

Chapter 2 Starting Over

"Breaking news: Aurora Sage, heiress to Edge Technology, has been successfully rescued from her kidnappers. Sources report that the victim was sexually assaulted, with her family paying a staggering 100 million dollar ransom.

"At just twenty years old, Aurora is Ravin City's premier socialite, our very own princess. But who would marry our fallen goddess now that she's been so thoroughly ruined?" one reporter intoned.

The morning news broadcasts were dominated by Aurora's story, with every channel carrying live coverage of the shocking headlines.

In her private suite atop the hospital, Aurora sat by the window in a plain hospital gown, watching traffic flowing below. The reality of her situation felt like a dream. She had been given an impossible second chance—thrown back in time to age twenty, to this very moment in her hospital room.

In her previous life, this kidnapping had been the beginning of her downfall, transforming her from society's darling into its greatest scandal, her reputation forever ruined.

Everyone had convinced her that Maverick had orchestrated it all, furious at her breaking their engagement. She'd carried that hatred until her dying breath, only to learn he'd been her savior all along.

Aurora's thoughts swirled inward, trying to figure out the true mastermind. She doubted Naomi could have possessed that kind of power or influence at just twenty years old back then.

At the click of the door, she sensed someone approaching with deadly intent. As a cool breeze swept through the floor-to-ceiling window beside her, a violent force struck from behind—someone was trying to push her into empty air. Fifty-eight stories up, such a fall would leave nothing to identify.

Aurora's survival instincts kicked in. She gripped the windowsill with one hand while catching her attacker's wrist with the other, using the momentum to spin around and pin the attacker by the throat, dangling the figure over the precipice.

"Aurora, stop! Look at me!" Naomi's voice cracked with terror as she

realized her position, the vertigo making her hysterical. "It's me. What are you doing?"

Their eyes met, and Aurora's grip tightened with murderous intent as she recognized her cousin. She couldn't forget the decade of torture in the mental hospital, couldn't forget how her family had been destroyed.

"You couldn't stand seeing me alive, could you?" Aurora's voice was ice-cold. "It must kill you to see me back safe and sound."

The door burst open as her auntie Evelyn Price rushed in with a horrified scream, followed by Aurora's father, Elias Sage, and two security guards.

"Good heavens! Aurora, what are you doing?" Evelyn cried out.

Naomi seized the opportunity to play victim, tears streaming down her face as she called out, "Mom! Mom, help me! Aurora's gone crazy!"

Elias waved the guards back, approaching his daughter carefully. "Easy now, sweetheart. What are you doing? Let her go. You're safe here."

At her father's gentle tug, Aurora's resolve crumbled. She released Naomi and turned to stare at him—alive again, when in her past life he had died with his hair turned white from worry, his heart broken by her choices.

"Dad," she whispered, her voice thick with emotion.

It was all her fault—blindly falling for Scott, breaking off her engagement with Maverick, breaking her father's heart... none of this would have happened if she hadn't been so willful.

"You're safe now. No one can hurt you anymore," Elias soothed, devastated by the changes in his once-vibrant daughter.

Aurora's eyes welled up with tears. "Dad, I'm sorry. I was wrong not to listen to you. I won't disappoint you again!" Her words carried the weight of regret.

Elias was taken aback by this sudden maturity. "You mean that? Then end things with Scott. I don't care if he played hero. I won't have a schemer for a son-in-law!"

"Consider it done, Dad," she replied.

From Evelyn's protective embrace, Naomi exchanged a worried glance with her mother. Aurora's behavior seemed to indicate a mind broken

by trauma. Her easy abandonment of her supposed savior made no sense at all.

Elias's expression turned stern. "Just promise me no more dangerous stunts like hanging people out windows. Do you know how dangerous that was? What if something had happened?"

"She tried to kill me, Dad," Aurora said quietly, her eyes glistening with tears as she looked up at her father's commanding presence. "She pushed me toward the window when she thought I wasn't paying attention."

"That's not true!" Naomi clutched her heart, her tear-stained face a picture of injured innocence. "Uncle, I saw her on the windowsill and thought she was going to kill herself. I was trying to save her!"

Aurora watched Naomi's insincere performance with contempt. Her eyes, usually bright as starlight, were now filled with an icy gleam. "Why would I want to end my own life?"

Naomi felt a chill run down her spine and choked up, "You've been pampered all your life, and now your reputation is in ruins. I'm afraid you might not be able to handle it and do something drastic."

Aurora smirked and said, "Why would I throw away my life after fighting so hard to keep it? That would destroy Dad." Her voice dripped with contempt. "Or was that your plan - drive me to suicide so you could inherit everything? Maybe you even arranged the kidnapping."

Naomi choked back a sob, her composure cracking. "How can you say such things? We all know Maverick did this because you humiliated him—falling for your bodyguard, breaking your engagement. You've nearly ruined the Sage family!"

"Enough, Naomi!" Evelyn cut in smoothly, ever the concerned aunt. "She's been through too much already."

She turned to Aurora with practiced sympathy. "Aurora, we're your family. We'd never hurt you."

Aurora's gaze turned skeptical. She'd once believed in Evelyn's maternal act, especially after losing her own mother. Her father had taken in his late wife's sister and niece out of kindness.

But in her past life, Evelyn had poisoned her father against her while Naomi had imprisoned and ultimately burned her alive.

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Aurora turned to her father, searching his face with desperate intensity. "Do you really think the Parkers did this? That I somehow deserved it for being willful?"



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