

SHARUKESH GOHAN

*STRANGER THINGS –
THE RIGHT SIDE UP*

*A full emotional rewrite giving Eleven,
Mike, Hopper & Hawkins the ending they
deserved ♥*

Copyright © 2026 by Sharukesh Gohan

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission.

First edition

This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy.

Find out more at reedsy.com

Contents

1	Stranger Things — The Right Side Up (Rewritten)	1
2	Disclaimer	2
3	Chapter 1 — “When the World Stops Breathing”	3
4	Chapter 2 — “The Price of Being Human”	6
5	Chapter 3 — “Learning How to Breathe”	11
6	Chapter 4 — “Becoming Jane Hopper”	14
7	Chapter 5 — “The Town That Forgot How to Smile”	18
8	Chapter 6 — “When Tomorrow Stops Being Scary”	24
9	Chapter 7 — “Learning How to Stay”	29
10	Chapter 8 — “The First Day of the Rest of Their Lives”	33
11	Epilogue — “For the Life You Deserve”	38
12	Ending & Thanks	43

One

*Stranger Things – The Right Side
Up (Rewritten)*



A full emotional rewrite giving Eleven, Mike, Hopper & Hawkins the ending they deserved ❤️

Two

Disclaimer



I do not own Stranger Things or its characters.

This is purely a fan rewrite created out of love and for emotional closure ❤

Three

Chapter 1 – “When the World Stops Breathing”



The expanse above them had ceased to be a sky. It was a wound—cracking, screaming, and burning as Dimension X tore itself apart. Fragments of dark reality shredded into violent storms of light and shadow, while the ground trembled beneath their feet as if the universe itself was struggling to decide whether it should still exist .

Above the chaos, the Mind Flayer roared. It was a sound not meant for human ears, a vibration that rattled the marrow of their bones. But beneath the familiar rage, there was something new. Something fragile. *Fear*. Its body, once infinite and untouchable, began to dissolve into drifting black ash .

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

And in the center of the storm stood Eleven.

Her chest heaved, and her arms shook with the effort. Every ounce of strength had abandoned her bones, yet she remained upright. She stood for the people she loved. She stood for the girl who had never been allowed a childhood, and for the woman who was finally choosing her own ending .

Vecna's scream echoed through the collapsing world as his twisted form tore apart, veins of darkness snapping like broken glass threads. His eyes locked onto hers one last time. There was no victory in his gaze, no godlike arrogance. Only defeat.

"You don't get to decide my life anymore," Eleven whispered.
The world seemed to listen. A blinding light exploded across the dimension, shattering reality. The dark particles—the cursed fragments of the Upside Down's heart—vaporized like smoke in a gale. The monsters vanished. The whispers ceased.
The Upside Down was gone .

Then, there was only silence.

"EL!"
The boys reached her just as her knees buckled. Mike caught her, his arms wrapping around her frame like a promise he refused to break again.

"I'm here," he breathed, his voice ragged. "I'm here... it's over. You did it."

Her eyes softened. They were no longer glowing with psychic fire, nor wide with the terror of battle. They were simply human.

"I know," she whispered. "Let's go home." .

Chapter 1 – “When the World Stops Breathing”

They ran as the world collapsed behind them. For the first time since Hawkins had fallen apart years ago, there was no second danger waiting in the wings. There was only the blinding glare of helicopters, spotlights, and soldiers screaming orders.

The military surrounded them like wolves circling prey. Guns raised. Alarms blaring.

“DO NOT MOVE! ON YOUR KNEES! HANDS UP NOW!”

Mike’s grip tightened on Eleven’s hand, and Hopper stepped forward, fury burning in his chest. But the gun barrels were steady, and they weren’t bluffing. Within seconds, the heroes were surrounded, bound, and separated. Eleven’s wrists were cuffed. Mike shouted her name until his voice broke, and Joyce begged and cursed, but it was no use .

Just like that, the kids who had saved the world were prisoners once more.

Dragged into the back of military trucks, the doors slammed shut, sealing them in darkness. As the engines roared to life, Eleven leaned her head back and closed her eyes. She had no powers left to save them. She had no safety. But as the truck rattled away, she whispered one word into the dark.

“Home.”

The world didn’t know it yet, but she wasn’t done fighting for it .

Four

Chapter 2 – “The Price of Being Human”



The facility hummed with the oppressive sterility of fluorescent lights. White walls, steel doors, and the sharp scent of antiseptic created an atmosphere that masqueraded as order, but the cleanliness only amplified the horror. It was a terrifying kind of precision .

They were separated the moment they arrived. Hopper was shoved toward one hallway, the kids dragged toward another, while Joyce's screams echoed down the corridor. Eleven was led deeper into the facility, into the cold sectors no one else was allowed to see .

The doctors here didn't shout or threaten. They smiled.

Chapter 2 – “The Price of Being Human”

“Please relax, Jane,” one of them said gently, gesturing to a chair with straps in the center of the room.

Eleven stared back in silence. The woman in charge, Dr. Kay, entered the room with the confidence of someone who owned the world. Her white lab coat was spotless, her posture perfect, her eyes sharp enough to cut glass.

“Eleven,” she greeted calmly, as if addressing a file rather than a person. “Or do you prefer Jane Hopper now?” .

When Eleven didn’t answer, Dr. Kay’s smile remained fixed. “I’ll take that as progress. Let’s begin.”

They strapped her down. The needle pierced her skin, drawing scarlet blood against the bright sterile metal. The doctor held the vial like it was a holy relic. “The blood of a miracle,” she whispered. Behind the glass observation window, military officials watched without blinking .

They ran their analysis, expecting the unnatural. They looked for the alien, the powerful, the mutated. Machines hummed and screens flickered as the numbers processed.

Then, Dr. Kay froze.

She leaned forward, rechecking the data. She reset the test and ran it again. And again. Her breath hitched.

“Run full analysis!” she snapped, her composed mask finally cracking.

Technicians scrambled. Results blinked onto the screens, mocking them with their simplicity. Normal red blood cell composition. Normal platelet density. Normal DNA expression. It was completely, devastatingly human .

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

Dr. Kay stared at the data as if the universe had betrayed her. “That’s not possible,” she whispered, her ego collapsing in real-time. “She channeled cosmic-energy scale matter disruption. She tore a dimensional construct apart. Her physiology *should not*—”

She spun toward Eleven. “What did you DO?”

Eleven looked at her hands. They looked small now. “I stopped being yours,” she said softly .

Dr. Kay slammed her fist against the table. “You don’t understand! Your existence is evolution! You are the answer to warfare, to control, to security! You are—”

“I’m not your weapon,” Eleven whispered. Her voice was steady; it was the doctor’s that shook. For the first time in her perfect laboratory world, Dr. Kay was not in control .

Before she could respond, alarms exploded through the lab. Red lights washed over the white walls, and sirens screamed.

“BREACH IN LOWER SECTOR! SEAL ALL LEVEL THREE DOORS!”

A soldier stumbled into the room, pale and breathless. “Ma’am... the Department of Energy just entered the facility. State security. Federal enforcement. They have warrants. They brought... everyone.” .

Heavy boots thundered down the hall. The steel doors slammed open, and Dr. Sam Owens stepped through. He looked disheveled—gray hair messily combed, suit wrinkled—but his

Chapter 2 – “The Price of Being Human”

eyes were sharper than steel. He looked like a man who believed in saving children rather than dissecting them.

“Dr. Kay,” he said coldly, flashing his federal clearance. “Your unauthorized experimentation ends now.”

Dr. Kay straightened, trying to salvage her authority. “You abandoned protocol. You chose morality over progress. That’s why you lost authority here.”

Owens stepped forward until they stood breath to breath. “I didn’t lose authority,” he said calmly. “I took it back.” .

“Arrest her,” Owens ordered.

As the handcuffs clicked, Dr. Kay’s composure shattered. “You fools don’t understand!” she screamed as they dragged her backward. “She was the next step! These children are the future of war—of dominance—”

“Of suffering,” Owens finished quietly.

Her voice vanished down the hallway, leaving a ringing silence in its wake. Owens turned to Eleven, his hard exterior softening. “Let her go.”

The straps were unbuckled. Eleven’s wrists were freed, her hands trembling as she lowered them. Owens looked at her with deep sorrow. “I’m sorry, kid. For everything. For what they did. You shouldn’t have had to survive any of this.”

Eleven swallowed, meeting his gaze. “...Can we go home now?”

He smiled, the look of a man who finally got to do the right thing. “Yeah. Let’s take you home.” .

Meanwhile, in another wing, Mike sat with his head in his

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

hands. The door opened, and they all turned.

There she was. No glowing eyes, no power hum, no looming monster. Just Eleven.

Mike walked toward her slowly, disbelief heavy in his steps, tears already falling. He stopped inches away. "...El?"

She nodded. He laughed breathlessly and pulled her into a hug, holding her as if the world had finally forgiven him. And when Eleven hugged him back, she didn't cling like she might disappear. She held on like she finally belonged .

Outside, news vans gathered, and headlines simmered with reports of the raided military program. But for Eleven, the noise didn't matter. She didn't have to hide anymore. For the first time since Hawkins had first broken, the world didn't feel like a monster's mouth. It felt like a place where someone might actually live.

Five

Chapter 3 – “Learning How to Breathe”



The silence that settled over Hawkins was not the heavy, suffocating quiet of a town holding its breath for the next disaster. It was simply quiet. Leaves rustled in the wind, a car engine hummed down the road, and somewhere far away, kids were laughing. It was normal—a word that had once felt like a fantasy, but now finally existed .

Inside the Byers-Hopper house, the air was thick with the best kind of chaos. Voices overlapped and laughter cut through years of accumulated fear. Joyce moved through the kitchen like she had been waiting her whole life for this specific evening—no monsters, no disappearances, just family.

Hopper sat at the head of the table, arms crossed as he pretended to be stoic, but his eyes betrayed him. He watched

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

Eleven not with the vigilance of a soldier, but with the relief of a father. She sat between Will and Jonathan, staring at the plate in front of her. There were no restraints here, no panic countdowns ticking in her head. Just dinner .

Joyce placed a bowl of mashed potatoes on the table as if presenting a crown. “Eat,” she said softly. “All of you.”

Dustin raised his hand dramatically. “Yes, Mrs. Byers—I mean Mrs. Hopper—I mean, whatever, food now, please.”

The table erupted into laughter. Lucas rolled his eyes while Max smirked, and Will smiled—a real, unburdened smile. Eleven picked up her fork, watching the warmth flow between them. For the first time, she realized she didn’t have to fight for this feeling .

Later that night, the living room transformed. Dustin spread a familiar board across the table with reverence. “Ladies and gentlemen,” he announced, “it’s time to return to the most sacred tradition of all.”

Dungeons & Dragons. But this time, it wasn’t an escape from a reality too painful to bear. It was just a game. They played with pure joy, arguing dramatically and yelling when Dustin cheated. Eleven watched them, listening to Will destroy everyone with his storytelling. She didn’t feel like a weapon sitting among humans anymore.

“Alive,” she whispered to herself.

Mike, noticing the shift, leaned closer. “What?” he asked gently.

She turned to him and smiled. “Nothing.” But he knew. He

Chapter 3 – “Learning How to Breathe”

always did. He reached under the table, finding her hand and holding it. There was no fear in his grip, only warmth .

As the night deepened and the house grew quiet, Hopper found Eleven brushing her hair in the hallway mirror. It was such a painfully human act that it made his chest ache.

“So,” he said, clearing his throat gruffly. “How does it feel?”

She blinked at her reflection before meeting his eyes. “... Different. Good different. Scary different. But... I think I like it.”

He stepped closer, his voice softening. “You don’t have to save the world anymore, kid. Your only job now is to live in it.”

Her eyes glossed over. She walked forward and hugged him—not a desperate cling for survival, but a daughter hugging her dad. Hopper froze for a split second before wrapping his arms around her, finally allowing himself to believe she was safe .

Outside on the porch, the night was gentle. Eleven sat on the steps, knees pulled to her chest, watching the stars. Mike sat beside her, and for a long time, the wind spoke for them.

“You know,” Mike said softly, breaking the silence, “every time things got bad... I used to imagine this. Just sitting with you. No danger. No countdown to something terrible.”

She turned to him. “Just... this?”

“Just this,” he nodded.

She rested her head on his shoulder. “I like this.”

There were no fireworks or dramatic confessions needed. Just two people breathing together, safe and alive. For once, that was enough .

Six

Chapter 4 – “Becoming Jane Hopper”



The morning sunlight filtered through the curtains, not as a harsh wake-up call, but as a gentle invitation. The house smelled of coffee and pancakes that were definitely burning—a sure sign that Hopper was cooking and refusing to ask for help. Joyce laughed in the kitchen, the sound bright and unburdened, while Jonathan teased Hopper about his spatula technique. Will sat at the table sketching, his shoulders relaxed for the first time in years .

At the top of the stairs, Eleven stood barefoot, digging her toes into the carpet. She wasn't running from this life or fighting to defend it; she was simply watching it happen.

“Good morning, sweetie,” Joyce called out, spotting her. Eleven blinked, the normalcy of it washing over her. “...Good morning,” she whispered. She sat between them at the table,

Chapter 4 – “Becoming Jane Hopper”

accepting a plate of charred pancakes from Hopper like it was a Michelin-star meal. She took a bite, the crunch echoing in the quiet kitchen.

“Good,” she lied softly.

Hopper grinned, puffing his chest out. “See? Told you. It’s about the crispiness.” .

The Return to School

Weeks bled into months, and time stretched out comfortably. The first day Jane walked back into the hallways of Hawkins, the air didn’t feel heavy with judgment. It felt charged with curiosity.

She stood by her locker, fumbling with the combination, when she heard the patter of running feet.

“Jane! Jane!”

It was Holly Wheeler. She was breathless, her backpack bouncing against her shoulders. Behind her trailed a boy—Derek. He looked younger, terrified but determined, holding a notebook against his chest like a shield.

“Holly,” Jane smiled. “You are running in the hall.”

“It’s okay, Mr. Clarke doesn’t care today,” Holly gasped, grabbing Jane’s hand. She turned to the boy. “See? I told you she’s real. She’s not a ghost.”

Derek stepped forward, his eyes wide. He didn’t look at her like a monster. He looked at her like she was the sun.

“You... you stopped the ground from opening,” Derek whispered. “My house was near the crack. My mom said we were gonna fall. But then... it stopped. She said you stopped it.”

Jane froze. She was used to soldiers fearing her power. She wasn’t used to children feeling safe because of it.

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

“I... yes,” Jane said softly. “I stopped it.”

“And the redhead girl,” Derek rushed on. “Max? She woke up, right? She helped too?”

“Yes,” Jane said, her voice firmer. “She helped. She fought very hard.”

Derek nodded solemnly. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a crumpled sticker—a holographic star. He pressed it into Jane’s palm. “For saving us,” he said.

Holly beamed, looking up at Jane with pure hero worship. “You’re our superhero, Jane. But like... a cool one. Not a boring one.”

Jane looked down at the sticker. It was small. Cheap. Sticky.

It was the best medal she had ever received. .

Max & El – The Skate Park

Later that afternoon, the sun hung low over the converted skate park. The ruins of the mall were gone, replaced by ramps and rails where kids scraped their knees and laughed about it.

Max sat on a bench, her red hair blazing in the sunlight, watching Lucas fail miserably at a kickflip. Jane sat beside her, peeling the backing off the holographic star Derek had given her.

“You’re gonna put that on your forehead, aren’t you?” Max teased.

“Maybe,” Jane said. “Derek gave it to me. He said we saved his house.”

Max went quiet. She looked out at the kids skating—at Holly and Derek chasing each other near the half-pipe.

“It’s weird,” Max admitted. “I always thought if we won, there’d be a parade. Or maybe we’d just be... I don’t know.

Chapter 4 – “Becoming Jane Hopper”

Broken.”

“We are not broken,” Jane said firmly.

“No,” Max smiled, bumping her shoulder against Jane’s. “We’re not. But it’s weird being... regular. Just sitting here. Not running.”

“I like regular,” Jane said. She stuck the star onto the back of her hand. “Regular is... safe.”

“Yeah,” Max sighed, leaning back and closing her eyes against the sun. “Regular is pretty damn good.” .

Seven

Chapter 5 – “The Town That Forgot How to Smile”



Hawkins didn't return to normal overnight. You don't survive years of rifts, monsters, and misplaced hatred just to snap back to potlucks and bake sales. But slowly, the boarded-up windows came down. The “For Sale” signs vanished. The town began to breathe again, though the air still held the heavy static of things unsaid .

The Town Meeting

The community center was packed to capacity. The air smelled of floor wax, stale coffee, and anxiety. People stood shoulder-to-shoulder—not to panic, but to listen. However, the tension was palpable. Whispers rippled through the crowd, sharp eyes darting toward the group of teenagers standing near the wall.

Chapter 5 – “The Town That Forgot How to Smile”

Hopper stood at the podium. He looked uncomfortable in a collared shirt, constantly tugging at the neck. Joyce stood beside him, a grounding presence.

“I’m not gonna give you a speech about how strong we are,” Hopper grumbled into the microphone, the feedback whining slightly. “You know what we went through. We all lost something.”

He looked out at the crowd. He saw Ted Wheeler sleeping in the back. He saw Mr. Clarke nodding encouragingly. But he also saw the lingering suspicion in the eyes of others—parents who still believed the lies about “Satanic cults” and “cursed children.”

“But the danger is gone,” Hopper said, his voice dropping an octave to demand attention. “And the people who stopped it... they aren’t enemies. They’re your neighbors.”

A man in the third row crossed his arms. “That doesn’t change what happened,” he muttered loud enough to be heard. “That Munson kid. The club. They brought this on us. You can’t say they didn’t invoke something.”

A murmur of agreement rippled through the room. The “Satanic Panic” hadn’t vanished just because the earthquakes stopped.

That was when Wayne Munson stood up.

The room fell deadly silent. Wayne looked older than his years, his face etched with grief, clutching his hat in working-man hands. He didn’t look angry. He looked exhausted.

“My boy,” Wayne said, his voice rough but steady, “didn’t invoke nothing but a guitar and a bad attitude.”

He stepped out into the aisle, turning to face the town that had hunted his nephew.

“You called him a monster,” Wayne continued, meeting the

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

eyes of the man who had spoken. “You called him a murderer. You called him a servant of the devil. You chased him like an animal while the real evil was tearing this town apart from underneath us.”

“We didn’t know,” someone whispered weakly.

“You chose not to know,” Wayne countered softly. “You chose fear over truth. And because of that... my boy died alone.” .

Dustin Henderson, who had been standing by the wall with the other kids, pushed himself off the plaster. His face was pale, his hands trembling, but he walked forward until he stood next to Wayne. He looked small beside the older man, but his voice, when he spoke, cut through the silence like a knife.

“He didn’t die running,” Dustin said, tears brimming in his eyes but refusing to fall. “He could have. He could have left us. He could have left *you*.”

Dustin looked at the crowd—at the parents, the teachers, the shop owners who had hung “WANTED” posters in their windows.

“The Hellfire Club wasn’t a cult,” Dustin said, his voice cracking with the weight of it. “It was just a game. It was a place for the kids you didn’t want. The freaks. The nerds. The ones who didn’t fit in your perfect little town. We weren’t summoning devils. We were just trying to belong.”

He took a shaky breath. “Eddie Munson fought for this town. He fought for a town that hated him. And he died saving it.”

The silence that followed was suffocating. Shame is a heavy thing, and it settled over the room like a blanket. The man in the third row looked down at his shoes. A woman near the front wiped her eyes.

Chapter 5 – “The Town That Forgot How to Smile”

Wayne placed a heavy hand on Dustin’s shoulder. It was a gesture of solidarity—the uncle who lost a son, and the boy who lost a brother.

“If this town’s gonna heal,” Wayne said, looking around the room, “we don’t do it by finding new people to blame. We do it by admitting we were wrong. And by finally being better.” .

For a long moment, no one moved.

Then, Derek’s mother—the waitress whose house had nearly been swallowed by the rift—stood up. She looked at Wayne, then at Dustin.

“I’m sorry,” she said clearly. “For Eddie.”

She clapped. Just once. Then Mr. Clarke clapped. Then another. Slowly, the sound grew—not a roar of victory, but a steady, rhythmic rain of apology and gratitude. Hawkins was finally, truly, choosing forgiveness..

Holly’s Birthday Party

A month later, the heaviness of the town hall meeting had lifted, replaced by the chaotic joy of life moving forward. The Wheeler backyard was a war zone of sugar.

Bright balloons bobbed in the wind. A banner that said *HAPPY BIRTHDAY HOLLY* sagged in the middle.

Jane stood by the snack table, overwhelmed but smiling. Holly came tearing across the lawn, dragging Derek by the arm.

“Jane! Jane! We need you!” Holly shrieked.

“Is it a monster?” Jane asked, half-joking.

“No! It’s the piñata!” Derek yelled. “My dad can’t break it! He’s weak!”

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

Jane looked over. Derek's dad was indeed whacking a papier-mâché donkey with a plastic bat, to absolutely no effect.

"Use your mind!" Holly whispered loudly. "Explode it!"

Jane laughed. "No powers. Remember?"

"Awww," the kids groaned.

"But," Jane said, picking up the plastic bat Derek offered her. She hefted it, channeling every ounce of frustration she had ever felt toward the lab, the monsters, and the bad pancakes. "I can use this."

Whack.

The donkey exploded. Candy rained down like shrapnel. The kids screamed—a pure, joyful sound that had nothing to do with fear. Holly hugged Jane's leg, her face smeared with blue frosting. "Best. Hero. Ever." .

The Evening Shift

As the party wound down and the fireflies came out, the town of Hawkins settled into a peaceful rhythm. Music drifted from open windows. Laughter echoed from porches.

At the edge of the yard, Max and Jane sat in the grass, watching the stars appear.

"You know," Max said, "Dustin is wearing Eddie's vest again. He hasn't taken it off all week."

Jane smiled softly. "He is keeping him alive."

"Yeah," Max nodded, her eyes glistening slightly. "He is. And the town... they aren't taking the posters down anymore. They're putting flowers up instead."

Jane looked up at the sky. It was vast and dark, but it wasn't empty. It was full of light.

"Good," Jane whispered. "He deserves flowers."

Chapter 5 – “The Town That Forgot How to Smile”

“Yeah,” Max agreed, leaning her head on Jane’s shoulder. “He does.”.

Eight

Chapter 6 – “When Tomorrow Stops Being Scary”



Time didn't rush anymore. It didn't chase them with ticking clocks or looming dates. It arrived in moments—sunsets, laughter, and ordinary days. Hawkins didn't forget the past, but it finally refused to let the darkness swallow the future.

The Staging Area

On graduation day, the Hawkins High gymnasium smelled of floor wax and nervous sweat. The graduating class of 1989 stood in rows, adjusting their synthetic gowns.

“My cap won’t stay on,” Dustin complained, aggressively shoving bobby pins into his curly hair. “It’s defying gravity. It’s physically impossible.”

“It’s not physics, Henderson, it’s your hair volume,” Lucas said, checking his own reflection in a trophy case glass. “You look like a mushroom.”

“A genius mushroom,” Dustin retorted.

Chapter 6 – “When Tomorrow Stops Being Scary”

Will stood quietly to the side, adjusting his sash. He looked at Mike. “Can you believe we actually made it?”

Mike looked around the gym. He saw the basketball hoop where Lucas had made the winning shot. He saw the bleachers where they had hidden from bullies. He saw the ghosts of who they used to be—scared, small, and running for their lives.

“Barely,” Mike smiled. “But yeah. We made it.”

Jane stood near the door, smoothing the front of her gown. She wasn’t Jane the Mage or Eleven the Weapon. She was just a girl worrying if she would trip in her heels.

Max walked over to her. She wasn’t limping. She wasn’t using a cane. She walked with the easy, athletic confidence of a girl who had climbed out of the grave and decided to keep running.

“You nervous?” Max asked, adjusting her own sash.

“Hopper said ‘don’t trip’,” Jane whispered. “Now all I can think about is tripping.”

Max laughed, linking her arm through Jane’s. “If you trip, I’ll trip too. We’ll make it a synchronized routine. They’ll think it’s performance art.”

Jane smiled, the tension bleeding out of her shoulders.
“Promise?”

“Promise.”

The Ceremony

The football field buzzed with the energy of hundreds of families. The sun was bright, the kind of boring, perfect blue sky that Hawkins deserved.

In the bleachers, the “Extended Party” had taken over an entire section.

“Is that a camera or a telescope?” Robin asked, squinting at the massive lens Jonathan was attaching to his camera.

“It’s a telephoto lens,” Jonathan muttered. “I want to get the

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

expressions.”

“You’re acting like a soccer mom,” Steve teased. He was wearing sunglasses and a polo shirt, looking every bit the proud, over-involved babysitter he was. He held a massive air horn in his lap.

“Steve,” Nancy warned, eyeing the horn. “Do not.”

“I’m just holding it!” Steve defended. “For safety!”

The music started. *Pomp and Circumstance* played over the crackling loudspeakers.

When the names began, the crowd cheered politely. But when the “Party” started crossing the stage, the volume changed.

“Dustin Henderson!” Steve blew the air horn. Nancy smacked his arm. Dustin bowed theatrically to the crowd.

“Lucas Sinclair!” Erica Sinclair stood up on the bleachers and cupped her hands. “Don’t trip, nerd!” she screamed, creating a ripple of laughter.

“Maxine Mayfield!” The crowd quieted slightly, watching. Max didn’t walk across the stage; she strutted. No cane. No limp. No hesitation. She took her diploma, turned to the crowd, and raised it high. It was a victory lap. Lucas shouted so loud his voice cracked.

Then, the principal paused. He looked at the card in his hand, then out at the audience.

“Jane Hopper.”

Hopper stood up. He didn’t care who was behind him. He clapped—a rhythmic, aggressive, thunderous applause that dared anyone not to join in. Joyce was crying openly, clutching Will’s arm.

Jane walked across the stage. She didn’t look at her feet. She looked at her dad. She saw the man who had hidden her in a cabin, who had died for her, who had come back for her. She

Chapter 6 – “When Tomorrow Stops Being Scary”

saw the Sheriff who became a Father.

She took the diploma. She didn’t smile for the camera; she smiled for him.

The Empty Chairs

Toward the end of the ceremony, the Principal cleared his throat.

“We also want to acknowledge those who should have been here today,” he said. “Barbara Holland. Fred Benson. Patrick McKinney. And... Eddie Munson.”

Silence fell over the field. But it wasn’t the heavy silence of shame anymore.

In the crowd, Wayne Munson tipped his hat. On the stage, Dustin touched the Hellfire Club pin attached to his gown. Jane squeezed Mike’s hand.

They weren’t forgotten. They were part of the victory.

After the Caps Flew

The field dissolved into chaos. Caps flew into the air, creating a black rain against the blue sky.

Mike found Jane under the large oak tree near the parking lot. The sunlight caught the stray hairs escaping her cap.

“So,” he said, taking her hands. “High school: Conquered.”

“It was... long,” Jane admitted.

“Yeah,” Mike laughed. “It was.”

He looked at her—really looked at her. “Now what?”

“Now?” Jane looked over at her friends. Dustin was currently trying to tackle Steve. Lucas was spinning Max around. Will and Jonathan were hugging Joyce.

“Now... I want to live,” she said. “With people I love. With you.”

Mike smiled, a sound of pure relief. “Good. Because I’ve been building a future with your name on it this whole time.” He

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

leaned his forehead against hers. “I don’t know where we’ll go, but as long as you’re there... it’s perfect.”

“I will be,” she whispered.

They kissed, not as broken children trying to survive the night, but as adults choosing their own morning.

Nine

Chapter 7 – “Learning How to Stay”



The Byers-Hopper living room was vibrating. It wasn't the shaking of an earthquake or a portal opening; it was the bass from Jonathan's mixtape, which he was defending aggressively near the stereo. The room smelled of pepperoni, cheap soda, and the dusty, comfortable scent of a house that was finally, truly lived in.

The Kitchen Cabinet

In the kitchen, the “adults” were pretending to have control. Murray Bauman was currently critiquing the dip selection with the intensity of a food critic.

“It’s store-bought, Joyce,” Murray said, dipping a chip with suspicion. “I can taste the preservatives. It tastes like capitalism.”

“It tastes like onion, Murray,” Joyce replied, rolling her eyes as she refilled a bowl of pretzels. “If you want homemade, you can chop the onions next time.”

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

“I don’t chop,” Murray sniffed. “I consume. I observe. I critique.”

Hopper leaned against the counter, nursing a beer and watching them bicker. He looked tired, but it was a good tired—the kind that comes from work, not war.

“You know,” Hopper grunted, pointing his bottle at Murray. “I could arrest you for trespassing. Technically, you’re always trespassing.”

Murray grinned, a manic glint in his eye. “You wouldn’t dare. I’m the life of the party. Look at this emotional ecosystem! It’s thriving!”

Hopper looked out at the living room. He saw Mike and Will laughing on the floor. He saw Max stealing Lucas’s soda. He saw his daughter safe.

“Yeah,” Hopper murmured into his beer. “It is.”

The Babysitters’ Club

On the couch, the “older kids” were holding court. Robin was lying upside down, her legs draped over the back of the sofa, while Steve tried to ignore her.

“I think my brain is melting,” Robin announced. “If I have to rewind one more copy of *Ghostbusters*, I’m going to haunt the store myself.”

“It’s job security,” Steve said, tossing a piece of popcorn at her. “Besides, you love it. You get to judge people’s taste in movies.”

“True,” Robin conceded. “But if Mrs. Clickman rents *Grease* one more time, I’m hiding the tape.”

Dustin appeared from nowhere, sliding into the space between them. “Speaking of movies,” he began, breathless. “I have a theory about *Return of the Jedi*. If the Ewoks are actually a warrior race—”

“Henderson,” Steve sighed, dropping his head back. “It’s

Chapter 7 – “Learning How to Stay”

Saturday. No theories. No thinking. Just pizza.”

“You’re just mad because the Ewoks would beat you in a fight,” Dustin smirked.

“I have a bat,” Steve argued. “A bat with nails.”

“They have rocks and logs, Steve. It’s guerrilla warfare.”

Robin laughed, kicking Steve in the shoulder. “He’s got you there, Dingus.”

Quiet Moments

Across the room, Nancy stood by the window, watching the fireflies in the yard. Jonathan walked up beside her, abandoning his DJ post. He was holding his camera, checking the light.

“Working on that documentary?” Nancy asked softly, nodding at the camera.

Jonathan smiled, a small, genuine thing. “Yeah. Just... observing. Trying to capture how systems break. How they rot from the inside.”

“The anti-capitalism project?”

“Someone has to film the decay,” Jonathan said, looking out at the sleepy, suburban street. “Before we build something new.”

“It sounds important,” Nancy said. “You’re good at seeing the things other people miss.”

Jonathan bumped his shoulder against hers. “I learned from the best investigator in town.”

Nancy smiled, then looked over at the porch door. She saw Mike standing there, looking out at the night. She squeezed Jonathan’s arm. “I should go check on the little brother. Before he does something stupid.”

“Go,” Jonathan said gently.

Nancy walked over to the sliding door, stepping out onto the porch. Mike was leaning against the railing, staring at the stars. He straightened up when he heard her.

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

“Relax,” Nancy teased, nudging his shoulder. “I’m not here to interrogate you.”

Mike squinted at her. “You always say that. Then you interrogate me.”

Nancy laughed, looking from him to the living room where Jane was laughing with Will. “You’ve grown up,” she said softly. “Both of you. Take care of her, Mike. Not because she needs a protector... but because she deserves someone who understands her heart.”

Mike swallowed, nodding. “I will.”

The Last Lock

Hours later, the energy faded. Murray slipped out a side door (presumably to avoid goodbyes). Steve and Robin left arguing about who had better hair. The kids crashed in various corners.

Hopper stood at the front door. He watched Mike and Jane sitting on the porch swing, just talking. He didn’t interrupt. He didn’t hover.

He simply turned the deadbolt—*click*—and flipped off the porch light, leaving them in the soft, safe dark of a Hawkins summer night.

Ten

Chapter 8 – “The First Day of the Rest of Their Lives”



Moving day was not cinematic. It was sweaty, chaotic, and involved a lot of shouting about angles.

The car was packed so tightly that if you opened a door, a box would likely explode out. Hopper stood in the driveway, hands on his hips, staring at the trunk like it was a puzzle he needed to solve.

“You don’t need three boxes of books,” Hopper told Jane.

“I need them,” she said firmly. “They are my stories.”

“You can get stories at a library. Tires need air pressure, kid. Physics doesn’t care about plot twists.”

“Let her take the books, Jim,” Joyce said, sliding a cooler of sandwiches into the backseat. “We can strap the lamp to the roof.”

The Goodbye

When the car was finally packed, the mood shifted. The

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

engine idled, a low hum in the quiet morning.

Hopper walked over to Mike. The air between them had cleared years ago, replaced by a grudging, deep respect.

“You got the map?” Hopper asked.

“Marked the route in red,” Mike nodded.

“You got the emergency cash?”

“In the glove box.”

Hopper looked at him. “You got her?”

Mike met his gaze, steady and unsure. “Always.”

Hopper nodded, satisfied. He turned to Jane. He cleared his throat, looking at the vehicle rather than her.

“You checked the oil?” he asked gruffly.

“Yes, Dad,” Jane said, tying her shoes on the porch steps.

“What about the spare tire? Is it inflated?”

“Mike checked it.”

Hopper grunted, walking over to kick the rear tire gently. “Check it again when you stop for gas. And don’t let the tank get below a quarter.”

Jane walked over to him. She didn’t roll her eyes this time. She saw him for what he was: a man who had spent years guarding her from monsters, now trying to guard her from flat tires and empty gas tanks.

She hugged him. It was a fierce, tight squeeze. “I’ll be careful,” she whispered.

Hopper stood stiffly for a moment, then wrapped his arms around her, patting her back awkwardly. “Just... call. Once a week. Or I’ll come find you.”

“I know you will.”

Mike shook Hopper’s hand—a firm, respectful grip—and they were off. As the car pulled away, Joyce wrapped an arm around Hopper’s waist. He let out a long, shuddering breath, watching

Chapter 8 – “The First Day of the Rest of Their Lives”

the taillights disappear.

“They’re going to be fine, Jim,” she said.

“I know,” he lied. Then, softer: “I know.”

The “Palace”

Their new apartment was three hours away. It was on the second floor of a building that smelled faintly of boiled cabbage. The paint in the hallway was a color that could only be described as “depression beige,” and the radiator clanked like a dying robot.

“It’s...” Mike hesitated, standing in the empty living room.

“Perfect,” Jane finished. She spun around, arms wide. “It is ours.”

The Couch Incident

The romance of the apartment lasted exactly until they tried to get the couch up the stairs.

“Pivot!” Mike yelled, his face red, pinned between the heavy floral sofa and the banister.

“I am pivoting!” Jane grunted, pushing from the bottom. “It is stuck!”

“Use your mind!” Mike joked, gasping for air.

“I am saving it for emergencies!” she shot back. “This is just furniture!”

They heaved, shoved, and maneuvered until, with a sickening crunch of wood against drywall, the couch popped through the doorway. They collapsed onto it immediately, sweaty, dusty, and laughing until their sides hurt.

“We are never moving again,” Mike wheezed.

“Never,” Jane agreed.

Domestic Disaster

A week later, Jane decided to cook lasagna. It was a gesture of independence.

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

It was a disaster.

The oven dial was confusing, and forty-five minutes later, the kitchen was filled with smoke. Mike ran in, waving a towel, while Jane stared mournfully at the black, charcoal brick that used to be pasta.

“It is dead,” she announced.

Mike coughed, opening a window. “It’s... crispy?”

“It is coal, Mike.”

He looked at her tragic face and started to laugh. He grabbed a fork and poked the brick. *Clink*.

“Okay,” he admitted. “It’s a weapon. But hey, we have cereal.”

They sat on the kitchen floor, eating bowls of Fruit Loops for dinner.

“I will get better,” Jane promised, milk dripping from her spoon.

“I know,” Mike smiled, bumping his knee against hers. “But I kind of like the cereal.”

The Question

Months later, the apartment was no longer empty. It was filled with books, mismatched rugs, and photos of their friends.

One evening, they sat on their tiny metal balcony. The city lights hummed below them—not the red lightning of the Upside Down, but the gold and white of people living normal lives.

Mike looked at Jane. She was reading by the light of the streetlamp, peaceful and whole.

He reached into his pocket. His heart beat fast, but not from fear.

“Jane?”

She looked up. “Yes?”

He didn’t kneel. He didn’t make a speech. He just held out the ring—simple silver, catching the light.

Chapter 8 – “The First Day of the Rest of Their Lives”

“I don’t need a perfect life,” he said, his voice steady. “I just want this life. The burnt lasagna and the heavy couches and the chipped paint. I want it with you.”

She looked at the ring, then at him. Her eyes filled with tears, but she was smiling.

“Yes,” she whispered. “To all of it.”

She took his hand. And for the first time in a long time, the future didn’t feel like a question mark. It felt like an answer.

Eleven

Epilogue – “For the Life You Deserve”



The wedding took place in a small wooden chapel filled with the scent of wildflowers.

The Wheeler family took up the entire front row on the groom's side. Karen Wheeler was a wreck of happy tears, clutching a handful of tissues and sobbing quietly into her husband's shoulder. Ted Wheeler sat beside her, looking mildly confused by the level of emotion but occasionally patting her arm and muttering, "There, there, Karen. It's a nice ceremony."

Nancy stood near the altar as a bridesmaid, beaming, while Holly Wheeler—now much older—sat with her friends, whispering excitedly.

When Jane walked down the aisle, the room held its breath. She wore white, simple and elegant. Hopper walked her down the aisle, his face a mask of intense concentration to avoid crying. When he handed her hand to Mike, he didn't threaten

Epilogue — “For the Life You Deserve”

him. He just nodded, a silent passing of the torch.

The reception was a blur of joy. Murray Bauman was shockingly good at dancing, spinning a terrified Joyce around the floor while Hopper sat at a table, drinking a beer and refusing to make eye contact with them. Dustin gave a toast that started heartfelt, detoured into a rant about physics, and ended with everyone cheering anyway.

Jane sat at the head table, looking out at the room. She saw Max laughing with Lucas, Will sketching on a napkin, Steve trying to explain hair care to a skeptical uncle. She saw her family.

Years Later...

The backyard of the Hopper home was noisy. It was a Sunday barbecue, and the air smelled of charcoal and sunscreen.

“Uncle Steve! Uncle Steve!”

Two small children chased Steve Harrington across the lawn. Steve, despite being in his thirties and complaining about his back, was running at full speed, pretending to be a monster.

“I’m gonna get you!” Steve roared, scooping one of them up.

“Put him down, you giant man-child!” Robin shouted from the patio, where she was helping Joyce slice watermelon.

“Never!” Steve yelled back.

Nancy sat in a lawn chair, sipping lemonade and laughing at the scene. Jonathan sat on the grass nearby, adjusting his camera lens to capture the chaos. They weren’t together anymore—life had taken them down different roads years ago—but the easy comfort between them remained. They were friends bound by history, the kind of bond that breakups couldn’t sever.

Dustin was by the grill, arguing with Hopper about the correct temperature for burgers.

“It needs to be medium-rare, Hopper, it’s about flavor pro-

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

files!"

"It needs to be cooked so we don't die, Henderson. Step away from the tongs."

Hopper finally shooed Dustin away and wiped his hands on a towel. He looked up and saw Jane standing by the porch railing, watching her children squeal as Steve spun them around. He walked over, leaning against the railing beside her.

They stood in silence for a moment, just listening to the laughter.

"You remember?" Hopper asked suddenly, his voice gruff but low.

Jane turned to him. "Remember what?"

"What I told you. Back when everything was... well, when it was bad. I told you to grow up. To find a good man. To have some rugrats of your own." He gestured vaguely toward the lawn with his beer bottle. "I told you to give them the childhood you didn't get to have."

Jane looked back at her daughter, who was currently trying to put a flower behind Lucas's ear while Max laughed. Her chest tightened, not with pain, but with the overwhelming fullness of it.

"I remember," she whispered.

Hopper nudged her shoulder with his. "Well," he said, clearing his throat to hide the crack in his voice. "You did good, kid. You really did."

Jane smiled, leaning her head on his shoulder. "I had a good teacher," she said softly. "He taught me how to be a dad."

Hopper let out a shaky breath, blinking rapidly at the sunset. "Yeah, well. Don't tell Joyce I got misty, or she'll never let me live it down."

He gave her one last squeeze, then pushed off the railing.

Epilogue – “For the Life You Deserve”

“Alright, I gotta save those burgers before Henderson ruins them with his ‘science’.”

He walked back to the grill, leaving Jane smiling in the fading light.

A few minutes later, Mike came up the steps and sat down beside her, their shoulders touching comfortably.

“Thinking?” he asked softly.

She smiled, leaning into him. “Remembering.”

“Remembering what?”

“The woods,” she said quietly. “The rain. The first time you found me.”

Mike laughed a little, a sound rich with memory. “You were soaked. And terrified. And you barely knew how to say ‘no’.”

“I was scared,” she admitted. “I thought the world was just... bad places and bad men.”

“It was, for a while,” Mike said. He took her hand, intertwining their fingers. “Everything felt wrong back then. Like the whole world was tilted on its axis. Distorted. Dark.”

“Upside down,” she whispered.

“Yeah,” Mike agreed. He looked out at the yard—at his sister laughing with Jonathan, at his friends who had become family, at Hopper grumpily serving burgers to a cheering Dustin. “But look at this.”

Jane followed his gaze. She saw safety. She saw love. She saw a future that belonged to them.

“We aren’t running anymore,” Mike said softly.

Jane squeezed his hand, her heart feeling fuller than she ever thought possible. “No,” she said, a smile breaking across her face. “We finally made it.”

“To where?” Mike asked, though he already knew.

She looked at him, her eyes bright and clear.

STRANGER THINGS – THE RIGHT SIDE UP

“To the right side up.”

Jane took her daughter’s hand as the little girl ran up to the porch. She stood up, pulling Mike with her, and walked into the crowd, into the laughter, into the life she had chosen.

The End.

Twelve

Ending & Thanks



Thank you for reading.

If this healed even one Stranger Things heart — it was worth writing ❤

