

Chapter 5 No Walking Away

Pain pierced through Aurora's heart at his question. "Breaking our engagement was a mistake," she said softly, her quiet voice cutting through him like a winter wind.

Maverick's fingers tightened around her wrist. "Let me guess. Your precious bodyguard dumped you?" he asked, his tone laced with sarcasm.

She met his haunting gaze, her chest tight with guilt and concern. "Would you still want me?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

His expression remained cold, though the veins standing out in his clenched fist betrayed his tension.

Reality crashed over Aurora. Of course, her reputation lay in ruins and someone like Maverick could never accept a disgraced socialite like her.

His silence made her squirm. "I get it," she whispered, straightening her spine. "Just take care of yourself. I'll go."

His control snapped. In one fluid motion, he had her pinned against the wall, his body caging her in. "Don't even think about regretting this," he growled, his eyes burning into hers as he braced his arms on either side of her head. "You've lost your chance to walk away, Aurora."

'The nerve of this woman to stir me up and try to leave as if nothing had happened,' he thought furiously. The urge to shake her warred with his need to keep her close.

"Please," she begged, afraid to push him away and worsen his injuries. "You need to let go."

"Having second thoughts already?" he asked. "Words can't be so easily taken back." Pain bleached his face white, but he refused to yield.

Aurora couldn't bring herself to refuse, pleading, "Please, let me go. You need to get to the bed... you're hurt!"

He refused to budge. "Answer me first. Are you planning to run?" he asked, his eyes narrowing.

Guilt flooded her like acid. "No," she replied, tears spilling from beneath her lashes.

Something shifted in his expression. The color drained from his face

as fresh blood darkened his bandages. Still, his grip never wavered.

"Maverick!" She caught him as he swayed, panic clawing at her throat. "God, don't do this to me."

Blood seeped from his wounds, quite a shocking sight.

"Takes more than this to kill me," he ground out, frustration evident beneath the pain.

She didn't wait for more. Pushing past him, she ran barefoot to the door. "Doctor! We need help in here!" she called out.

"Aurora, don't you dare leave!" Maverick rasped, his face pale, eyes red, voice hoarse. He was furious, desperate to pull her back.

The medical team and Howard rushed in, only to freeze at the sight before them. Blood soaked through the bedding where Maverick's wounds had reopened. He lay there, eyes shut tight in agony, barely able to move, a far cry from the invincible man they had always known.

Howard's rage exploded. He physically forced Aurora from the room as doctors in sterile gear swarmed the bed. The grim set of their mouths spoke volumes.

"Was this your plan?" Howard snarled, backed by a wall of black-suited security. "To finish what the kidnappers started? We spent twenty-four hours just keeping him alive. Did you know there's still a bullet lodged by his heart?"

"What?" The words hit her like physical blows. "A bullet... by his heart?" she repeated, her voice laced with shock. She was haunted by the image of Maverick covered in blood, a chill running down her spine.

"It's none of your concern anymore. Get out and stay out, you manipulative witch!" Howard snapped.

He didn't hesitate to show Aurora the door, but she planted her feet, desperate to wait for Maverick to wake, to ensure he'd survive.

But one woman stood no chance against an island full of people who saw her as the enemy. They forced her out before she could even check his condition.

A bullet near Maverick's heart. The revelation echoed through her mind like a death sentence. She could only pray Maverick would pull through. Even if this second chance proved just a dream, she'd trade

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anything for his survival.

Aurora returned to her hospital looking like she'd walked through a war zone. Chaos greeted her outside her VIP room, her father's fury cutting through the closed door.

"What the hell are you all doing? You can't even protect one person. I swear, if anything happens to Aurora, you'll all pay!" Elias shouted.

Evelyn's placating tones followed. "She's not a child anymore, she'll be fine."

"Fine? She has no idea what dangers are out there. Do you know how worried we've been?" Elias shot back.

"Uncle." Naomi's voice dripped with false concern. "What if she's done something desperate? I mean, even if she was... violated... we'd support her. But now everyone online knows about her upcoming examination, and she vanishes? This only feeds the rumors."

"Who's running away?" Aurora's voice sliced through their speculation.

All eyes turned to find her in the doorway—bloodied, disheveled, but standing tall with steel in her spine.



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