

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life chapter 235

Chapter 235

Cleo froze when she saw Kevin, her surprise quickly turning to tears. “Mr. Edwards, I finally found you.”

Kevin glanced up at her, recognizing Bianca’s assistant, and stubbed out his cigarette, tossing it into the trash. “What’s going on? Is there no one else at the company?”

He had started an entertainment company and, while he was the principal, an executive CEO handled most of the daily responsibilities.

Cleo shook her head, tears streaming uncontrollably. “No matter how many people are there, Ms. Lynch needs you! We couldn’t get through to your phone.”

Kevin’s brows furrowed in irritation. He waved her off impatiently. “If there’s nothing urgent, leave.”

But Cleo couldn’t hold back. “Ms. Lynch’s condition is worsening. Her old illness has flared up again. Yesterday, she had a notice but had to cancel because she couldn’t hear anything. Is she going deaf? How can she act in the future? She couldn’t sing before, and now she can’t even act. She’s—she’s falling apart! How can she endure this?”

Kevin’s expression shifted as he straightened up. “Completely deaf?”

Cleo nodded miserably.

Kevin had already arranged for the best doctors to treat her before. They had assured him her hearing could be restored. She had been recovering well—what went wrong?

After a moment of hesitation, he said decisively, “Take me to her.”

Cleo wasted no time leading him to Bianca.

Bianca was on the ninth floor, while Kevin first stopped on the eleventh. From outside the ward, Kevin could see Bianca sitting on the hospital bed. Her disheveled hair framed a pale, fragile face. She was curled into herself, her vulnerability radiating from the sterile room.

For any man, the sight would have been unbearable.

Cleo hesitated before speaking again. “Mr. Edwards, she didn’t want me to call you. She didn’t want to tell you at all. But I couldn’t just watch her give up on herself. She doesn’t cry or lash out, but she’s not eating, only surviving on nutrient injections. If she tries to eat, she vomits. She can’t go on like this!”

Cleo’s voice cracked as she choked back sobs.

Kevin, his face an unreadable mask, pushed the door open and stepped inside.

Bianca didn’t react. It was clear her hearing had deteriorated significantly.

Kevin approached her.

When Bianca saw him, her body stiffened slightly, her hoarse voice laced with exhaustion. “Didn’t you say you’d leave me alone to rest?”

When he didn’t respond, Bianca lifted her gaze. The moment her eyes met Kevin’s, a mix of shock and desperation flashed across her face. “Why are you here? Who told you to come?”

Her eyes darted to Cleo, still standing at the door. “Was it you? How could you? I told you not to! I don’t want anyone to know I can’t hear! It’ll ruin my career—no one will watch my films anymore! Do you want to destroy me?”

Cleo stammered, “I didn’t—”

But Bianca cut her off, reading her lips. “I don’t want you as my assistant anymore. Get out!”

“Ms. Lynch...” Cleo whimpered, tears flowing again.

Bianca cried too, her anguish filling the room.

Kevin stood there silently, his deep gaze locked on her. His expression remained cold, unreadable.

After a long moment, Bianca collapsed against him, clutching his legs as though she wanted to bury herself there.

When her sobbing finally subsided, Kevin pulled her up. He studied her tear-streaked face with a hard, unyielding expression. “Are you really going to keep destroying yourself like this?”

Bianca stared blankly, her eyes hollow and lifeless.

Kevin’s voice sharpened. “I hired the best doctor for you. They said your hearing could be restored if you followed the recovery plan. So tell me—why is it getting worse?”

Bianca’s empty gaze flickered briefly before she forced a trembling smile. “Kevin, why are you being so cold? Don’t talk like this... I’m scared. I’m already so scared.”

Her hands shook uncontrollably as she reached for him.

Kevin stepped back, his voice cutting like a blade. “You’re the one doing this to yourself. If you truly cared about your career, you wouldn’t keep sabotaging your recovery. Do you think this industry is forgiving? People work their entire lives to reach where you are. And here you are, throwing it all away. If you don’t value what you’ve achieved, I’ll find someone who does.”

His words were merciless, each one landing like a blow.

Bianca froze, stunned. Kevin turned on his heel, heading for the door.

As he moved to leave, Bianca’s panic erupted. She rushed after him, throwing her arms around him from behind. “Kevin, please don’t go!”

Meanwhile, Norah and Bonnie were making their way down the hall toward the ward.

Bonnie, holding a tissue to her nose, sniffled. “I told you to stay in bed, but you never listen.”

Norah smiled faintly, leaning on Bonnie’s arm. “It’s fine. The doctor said I could move around a little. Besides, I wanted to see you.”

Bonnie sighed. “This rhinitis is driving me crazy. My nose itches if a single hair gets near it. And I love cats! How unfair is that? Ugh, I need to find a doctor who can fix this.”

Norah chuckled. “It’s not so bad. A little medicine and you’ll be fine.”

As they walked, Bonnie glanced around casually. “Do you think Kevin knows about my rhinitis? Maybe he brought me some medicine.”

They turned a corner and spotted a ward with the door wide open.

What they saw froze them in place.

Inside, a woman clung tightly to a man’s back. The figures were unmistakable.

It was Bianca—and the man she held was Kevin.

Norah stopped in her tracks, her heart sinking like a stone. The spark of hope she’d carried for Kevin was extinguished in an instant.

Bonnie followed Norah’s gaze, her expression hardening.

Her anger surged. “That woman again! She’s doing this on purpose!”

Without waiting, Bonnie stormed into the ward.

“Aunt Bonnie...” Norah’s voice trailed off, but it was too late.

Bianca turned her head and froze when she saw Bonnie, her face instantly drained of color. “Aunt Bonnie...” she murmured weakly.

Bonnie strode forward and slapped Bianca across the face. “How dare you? Seducing a married man? Didn’t your mother ever teach you shame?”

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Chapter 236

Bianca tilted her head and fell off the hospital bed with a sickening thud, the sound of her body hitting the floor reverberating through the room. The impact was harsh, leaving her sprawled helplessly on the ground.

Kevin, who had just been about to push Bianca away, froze when he saw Bonnie strike her. His expression darkened as he addressed her sternly.

“Aunt Bonnie, what are you doing here?”

Cleo hurried over to help Bianca, her face pale with worry.

“What am I doing?” Bonnie sneered, her tone ice-cold. “I’m dealing with this homewrecker. Can’t you see?”

Bianca, tears streaming uncontrollably, remained limp on the floor, her spirit seemingly shattered.

Kevin frowned deeply, pulling Bianca up and steadying her. “She’s sick,” he said tersely. “I came to check on her.”

“Sick?” Bonnie scoffed, crossing her arms. “She’s not sick—she’s *pretending*. This is all part of her act to win your pity. And you’re falling for it, just like she wants!”

Kevin’s jaw tightened. “She’s my employee. Whether she’s pretending or not, I have a responsibility to check on her.”

Bonnie glared at Bianca, her irritation barely contained. “Your employee? Really? Then why is it every time you’re around, she just happens to have some ‘tragic’ illness? She’s a master manipulator, Kevin. She’s been playing you like a fiddle from the start.”

Cleo, kneeling beside Bianca, finally snapped. “How can you treat Ms. Lynch this way?” she cried, her voice trembling with emotion. “She’s already been through so much—losing her voice, now her hearing—and yet everyone around her keeps tearing her down! Don’t you think she’s suffered enough?”

Bonnie rolled her eyes, her disdain palpable. “Suffered?” she shot back. “She’s climbed to the top of the entertainment industry, living a life of luxury, all thanks to Kevin’s help. If anyone deserves pity, it’s my daughter-in-law!”

Cleo wiped Bianca’s tear-streaked face, her voice rising with indignation. “Ms. Lynch hasn’t done anything wrong. She’s innocent, yet you all keep punishing her like she’s some kind of criminal!”

Bonnie stepped closer, her expression hardening. "Innocent? That's rich. I'm going to put an end to this nonsense right now." She grabbed Bianca by the arm, yanking her to her feet.

"Let's see this so-called illness of yours," Bonnie said, her voice dripping with sarcasm. "Are you really deaf, or is this just another performance?"

Bianca's eyes widened in terror as she pleaded, "Please, Aunt Bonnie... don't hurt me. I've done nothing wrong!" She clutched her head protectively, her whole body trembling.

Bonnie wasn't swayed. "Can't hear, huh? Convenient. Let's see if that's true."

Cleo rushed to shield Bianca, her voice shaking with desperation. "Leave her alone! She can't handle this right now. You're going to push her over the edge!"

Kevin grabbed Bonnie's arm, his voice sharp. "Enough, Aunt Bonnie! Let her go."

Bonnie jerked her arm free, glaring at Kevin. "I won't let this go. Not until everyone sees her for the fraud she is."

Before anyone could intervene further, Bianca suddenly broke free. Her face was a mix of anguish and desperation as she screamed, "You all want me gone? Fine! I'll end it right now!"

With a burst of frenzied energy, Bianca darted past them and slammed her head against the wall. The sickening crack of her skull echoed through the room as she collapsed to the floor, blood trickling down her forehead.

The room fell into stunned silence.

"Ms. Lynch!" Cleo's scream broke through the paralysis. "You monsters! You're killing her!"

Kevin didn't hesitate. He rushed to Bianca's side, scooping her up in his arms. "Call the doctor! Now!" he barked.

Cleo bolted out of the room, tears streaming down her face. Within moments, a team of doctors arrived, whisking Bianca into the emergency room.

The chaos subsided into a tense silence as everyone waited outside the operating room.

Cleo sobbed uncontrollably, her hands trembling as she paced the hallway. Kevin stood off to the side, his face a cold mask of fury as he barked orders into his phone.

Bonnie, now calm but visibly shaken, stared blankly at the emergency room doors. She hadn't expected Bianca to go to such extremes.

"She's more ruthless than I thought," Bonnie muttered under her breath.

Norah, still frozen in shock, whispered weakly, "Aunt Bonnie..."

Bonnie turned to her niece, softening her tone. "I'm sorry, Norah. I didn't mean to scare you."

Norah's voice quivered. "Aunt, I..."

"You're pregnant, sweetheart," Bonnie interrupted gently. "You shouldn't be around all this chaos. Go lie down and rest. I'll take care of everything."

"But Aunt Bonnie—"

"No arguments," Bonnie insisted, her voice firm but kind. "You and the baby come first."

Norah hesitated but ultimately nodded, letting Bonnie guide her away.

Once Norah was out of earshot, Bonnie turned her attention back to Kevin, who was pacing the hallway. She approached him cautiously.

"Kevin," she said quietly, "I know you're angry. But you need to understand—this woman has manipulated everyone around her. Don't let her drag you down with her."

Kevin didn't respond, his eyes fixed on the emergency room doors.

Bonnie sighed, her expression a mix of regret and resolve. "Just be careful, Kevin. Women like her always have an agenda."

She turned and walked away, leaving Kevin alone with his thoughts.

As the tension in the hallway thickened, Kevin's phone buzzed in his hand. Without looking, he silenced it. His focus was on Bianca—and the consequences of everything that had just unfolded.

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Chapter 237

Bonnie approached the group just as Kevin ended his phone call. She caught the tail end of his conversation: “Block the news. Don’t let anyone find out about Bianca’s condition—it wouldn’t look good.”

Kevin brushed past Norah without so much as a glance, preoccupied with his concerns for Bianca. The moment stung. Norah’s chest tightened as she stood there, feeling invisible to him. She had always convinced herself not to dwell on such things, but seeing Kevin’s clear devotion to Bianca planted a seed of unease deep in her heart.

She sighed, choosing not to trouble Kevin further. Instead, she made her way to the doctor’s office. If Kevin was too busy to answer her questions, she would get the information herself.

After a brief conversation with the doctor, Norah learned the truth about Bianca’s condition: she was completely deaf in both ears. The doctor explained that Bianca’s hearing could potentially recover with the help of top specialists Kevin had hired. However, if the treatment failed, she might have to wear hearing aids for the rest of her life.

Norah furrowed her brow. She recalled hearing rumors about Bianca’s health issues—whispers about how her career had been derailed by both physical and emotional setbacks. But this new information troubled her. If Bianca’s condition wasn’t congenital, how had it worsened so suddenly? Could it really be as simple as a brain or ear injury? Or was there more to the story?

Something didn’t add up, but Norah decided not to linger. She thanked the doctor and returned to her hospital room, lost in thought.

Back in her ward, Norah tried to distract herself by scrolling through news articles about Bianca, but there was no mention of her hospitalization or hearing issues. It struck her as odd—how could such significant news be completely absent from the media? It was as if someone had deliberately erased all traces of it.

Her thoughts were interrupted when the door opened abruptly. Steven stood there, out of breath, his face a mix of concern and relief.

“Norah,” he gasped, “are you okay? I heard from Lincoln that you were in the hospital, and I came right over.”

“Steven?” Norah blinked, surprised. “Why are you here? I didn’t tell you I was in the hospital.”

Steven smiled sheepishly. “Lincoln told me. You scared me. I just wanted to make sure you and the baby are okay.”

Norah felt a twinge of guilt. Steven had always been there for her, but she didn’t want him to worry unnecessarily. “I’m fine,” she assured him. “The baby’s fine too—just a little scare. The doctor said I need to rest more, that’s all.”

Steven visibly relaxed and wiped the sweat from his brow. “Thank goodness. I came straight here when I heard—I didn’t even have time to change.”

Norah chuckled lightly. “Well, sit down, at least. I’ll get you some water.”

“No, no, I’ll do it myself,” Steven said, grabbing a cup and filling it at the sink. “You need to take it easy.”

Norah watched as he settled into the chair beside her. His calm, steady presence brought her a sense of peace she hadn’t felt in a long time. But Steven’s next question caught her off guard.

“The baby,” he asked gently, “is it Kevin’s?”

Norah froze, unsure of how to respond. She had been keeping the baby’s paternity a secret, even from Steven. She feared that revealing the truth would only complicate things further.

Steven seemed to sense her hesitation. “It’s okay,” he said softly. “You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to. But I can tell you’re not happy, Norah. You’ve never been happy with Kevin. If you want to leave him, I’ll support you.”

His words touched a nerve. Tears welled up in Norah’s eyes as she confessed, “I’ve thought about leaving him so many times. But it’s not that simple, Steven. Divorce is messy, and I don’t know if I have the strength to go through with it. Sometimes I think about staying, just to avoid the pain of starting over.”

Steven reached out and took her hand. "You deserve to be happy, Norah. And you don't have to go through this alone. I'll help you."

"Help me how?" Norah asked, her voice trembling.

Steven smiled, his expression full of quiet determination. "Do you trust me?"

Norah nodded. Despite everything, Steven had always been her rock.

Steven pulled out his phone and made a call. His tone was calm but firm as he spoke into the receiver: "Weren't you looking for answers about the baby's father? Well, I'm telling you now—the baby in Norah's belly is mine."

Norah stared at Steven in stunned silence. She had never expected him to say such a thing.

"Steven, why would you do that?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

He looked at her with unwavering confidence. "Because I want to protect you. If this is the only way to keep you safe from Kevin and the people around him, then so be it."

Norah's heart ached at his selflessness. For the first time in a long while, she felt a glimmer of hope. Maybe, just maybe, there was a way out of the tangled mess her life had become.

Chapter 238

Norah's face froze in shock.

Steven calmly hung up the phone, his expression unshaken. He had made this decision long ago, knowing he needed to take a chance. If he didn't, he might never have the opportunity again.

"Steven, what are you doing?" Norah exclaimed, her voice laced with disbelief. "The baby isn't yours! Why would you claim that?"

Steven looked her straight in the eye, his tone firm yet gentle. "I'm sorry, Norah. I made this decision on my own. But I believe this is the only way to put an end to everything."

Her brows furrowed as she stared at him, worry evident in her expression. "But what about you? The baby isn't yours, and yet you're claiming to be the father. That's not fair to you!"

Steven shook his head, smiling faintly. "Fairness? Norah, life isn't always fair. You do what feels right. I don't care what people say about me. If I lived my life worrying about others' opinions, how could I ever be happy? Please, don't concern yourself with me. Besides..." He paused, his voice softening, "...I see it as a privilege."

Norah's heart ached. "No, Steven. I can't drag you into this. You may not care, but I do. I can't let you bear this burden because of me. It's not right."

Steven leaned in slightly, his voice unwavering. "You're not dragging me into anything. I chose this. You don't know how much it means to me to be needed by you, even in this way. It's an honor, Norah, truly."

Her guilt deepened as she listened to him. Steven had always been there for her, offering unconditional support, and she had always tried to keep her distance, knowing his feelings for her. She didn't want to take advantage of his kindness, didn't want him to lose out because of her.

Steven's sincerity and unwavering dedication touched her deeply. He truly cared, not expecting anything in return. Few people in this world loved so selflessly.

"If things were different..." she thought to herself. If she weren't already pregnant, already married, perhaps she could have considered a future with Steven. But as things stood, it felt impossible.

Steven noticed her hesitation and spoke again, his voice steady. "Norah, everyone has different goals in life. Do you know what mine is? I want to see you happy. That's all that matters to me."

Her throat tightened. She wanted to say something, but the words wouldn't come.

"I thought you were happy with Kevin when you married him. That's why I stepped back. But seeing you now, I know you're not. If Kevin can't make you happy, then he doesn't deserve you. And that gives me the courage to stand by your side."

Steven's voice softened, and a faint smile crossed his lips. "You don't know this, but just being with you—talking to you—makes me happy. It's enough for me."

His words struck a chord in her heart.

Norah knew how much Steven cared, how easily he would be overjoyed if she simply said yes to him. But she also knew she couldn't. She couldn't promise him happiness when she wasn't sure she could provide it.

Before she could respond, the door slammed open with a loud *bang*.

Kevin stormed into the room, his face dark with rage.

"Steven!" Kevin's voice was sharp, and he closed the distance between them in an instant, grabbing Steven by the collar. "You've got some nerve!"

Kevin had been waiting for an excuse to lash out at Steven. He was already furious that Steven was always around Norah, acting like some kind of savior. But this—claiming to be the father of Norah's child—was the final straw.

Without warning, Kevin's fist collided with Steven's face.

"Kevin!" Norah yelled, rushing forward. "This is a hospital! Stop it!"

Kevin didn't even glance her way. "I'll hit him if I want to!" he growled.

Steven, despite the punch, was smiling. Blood trickled from the corner of his mouth, but his voice was steady. "Go ahead, Kevin. Hit me all you want. But after this, let Norah go."

Kevin's fist tightened, his knuckles cracking. "You're shameless, Steven. You don't even care about your reputation anymore, do you?"

Steven wiped the blood from his mouth, his expression calm. "Reputation? I don't care about that. I'd give up everything—my reputation, my life—if it meant Norah could be happy."

Kevin's fury boiled over. He landed another punch, this one harder, sending Steven staggering back.

"Kevin, stop it!" Norah shouted, stepping between them. "If you're so angry, hit me instead!"

Kevin froze, his eyes narrowing as he stared at her. “You think I won’t?”

“Do it,” Norah said coldly, standing firm. “Hit me if it’ll finally end this. I’d rather take the blow myself than keep living like this—tied to someone who refuses to let me go.”

Her words were like a dagger to Kevin’s heart.

He stared at her, his anger fading into something darker—pain. “You think I’m holding on to you? That I’m the one clinging to this?” he asked, his voice low and bitter.

Norah didn’t flinch. “Yes. You’re holding on to me, Kevin. And it’s suffocating.”

Steven stepped forward, his voice calm despite the tension. “Kevin, wasn’t your marriage to Norah just a transaction? You had your reasons, and she had hers. If that’s all it ever was, then you don’t have the right to act like this now. You’ve had countless women around you, and you never cared how that affected Norah. So why does it matter to you now?”

Kevin’s jaw clenched. He stared at them—at Norah standing protectively in front of Steven, at Steven’s bruised face and calm defiance. And for the first time, he felt like the outsider in the room.

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Chapter 239

Steven knew Norah too well—reading her was as effortless as flipping a page in an open book.

“Great! You two are in perfect sync. Meanwhile, I’m the outsider!” Kevin sneered bitterly, his voice dripping with sarcasm. His gaze burned into Norah. “You just wanted to use this as an excuse to break things off, didn’t you? You and Steven—so close, so intimate!”

Norah’s chest tightened. It was the moment she realized the truth: her relationship with Kevin had completely shattered.

Her heart ached, but a part of her knew this was inevitable. Kevin's lingering attachment to Bianca had always been a wall between them—one she could never break down. Even if he'd married her, she would never erase the shadow of Bianca from his mind.

Kevin would never tolerate imperfections in others, but he'd never address his own flaws.

"Think whatever you want," Norah said quietly, her voice heavy with resignation. "I've said everything I needed to say."

"Save your breath," Kevin snapped.

Without another word, Kevin reached into his suit and pulled out their marriage certificates.

Norah's heart sank.

Holding the red booklets high, Kevin tore them apart in front of her and Steven. He ripped the pages with precision, his actions deliberate and cold.

"You don't want this marriage? Fine—I don't want it either!" His voice cut through the room like a blade.

Norah stared at the torn halves of their wedding photo fluttering to the floor. Her face in the picture looked joyful, glowing with the naive excitement of a bride in love.

Kevin's face, on the other hand, was devoid of emotion. He had looked as indifferent then as he did now.

Her heart crumbled.

The shredded pieces of their marriage certificate scattered across the floor like confetti. Kevin turned and, without so much as a glance back, stormed out of the ward.

Norah stood frozen, staring at the fragments on the ground. Slowly, she sank to her knees, picking up each torn piece one by one. Her fingers trembled as they touched the paper, and tears she hadn't even realized were falling blurred her vision.

Steven crouched beside her, his voice soft but filled with concern. "Norah, you're hurting. You don't have to do this."

She glanced up at him, her face blank but her eyes brimming with sorrow. “What else is there to do?”

“You’re crying,” Steven said gently, his heart breaking for her.

“I’m not crying,” she replied quickly, swiping at her cheeks as if to erase the evidence. “Maybe my eyes are just irritated.”

Steven held her gaze, his voice firm but kind. “Norah, you don’t have to hide how you feel. I can see it—you care about him. You love Kevin.”

Her composure cracked. Tears spilled freely down her face as she choked out, “Why do you know that? How could you know?”

“Because I’ve been watching you,” Steven said simply. “You might try to hide it, but I see everything, Norah.”

Her sobs deepened, her hands covering her face as she broke down. “It’s so embarrassing,” she admitted through her tears. “Why do I like someone who only makes me miserable? I shouldn’t love him!”

Steven’s chest ached as he watched her unravel. He reached out and pulled her into his arms, holding her as she cried. “It’s not wrong to love someone,” he said softly, his voice thick with emotion. “But it’s okay to let go when it hurts too much.”

Norah shook her head against his chest, her voice muffled. “I was so stupid. I thought I was special to him, but I was just another passerby in his life. I’ve been wrong from the start.”

Her words were filled with the weight of self-realization, each one cutting deeper than the last.

Steven’s jaw tightened as he struggled to hold back his own tears. “You’re not wrong, Norah. You’re human. And he’s a fool for not seeing how incredible you are.”

She pulled back slightly, her tear-streaked face looking up at him. “I just wanted him to notice me,” she whispered. “But he never did. Not once.”

Steven’s heart shattered. He’d loved her quietly for so long, and yet, here she was—broken over someone who had never truly seen her.

“It’s okay,” he said softly, wiping a tear from her cheek. “Time will heal this. You’ll forget him, and one day, you’ll find someone who deserves you.”

Norah didn’t respond. She simply stared at the shredded paper in her hand, clutching it like it was the only tangible thing left of her failed marriage.

Eventually, her tears slowed, and her breathing steadied. She sat in silence, staring at the fragments of her past.

Steven, seeing her exhaustion, made a quiet decision. He stepped out and called Gloria, knowing Norah needed someone who could lift her spirits in a way he couldn’t.

When Gloria arrived, she immediately took charge. “Norah,” she said gently but firmly, “crying is good. It helps. But now it’s time to think about the future.”

“I’m fine,” Norah said, though her voice betrayed her exhaustion. “It’s just... crying helps me feel less heavy inside. That’s all.”

Gloria shot Steven a look, then turned back to Norah. “You know, the best way to move on is to focus on what’s next. Steven’s here, and he’s been waiting for you all this time. Don’t you think it’s time to give him a chance?”

Norah shook her head weakly. “I can’t. I’m pregnant. It wouldn’t be fair to him. I can’t drag him into my mess.”

Gloria crossed her arms. “Do you really think Steven hasn’t thought this through? He’s loved you for years, Norah. That’s not just a crush—that’s commitment.”

Steven stepped back into the room, his expression unreadable. “Gloria,” he said quietly, “it’s okay. Let’s not push her. She needs time.”

But Norah wasn’t so sure time would be enough. She looked at Steven, her heart aching anew. How could someone like him love her when she felt so unworthy?

Still, his presence gave her a sliver of hope—a faint promise that maybe, just maybe, she could rebuild her life.

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Chapter 240

Norah believed in never imposing on others. While she couldn't always live up to that ideal, she tried her best to do so whenever possible.

Gloria, however, had a different take. "Why do you assume you're holding him back? You're not Steven—how can you decide for him?" Gloria asked, her voice firm but kind. "Come on, this is the modern age. Emotional freedom, marriage freedom—stop chaining yourself with unnecessary guilt. Having a child doesn't mean you're destined to live with someone forever. If he's fine with it, why aren't you? You overthink everything, Norah. Sometimes, you just have to let people take their own risks—after all, blessings often come disguised as losses."

Norah looked at her friend thoughtfully. Gloria's outlook on relationships was vastly different from her own. Gloria lived boldly and unapologetically, moving on without regret or debt when things ended.

Norah, however, was more restrained.

"I don't love Steven enough," Norah admitted quietly.

Gloria wasn't fazed. "And how do you know that? You haven't even given yourself the chance. Love can grow, you know. Sometimes, it just needs time."

"But what if I hurt him?" Norah's voice trembled slightly. "Relationships are serious to me, Gloria. I can't jump into something without being certain. If I'm with Steven because I feel grateful to him today, what's to stop me from leaving him tomorrow for the same reason? I can't give him false hope or a future I can't guarantee."

Gloria sighed, shaking her head in mild frustration. "You're overcomplicating this, Norah. Life isn't about guarantees. Cherish what you have now, not what might or might not happen later. People have peaceful breakups all the time—what matters is that you truly lived and loved while it lasted."

Her words made sense, but Norah remained conflicted. She wasn't the type to live in the moment. She loved deeply and deliberately, always with an eye on the future.

For instance, when she'd fallen for Kevin, she'd imagined a life together—marriage, children, everything. That dream had cost her dearly, and the painful ending had left her wary.

Gloria reached over, taking Norah's hand and placing it gently on her stomach. "Norah, think about it. If Kevin is out of the picture, that opens the door for new possibilities. Even if it's not Steven, someone else could come along. Your child isn't a burden. The right man will love you *and* your child."

Gloria often tried to pull Norah out of her self-imposed prison of guilt and hesitation.

"You carry too much weight on your shoulders, Norah," Gloria said softly. "You can't let go of the past, and you're so afraid of hurting others that you end up hurting yourself."

As Gloria spoke, Norah's gaze shifted to the doorway, where Steven was standing silently, his eyes filled with quiet concern. He hadn't left.

"Did you know," Gloria continued, "Steven has been looking out for you for years? He didn't just happen to meet you at my art exhibition. He came back for you."

Norah turned back to Gloria, startled. "What? Really?"

"Yes," Gloria said firmly. "Back when you were in high school. After your accident, Steven flew back immediately. He was worried sick about you, but he never approached you."

"Why not?" Norah asked, her voice barely above a whisper. "If he came back, why didn't he meet me?"

Gloria sighed, poking Norah's forehead lightly. "Because you were so fixated on Kevin, of course! You never noticed anyone else."

The revelation left Norah stunned. She'd been so blinded by her feelings for Kevin that she hadn't even realized Steven cared for her.

"You know, Norah," Gloria said with a wry smile, "sometimes, I admire how loyal you are. But other times, I can't help but wonder how you manage to be so clueless about the people around you."

Norah felt a pang of guilt. She had spent years yearning for Kevin, oblivious to Steven's quiet devotion.

"Love requires courage, Norah," Gloria added. "Just like the courage you showed with Kevin. You've loved him for so many years, but when did you ever let him know? Steven has that same courage—to care for you, even from the shadows."

Norah was quiet for a long moment. "So he's known all along..."

"Of course," Gloria said, smiling gently. "Steven pays attention to you in ways Kevin never did. Not everyone can love you so selflessly. You should be grateful."

Her words lingered in Norah's mind as Gloria stood up to leave the room.

Outside, Steven was still waiting.

"How's she doing?" he asked as Gloria walked out.

"Better," Gloria replied. "Don't worry, Steven. She's strong. She'll figure it out. She's already come to terms with her broken marriage, but part of her still hoped for a miracle with Kevin. Now, she just needs time to wake up from that dream."

Steven remained silent, but his expression was heavy with sadness.

Gloria gave him a reassuring pat on the shoulder. "I spoke up for you in there," she said, her tone teasing.

She leaned against the corridor railing, looking out the window. "I want Norah to be happy, Steven. And you... you love her so much. You can give her that happiness. I just hope she starts paying attention to the people who truly care about her. Life's too short not to. If the two of you can find your way to each other, it'd be the best outcome."

Steven nodded, his gratitude evident. "Thank you, Gloria."

"Don't thank me," she replied with a grin. "Just don't mess it up."

When Steven returned to the ward, he felt more composed. Gloria had said what he couldn't, and he was grateful for her support.

Norah was lying down, her hands resting on her stomach. She wasn't asleep, just lost in thought.

"Feeling better?" Steven asked gently.

"Much better," Norah replied, her voice calm.

"That's good." Steven sat down beside her.

“Aren’t you busy?” Norah asked. “You’ve been here for so long.”

Steven’s eyes softened. “You’re more important to me than anything else.”

Norah averted her gaze, his words making her heart flutter in an unfamiliar way. After a moment, she asked, “Why are you telling me this now? Gloria said you’ve cared about me since high school. Why didn’t you tell me before?”

Steven smiled faintly. “I didn’t have the courage back then. How could I, when your eyes were always on someone else?”

Norah lowered her head, feeling a pang of guilt.

“Don’t ever watch me from a distance again,” she said softly, meeting his gaze.

Steven looked up, surprised.

Norah managed a small smile. “There’s no need to hide anymore. If there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s this: do what makes you happy. Life is too short for anything less.”
