

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life chapter 281

Chapter 281

The middle-aged man scoffed in disdain and walked away.

Karina, trembling, collapsed onto the ground as her tension melted into exhaustion. She wiped the blood from the corner of her mouth, her swollen face a far cry from her usual composure. Panic flickered in her eyes—an emotion she rarely allowed herself to feel.

Fear was etched into her being.

Living in the shadows of the organization left no room for escape. Defection wasn't an option—only death awaited those who dared to leave.

Her thoughts drifted to Jace. His recent actions had begun to cross dangerous lines, defying the very system that bound them.

What would happen if the boss found out?

A wave of dread washed over her. No matter what, she had to complete her mission—not just to save herself but to shield Jace as well.

Her time was running out. Only a week remained—a ticking clock not just for her but for Jace, too.

Karina rose to her feet, carefully applied foundation to conceal the red marks on her face, and adjusted her hair. With her appearance restored, she left, wearing a mask of confidence.

At the riverbank, Jace stood waiting.

"The location has been confirmed," Karina said, her voice steady.

Jace turned to face her, his hands buried in his pockets. "What did you just say?"

Karina avoided his gaze, brushing a strand of hair from her face. “I can’t protect you forever. Anyone targeted by the organization has only one fate—death.”

“Who ordered the hit on Norah?” Jace asked, his tone sharper now.

Karina hesitated before replying, “The order came from Archer. This isn’t a joke, Jace. It’s the boss’s command.”

Suspicion flickered across Jace’s face as her words sunk in.

“Why haven’t you cut ties with them?” Jace finally asked.

Karina’s expression softened—a rare glimpse of vulnerability. “We’re in this together. If you go down, what happens to me?” she murmured, stepping closer.

Her voice wavered, her tone unusually tender. “What should I do without you? There’s no one left in this world for me. Without you, I’d be completely alone.”

Karina wrapped her arms around Jace’s waist, resting her head against his chest. “You’re all I have.”

Jace stood motionless, neither returning the embrace nor pushing her away. His gaze fixed on the horizon. “Thank you,” he said quietly.

Karina tightened her grip on his sleeve, her voice resolute. “The boss is coming back soon. You need to understand—this kind of defiance won’t be tolerated again. They won’t let either of us go if you keep this up.”

“Do they have a deadline for the mission?” Jace asked, his tone unreadable.

“A week,” Karina replied.

Jace’s lips curled into a faint, bitter smile. “Got it.”

Karina interpreted his calm demeanor as agreement, her nerves easing.

As long as Jace played along, they had a chance of surviving. After all, life in the shadows left no room for idealism. Living was all that mattered, no matter the cost.

Gobi Desert – Military Base

A dusty military vehicle rolled into the base, its arrival prompting a soldier to open the door.

Kevin stepped out, and a man wearing a colonel's insignia approached him with a warm smile.

"Kevin! It's been ages. Look at you—you've grown up so much!" the colonel exclaimed, shaking his hand firmly.

"Colonel Masse," Kevin replied with a respectful nod. "You haven't changed much."

Kolton Masse chuckled. "You're too kind. I'm pushing fifty, and these gray hairs don't lie."

Kevin smirked. "The military lifestyle suits you, sir."

The two men reminisced, their bond evident. Kolton had mentored Kevin years ago, guiding him through countless challenges. Despite their age gap, their camaraderie remained strong.

After some time, Kevin's tone turned serious. "Colonel, I need your help with something."

Kolton straightened. "Of course. But before we dive in—have you given any thought to rejoining the military?"

Kevin shook his head. "Not at the moment."

Kolton sighed but didn't press further. "What's the issue?"

"I need you to help me track someone down," Kevin explained, handing Kolton a name: *Anthony*.

Kolton immediately set his team into action. Hours later, he handed Kevin a list of individuals named Anthony from the capital.

Kevin scanned the names but found nothing conclusive. Most didn't match the age or background he was seeking. Frustration gnawed at him.

"Why are you looking for this person?" Kolton asked curiously.

Kevin's answer was vague. "It's personal."

Kolton didn't pry, but his expression darkened as he changed the subject. "I need to tell you something important. That man... he's being released."

Kevin froze, his grip tightening on the paper in his hand.

"I thought he was sentenced to death," Kevin said, his voice laced with disbelief.

Kolton's jaw tightened. "He appealed. Every key witness against him either died or disappeared. The case fell apart, and he walked away unscathed."

Kevin's eyes narrowed, his fury barely contained. "When is this happening?"

"Next month," Kolton said gravely. "The man's crimes—countless women and children—remain unanswered. I need you back, Kevin. Only you can help put him away for good and uncover the real mastermind behind it all."

Kevin said nothing, his silence heavy with thought.

Kolton pressed on. "You know as well as I do—justice won't be served without you."

As night fell, Kevin stepped away to make a phone call.

Back in her apartment, Norah triple-checked her locks, yet she couldn't shake the unease crawling under her skin.

Sleep eluded her until her phone rang, breaking the stillness. She glanced at the caller ID, her pulse quickening when she saw Kevin's name on the screen.

With a deep breath, she picked up.

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"Hey." Kevin sat still, his gaze softening when he heard Norah's voice. Speaking hoarsely into the phone, he said, "I miss you."

For a moment, Norah clutched her phone tightly, unable to respond.

She had almost been kidnapped earlier today. The fear still clung to her, and the thought of a stranger staying next door left her uneasy. She wasn't sure how safe she was here, but talking to Kevin was a welcome distraction.

Unable to hold back, she asked, “Where are you?”

Kevin glanced outside, where the sound of shouted commands echoed loudly. He got up and closed the window tightly before replying, “I’m out of town.”

“You’re out of town?” Norah echoed, recalling the day they had parted. Kevin had been busy rushing off to something important, but she hadn’t realized he’d gone out of town.

“Yeah, something came up,” he replied vaguely.

Kevin didn’t elaborate—he didn’t want to overthink things or make her worry.

He shifted the focus back to her. “How are you doing?”

Kevin had always cared about Norah, especially knowing she often skipped meals or neglected herself.

“I’m fine,” Norah replied after a pause, though her voice betrayed a hint of unease.

Kevin wished she would say more, but even hearing her voice was enough to soothe him.

Glancing at the time, he asked, “Are you going to sleep soon?”

“Yes,” Norah answered softly.

Not wanting to disturb her further, Kevin said, “Alright then, rest well. I’ll let you go.”

“When are you coming back?” Norah asked before he could hang up.

A small smile tugged at the corners of Kevin’s lips. “The day after tomorrow.”

Norah continued, “What about the interview? I’ll handle it when you’re back.”

She was referring to work.

Kevin couldn’t help but think she might also want him to return sooner, but her tone was all business as usual. That was just like her—practical and reserved.

Even so, Kevin couldn’t bring himself to be upset. In a low voice, he reassured her, “Don’t worry. I’ll make sure you finish everything on time.”

Norah held the phone tightly, her anxiety lingering. For some reason, she felt particularly vulnerable tonight. But in this fleeting moment, Kevin’s voice offered her a fragile sense of security.

When she stayed silent, Kevin noticed something was off. “Is there something you’re not telling me?” he asked.

Norah hesitated before answering, “No, I’m just tired. I’ll hang up now.”

She didn’t tell him about the near-kidnapping. It wasn’t something she wanted to share, and she didn’t want to lean on him too much.

Sometimes, she reminded herself, it was better to let go.

After the call ended, Kevin stared at his phone for a moment, sensing something wasn’t right. Then he set it aside, deep in thought.

Norah, meanwhile, turned on every light in her room. The dark felt suffocating tonight, and she couldn’t stand it.

She had been better before—at worst, she only disliked cramped spaces. But tonight was different. She was still shaken from the day’s events and couldn’t bear the thought of a dark room.

She lay in bed, tossing and turning for what felt like hours. Just as she began to drift off, the doorbell rang, startling her.

Her heart raced as the bell rang twice, each chime tightening the knot of fear in her chest.

She opened her bedroom door cautiously and stared toward the front door. If someone was there, they’d knock next.

At that moment, her phone buzzed.

She grabbed it quickly and saw Gloria’s name flashing on the screen. Relieved, she answered.

“What are you doing? Why aren’t you opening the door?” Gloria asked, her voice tinged with concern.

Realizing it was her friend, Norah felt her tension melt away. She hurried to open the door.

Gloria stood on the threshold, her arms crossed as she studied Norah’s pale face with a puzzled expression. “What’s going on, Norah? You’re home—I thought you weren’t.”

Gloria came in carrying an armful of items.

Seeing her, Norah looked as if she had just spotted a savior. She immediately hugged Gloria, saying, “I’m so glad you’re here. I wouldn’t have been able to sleep tonight otherwise.”

Gloria frowned. “What’s going on? No wonder Kevin called and asked me to check on you. Turns out, something really did happen.”

For Kevin to ask her to come over, it clearly wasn’t a trivial matter. Worried, she had come right away.

“He called you?” Norah asked, a little surprised.

Gloria nodded. “Kevin couldn’t come himself, so he asked me to stay with you.” She touched Norah’s face gently. “Look at you—your face is pale. You’ve been scared, haven’t you?”

Norah took Gloria’s hand, her voice trembling slightly as she said, “I don’t know who I’ve offended, but I was almost kidnapped today.”

“What?” Gloria’s face turned pale with shock. “Why didn’t you tell Kevin? If he knew, he’d handle it for you and track down whoever’s responsible. And why would someone want to kidnap you? Think about it—who might you have upset?”

Norah thought back. Ever since marrying Kevin, she’d made quite a few enemies, both in her personal and professional life. “There are too many possibilities,” she admitted. “I’d have to go through them one by one.”

“How did you manage to escape?” Gloria asked, her voice still laced with concern.

Norah’s mind immediately went to Jace. She couldn’t figure out whether he was trustworthy or not. “Do you remember Jace?”

“Of course, I do,” Gloria replied.

Norah hesitated for a moment before saying, “He saved me.”

Gloria’s eyes widened, then her expression softened into a smile. “I knew it. He has a soft spot for you. He cares about you and stepped up when it mattered most.”

Norah frowned. “But don’t you think it’s strange? How could it be such a coincidence that he happened to be staying next door to me and just happened to save me?”

She found the timing too suspicious to be mere chance.

Gloria considered her point but said, “Even if it’s odd, he didn’t harm you.”

Norah shook her head. “What if it’s all part of a bigger plan to gain my trust?”

“Why would he go to such lengths to deceive you?” Gloria asked, perplexed.

“I don’t know,” Norah admitted, her voice heavy with uncertainty. “I just feel like it’s not that simple.”

She couldn’t fully let her guard down when it came to Jace.

Noticing Norah spiraling into her thoughts, Gloria quickly redirected her. “You need to eat something. You’re pregnant, remember? Small, frequent meals are important to keep you and the baby healthy. Your belly is already starting to show.”

Norah's gaze dropped to her stomach. She gently ran her hand over it. "You're right. I can't let anything happen to the baby."

Her child's safety was her biggest concern. She wasn't just responsible for herself anymore—she had to protect the little life growing inside her.

"I'll stay with you for the next few days," Gloria said firmly. She couldn't bear to leave Norah alone, especially knowing how vulnerable pregnant women could be.

"Won't this affect your work?" Norah asked hesitantly.

"Work can wait," Gloria replied without hesitation. "I'm more worried about you. I won't feel at ease until Kevin gets back."

Norah pursed her lips. "Why did you have to bring him up?"

"Because I'm right," Gloria said bluntly. "If he'd been here, this kidnapping attempt wouldn't have happened. Whoever's behind it waited for the perfect moment."

Norah couldn't argue with that. Gloria had a point.

Things definitely weren't as simple as they seemed.

Meanwhile, Siena stood outside another door, holding two thermos flasks. Her eyes kept darting inside, scanning for any movement.

When Bianca's assistant, Cleo, finally stepped out, Siena's face lit up with a smile. "Cleo! How's Bianca doing? The last time she left my place without saying a word, I was so worried. I've been calling her for days, but she hasn't answered. Is she alright?"

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Cleo's tone was calm as she addressed Siena. "Ms. Lynch is doing well. She's been busy with work lately and hasn't had time to visit."

Siena forced a smile, though her heart felt heavy. "That's good, I suppose. It's better to have more work. She's a big star now, and her future is bound to be bright. Having a packed schedule just proves she's on the right track. I'm truly happy for her."

"Aunt Edwards, I need to get back to work," Cleo said politely.

"Of course," Siena replied quickly, looking down at the thermos flask in her hands. She extended it to Cleo. "This is chicken soup I made myself. Bianca must be so busy that she barely has time to eat. Please give this to her. She can have it when she has a moment."

Cleo took the flask and nodded. "I'll make sure she gets it."

Siena watched as Cleo walked back inside. She stood at the door, waiting, her eyes scanning for a glimpse of Bianca. But there was no sign of her. After a long time of waiting in vain, Siena finally got into her car and left.

Inside the building, Cleo entered the break room where Bianca sat, looking blankly at the wall.

"Ms. Lynch, Aunt Edwards has left. She brought this for you," Cleo said, placing the thermos flask on the table.

Bianca glanced at it, her expression cold and detached. "Got it."

"Would you like to drink it now?" Cleo asked hesitantly.

"No," Bianca replied flatly. There wasn't even the slightest flicker of emotion in her eyes. Siena's effort didn't move her at all.

Without a second thought, Bianca picked up the thermos flask and threw it straight into the trash can.

Cleo blinked in surprise. While she knew Bianca wasn't fond of Siena, she hadn't expected such a reaction.

"I just don't want it," Bianca said, her tone devoid of any explanation.

Cleo nodded and said no more. Perhaps Bianca really didn't like chicken soup.

Siena didn't go home after leaving Bianca's place. Instead, she drove to the prison to visit someone.

After a brief wait, she was led to the visitation area. Through the glass, she saw a man. He was around her age, his face plain and worn with time. Wrinkles gathered at the corners of his eyes, and his hands and feet were shackled. His movements were slow and heavy, but his eyes were sharp and unsettling, capable of making anyone uncomfortable under his gaze.

When he noticed Siena, a smirk tugged at the corners of his mouth.

Picking up the phone on her side, Siena hesitated before speaking. "It's been a long time. I didn't expect to see you again, let alone find you in prison."

The man chuckled, his voice low and unbothered. "I didn't think I'd end up here either. But it doesn't matter—I'll be out soon."

Siena's face darkened. Her tone grew sharp. "You're shameless enough to say that? I trusted you to take care of Bianca, but you landed yourself in prison. She hasn't had an easy life because of you!"

The man's smile turned cold. "You think I didn't take care of her? If it weren't for me, she wouldn't even be alive today."

Siena's voice shook with anger. "I gave her to you. I even gave you money. You promised me you'd raise her, that you'd be her father and protect her! She's a star now, but if people find out she has a father who's fresh out of prison, how do you think that will affect her career? Do you ever think about her future?"

Her hands trembled as she gripped the phone.

The man's calm demeanor didn't waver. "You're lecturing me? Why didn't *you* raise her yourself? To please your rich husband, you abandoned your own daughter. And now you come here to blame me? She's not even my biological child. If she were, maybe I'd care more."

"You bastard!" Siena hissed, her eyes red with rage. "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have been able to marry into the Edwards family. Calvin, you owe me for the rest of your life!"

Calvin Donnelly's smirk returned. "Don't worry. I haven't forgotten what I owe you."

He paused, his tone turning ominous. "When I get out, it'll be good for both you and our daughter."

Siena's expression hardened. "When you're released, stay out of my life and Bianca's. Don't ruin her career. That's the best thing you can do for her!"

She stood abruptly, hanging up the phone without another word. Her face was a storm of anger and regret as she walked out of the room.

Behind the glass, Calvin watched her leave, the sneer on his lips growing darker.

The next morning, Gloria helped Norah prepare for her hospital check-up.

"Do you have everything?" Gloria asked.

"Yes," Norah replied, checking her bag. She had swapped her usual high heels and formal outfits for loose sweaters, skirts, and flat shoes, embracing a more comfortable style.

Gloria drove them to the hospital, where a long line had already formed in the obstetrics and gynecology department.

It was a busy weekend, and Norah's number was far back in the queue. She'd have to wait until around eleven o'clock for her turn.

As she sat in the waiting area, she watched a pregnant woman walk out with a beaming smile, her hands resting on her large belly. The sight brought a smile to Norah's face. She stroked her own belly, imagining her child growing and thriving.

When her turn finally came, a nurse called out, "Ms. White, it's your turn."

"You go ahead," Gloria said. "I'll wait out here."

Norah nodded and followed the nurse into a quiet examination room.

The doctor, wearing a cap and mask, gestured to the seat in front of her. "Ms. White, please have a seat."

Norah sat down and asked, "When will I have the ultrasound?"

"In a moment," the doctor said, flipping through Norah's medical records. "I see you've had signs of miscarriage before. Is that correct?"

"Yes, just a little," Norah admitted.

The doctor nodded. "Let's do a detailed examination. Please lie down."

Norah complied, lying down on the examination bed.

The doctor pressed her hands gently on Norah's stomach, her expression unreadable.

Norah noticed the doctor's hesitation and frowned. "Is something wrong?"

The doctor withdrew her hands and said calmly, "Nothing. Let's start with a blood draw."

She prepared the needle, but just as she was about to insert it, Norah grabbed her hand.

"You're not a doctor at all!" Norah exclaimed, her voice filled with alarm.

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The doctor's posture stiffened. "Ms. White, what are you implying? Are you questioning my professional abilities?"

Norah gripped the doctor's hand tightly. "Doctors don't do manicures. You've got nails this long and perfume strong enough to knock someone out. How can you possibly be a real doctor?"

The doctor flinched, pulling her hand back quickly, her face betraying a flicker of unease.

Norah seized the moment, bolting toward the door.

“Where do you think you’re going?” The doctor’s voice rang out as she lunged, catching Norah by the hair before she could escape.

The movement was swift and merciless. Norah realized in an instant that this wasn’t just anyone—this was someone trained, someone dangerous. She knew she didn’t stand a chance.

“Help! Someone, help!” she cried out, her voice strained with desperation.

Before she could say more, the doctor wrapped an arm around her neck and jabbed a needle into her.

Norah’s eyes widened as the familiar syringe—the same one used earlier to draw her blood—pierced her skin. Pain shot through her as she clutched her thighs, her vision dimming and her body weakening.

The doctor smirked as Norah’s resistance faded, letting her body slump to the ground.

Standing over her, the doctor’s smug gaze pierced through Norah’s blurry vision. That’s when it clicked—she knew this face. The doctor and the driver were the same person.

The doctor leaned down, her voice cold and mocking. “If only you’d left things alone, you wouldn’t have to suffer like this. You brought this on yourself.”

The drug worked quickly. Norah’s body felt heavier by the second, but she fought to stay awake. She dug her nails deep into her flesh, letting the sharp pain jolt her back to consciousness.

“Stop struggling,” the doctor sneered. “This drug could knock out a bull. You’re not going to beat it.”

She hoisted Norah’s limp body onto a medical cart and covered her with a white sheet. With practiced calm, she pushed the cart toward the door.

The waiting room was still crowded, but no one gave the doctor a second glance. Keeping her head low, she maneuvered the cart into the elevator and descended.

Meanwhile, Gloria was growing restless outside. She checked the time—Norah had been in there far too long.

Her nerves were on edge, memories of Norah’s previous kidnapping fresh in her mind. Unable to wait any longer, she rushed into the consultation room.

“Norah?” Gloria’s voice echoed in the empty room. Her stomach dropped as she scanned the space.

That's when she noticed the real doctor, unconscious and slumped behind a cabinet.

"Doctor! Wake up!" Gloria shook her urgently. "Where's Norah? What happened?"

The doctor groaned, her eyes fluttering open. "Help... someone attacked me!"

It all became clear. Someone had impersonated the doctor and taken Norah. Gloria's heart raced as she pulled out her phone and dialed the police.

In the underground garage...

The fake doctor peeled off her disguise—a mask, a lab coat, and a hat—revealing a cascade of fiery red hair.

It was Karina.

She dragged Norah's semi-conscious body out of the cart and stuffed her into the trunk of a car.

Norah, still clinging to the last shreds of awareness, grabbed at Karina's pants with trembling fingers.

Karina swatted her hand away with a sneer and slammed the trunk shut, plunging Norah into suffocating darkness.

Panic set in as Norah struggled to breathe. The small, confined space felt like it was closing in on her. She gasped for air, her chest tightening. Memories she thought she'd buried came rushing back like a nightmare—shadows, screams, the cries of young girls.

A voice echoed in her mind, soft and reassuring. *"Don't be afraid. I'll get you out of here."*

Then another, cold and detached: *"Have you ever seen the sun? What does it feel like?"*

The faces were blurry, but the voices lingered.

"Julie... I'll show you the sun," one whispered.

Norah's eyes flew open, her breath ragged. She was back in the present, still trapped in the trunk. Tears streamed down her face as she clutched her head, screaming, "No! No—!"

Her cries startled the driver.

"Did you hear that?" Karina asked, alarmed.

The assistant, a lanky man with an unremarkable face, glanced back. "She's awake?"

“Impossible,” Karina scoffed. “I dosed her heavily. There’s no way.”

But the scream was unmistakable.

The car slowed momentarily, but before they could react further, the sound of engines roared from up ahead.

Five military vehicles appeared, blocking their path.

Karina’s expression darkened. “Turn around. Now!”

The assistant floored the gas, spinning the wheel to head in the opposite direction.

“This road’s deserted. It has to be them,” Karina muttered.

“All this for one woman?” the assistant grumbled.

Karina clenched her jaw. “This isn’t just any woman. She’s important to Jace.”

The assistant cast her a nervous glance. “What do we do if they catch us?”

“We don’t let that happen.” Karina pulled a pistol from her belt.

The assistant’s eyes widened. “You’re insane! Those are military vehicles—they’ll tear us apart if we fire!”

“I’m not dying here without a fight.” Karina fired a shot at the pursuing cars, but the bullet barely scratched the armored vehicles.

A volley of shots rang out in response, shattering their car’s rear window.

“One of their tires!” the assistant shouted, struggling to keep the car steady.

But the military vehicles pressed on relentlessly.

Inside one of them, Kevin Edwards watched the chase with steely determination.

“Captain, they’re not stopping,” one of his men said.

Kevin was sitting inside, looking at the car in front of him with a solemn look.

These people used to be Kevin’s comrades-in-arms. And Kevin was their captain.

Chapter 285

Even though Kevin had left the army, his former comrades still called him Captain Edwards.

The moment Kevin's call with Norah was abruptly cut off, he knew something was wrong. Without hesitation, he rushed back overnight, only to confirm his worst fear: someone had kidnapped Norah.

And there was no way he would let them get away with it.

"Keep chasing!" Kevin commanded, his voice firm and focused. "Be careful—there's someone else in that car!"

If he wanted to stop them outright, he could've had his team shoot out all four tires. But Norah was in that vehicle—and she was pregnant. Kevin couldn't take the risk. Instead, he had to rely on speed and strategy to catch up.

On the bridge ahead, Karina's assistant glanced nervously in the rearview mirror. "We're almost there. Once we cross this bridge, we'll be safe."

Karina wasn't convinced. The military vehicles behind them were gaining ground. "It's not going to be that simple," she muttered, her frustration mounting.

Their car was limping on three wheels, and their pace was slowing. It was only a matter of minutes before they'd be overtaken.

"What do we do?" the assistant asked, his voice betraying his panic.

Karina glanced down at the turbulent river below the bridge, her mind racing. If Norah didn't survive, their mission would still be considered a success.

"Stop the car," Karina ordered coldly.

"What?!" The assistant's eyes widened.

"Stop the car!" Karina barked again. "This woman is more trouble than she's worth. We'll throw her over the edge and be done with it."

The car screeched to a halt.

Karina jumped out, opened the trunk, and yanked Norah out with no hesitation.

Curled up in the cramped space, Norah trembled as the sudden burst of sunlight blinded her. She instinctively raised her hands to shield her face, her movements sluggish from the drug's lingering effects.

Karina was startled to see that Norah was still semi-conscious, but she had no time to dwell on it. She dragged Norah to the edge of the bridge.

Dangling above the rushing river, Norah's mind snapped into sharp focus. Her legs flailed in the air, and she clawed desperately at Karina's arm, her nails leaving bloody streaks. "Don't—please don't!"

Karina's expression remained cold. "I'm sorry, but you have to die. If you don't, a lot of people will."

Norah's pale face tilted upward, her voice trembling. "I know who you are... You and Jace... I saw you."

Karina froze. "What?"

Norah's voice grew hoarse as she clung to Karina. "You've been in the dark for so long... Haven't you wanted to see the sun?"

Those words hit Karina like a thunderbolt. Her grip faltered as her mind flashed to memories she'd buried deep—memories of a small, pitch-black room where she, too, had longed for sunlight.

"Who... who are you?" Karina whispered, her voice cracking.

Before Norah could answer, a gunshot shattered the moment.

"Karina!" the assistant shouted. "What are you doing? Throw her over!"

Karina turned, her composure breaking, as military vehicles screeched to a halt nearby. A group of armed men emerged, moving quickly toward them.

"Karina!"

She flinched at the sound of her name and turned to see Archer leaning out of a car on the other side of the bridge, his face dark with fury.

"Let her go!" he bellowed.

Karina hesitated, torn between Archer's orders and the mission. Finally, her face hardened.

"I'm sorry," she whispered to Norah.

She pried Norah's hands off her arm, but instead of letting her fall, she placed Norah's hands on the bridge railing.

"Life and death are a matter of fate," Karina said, her voice low. "This is all I can do for you."

Norah clung to the railing desperately, her legs dangling. She was losing strength fast, and her grip began to slip.

"Norah!"

Kevin's voice boomed across the chaos as he sprinted toward her.

“Captain Edwards, stop! It’s too dangerous!” his men shouted, trying to hold him back.

But Kevin shrugged them off, his focus entirely on Norah. He knew if he didn’t reach her in time, she would fall—and he couldn’t let that happen.

Gunfire erupted around him, but Kevin kept moving, dodging bullets with precision.

Norah, clinging for dear life, heard the shots and panicked. Tears streamed down her face as she pleaded, “Kevin, no! It’s too dangerous! Don’t come closer!”

Kevin ignored her cries. “It’s okay. I’m here. I’ll save you.”

Reaching the railing, he grabbed her wrists and began pulling her up.

Norah sobbed, terrified for his safety. “Please, just leave me! They’ll kill you! I’ll manage—just go!”

Kevin gave her a reassuring smile, even as bullets whizzed past them. “Don’t worry. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

His calm confidence only made her cry harder. She felt like a burden—like she had dragged him into this life-threatening mess.

Finally, Kevin hauled her up and wrapped her in his arms, shielding her from the gunfire. “You’re safe now,” he whispered. “I’ll get you out of here.”

As Norah clung to him, she saw Archer in the distance. His sinister smile widened as he aimed his gun directly at Kevin.

“Finally,” Archer muttered, steadying his aim.

Bang!

A single gunshot rang out.

Norah froze, her breath caught in her throat as her world slowed to a standstill.