekeeper looked around but found no one. Thinking it strange, she turned and left the yard.

Up in the tree, the bugs were getting annoying. Madelyn filled two bags with the jujubes, then climbed down the ladder to head home. As she returned, Rosario, just descending from the third floor, was about to call her when she noticed the wood splinters scattered over Madelyn's clothes. She approached her ward, brushing off the debris.

“Where've you been running off to, all covered in grime? Get back to your room and change your clothes right away. I'll wash them for you.”

Madelyn cast her a sidelong glance, replying calmly, “It's fine. Here, Rosario, taste these jujubes I've picked. They're really sweet.”

Rosario spotted the jujubes in her hands and shook her head. “You didn't bother with the jujubes we picked earlier. Now, look at you, climbing up and picking them yourself. You went up there all on your own?”

Madelyn nodded. “Yep! I climbed using the ladder.”

“You've healed, but you've forgotten the pain!” Rosario admonished lightly, prodding Madelyn's forehead with a finger. “You're not to climb that tree anymore. If you get hurt again, I'll have your father chop it down.”

Madelyn knew that Rosario was all bark and no bite. She would not actually do it.

“Rosario, I'm not a child anymore. I'll be careful.”

## Chapter 10

Madelyn washed all the jujubes she had in her pocket, placing them neatly on the coffee table. Switching on the television, she curled up with a bowl of jujubes, lost in the enjoyment of her favorite treat.

Rosario came out from tidying up the kitchen and immediately frowned at Madelyn lounging on the couch in her grimy clothes. Raising her hand as if to swat at her, she chided, “You little scamp, I just changed that couch cover today, and you’ve already managed to dirty it. Go back to your room and change your clothes before you come back down.”

Madelyn, barefoot on the cool floor, dodged Rosario’s faux attack, hiding behind the couch with a giggle. “Can I get changed later, Rosario? I’m so tired. I just want to lie down for a while.”

“You and your shenanigans. If Mr. Jardin sees your uncouth manners, you’re bound to be punished again. Madelyn, be a good girl and go back to your room.”

“Can I finish this episode first, pretty please? There are only ten more minutes left.” Madelyn cooed sweetly at Rosario.

“No deal. You have exams coming up, and you’re still watching TV. I’m turning it off. Go upstairs and study.”

At that moment, Zach’s voice echoed from behind Madelyn. “Madelyn, Rosario has a weak heart. Stop making her angry all the time.”

Madelyn froze momentarily, her dainty brows creasing slightly. ‘How did he and Jadie come back so early? Without my meddling, shouldn’t Zach have been able to take Jadie out to live as he wished? Then I could have lived happily by myself in this house.’

Rosario asked, “Mr. Jardin, you’re back so soon?”

Zach placed his keys on the table, nodding. “There’s an emergency meeting at the office, so I came back to pick up some documents. I’ll take Jadie over later. For now, she can stay here for a bit.”

Madelyn pretended to be engrossed in the television, choosing to ignore their conversation. To her surprise, Zach came over to her, his hand finding her soft, waist-length, wavy hair, affectionately tousling it.

“Spend less time watching TV, focus more on your studies. Aren’t you preparing for exams? I’ll check in on your progress when I come back tonight.”

Madelyn was aware that he was very busy. With only 24 hours in a day, apart from eating and sleeping, he scarcely had the time to waste on her. If he did have the spare time, he would only spend it with Jadie.

Nonchalantly, Madelyn replied, “Bro, I’ve finished my homework. If I don’t understand something, I’ll ask Sis Jadie. You should go back to work!”

Listening to her indifferent voice, Zach’s gaze narrowed when she called Jadie ‘sis.’ Even Jadie, who stood frozen on the spot, widened her eyes in surprise, and even Rosario found Madelyn’s behavior offbeat. Madelyn had never liked Jadie; she considered it a good day if she did not torment her, and now she was actually calling Jadie ‘sis’.

Rosario could not help but ask, “M-Madelyn... Are you okay?”

Madelyn popped a jujube into her mouth, her eyes fixated on the television screen, though she was not truly absorbing any of it. “I’m fine! Jadie is a few months older than me, shouldn’t I call her sis? Besides, she’s always had better grades than me; I should learn from her.”

With the end of the TV show coinciding with her words, Zach’s familiar scent pervaded her senses, making Madelyn feel somewhat suffocated. Only when she was not in the same space as him would she feel slightly better.

Lowering her legs from their elevated position, Madelyn obediently said, “Alright, the show’s over. Bro, I’ll go to my room now.”

After all, Zach did not like seeing her around, so her departure would conveniently make room for them.

Zach glanced at her, attempting to glean something from her slightly pale face. Madelyn flicked her long hair over her shoulder and walked briskly toward the stairway. Zach’s brow furrowed as he watched her retreating figure. She used to become insanely jealous seeing him with Jadie, and she would do anything in her power to harm Jadie.

A frown marred Zach's face as he pondered, 'Has she truly moved on, or is she brewing a sinister plan in her mind? What exactly does Madelyn want to do?'