

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life chapter 291

Chapter 291

"Okay," Norah agreed, then gently said to Gloria, "Go back to sleep."

Gloria, visibly exhausted, quickly drifted off again.

Norah, however, lay wide awake. Her mind was racing.

When Gloria mentioned worshipping God, Norah couldn't help but think about the emerald-green Buddha beads Jace always carried. They seemed eerily familiar.

In the morning, Gloria shook Norah awake, panic etched across her face. "Norah, wake up! Something's wrong—Kevin is critically ill!"

Norah's eyes snapped open, her heart pounding. "What?"

"It just happened," Gloria explained, her voice trembling. "The hospital called!"

Norah grabbed her phone and checked the call log. It was indeed from the hospital.

Her chest tightened. Could it be true? Could Kevin really not wake up?

Her eyes welled up with tears. The thought of never seeing Kevin alive again was unbearable.

As long as someone was alive, there was always hope.

But if Kevin died... the finality of it—the idea that she'd never see him again—was a pain she couldn't fathom. It felt as though her heart was splitting open.

Norah desperately wanted to break down and cry, but she knew she couldn't afford to lose herself. She had to stay strong for Kevin. With trembling hands, she dressed hurriedly and rushed to the hospital.

Gloria tried to console her on the way, whispering words of comfort, but it was futile.

How could Norah not be upset?

If Kevin died, what would happen to her? To the child growing inside her?

The thought of life without Kevin was too much to bear.

Even if they divorced—even if he didn't love her anymore—it was still better than losing him forever.

Norah kept her tears at bay, but her silence spoke volumes. Her mind was consumed by the thought of Kevin's critical condition.

When she arrived at the hospital, she ran straight to the ICU. Inside, Kevin's comrades-in-arms stood solemnly, their expressions grim. Kevin lay unconscious, pale and frail.

Norah couldn't hold back anymore. Her body trembled as she choked out his name, "Kevin..."

She stumbled to his bedside, her legs giving out beneath her. Kneeling by his side, she grasped his hand, her tears flowing freely.

"How could this happen?" she cried, her voice breaking. "Didn't they say you wouldn't die? If you leave me, what am I supposed to do? What about our baby?!"

She buried her face against the bed, her sobs racking her body.

Then, suddenly, Kevin's fingers twitched.

Norah froze, unsure if it was real or just a cruel trick of her mind.

His fingers moved again.

Her heart raced, but she dismissed it as wishful thinking—until she felt a hand gently rest on her head.

"If I die," Kevin rasped weakly, "you won't have a husband anymore. How could I leave you to be a widow?"

Norah's head shot up, disbelief etched on her tear-streaked face.

Kevin's eyes were open, his lips curved into a faint smile.

She stared at him, stunned. "You... You're awake?"

Wasn't he critically ill? How was he speaking?

Were they lying to her?

Kevin tried to sit up, but Norah pushed him back down, her sadness quickly turning to anger.

"Was this a joke?!" she demanded, her voice trembling. She turned to Levi and Kevin's comrades-in-arms. "Did you all conspire to trick me?"

Levi raised his hands defensively. "Captain Edwards just wanted to see you. He thought this would bring you here quickly..."

"Enough!" Norah cut him off, her emotions boiling over. She glared at Kevin, her voice sharp. "How could you lie to me like this? Do you even care about how I feel?"

Kevin reached for her hand, his voice soft. "I'm sorry. I just missed you so much... I was afraid you wouldn't come if I didn't do something drastic."

Norah yanked her hand away, her anger unabated. "You're unbelievable! If you wanted to die so badly, then just do it!"

With that, she spun on her heels and stormed toward the door.

"Norah!" Kevin called out, trying to follow her. But the effort reopened his wound, and he collapsed back onto the bed, coughing violently.

The sound stopped Norah in her tracks. She turned to see him clutching his side, his face contorted in pain.

Her anger melted into concern. She rushed back to his side. "Are you okay? Did you tear your stitches? Should I call the doctor?"

Despite his pain, Kevin reached out and grabbed her hand. "Don't leave," he whispered. "As long as you stay, I'll be fine."

Norah hesitated, but the desperation in his eyes broke her resolve. She sighed. "Lie down and let the doctor check you. Stop being so reckless."

Kevin obeyed, though he didn't let go of her hand. "You're not leaving, right?"

“You’re injured because of me,” Norah replied, her voice softer now. “If I left, it’d be heartless. I owe you this much.”

A faint smile tugged at Kevin’s lips. “That’s all I need to hear.”

The doctor came in to examine Kevin, reassuring them that he just needed rest and proper care.

After the doctor left, Kevin turned to Norah, his eyes sparkling with mischief. “I’m hungry.”

Levi, sensing the moment, quickly offered, “I’ll grab some food.” He disappeared before Norah could respond, leaving the two of them alone.

Kevin patted the bed beside him. “Come here.”

Norah walked over hesitantly, and Kevin pulled her into his arms. She leaned against his shoulder but immediately worried. “Won’t this hurt your wound?”

“It’s fine,” Kevin said with a grin. “Though, if you kissed me, I think I’d heal even faster.”

“Stop joking around!” Norah scolded, giving him a light shove.

“Ow!” Kevin winced dramatically, breaking into a sweat.

Norah panicked. “Did I hurt you? Did I touch your stitches?”

Kevin chuckled through the pain. “You’re so strong—you might actually put me back in critical condition!”

“Don’t say things like that!” Norah scolded, though her concern was evident. “I’ll be more careful next time.”

Kevin softened, brushing a hand against her cheek. “You look tired. Didn’t sleep well last night?”

“Where’d you get that idea?” she muttered.

“It’s all over your face,” he said gently. “You were too worried about me, weren’t you?”

Norah dropped her gaze, her voice barely a whisper. “Don’t pull a stunt like that again. You scared me to death.”

Kevin's heart swelled. She cared. She really cared.

"Sleep here with me," he said, moving over to make room.

"Two people can't fit on this bed," Norah protested.

"We'll make it work." He patted the space beside him. "Come on, I'll help you sleep."

Despite herself, Norah climbed in beside him.

Kevin wrapped an arm around her, holding her close. "Sleep," he murmured.

Norah lay still, her mind still racing, but his steady breathing began to calm her.

She shifted slightly, unable to get comfortable.

Kevin let out a low groan.

"Are you in pain?" she asked, alarmed.

His voice, hoarse and filled with a mix of humor and helplessness, replied, "A little. But not in the way you think."

Chapter 292

Hearing this, Norah immediately thought something was wrong again. Her concern deepened as she asked, "Uncomfortable? Where exactly?"

Her wide, anxious eyes locked on Kevin.

Looking at her face, Kevin's gaze darkened, and he replied in a low, hoarse voice, "Everywhere. My whole body feels uncomfortable."

Norah hurried to check on him, fearing the worst. It wasn't until she felt his warm body and noticed the faint change in his breathing that the realization hit her.

Her face turned crimson as she quickly pulled away, annoyed. "At a time like this, you're still thinking about that? Can't you control yourself?"

Kevin sighed helplessly. "It's an instinctive reaction. How do you expect me to control it?"

Norah's embarrassment deepened. "You're always thinking about these things!"

Kevin's intense eyes met hers. "If I didn't, there'd be something wrong with me. Being this close to you and not reacting? That would make me a lost cause."

Her cheeks burned as she tried to avoid his piercing stare.

"Just sleep," Kevin finally said, pulling her close into his arms. Despite his obvious discomfort, he suppressed his desires. "It's fine. I'll manage."

Norah, still tense, turned away from him. She lay with her back pressed against him, unsure of what might happen. The thought of being forced flickered through her mind but was quickly dismissed. Throughout their marriage, Kevin had always respected her boundaries; he wouldn't start now.

Still, Kevin's body remained rigid, and she could sense the changes in him. She dared not move, fearing she'd worsen his discomfort.

Eventually, Norah fell asleep. Her pregnancy made her naturally tired, but her recent nightmares had stolen her rest. In Kevin's arms, however, her mind quieted, and no nightmares came.

Kevin watched her peaceful, sleeping face and felt a sense of relief. As long as she was beside him, everything else seemed bearable. A small smile played on his lips as he gently brushed the stray hairs from her face, ensuring she was as comfortable as possible.

Just then, Levi entered the room.

"Captain..." Levi started but quickly quieted when Kevin placed a finger to his lips, signaling him to stay silent.

Seeing Norah asleep, Levi nodded and tiptoed out of the room. Kevin lingered a moment longer, his gaze softening as he looked at Norah. Carefully, he adjusted her pillow and slipped out of bed without waking her.

At the door of the ward, Kevin clutched his chest as he approached Levi. Concerned, Levi said, "Captain Edwards, you should be resting. You're still injured."

Ignoring the comment, Kevin's expression hardened. "Did you manage to track down the group that kidnapped Norah yesterday?"

Levi's face fell. "I'm sorry, Captain. The roads in that area were too complicated. They know the terrain better than we do, and we lost them."

Kevin's jaw tightened. He'd noticed how focused the attackers were during the incident and had his suspicions. "Could they be the same group from before?"

Levi hesitated. "You mean the group from that unresolved case?"

Kevin gave a terse nod. "It's possible."

Levi frowned. "The leader is still in prison. Could they really orchestrate something like this from inside? Or could it be that someone else is targeting Madame?"

Kevin considered this. From what he'd observed, Norah had clearly been the target, and the attempts were becoming more frequent. "It could be a hired hit. Whoever's behind this is determined. This isn't the first attempt, and it won't be the last. We need to figure out who Norah might have crossed."

Levi's brows knitted. "Do you think it's personal?"

Kevin's tone was grim. "Whoever they are, they're willing to kill. We can't rule out the possibility of a personal vendetta."

Their conversation was interrupted when one of the team members approached. "Captain Edwards, the woman from yesterday is here again."

Kevin's gaze darkened. "Bianca?"

The team member nodded. Before Kevin could respond, Bianca appeared at the end of the hallway. She removed her sunglasses, revealing tear-filled eyes. Her face was pale, and her distress was evident.

"Kevin! Are you okay?" Bianca's voice trembled as she rushed toward him. Tears streamed down her face, making her look both pitiful and sincere.

She reached for him, her hands shaking as she tried to inspect him. "Where are you hurt? Let me see your injuries."

Kevin stepped back, blocking her hands. His tone was cold. "You were here yesterday?"

Bianca's expression faltered. She seemed nervous but quickly composed herself. "I was worried about you. I've been panicking ever since you left. When I heard you were injured, I couldn't stay away. I didn't sleep at all last night, Kevin. I was too worried."

Kevin's sharp eyes remained fixed on her. "Did you have anything to do with this?"

Bianca's face went pale. "What? Kevin, how could you even think that? I would never hurt you! I risked my life for you once. How can you accuse me of something like this?"

Her voice broke, and she began sobbing uncontrollably.

Kevin's tone didn't soften. "I'm not talking about me. I'm talking about Norah. Someone's targeting her."

Bianca's tears slowed as she processed his words. "Kevin, I would never hurt Norah. I swear! How can you doubt me like this?"

Kevin's patience wore thin. He didn't want her causing a scene, especially with Norah still resting inside. "Enough. I'll handle it. For your sake and your public image, I suggest you leave before anyone notices you here."

Bianca's eyes filled with hurt, but she bit her lip and nodded. As she turned to leave, she glanced into the ward and saw Norah still asleep on the bed. Her expression shifted, but she said nothing as she walked away.

Chapter What's Going On?

293

Could it be that their relationship had improved?

Bianca thought about breaking them up, but had she inadvertently paved the way for their happiness?

Her fingers clenched tightly as frustration boiled in her chest, threatening to overflow into her eyes.

What Bianca couldn't have, how could she let Norah take?

She had known Kevin first. She had sacrificed so much for him—nearly half her life. Norah had no right to swoop in and reap the benefits.

It wasn't fair.

Kevin's sharp eyes snapped her back to reality. "Bianca, did you hear what I said?"

Bianca blinked, quickly softening her expression and masking the bitterness in her eyes. She forced a calm demeanor and replied, "I understand. I won't let negative press follow me anymore. I've already taken on several new projects. When the time comes, I'll focus on my career and reshape my image."

She had stumbled before, but this time, she was determined to recover.

If Bianca wanted to make a comeback, she had to keep taking on roles. As long as she stayed focused on her career, her hard work would eventually pay off. In today's internet-driven world, it was easy for a persona to gain traction and spread like wildfire.

Kevin shifted the conversation back to business. "Good."

Bianca interpreted his terse response as proof that he still had expectations for her. After all, this entertainment company had been founded for her.

She understood there was a sense of obligation behind it.

She had once saved Kevin's life, and this was his way of repaying her.

But Bianca didn't want to squander his efforts.

Instead, she wanted Kevin to witness her rise to the top. She wanted to become a success story he could take pride in.

"As long as you're okay," she said, slipping on her sunglasses. "I have an announcement to attend later, so I'll head out first."

Kevin gave a brief nod. "Hmm."

His indifferent response didn't bother her. Her gaze flickered briefly toward the ward. No matter what, Norah's happiness wouldn't last long.

Bianca would give Kevin and Norah a bit more time. Sooner or later, they'd be separated again.

She was sure of it.

With reluctant eyes, Bianca looked at Kevin one last time before leaving.

Kevin, however, stared after her retreating figure. Deep in thought, his expression grew colder by the second.

"Captain Edwards, that woman looks so familiar," Levi remarked, only now realizing why she seemed recognizable.

Kevin glanced at Levi and explained, "During a mission, she once saved my life."

Levi nodded in understanding. "Ah, that's why she looks so familiar."

Still, something about the situation felt off to him, though he couldn't pinpoint what.

When Norah woke up, night had fallen.

The first thing she saw was Kevin gazing at her softly.

Her eyes flicked to the IV needle taped to her hand as she instinctively sat up.

Kevin helped steady her. "Take it slow. Do you want to rest a little longer?"

Norah shook her head. "Why are you out of bed? You're so injured—you shouldn't be moving around. Did I take your spot?"

She tried to get up, but Kevin gently pressed her back down.

“No, I’ve rested enough. I wanted to stretch my legs. You’ve been sleeping for a long time—are you feeling tired?”

Norah frowned. “I’ve slept all day?”

Kevin nodded. “Yes. You must be hungry now.”

“What about you? Did you eat yet?” Norah asked.

Kevin smiled. “Of course. I had something earlier. It’s dinner time now.”

Norah sat up slowly, rubbing her temples. “Sleeping so much makes me even more tired.”

Kevin chuckled. “If you can’t sleep tonight, we can watch TV together.”

Norah nodded, a small smile tugging at her lips.

Kevin had prepared a meal for the two of them—a nutritious spread tailored for pregnant women.

He opened the containers and handed Norah a bowl of soup.

She took a sip, finding it rich and flavorful. “This is delicious,” she said, visibly pleased.

As her appetite grew, she picked up a piece of pork liver, but the strong flavor made her grimace. “This is too fishy. You eat it,” she said, tossing it into Kevin’s bowl.

Kevin looked at her for a moment, amused by her casualness. “Alright. If you don’t like it, I’ll eat it.”

He took the piece and ate it without hesitation.

Norah didn’t think much of it—it felt natural.

After they finished eating, Norah noticed that Kevin had cleaned up everything, including the food she didn’t finish.

She blinked in surprise. “Why are you eating my leftovers?”

Kevin shrugged. “What’s the problem? If you don’t want something, I’ll eat it. It’s not a big deal.”

Norah couldn’t help but feel a bit touched. For someone like Kevin—who never settled for less—to eat her leftovers was unexpected.

Things seemed to be heading in a positive direction.

Watching Kevin eat, Norah felt a sense of sweetness in her heart. She teased, “You don’t even like that—are you sure you can eat it?”

Kevin met her gaze with a smirk. “If it’s from you, I’ll eat it.”

Norah blushed under his intense stare, momentarily at a loss for words.

Kevin handed her a glass of juice. “Here, drink this.”

But as Norah reached for it—

“Bang!”

The glass slipped from her hand, spilling juice all over the table and soaking her skirt.

Kevin stared, equally surprised by her sudden clumsiness.

Norah looked at the mess, stunned. “Why did I drop it?”

Kevin quickly stood and helped clean her up. “It’s fine. I’ll take care of it.”

She frowned, glancing at her hands. Something didn’t feel right.

Noticing her troubled expression, Kevin reassured her gently, “Don’t overthink it. Accidents happen.”

Still, Norah couldn’t shake the unease. “Do you think something’s wrong with me?”

Kevin cupped her face, his voice soothing. “Not at all. Breaking a glass once in a while is normal. Don’t stress.”

Norah tried to believe him. Maybe it really was nothing.

Kevin ruffled her hair affectionately. “Do you want anything else to eat?”

“I’d like something sweet,” she said softly. “Strawberry cake.”

“Perfect.” Kevin opened a cabinet and pulled out a strawberry cake, placing it in front of her.

Chapter 294

Norah was stunned by Kevin’s thoughtful gesture. She looked at him with wide eyes and asked, “How did you know I wanted strawberry cake?”

Kevin’s lips curled into a sly smile. “I have magic powers.”

Norah raised an eyebrow, clearly not buying it. “Magic? Really?”

She glanced suspiciously at the cabinet nearby, then back at Kevin. With a look of disbelief, she strode over and opened the cabinet.

Her jaw dropped. The cabinet was stuffed with food—snacks, fruits, cakes, and more, all neatly stacked to the brim.

Turning back to Kevin, she arched an eyebrow.

Kevin cleared his throat awkwardly and said, “I might’ve stocked up... just a little.”

Norah couldn’t help but laugh. “You’ve been working hard just to impress me, haven’t you?”

Kevin’s face flushed slightly, and his gaze drifted toward Levi, who was stationed by the door, trying his best to look inconspicuous.

Levi, however, felt Kevin’s eyes on him and immediately turned his back, pretending to focus on the hallway.

Kevin recalled the conversation they’d had earlier:

“Hide snacks in the cabinet,” Levi had suggested confidently. “Girls love surprises like that. It never fails!”

Kevin had been skeptical. “Are you sure about this?”

“Absolutely!” Levi had said with enthusiasm. “I’ve done it for my nieces—they loved it every single time!”

It hadn’t taken long for Kevin to realize how unconvincing the trick was when applied to someone like Norah.

Now, as Norah gleefully dug into her cake with a spoon, Kevin whispered to Levi, “Didn’t you say this always works?”

Levi looked sheepish. “I didn’t know Mrs. Edwards wouldn’t fall for it. It worked on my nieces!”

Kevin raised an eyebrow. “Nieces?”

Levi sighed and admitted, “Captain Edwards, let me be honest with you. The only girls I’ve ever impressed are my nieces. That’s all I’ve got.”

Kevin shot him a look of exasperation. He’d expected Levi to be some kind of expert.

Half an hour later, Levi found himself downstairs, doing push-ups as punishment.

Sweating profusely, he counted aloud, “Ninety-nine... one hundred... one hundred and one...”

Meanwhile, back in the room, Norah stood by the window and spotted Levi working out in the courtyard below. She tilted her head in confusion.

“Is Levi seriously exercising this late at night?” she asked.

Kevin chuckled. “He’s very disciplined. Likes to stay in shape.”

“Oh,” Norah said, impressed. “Soldiers must have incredible self-control.”

“Absolutely,” Kevin replied. “Now come on, the show’s getting to the best part.”

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The next morning, Quinn called Norah and asked her to deliver an important document. Norah realized she’d left the document at home and, knowing Quinn was in a rush, decided to make a quick trip back.

Kevin, though hesitant to let her go alone, respected her dedication to her work. He sent Levi to accompany her.

On the way, Levi groaned, “Mrs. Edwards, you’ve got to help me. Captain Edwards is too harsh on us. If I keep this up, I’m going to collapse one day.”

Norah frowned, puzzled. “What do you mean? What happened?”

Levi sighed dramatically. “Yesterday, Captain Edwards punished me. He had me exercising until midnight, and I had to get up before sunrise!”

Norah blinked. “But didn’t he say you enjoy exercising at night?”

Levi looked crushed. “He said that?” He paused, then reluctantly admitted, “Well, I guess I do... like exercising at night.”

When they arrived at Norah’s apartment, she told Levi to wait for her outside while she ran upstairs to grab the document.

“Got it. I’ll be right here,” Levi said, standing guard.

As Norah approached her door, she hesitated. She hadn’t seen Jace in a while, and a strange sense of unease crept over her. Was he home?

Deciding to check, she rang his doorbell.

She pressed it three times.

When there was no response, she assumed he wasn't home and turned to leave.

But just as she did, the door creaked open.

"Jace..." she began, but her words faltered.

Jace leaned against the doorframe, pale and unsteady. His tall frame swayed, and Norah instinctively rushed to support him.

"What's wrong?" she asked, her voice laced with concern.

Jace mumbled weakly, "Julie..."

Hearing that name, Norah's heart clenched, but she didn't press him. Instead, she helped him inside.

The moment she stepped into his apartment, the metallic scent of blood hit her. She glanced at the trash can, which was overflowing with blood-soaked gauze.

Her eyes widened in alarm as she looked at Jace's abdomen, where blood had seeped through his shirt.

"Jace! What happened to you?" she exclaimed, guiding him to the sofa.

Jace avoided her gaze. "Don't... touch me," he said hoarsely. "I'm dirty."

Norah froze, startled by the self-loathing in his voice.

"I don't want to stain you," he muttered, his tone filled with shame.

Norah's chest tightened as she looked at him. She placed her hand gently on his.

"You're not dirty," she said firmly. "Let me help you."

Jace flinched but didn't pull away. He looked up at her, his brown eyes filled with sadness. "Aren't you afraid of me?"

"No," she said softly. "I'm not afraid."

For a moment, Jace seemed on the verge of tears. A faint smile touched his lips. "That's good. As long as you're not afraid of me... that's good."

Norah carefully unbuttoned his shirt, revealing countless scars crisscrossing his torso. Her breath hitched.

"How did this happen?" she asked, her voice trembling. "Why are there so many wounds? The last time I saw you, I noticed the injury on your arm, but I didn't realize..."

Jace's lips curled into a bitter smile. "I told you I wouldn't lie to you. But if I tell you everything... you might not like me anymore."

Tears pricked at Norah's eyes as she shook her head. "That's not true. Nothing you say could make me think less of you."

Jace's gaze softened, and for the first time in a long while, he allowed himself to hope.

Chapter 295

Norah couldn't believe her eyes when she saw Jace.

"How could this be?" she murmured, her voice laced with disbelief.

Jace, on the other hand, was overcome by an all-too-familiar fear—that she might no longer look at him the same way.

He shouldn't be worried about anyone disliking him. He had no reason to.

But right now, Norah's priority was tending to his wounds. She spoke gently, yet firmly, "Just stay still, and let me take care of this."

Jace hesitated, his unease visible in the slight tension in his posture.

Norah didn't wait for his approval. She moved closer, unbuttoning his shirt, and what lay beneath made her heart clench. The scars on his pale skin stood out starkly, raw and angry.

The sight left her unsettled.

She found some medicine on the coffee table, picked it up, and began to treat his wounds with the utmost care. As she dabbed the ointment on his injuries, her mind began piecing together recent events.

"You came to see me yesterday, didn't you?" she asked, breaking the silence.

Jace dropped his gaze, avoiding her eyes.

Norah continued as if speaking her thoughts aloud. "You were fine then. No injuries. But after I was kidnapped, everything changed. That red-haired woman—Karina—I saw her leave your room. She knows you, doesn't she? She's the one who tied me up that day. Are these wounds her doing? Or is there more to this story?"

Her voice carried both concern and frustration, but she was already connecting the dots.

Jace exhaled, resigned. "Her name is Karina," he said quietly.

“Karina,” Norah repeated, her brow furrowed in thought. “Was she the taxi driver that day?”

Jace nodded. “She was. That’s how I was able to save you.”

Norah studied him, her emotions a tangle of confusion and unease. “Did we meet before? Back in that dark place?”

Jace’s eyes flicked to her, as though trying to gauge how much she remembered.

But her expression remained clouded, uncertain.

He had no intention of letting her recall those memories. He had only wanted to see her, to keep her in his life, even from a distance. Bringing up the past would only reopen wounds he’d rather keep closed.

“You’re Norah,” he said finally, his voice low.

Norah tilted her head, studying his face. “I’m Norah, yes. But aren’t I also Julie? You called me Julie earlier. Am I not Julie?”

Jace’s brow creased, and he seemed to retreat into himself. The internal struggle was evident in the way he clenched his fists.

He had loved her, still loved her, but he knew she was never his to claim. They came from different worlds, and he’d always understood that. His only wish was to protect her, to ensure she lived a life of happiness—even if it wasn’t with him.

“You’re Norah,” he said firmly, trying to convince himself as much as her. “You’re Kevin’s wife. Julie... Julie is nothing more than a name in my imagination.”

Norah frowned. The dreams she’d been having lately seemed to tell a different story.

Jace’s voice broke through her thoughts. “I don’t have a name,” he said, his tone laden with regret.

Norah stared at him, her gaze unwavering. “You do. You gave me my name—Julie. And someone gave you your name. Jace, Karina, Julie... these are all names someone else gave us, aren’t they?”

Jace’s fists tightened, his knuckles white as her words hit closer to home than she realized.

Suddenly, as though driven by a desperate need to shut down the conversation, he leaned forward, pressing her into the couch.

Norah froze, startled by the abruptness of his movement.

“What are you doing?” she asked, her hands braced against his chest.

Jace's eyes darkened. "You're brave, aren't you? Walking into a strange man's room without hesitation. Don't you know the dangers of doing something like this?"

Norah met his intense gaze without flinching. "I know you," she said calmly.

"Do you really?" Jace challenged, his voice dripping with tension.

"I know enough," she replied. Her eyes held his, unwavering. "And even if I didn't, you wouldn't hurt me. Would you?"

Her words made Jace pause.

Seeing his hesitation, Norah leaned closer. "You're all talk," she said, her voice softer now. "You wouldn't dare."

Her confidence disarmed him. Jace backed away, conflicted and frustrated.

She sat up, watching him carefully. "If you wanted to harm me, you wouldn't have saved me in the first place."

Jace rose from the couch, his shoulders slumping in defeat. "You're right," he admitted. "No matter what, I can't hurt you."

Norah nodded. "That day, Karina didn't kill me either. Why?"

"Don't concern yourself with that," Jace said curtly.

"I'm not trying to meddle," Norah replied. "But I remember fragments of the past, and I know we've crossed paths before. Whatever happened, I've moved on. Can't you?"

Jace looked at her, his expression unreadable. "You're different from us," he said finally.

"Why am I different?" Norah pressed.

Jace shook his head, avoiding her question. "Just leave," he said, his tone distant.

Norah sighed, standing up. "When you're ready to be honest with me, I'll be here."

She turned to leave, but a wave of dizziness hit her, and she stumbled.

Jace was at her side in an instant, steadying her. His grip tightened slightly as his eyes fell on a faint bruise on her arm.

Shock flickered across his face. "What happened?"

"It's nothing," Norah said, brushing him off. "Take care of yourself."

She walked toward the door, leaving him standing there, his fists clenched.

Just as she reached the exit, Jace called out to her.

When she turned, she saw him holding out the string of beads he used to wear.

“Take it,” he said, his voice soft but firm.

“This is important to you,” Norah said, hesitant to accept it.

“It’s yours now,” Jace insisted, pressing it into her hand. “Keep it safe.”

Norah studied the beads, catching the faint scent of sandalwood mixed with the metallic tang of blood.

She looked up at him one last time, her gaze heavy with unspoken questions. But Jace said nothing more.

Taking the beads with her, she nodded and left. The door closed behind her, leaving them both alone with their thoughts.