

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life Chapter 451

Chapter 451

Journi's eyes held a trace of anticipation.

A smirk played at the corner of Baimo's lips. "Are you going to fight or not?"

"Yes." Journi clenched her fists.

"Then talk to her yourself." Baimo had no interest in helping. He hadn't liked this sister from the moment he met her—her demeanor, her temperament, everything about her put him off.

His gaze landed on the string of emerald-green beads on Norah's wrist. A flicker of hope had sparked in him earlier, making him wonder if the appraisal had been manipulated. But the clown had been present throughout the process—no one would have dared to tamper with it.

Besides, no one even knew it was Baimo who had insisted on the appraisal.

He tossed out his words and turned away without hesitation.

Journi watched Baimo walk away, her expression unreadable. She had always been careful around him, always deferential. Even when Pharaoh arranged for them to eat together, Baimo's attitude toward her remained unchanged.

Wasn't he her father?

Journi couldn't understand.

But she couldn't chase after Baimo now. She had to find her own way forward.

...

Norah stayed close to Kevin, worry filling her eyes.

"How do you feel? Are you in pain?" she asked, her voice trembling. "Do you need water? Are you hungry?"

She bombarded him with questions, desperate for answers.

Kevin said nothing. In that moment, all he wanted was to touch Norah's face.

And so he did.

His hand trembled as he reached out, gently brushing her cheek. "Norah, I'm sorry."

"Sorry? Because I found out you were poisoned?" Norah's voice cracked, thick with emotion.

Kevin winced at the pain in her voice. He couldn't deny it—everything she said was true.

He had tried to keep it from her, tried to handle everything on his own. If he had succeeded, he would have left without her ever knowing.

His silence was all the confirmation Norah needed.

"Forget the past. We need to focus on getting out of here." She had found Karina, only to realize Karina didn't remember her. And she hadn't even gotten the chance to see Steven before Kevin collapsed. Right now, Kevin was her priority.

She had already lost too much.

Her child.

The thought alone was unbearable. Just thinking about it made it impossible to breathe.

"I know." Kevin's voice was firm. "When you get out, go back to the Imperial Capital. Norah, take care of things there. Live your life. Don't wait for me."

He grasped her hand, his grip tightening as his voice grew hoarse.

"What are you saying?" Norah's eyes filled with tears. They burned, making her vision blur.

Don't wait for him?

That meant moving on. Marrying someone else.

How could he expect that? She had been by his side for years. They had a child together. They had lived through life and death. How could she possibly move on?

A bitter smile twisted Norah's lips. "Kevin, do you think I'm that kind of person? That I can just replace you so easily?"

Kevin didn't respond.

He had planned for everything. He wanted to leave her with no reason to hold on to him. If he survived, he would return to her. If he didn't, at least she wouldn't be a widow tied to his memory.

He took a deep breath, suppressing the pain in his heart. He brushed his fingers over her face, his touch agonizingly tender.

"Norah, I know you're not that kind of person. But life is unpredictable. You have a long future ahead of you. Kian will be there to help you."

With Kian by her side, she wouldn't struggle in her career. And he had arranged for Karina to be there for her, too.

If she hadn't come to the Yi tribe, she would have been living the best possible life in the Imperial Capital. But that life would have been empty—without him, without their child.

She would never have understood everything she did now.

And she would have carried guilt for Steven forever.

"Norah, I love you. If I could change anything, I wish I had never met you." Kevin pressed a kiss to her forehead.

His words were warm, but the meaning behind them was cruel. He wished they had never met—so she wouldn't be in danger because of him.

But Norah didn't believe in coincidences. People didn't just appear in each other's lives without a reason.

She clutched his hand, her voice raw. "Kevin, it's too late for that. You're my Anthony. I've admired you from the very beginning. When I saved your grandfather, he told me he wanted me to marry you. And the moment I saw you, I didn't hesitate."

Maybe it was fate. Maybe it was Kevin's confession that had finally moved her to say it out loud.

Either way, at that moment, Norah bared her heart.

She had never told Kevin this before. And he had rarely voiced his feelings, either. They had both misunderstood, both assumed the other didn't care enough.

They had been fools.

Kevin wiped away her tears, swallowing back the words that rose to his lips.

Some truths would only bring her more pain. And he wanted to protect her from that.

He had only one wish left—to see Norah live a happy life.

“I know. The child... was mine...”

At the mention of their child, Norah broke down completely. She collapsed into Kevin's arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

Pregnancy had been terrifying for her.

And when Kevin found out about the baby, he had wanted to get rid of it. In the end, he had relented, but the uncertainty had tormented her.

Kevin gently wiped away her tears. “Norah, I was an idiot. That night... the woman was you. I didn't realize it until much later.”

He had investigated. He had asked Norah to investigate. Looking back, it was all so ridiculous.

Norah's voice was raw. “Kevin, that's in the past. Right now, we need to focus on getting out of here. We have to get Karina and Steven back. And I'm not leaving without you.”

Kevin had been poisoned because of her. Now that she knew everything he had done was for her, there was no way she was abandoning him.

She had seen too much death. She understood now—what mattered most was the people by her side.

She couldn't lose Kevin again.

Tears streamed down Norah's face as she spoke.

Before Kevin could respond, the sound of slow, deliberate clapping echoed through the air.

Norah and Kevin turned sharply.

Baimo strode toward them, a deep, knowing smile playing at the corner of his mouth.

Chapter 452

Norah furrowed her brows. Kevin was nowhere in sight.

At this moment, fury burned in Kevin's eyes, yet his gaze toward Baimo was razor-sharp.

Baimo, however, remained unfazed. His smile held steady. "With war raging outside, you two are here making a lifelong commitment to each other? If you have time for that, you might as well tell me where Jace is."

The mention of Jace wiped the smile off Baimo's face. His expression turned cold as ice, his eyes dark with restrained anger.

Baimo had always carried an air of gentleness, but he could be ruthless when necessary—just like now.

He was determined to find Jace. He needed to know why Jace had given Norah the bracelet. He wanted answers—answers to questions that had tormented him from the start.

Norah recalled being knocked unconscious by the clown not long ago. Whatever had happened during that time, Baimo must have uncovered the truth. His sudden indifference toward her made that clear.

She exhaled slowly, but confusion gnawed at her. If she wasn't Julie (Journi), why had Jace given her the bracelet? Why had he called her Julie? And those fragmented memories flickering in her mind...

Was it the drug affecting her memory? Had something been altered?

"I don't know where Jace is," Norah said firmly.

Even if she did, she wouldn't betray him.

Jace had always treated her as a friend. He had gone to great lengths to help her when she was poisoned.

Baimo shifted his gaze to Kevin. He didn't speak, but the cold, merciless look in his eyes said enough.

Kevin smirked. "Do you think I'll give in to you?"

With that, he pulled out a black pistol.

Ironically, Baimo had arranged for the clown master to bring Kevin and Norah for self-defense, yet here was Kevin, turning the weapon against him.

But Baimo remained unbothered. He smiled faintly. "I don't need to remind you of your situation, do I?"

Even if Kevin took Baimo hostage, escaping alone was one thing. But Norah, unarmed, was with him.

Kevin didn't respond.

Baimo continued, "I just want to know Jace's whereabouts. That's not too much to ask, is it?"

Baimo had allowed Norah to look for Karina and Steven. He had even sent the clown to protect her. If the clown hadn't intervened in time, Norah would have suffered under Kendall's whip.

Norah clutched the corner of Kevin's shirt. He held the gun, but she hesitated to interrupt.

"Since Jace left the imperial capital, no one knows where he is," she finally said.

Baimo scoffed. "Really? Then how do you contact him?"

Jace had given Norah the bracelet, which meant she held a significant place in his life. Even if she was merely a pawn, she was an important one.

If they could reach Jace and tell him about Norah's predicament, he would show up.

Norah's voice turned cold. "Do you really think I'd have his contact information under these circumstances?"

She had lost her phone when she arrived. Kevin, sneaking in under disguise, wouldn't have one either. Carrying a phone here was a death wish.

With a single gesture from Baimo, a swarm of people entered, surrounding Norah and Kevin.

Baimo sighed dramatically. "With Captain Edwards' skills, finding a way to contact Jace wouldn't take long. You can leave with Karina and Steven, but Norah stays."

Norah was the key. Whether Baimo could pressure Kevin or not, she was his leverage to Jace.

Although Baimo had no interest in making Kevin an enemy, keeping him under control wouldn't hurt.

Norah weighed her options, tightening her grip on Kevin's sleeve. She didn't speak, but her silence said enough.

"If you insist on getting his contact information, I'll stay," she said finally. "But they have to go."

Kevin immediately stepped in front of her. "No. I won't leave you behind."

Baimo turned to Kevin with a smirk. "And what exactly do I gain from keeping you here?"

He wasn't a fool. He knew Kevin had sneaked in to find Norah—and to sabotage them.

As a military officer, Kevin would never allow himself to be held captive.

"You only have one choice," Baimo stated flatly. "If you want to leave, I'll let you. If you refuse, neither of you is walking out of here."

Baimo hadn't expected Journi to bring Norah in, but since she had, he had placed the clown at Norah's side to ensure her safety. He had hoped to unravel some mysteries over time, but Kevin's unexpected arrival had thrown everything into disarray.

Norah turned to Kevin. "Don't hesitate. You're a soldier. You know the importance of sacrificing for the greater good."

Karina was trapped because of her. Steven was here because of her. Kevin was poisoned because of her.

If Kevin left, he could still protect these lands, bring stability to the people. There would be no more war.

“Enough!” Kevin snapped, his voice raw with emotion.

He had been taught this lesson from the moment he entered the military. He knew it better than anyone.

But...

If it meant abandoning Norah, he couldn't do it.

“Norah, I've spent my whole life fulfilling my duties—doing what was expected of me,” he said, his gaze steady, unwavering. “But in the process, I neglected the people closest to me. I can't do that anymore. If you leave, we leave together. If you die, we die together.”

Norah's breath hitched.

Before she could respond, a deafening explosion tore through the air.

Baimo immediately signaled his men, who closed in on Kevin. In the chaos, Baimo seized Norah, dragging her toward him.

But Norah wasn't defenseless.

She pressed a gun to Baimo's temple, her voice low but firm. “Baimo, you've helped us more than once. I don't want to hurt you. But if you don't order them to back off right now, I will.”

Chapter 453

The gun in Norah's hand didn't faze Baimo in the slightest.

In a flash, Baimo struck, his hand snapping against Norah's wrist with precision. The black pistol clattered to the ground with a sharp *clang*. Baimo's grip shifted to her neck, his voice low and commanding. “Kevin, I know your people are here. I'll let you leave now. But if you want warmth, bring Jace in exchange.”

Baimo had reached a point where holding Norah hostage was more strategic than capturing a handful of others. Norah's voice cut through the tension, raw and urgent. “Kevin, go! Now!”

Kevin's eyes locked onto Norah's, a storm of emotions swirling in his gaze—reluctance, defiance, and a deep, unyielding resolve.

But the relentless barrage of artillery fire outside left no room for hesitation.

A large force stormed in.

Levi and Frank quickly located Kevin using their tracking systems. “Captain Edwards,” Levi said, his tone urgent but controlled, “orders from above—avoid conflict with the Pharaoh for now.”

“Kevin, go!” Norah’s voice rang out again, sharper this time.

Kevin was dragged away, his protests muffled by the chaos.

Soon, the scene fell into an uneasy calm, though the aftermath was a wreckage of shattered plans and broken resolve.

Baimo released Norah, his tone almost casual. “You’ve got some fight in you. Ever thought about learning grappling techniques?”

When he’d grabbed her wrist earlier, Norah had fought back—a simple self-defense move, but one that hinted at potential. With training, she could reach a formidable level.

Norah’s response was icy. “Not interested.” She turned her back on him, her mind racing with worry for Kevin. She knew him too well—he’d dive headfirst into danger for her, and now he’d stop at nothing to find Jace. She couldn’t let that happen.

Baimo watched her, words lingering on the tip of his tongue. But in the end, he swallowed them back.

Kevin’s Side

Kevin fought like a man possessed, even turning his fury on Levi. But Levi and Frank knew they couldn’t let him spiral. Working together, they subdued him, finally carrying him away while he was off guard.

When Kevin came to, he was back at the military camp. He bolted upright, his first thought to go after Norah.

Levi stopped him. “Captain Edwards, we get it. You care about Ms. White. You want to save her. But you’ve got a bigger responsibility now. You can’t keep charging in like this.”

After Kevin’s stunt, the Pharaoh’s forces would be on high alert.

“Then we fight!” Kevin’s voice was a low growl, his face twisted with rage.

Frank stepped in, his tone measured. “Captain Edwards, our orders are clear—no clashes with the Pharaoh. We’re here for peacekeeping, not to intervene in the Yi tribe’s internal conflicts.”

Kevin’s eyes darkened. “So you’re saying we just leave Norah there?”

Norah was a citizen of Craggaville. Her detention—whether public or private—was unacceptable.

“That’s not what I’m saying,” Frank clarified. “We’re just urging caution. We can negotiate. The Yi tribe won’t risk a conflict with our nation.”

Their country prioritized peace. A direct attack could spark chaos, drawing in allied forces and potentially igniting a global conflict.

Levi added, “Captain Edwards, we’ll find a way to get Ms. White out. But we need to think this through.”

Kevin’s mind raced. Baimo had mentioned the poison—he knew about it and had hinted at an antidote. That meant Baimo was connected to Jace. If anyone could negotiate Norah’s release, it was Jace.

After a tense silence, Kevin dialed Jace’s number.

The phone rang for what felt like an eternity before Jace answered, his voice weak. “What is it?”

“Norah’s been captured by the Pharaoh,” Kevin said, his voice low and heavy.

Jace’s response was immediate, his voice cracking with anger. “What did you say? You promised to protect her!”

Kevin didn’t respond. Guilt and frustration lodged in his throat, suffocating him. Norah’s capture was a failure on his part. If he’d been stronger, none of this would’ve happened—not the poison, not the separation from their child.

“Baimo wants you,” Kevin said finally.

Jace’s reply was curt. “Understood.”

The line went dead. Kevin didn’t need to explain further. Jace would move heaven and earth for Norah.

Norah’s Side

Norah was kept in Baimo's quarters, far from the slave camp. She was given the best meals, even new clothes. Baimo's intentions were clear—he wanted Jace, and he was using her to control Kevin.

She ate and changed without protest. There was no point in making things harder for herself.

What she didn't expect was a visit from the Pharaoh himself.

The masked figure was unnerving, his presence radiating menace. He studied Norah, his voice dripping with disdain. "I never imagined my forces could be brought to their knees by your husband. And you—you've managed to catch my son's attention. Impressive, for someone of your... standing."

Norah glanced at him briefly before looking away. A masked man held no interest for her. She knew enough about him to feel nothing but contempt.

Her silence and the flicker of disgust in her eyes didn't escape the Pharaoh. But before he could say more, Baimo strode in, positioning himself protectively in front of Norah.

"Norah is under my protection," Baimo said, his voice cold. "If you've got time to spare, focus on your experiments. Keep your hands to yourself."

The Pharaoh didn't respond. His masked face revealed nothing, but Baimo's defense of Norah spoke volumes.

"I merely spoke to her," the Pharaoh said, his tone mocking. "You're awfully tense. If something happens to her, will you die for her?"

Baimo's expression hardened. "I don't have time to argue with you in front of outsiders."

The Pharaoh left without another word, but his visit left a lingering unease.

For Journi, the Pharaoh's appearance was a red flag. If the Pharaoh knew Norah was with Baimo and did nothing, what did that mean? Even Kevin had been allowed to leave unharmed.

Was Baimo showing favor to Norah—and by extension, Kevin? Or was there some deeper agreement at play? The questions hung heavy, unanswered.

Chapter 454

She wasn't them. She wasn't inside their heads, didn't know what they were truly thinking.

But one thing was certain—it wasn't that simple.

Journi gathered a few things and went to see Baimo.

Baimo barely acknowledged her efforts, his tone cold and dismissive. “I don’t need anything from you. Take it away.”

Journi looked at him with expectation. “Brother, I prepared these for Norah. I want to see her.”

“She doesn’t need them,” Baimo replied indifferently.

If Journi truly wanted to befriend Norah, she wouldn’t have brought her here in the first place.

Deep down, Baimo knew Journi’s intentions weren’t pure. Her gifts were just a front—empty gestures meant to disguise her true motives. To him, she felt completely insincere.

“Brother, you’re not her,” Journi insisted. “I know what you’re thinking, but I’m already here. How could I possibly hurt her? I wouldn’t.”

Baimo shot her a cold glance, said nothing, and turned to leave.

Journi hit a dead end.

But as she stood there, her nails dug into her palms.

Norah was still here. Journi didn’t believe she would stay locked up forever. The moment Norah stepped out, opportunities would present themselves.

Right now, in her mind, there was only one thought—countless ways to end Norah.

Meanwhile, on Kevin’s side...

His mind was consumed with thoughts of Norah as he studied the topographic map.

A reckless impulse stirred inside him.

He had a duty to his country, a responsibility to carry. But what if, just this once, he chose to act for himself? Even if it meant death, he would die by Norah’s side.

But then, her face flashed in his mind.

They hadn’t even reunited as a family yet. How could he throw his life away so quickly?

He couldn’t.

Just like Norah, he knew she was safe for now. The real challenge was getting her out. He needed to focus on the situation at hand.

He went to check on Karina and Steven.

Karina was under Levi's care. Her memory was gone, and her body bore the scars—large and small, a painful reminder of what she had endured.

Even worse, Levi had discovered that her tendons had been severed and reattached, weakening her movements.

Karina, once swift and skilled, could no longer move the way she used to.

When Levi realized this, his chest tightened with anguish.

He had fought through countless battles, endured pain beyond measure. But the sight of Karina like this—this pain was different. This pain was unbearable.

He wanted to pull her into his arms, to shield her from everything. But Karina resisted.

Kevin witnessed the moment as he approached. Without a word, he turned and left, giving them their space.

He understood. He loved Norah deeply, and as a man, he knew exactly what Levi was feeling.

Levi longed for Karina to snap at him like she used to, to call him a fool. But that moment would never come.

And then there was Steven.

Like Karina, Steven was covered in wounds—each one telling the story of the torture he had endured.

All for Norah.

Frank stood beside him, his gaze heavy with concern. When he saw Kevin, he immediately straightened and lowered his head.

“Captain Edwards, Steven isn't doing well. The military doctor just confirmed kidney failure...”

Steven had come all this way, risking everything, just to find an antidote.

For Norah.

Kevin's expression darkened. “Have the military doctor check if I'm a match.”

Frank's eyes widened in shock. “Captain Edwards, are you sure? Your body—”

“I'm sure,” Kevin said firmly.

The military doctor arrived quickly. Unlike a hospital, they didn't have advanced equipment here. Testing for a kidney match required a proper facility.

The doctor hesitated before speaking. “Captain Edwards, with all due respect, this is a critical moment. If you make such a major sacrifice now, it will create an opening. Our enemies will seize the opportunity, and smaller nations in Yi will take advantage. If that happens, should our country retaliate or hold back?”

If they didn’t retaliate, they’d be seen as weak.

If they did, it could spiral into a full-scale war.

Kevin remained silent for a few seconds. Then, with unwavering resolve, he said, “Do it in secret.”

The military doctor’s expression turned grim. “That won’t work. Too many eyes are on you. Unless the government assigns someone to replace you, this can’t happen until after you step down.”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Steven began coughing violently.

Kevin shot a look at the doctor, signaling him to stop talking.

He stepped forward. “Steven, how are you feeling?”

Steven’s brows furrowed as he looked up, his voice hoarse. “Are you talking to me?”

Kevin hadn’t expected them to be in such a state—barely recognizable, memories shattered.

But he nodded. “Yes, your name is Steven.”

Steven hesitated. “Are we… friends?”

Kevin met his gaze and answered without hesitation. “Yes.”

Before, Kevin had never taken Steven seriously because of Norah. But now, things had changed. Norah was carrying his child, and Steven had risked everything for her.

Steven glanced around, taking in the unfamiliar surroundings. “Did you save me?”

Kevin was the only one standing in front of him.

“Yes.”

Steven fell silent.

He didn’t remember Kevin. But he did remember something.

Through the pain, through the endless torture, one image had remained in his mind. A face. A name.

Norah.

It was the only thing that hadn't faded.

He hesitated before asking, "Since you're my friend... do you know Norah? What is she to me?"

Kevin pressed his lips together, unsure of how to answer.

He hadn't expected Steven's feelings for Norah to run this deep. Even now, when everything else was lost, Norah was the one thing he held onto.

For a brief moment, Kevin wavered. If the poison in his body couldn't be cured... if he was going to die anyway...

Then maybe the best thing he could do was rescue Norah and leave her with Steven.

Steven would love her, protect her.

Maybe that was the only thing Kevin could still do for her.

Steven saw the hesitation in Kevin's eyes. His expression darkened. "Your reaction... does it mean that I had a bad relationship with Norah? Or... is she someone I shouldn't love?"

Chapter 455

Kevin was silent for a moment before finally answering in a quiet, almost absentminded voice. "Norah is my wife."

There was no declaration of ownership in his tone—just a simple, undeniable truth.

Steven had lost his memory, but somehow, he still remembered Norah. Kevin had already considered the worst-case scenario: if he didn't make it, he would have urged Steven to take care of Norah. But the thought of it twisted something deep inside him.

Because Kevin loved Norah. And he couldn't bear the thought of pushing her toward someone else.

Steven didn't respond. His mind raced with fleeting fragments, images flashing too quickly for him to grasp. He had no real memory of Norah.

And now, standing before Kevin, he realized he didn't remember him either.

Kevin's words left Steven momentarily lost. He was in love with someone—someone who was already married. But what stunned him even more was Kevin's lack of hostility. Kevin hadn't attacked him, hadn't tried to push him away. That alone was unbelievable.

“I know you’re confused,” Kevin said, his voice steady. “But you don’t need to overthink it. You and Norah knew each other long before I came into the picture. You were her friend.”

Kevin had been cautious when he first saw Steven with Norah. He had even asked Kian to investigate him, once suspecting he might be Anthony.

Steven took a deep breath. “Where is Norah?”

His memories were full of gaps, and he didn’t dwell on the details of the past. Some things, he felt, had already been decided by fate. But one thing remained—her name. The only name he could recall.

He needed to see her.

Kevin’s expression remained unreadable. “You were just rescued, and Norah... she’s been captured. Focus on healing. Once she’s free, I’ll make sure you see her.”

With that, Kevin made his decision.

Steven didn’t argue. Right now, he had no choice but to accept the situation as it was.

Meanwhile, Jace was making his way to the Yi tribe as fast as possible. But before he could reach his destination, something went wrong.

Pharaoh’s men ambushed him, surrounding him in an instant.

And then, Jace saw him.

Calvin.

A cold smirk played at the corner of Calvin’s lips. “Jace, I have to admit, I admire your guts.”

Jace had risked everything to escape. And now, here he was, walking straight back into the lion’s den.

“I don’t have time for your games, Calvin,” Jace said, his voice tight with frustration. He hadn’t told anyone about his return—only Kevin. And yet, Calvin had been waiting for him.

That meant someone had betrayed him.

Jace clenched his jaw. It couldn’t have been Kevin. Kevin would never sell him out. And there was no one else close enough to him to have done it.

Calvin saw the suspicion flicker in Jace’s eyes and let out a low chuckle. Then, without hesitation, he raised his pistol and fired two shots into Jace’s knees.

Pain shot through Jace's body, forcing him to the ground. But he gritted his teeth, refusing to make a sound.

Calvin signaled to his men. "Take him."

Jace was dragged away.

At the same time, on Baimo's side...

Baimo approached Norah, holding out a phone. "Aren't you going to call Kevin?"

Norah eyed the phone but didn't reach for it. She knew exactly what Baimo was trying to do. This wasn't kindness—he just wanted to use her to provoke Kevin.

Instead of answering, she turned her gaze away, refusing to engage.

Baimo wasn't deterred. He stepped in front of her again. "What's wrong? You two were so devoted before. I'm giving you a chance to talk to him—don't you want it?"

Norah let out a dry, humorless laugh. "Are you sure this is a 'chance'?"

Her voice was cold, unreadable.

Baimo smiled but didn't respond. Instead, he pulled out a chair and sat across from her. "Back then, you were searching for someone—Steven, Karina, Kevin. You were so determined. And now? You don't even want Kevin anymore?"

His words dripped with mockery.

Norah met his gaze without flinching. "Whether I want Kevin or not is none of your business. You've dug into my past, you know everything about me. And once, you promised to let me go." Her voice was steady, but her frustration was clear.

Of course, she wanted to leave. She had no intention of staying in this hellhole any longer than necessary.

Baimo studied her, his expression unreadable. His memories of his mother were distant and faded. He couldn't say for certain whether Norah resembled her. He had no photos of his mother—or his father, for that matter. His father had always worn a mask, keeping his face hidden.

A DNA test had already ruled out a connection. And yet, there was still one thing that nagged at him—the string of emerald green beads Norah carried.

She had said Jace gave them to her.

Journi had been here before. She had interacted with Jace, but Baimo had no idea what had transpired between them.

So why had Jace given Norah those beads?

Or worse... had the test results been tampered with?

His eyes darkened at the thought.

“Joker,” Baimo called sharply.

The clown appeared almost instantly, already understanding what Baimo wanted.

Without hesitation, he moved toward Norah, intending to catch her off guard. But Norah saw it coming. Her expression turned icy. “You’re drawing my blood for another test, aren’t you?”

Baimo’s sudden insistence made it obvious.

She had already undergone one test. And now, they wanted another? Norah had no intention of going along with it. “It won’t change anything,” she said flatly. “Some things are better left to fate.”

The first time, she had fought against it, unwilling to accept the idea. When the results had come back negative, she had felt relieved. She had thought it was over.

But now, Baimo was determined to do it all over again.

She wouldn’t let it happen.

Baimo’s brows furrowed. He stared at her, not saying a word. He couldn’t deny that she was sharp—but she hadn’t considered one crucial detail.

“Don’t you find it odd that Jace gave you those beads?” he asked.

Norah’s heart clenched.

Odd?

She had wondered the same thing. When Jace had handed her the beads, calling her Julie, she had felt an unsettling sense of familiarity. But Jace had insisted. He had been determined to give them to her, and she hadn’t refused.

And ever since she had worn them... her nightmares had stopped. The heavy, restless feeling in her chest had disappeared.

She stared at the emerald green beads in her hand, lost in thought.

Could there be more to them than she realized?

But she wasn't about to admit anything to Baimo.

Once, she had hoped to use him to get close to Pharaoh. Now, she didn't know where he stood. Friend or enemy, she couldn't afford to trust him too much.

"A bracelet is just a bracelet," she said coolly. "I'm tired. If you want answers, go find Jace and ask him yourself."

She turned away, refusing to acknowledge him.

Baimo's lips curled into a cold smirk. "You and Kevin don't even know where Jace is. Where exactly do you expect me to find him?"

Norah met his gaze, her eyes sharp. "Then why bother asking me?"