

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life

Chapter 601

"One million," Kevin offered.

The uncle hesitated at first, but when Kevin mentioned the price, he agreed without a second thought. "Okay, but you need to pay before you take the person."

Kevin didn't hesitate. "Give me the card number."

Though the uncle had spent most of his time hunting and living in the mountains, he still had a card. He provided the number, and within two minutes, one million dollars was transferred into his account.

He had never seen that much money in his life.

While he was still lost in the thrill of his new wealth, Kevin had already taken Kian and Ophelia to look for the others.

Once the money was received, Kian and Ophelia were quickly taken away by Kevin.

Kevin had them sent to the hospital and requested Cody personally examine them. Both were injured, and there was even residual snake venom in their systems.

Cody administered serum injections and had them hospitalized for observation.

Kevin instructed Kian, "Rest up in the hospital. Don't worry about the company's business. Once you're discharged, I'll give you a paid vacation."

Kian, who had been with Kevin for years, certainly deserved this kind of care.

"I'll be fine after a few days of rest. But if I'm not at Edwards', how will you handle everything on your own, Mr. Edwards?"

Bonnie was now inseparable from her true love, and Ophelia also needed care in the hospital, so Kevin would have to manage the company solo.

Norah was pregnant, so it was impossible to ask her to take on the internal affairs of the company.

"I can't handle everything. Do you think you can manage if I pull you out of here?"

Kevin sat by Kian's bed.

He'd placed Kian and Ophelia in the same room since they both had similar symptoms, making it more convenient for their care.

Kian scratched his head awkwardly. "Now that I'm feeling better, I can still manage a few things."

"Alright, you don't need to worry about that. You and Ophelia just focus on your recovery. Ophelia, you'll also get paid leave. I've arranged for a nurse to help you. If anything feels off, let the nurse know, or talk to the doctor."

Kevin was still worried about Norah at home.

He'd spent the last two days searching for Kian and Ophelia, and Norah had been worried too.

Kevin just wanted to settle them and head home to be with Norah.

After all, Norah was still pregnant.

"Don't worry, Mr. Edwards, we're fine." Kian knew that Kevin's thoughts were elsewhere, but he was feeling better now.

Kevin gave the nurse some final instructions before leaving.

But just then, Cody caught up with him, grinning. "Assistants get paid vacations, so when do I get one?"

Kevin shot him a glare. "Is your work under my jurisdiction?"

"Why not? You and the people around you always come to me when there's a problem. I'm worn out seeing patients every day and running around for you. Don't I deserve a break? If I'm not going to you, who am I supposed to go to?"

Cody smirked, challenging Kevin.

Kevin kept walking, uninterested in responding to Cody's antics.

Cody followed him without stopping. "Really? Now that I've made my point, you're just going to ignore me? I swear, one day I'll drop dead from exhaustion, and then you won't come looking for me anymore."

As Cody vented, a few people nearby turned their heads, sensing the tension.

Before Norah, and before Bianca, rumors about Kevin and Cody had spread, hinting at a relationship between them.

And now, here was Cody again!

Kevin sighed, his eyes hardening. "If you want to die so badly, I'm happy to help you along."

What Kevin hated most was when rumors spread, especially now that he had a happy family. He didn't want any part of that nonsense.

Cody saw the deadly seriousness in Kevin's eyes and wisely kept quiet.

He could only watch as Kevin walked away.

When Kevin returned home, Norah noticed the hostility in his expression right away.

"What's wrong? Haven't you found them yet?" she asked, her voice full of concern.

Days had passed, and Kevin had sent out a large number of people. If Kian and Ophelia still weren't found, it could mean things were worse than anyone had expected.

Kian had been by Kevin's side for years. Norah couldn't imagine how Kevin would feel if something had happened to him.

"We found them."

Kevin's face softened the moment he heard Norah's voice.

Norah, knowing Kevin so well, could tell that while he should be relieved, his expression hadn't changed much.

That could only mean something else had happened.

As his wife, Norah had been through it all with Kevin. She was deeply concerned, "Now that you've found them, why are you still upset?"

"What happened? Kevin, we're partners in this. We'll get through everything together."

Norah took a few steps closer, her eyes filled with determination as she looked up at him.

Kevin put his arm around her shoulders. "It's nothing. Some of Cody's actions pissed me off. I don't want any rumors to start swirling around us."

Rumors. Public opinion.

Norah raised an eyebrow, "What rumors?"

"Before, Cody and I were close, so people started assuming there was something going on between us." Kevin explained, trying to keep his tone light, but the thought of Cody's behavior made him angry again.

The hospital, a place full of comings and goings, was like a sink for gossip. Everyone had something to say.

Norah's confusion turned into understanding, and she couldn't help but laugh. "You and I are married, and we're expecting our second child. How could anyone still spread rumors about you? You know Cody, he just likes to talk nonsense."

Some things could be laughed off.

Kevin would've brushed it all aside if it weren't for Norah and their growing family. But now, with a wife, children, and responsibilities, he couldn't let things like this slide.

Kevin gently stroked Norah's head. "No, I need to be responsible for you and the kids. I can't let Cody keep acting out of line."

"Cody was just joking, nothing serious. Don't let it bother you. Besides, he's helped us a lot, hasn't he?"

Norah didn't want Kevin to get caught up in something so trivial, but just then, an uninvited guest arrived at their door.

Chapter 602

The woman who showed up was none other than Martin's mistress.

When Martin was alive, they never lacked material things. But now that he's gone, life's taken a turn for the worse—especially since she's still pregnant.

Standing before them were Martin's son and daughter.

Their intent was obvious:

"My man is dead. You may not have killed him directly, but it's because of you that he's gone. Now, none of us—old or young—can survive!"

The woman broke down in tears, covering her face as she cried bitterly.

She also noticed Norah's slightly rounded belly and deliberately raised her voice. **"You're pregnant too. You know how hard it is. We really can't go on like this, so we came to you. We're out of options..."**

Her voice echoed through the room, her children crying alongside her.

Kevin stood protectively in front of Norah. **"Go upstairs,"** he said gently. **"I'll handle this."**

But Norah held his hand. **"I'll stay with you,"** she insisted.

She wanted to be there for him, no matter what.

Kevin glanced at the trio, his thin lips moving slowly. **“Martin left on his own...”**

“Then we’re the real Edwards bloodline!” the woman cut in before he could finish. **“You’re just adopted. The Edwards family gave you everything. Sharing a little with your siblings shouldn’t be a big deal, right?”**

Her tone was sharp and firm—she wasn’t here to negotiate.

Norah let out a soft laugh. **“Then show us the paternity test. If you meet all the requirements, of course, we’ll give you your share.”**

“A share? We’re the rightful heirs, and you’re taking most of it? That’s stealing what’s ours!”

Clearly, the woman wasn’t here for fairness—she wanted it all.

But it wasn’t going to be that easy.

Back when the Edwards family needed help, Martin was living recklessly. And Siena hadn’t exactly treated Kevin well either.

Now that Kevin was running the Edwards Group alone, they wanted to swoop in and take everything? Not a chance.

Norah looked at Kevin, heart aching. **“When Kevin took charge of the company, Martin didn’t even want the shares. And it was Grandpa who appointed Kevin!”**

The woman wasn’t interested in history. **“He’s dead now. Why are you bringing up the past? If we keep talking like this, none of us might survive!”**

Then she plopped down on the couch—clearly planning to stay.

Norah didn’t react. Calmly, she said, **“I already asked you to show us proof. If you’re truly an Edwards, let the evidence do the talking.”**

“But you’re only giving us a portion!”

“If you want more, go through the proper channels. We’re happy to follow inheritance law. Go to court.”

But in court, they’d lose. Kevin’s close friend Bonian is the top lawyer in Belourvinelle.

They had no money, no power. This was never about law—it was about guilt-tripping.

“If you’re not willing to give, just say it! Why bring up court? Once it goes to court, you outsiders won’t get a dime from the Edwards family!”

She kept going, even though she clearly had no DNA proof. She was just trying to win through pity and pressure.

Norah had enough. She raised her voice, **“Someone get them out of here!”**

“You!” The woman jumped up, furious. **“Norah, Kevin, don’t go too far!”**

“That’s right,” her daughter added. **“Our mom is pregnant. If she gets upset and something happens, can you afford to take responsibility?”**

“If we don’t get anything today, we’re not leaving!”

“Ouch...” The woman suddenly cried out in pain.

Norah didn’t fall for it. She turned to the servants. **“Don’t touch her. Call 110 and 120. Medical help, police—everything.”**

“Yes.”

The servant followed her orders.

Norah added coldly, **“We’re not family or friends. You won’t leave? Fine—I can press charges for breaking into our home and extortion. And if you’re asking for everything, that’s a major crime...”**

“Hmm, Kevin—is it under three years?” she asked playfully, turning to him.

Kevin shrugged. **“I don’t know. We’ll have to ask Bonian.”**

Bringing up Bonian meant one thing: once the authorities arrived and confirmed the woman was faking, they could decide how many years she’d serve.

Terrified, the woman backed down. **“You—you remember this! You’ll get what’s coming to you! I won’t let you live in peace!”**

She had no case against Norah. With nothing left to say, she left with her two kids.

Kevin wrapped his arm around Norah. **“I told you to go upstairs. Why didn’t you listen? From now on, are you planning to fight beside me no matter what?”**

“Yes.” Her response was firm.

Norah nudged him. **“You’re still trying to protect me like before. But that’s not how marriage works. We’re in this together. When something happens, you’re there for me—and when you’re in trouble, I’ll stand with you.”**

Her eyes were full of determination.

Kevin felt warmth spread through him. He smiled softly. **“Having you in my life is enough.”**

Just then, Norah’s phone rang. It was Gloria.

They kept in touch regularly—but she never expected Gloria to ask for money.

“Norah, I need cash. Give me a card you don’t use, and help me leave the capital tonight.”

Gloria wasn’t someone who lacked money.

That’s how Norah knew—something was wrong.

Norah’s face turned serious. **“How much? One million?”**

She was testing to see if Gloria needed police help.

Gloria, a longtime friend, understood instantly and chuckled. **“No, Norah. I need five million.”**

Chapter 603

Norah finally let out a breath.

If Gloria needed money, Norah would help without hesitation.

“I’ll send it to you. Tell me where you are—or do you want to come get it?” Norah asked, thinking everything through.

“Send it to me,” Gloria replied. **“And help me leave the capital tonight.”**

Gloria had considered packing, but then realized as long as she had money, she didn’t need anything else.

“Okay.”

Norah hung up, then received Gloria’s location—a hotel.

She immediately transferred five million from one of her accounts and turned to Kevin. **“Can you arrange a few people to come with me?”**

She wanted someone to escort Gloria safely out of the city.

Kevin frowned. **“You’re not taking me with you?”**

“Gloria wants to see me. Just send a few people.” Her tone made it clear—he wasn’t going.

Kevin’s voice grew tense. **“Martin’s woman just left. They didn’t get anything. Who knows what they’ll do next. You can’t go alone.”**

“If you insist, fine. Come.”

Norah noticed the concern in his eyes and softened.

Kevin wrapped an arm around her waist. **“Of course I’m coming with you.”**

Meanwhile, in the hotel—

After Gloria ended the call, she waited.

But within minutes, she heard the door click open.

Her body tensed.

She turned—and saw Johnny walking in with heavy steps.

His black eyes were cold, like dull blades.

And his presence was suffocating—he looked like a demon straight out of hell.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

He closed the distance between them.

His oppressive energy made Gloria feel like she couldn’t breathe. **“Where I go is none of your business. We’re not kids anymore—why do you keep interfering in my life?”**

She was done living under his shadow.

Her past relationships had all failed—cheaters, liars, men who ghosted her, or those with... unusual preferences.

Even the ones arranged by Johnny or her family were disasters.

She used to think she was just unlucky—until she accidentally stepped into Johnny’s study one day and discovered the truth.

Photos of her on his computer, his desktop, his walls.

Johnny had a wife. Yet he still hovered over her life.

Five years of obsession. She was done.

She wanted no more fame, no more fortune—just freedom.

She asked Norah for five million to start over.

But she never expected Johnny to come after her.

His face was dark—twisted.

Gloria was terrified.

“I’m not trying to control you,” Johnny said. “But your dad’s dead. Your mom’s gone. I’m the only one left who cares. I’m the only one who can protect you.”

He reached for her.

But his touch made her skin crawl. **“I don’t want your help! I already called Norah—my best friend. You know who she is. If you hurt me, she and her husband won’t forgive you!”**

Johnny laughed. **“You think anyone would believe you? You really want me to expose our relationship?”**

Gloria froze.

She thought of the past five years—his voice, his touch, everything.

“Ah—!”

She couldn’t take it.

She grabbed a crystal glass from the coffee table and smashed it.

Holding a shard to her neck, she screamed, **“Don’t push me. I swear, I’ll do it right in front of you!”**

She wasn’t bluffing.

And as soon as she spoke, the glass cut deep.

Johnny lunged forward, pressing down on the wound. **“Are you insane? After everything I’ve done for you, how am I not good enough?”**

He had supported her every step. She just never knew.

But now she wanted to run.

“You’ve been good to me,” Gloria said, her voice weak. **“I know. But what we have—it’s not right. I don’t want it. I just want something normal—”**

She tried to push him away, but he was immovable.

Johnny scooped her into his arms. **“When you recover, tell me what you want.”**

He carried her out.

Gloria smelled blood.

Her head spun.

Outside the hotel, they ran into Norah and Kevin. When Norah saw Gloria bleeding, she rushed after them.

Kevin held Norah close. **“It’s okay. Medicine’s advanced now. She’ll be okay...”**

“Kevin, I’m scared! Besides you, all I have is my dad, my adoptive parents, Cooper... and Gloria. She’s my best friend. If something happens to her—”

Norah broke down crying.

The blood—so much blood. How deep must that wound be?

Kevin held her tighter, rubbing her back. **“I’ll call Cody. I’ll have him treat her personally.”**

Chapter 604

After calling the sedimentation tank, Kevin quickly explained the situation and urged the driver to speed up.

On the way, Johnny sat silently, his face tight with emotion. He kept trying to move Norah aside, wanting to be closer to Gloria to protect her. But in the end, he didn’t act—he just stared at Gloria.

His gaze grew deeper and more unreadable. Kevin noticed but didn’t press him.

He didn’t know what had happened earlier, and Johnny wasn’t offering an explanation. Asking now would only seem intrusive.

Besides, at this point, anything Johnny said might not be reliable.

When they arrived at the hospital, Cody showed up as well.

Before Kevin could speak, Norah grabbed Cody's hands. "Cody, whatever it takes, save my friend. Please, you must."

Kevin gently pulled her back and tried to calm her down. "I told him already—Gloria is very important. He'll do everything he can."

"Yes, anything. Just save her. I can't live without Gloria."

Norah broke down in tears.

Kevin wrapped his arms around her and gave Cody a firm nod.

As Cody headed toward the emergency room, Johnny suddenly stepped forward to block him. Cody stopped and looked at him. "You need something?"

"No matter the cost, just keep her alive. I mean it—money's not an issue. Please..."

"Oh?" Cody gave Johnny a blank look, then turned and entered the operating room without another word.

The red light above the door lit up, and everyone grew tense.

Norah stared at Gloria's blood on her palm, her eyes welling up again.

Suddenly, she looked up and glared at Johnny. "Why did this happen to her?"

Johnny said nothing.

Silence can mean many things, and Norah imagined the worst. Her heart sank at the thought of her best friend being wronged.

She stepped closer, demanding, "Why did Gloria end up like this?"

Johnny lifted his eyes briefly to Kevin, then lowered them again, still silent.

To Norah, that silence was an admission—he was guilty.

She lunged at him in anger, but Kevin stopped her just in time.

"He hurt Gloria. I'm going to make him pay!"

Norah's emotions spiraled out of control. It wasn't good for her—or the baby.

Kevin had no choice but to pick her up and carry her into the elevator. He didn't set her down until they began descending.

They said nothing. Kevin gently wiped away her tears.

"I failed her," Norah sobbed. "If I'd gotten there sooner, this wouldn't have happened."

The thought of Gloria suffering alone crushed her.

She felt like a terrible friend. She'd known something was wrong when Gloria asked to borrow money, but hadn't acted fast enough.

She could've sent someone to check the hotel first and maybe prevented all of this.

The more she thought about it, the more guilt consumed her, and the tears kept falling.

Kevin watched her in pain, unsure how to comfort her.

At this point, only Gloria waking up would ease Norah's guilt.

Suddenly, Norah frowned.

Kevin noticed right away. "What's wrong?"

Norah shook her head, but instinctively placed a hand on her belly.

That tiny movement alarmed Kevin. He immediately decided she needed a check-up.

Nothing could happen to the baby—or to Norah.

The doctor wrote a prescription, and Kevin took Norah to the prenatal area. While she waited in line, he ran downstairs to pay.

Norah sat, drained. Her mind kept replaying Gloria lying unconscious.

"Norah, it's your turn."

Someone called out.

Without realizing Kevin had the documents, Norah walked into the exam room. She slipped off her shoes and lay down before the nurse even spoke.

Then she noticed something strange—a woman walking out of the room. She wasn't pregnant.

A non-pregnant woman in the prenatal area was odd.

Just then, a hospital announcement echoed—turns out, it wasn't Norah's turn yet.

She immediately got up and put on her shoes. As she approached the door, she overheard a conversation.

“That’s her. That woman said she’d give us \$100,000 if we got Norah to her.”

“Can we trust her?”

“Why not? She said she’s Martin’s lover. I checked—Edwards Group really does have a president named Martin. He’s legit.”

Martin. Norah instantly thought of the mistress who’d come to her house.

A faint smile tugged at her lips. After adjusting her mood, she lay back down.

But she hadn’t forgotten her baby. She had to stay alert.

A moment later, the same woman from before returned.

“Mrs. Edwards,” she said politely, “Mr. Edwards arranged for you to receive VIP treatment. Please follow me to a private room.”

She sounded professional. If Norah hadn’t overheard their plan, she might’ve believed her.

After all, hospitals do make special arrangements for certain patients.

But Norah wasn’t fooled.

Still, she didn’t question her. She quietly followed.

The woman took her through another elevator, avoiding Kevin, and hurried along.

Anyone paying attention would know something wasn’t right. And Norah already knew the truth.

“Slow down,” she said. “I’m pregnant. I can’t move that fast.”

The woman slowed slightly. They passed several hospital wings, finally reaching a side door.

Norah stopped. “This isn’t a prenatal exam area. Where are we going?”

“This hospital has another VIP room—just across the street.”

The woman tried to play it off, pulling Norah through the door.

Norah sent a message to Kevin and followed, pretending to believe her.

Across the street stood a commercial building, its upper floors abandoned.

The woman led her to the top floor. At the broken-down door, Norah gave a small laugh.

The woman jumped and shoved her inside. "Hurry! We can't be seen."

Inside, Norah found Martin's mistress—Sandra—lounging on a torn-up sofa.

Norah chuckled again.

"What are you laughing at?" Sandra snapped.

Norah didn't answer. She surveyed the room, then sat on a half-decent stool.

Her legs ached from walking so much.

"I asked what you were laughing at," Sandra repeated, irritated.

Norah smiled at the woman who'd led her in. "Where's the third one? Shouldn't she be here too?"

Only then did they realize Norah had been onto them the whole time. But instead of panicking, they stayed calm.

Chapter 605

Sandra smirked. "I was going to keep it quiet, but since you already know, no point hiding it. Come out—she figured it out."

Nurse Li emerged from the back room, glaring at Norah with pure hatred.

Norah gave her a calm smile.

"What are you smiling at?" Nurse Li snapped. "You found out—so what? You're in our hands now. No one's coming to save you."

"Oh?" Norah raised an eyebrow.

Infuriated, Nurse Li stormed over, grabbed her collar, and yanked her up.

Norah, careful not to hurt the baby, pushed herself up and stared coldly at her. "You're digging your own grave."

"Really?" Nurse Li sneered, glancing at Sandra. "Once I get the money, my aunt and I are gone. No one will know—God, the world, not even you."

"Enough chatter," Sandra said. "Step aside. I've got things to do."

Nurse Li shoved Norah and stood beside Sandra.

Sandra crossed her legs arrogantly. “Call Kevin. Tell him to transfer the Edwards Group to me, or I’ll throw you out this window. I’ll go to jail, but you’ll vanish.”

“You’re threatening me?” Norah’s tone was calm. She’d already texted Kevin and knew help was on the way.

All she had to do was stall.

Sandra raised a stick and walked toward her. “Yes, I’m threatening you. So what?”

Norah stared her down. “Aren’t you worried your baby can hear you? Do you think he’ll love a mother like that?”

Sandra froze.

Norah continued, “At your stage, the baby can hear and feel. Everything you say, everything you do, he knows. Aren’t you afraid he’ll resent you from the start?”

“Shut up!”

Sandra lost it and swung the stick. Norah dodged, but it hit her right arm hard.

She gasped in pain.

Sandra grinned cruelly. “Keep talking, and next time I’ll aim for your belly.”

Norah gritted her teeth. “If you want the Edwards Group, you’d better keep me and this baby alive. If I die, you won’t get anything.”

Her words were cold and fierce. Sandra hesitated.

Finally, Sandra shoved a phone in her face. “Stop stalling. Call him.”

“No need.”

A voice rang out—and Kevin stepped in, flanked by a dozen officers who quickly restrained everyone.

Sandra screamed at Kevin, “You stole the Edwards family from us! You’ll pay for this one day!”

Kevin ignored her and rushed to Norah. “Did they hurt you?”

“She hit my arm,” Norah cried, burying her face in his chest. “If you were a second later... I don’t know what would’ve happened.”

Kevin turned to the officers. “You know what to do. Don’t show mercy to people like this.”

He was seething. Norah and the baby were his bottom line—no one touches them.

Nurse Li tried to resist one last time, but Kevin's icy glare shut her down.

At the station, after giving statements, Kevin gently scolded Norah while pinching her nose. "Why did you go with them when you knew something was off?"

"You figured it out."

Norah rubbed her sore arm, and Kevin rolled his eyes.

Of course he did. After all these years, he could read her like a book.

"I just wanted to end things for good. But fine, I won't do that again."

"Do you realize how dangerous that was? What if something happened? What would I do then?"

Before he could finish, Norah kissed him. Kevin froze—then kissed her back.

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Five months later.

A sleek black car pulled up at the hospital. Kevin got out, walked to the back, and opened the door for Norah.

He helped her out gently and guided her inside.

Norah was heavily pregnant and struggled to walk, even with support.

"You're finally here. I've been waiting for two hours," Cody complained, approaching them.

Kevin smiled without a hint of guilt. "Sorry—something came up."

"Let me guess—were you trying to stop Norah from coming? Afraid to hear the baby's gender?"

Last night, Kevin had asked Cody to find out if they were having a boy or girl. Cody assumed Kevin wanted a boy.

Now, with them arriving late, Cody was suspicious.

Kevin chuckled. "Come on. Do I seem like that kind of person?"

Norah, too tired to stand, urged them to speed it up.

Cody called a nurse to bring a wheelchair and wheeled Norah into the exam room.

After a while, Cody came out looking serious.

Kevin rushed over. “How’s the baby? Is everything okay?”

“The baby’s healthy.”

Cody gave Kevin a look. Clearly, Kevin only cared about the baby.

“Boy or girl?” Kevin asked.

“It’s a girl. And just so you know, it’s illegal to ask. I’m only telling you because I know you. But don’t blame me later—this child stays.”

Cody warned him, expecting disappointment—but Kevin swept him into a hug and spun him around.

Pharaoh and Cooper showed up.

“You did the checkup?” they asked in unison.

“It’s a girl. I finally have both—a son and a daughter!” Kevin laughed, hugging Cooper and smothering him with kisses.

Pharaoh was stunned, then burst out cheering. “A granddaughter! I have both now—this is amazing!”

“I have a sister now? Can I take her to buy candy?” Cooper asked excitedly.

Cody stood to the side, dumbfounded. He’d met people desperate for a boy—but never someone this thrilled to have a girl.

Chapter

606

“Mom, Dad said I’m going to have a sister.”

As soon as Norah stepped out of the prenatal exam room, Cooper ran up and hugged her tightly. She beamed with joy the moment she heard what he said.

One son and one daughter—that’s all she ever wanted.

“Mom, are you happy?”

Cooper tilted his little head, looking up at her with hopeful eyes.

Norah nodded. “Mom’s always wanted a daughter. Of course I’m happy.”

“Awesome!” Cooper cheered, then paused. “I want to get my sister a gift. Mom, can we go shopping later?”

Norah had already planned to pack the hospital bag and get the baby’s things ready soon.

She gently took Cooper’s hand and nodded. That simple gesture lit up Cooper’s face with excitement.

To make it easier for Norah to get around, Kevin had Cody bring a wheelchair, and the group headed to the pedestrian street.

Their first stop was a baby store. The shelves were packed with all kinds of products, and the choices were overwhelming.

Norah looked at one thing, then another, thinking they were all beautiful—she wanted to buy them all.

This time, choosing felt harder than ever.

“You don’t need too many clothes. Babies grow fast. Just get a few outfits to rotate,” Kevin offered gently, speaking from experience.

Norah held up a tiny hat and smiled at him. “It’s so small and cute.”

“If you like it, then get it.”

Kevin picked up a few more hats and pointed to the clothing section. “Let’s check that out.”

Norah had no idea what to choose, so she just followed his lead.

Meanwhile, Cooper was picking out a gift for his baby sister. He browsed through item after item but couldn’t find the right one—until a small, lifelike doll caught his eye.

Cooper ran over and picked it up. “This is the one.”

Pharaoh smiled. “Good choice.”

When it comes to gifts, it’s the thought that counts—not whether the recipient will like it or not.

Even though a newborn can’t play with dolls, Pharaoh didn’t tell Cooper that. Let the kid give what he wants.

After picking out their items, they found Norah and the others in the shoes and socks section.

“Whoa, Mom! Are you trying to buy the whole store?” Cooper asked in surprise.

Both shopping carts were packed, and Kevin was still holding more things.

Norah gave Kevin a look and said to Cooper, “This isn’t your mom’s doing—it’s all your dad’s.”

They had agreed to buy just a few things, but it looked like they were clearing out the whole place.

Kevin smiled, clearly enjoying himself. He asked the clerk to bring another cart, then said seriously, “This is my first time shopping for my daughter. I couldn’t help myself. It’s fine—I’ve got the money. It’s a small expense.”

Is it really about money?

Pharaoh shook his head. Babies grow fast, and most of these clothes will be outgrown before they’re even worn.

Still, no one said anything. Kevin looked happy, and Cooper joined in, carefully picking out a few soft baby shoes.

Seeing Kevin choosing socks, Cooper ran over and picked out a handful himself.

“We have to give our sister the best, right, Dad?”

“Exactly. We should love our sister just like we love Mom—and give her the best.”

Kevin rubbed Cooper’s head, feeling proud and content.

A son and a daughter. A smart, thoughtful boy and a sweet little girl on the way. What more could he ask for in life?

As they left the mall, they saw two girls arguing over a cup of milk tea outside a shop. Each wanted the other to take the last sip. Neither gave in, and eventually, they tossed the half-finished cup and bought two new ones.

Norah fell silent, lost in thought.

She and Gloria used to be just like that—always worrying about shortchanging each other, never wanting the other to go without.

“What’s wrong? Want some milk tea?” Kevin noticed her mood shift and leaned down to ask.

Norah shook her head and forced a smile. “I want to visit Gloria at the hospital.”

Kevin immediately asked Pharaoh to take Cooper home and went with Norah to Gloria’s ward.

Just as they were about to enter, Johnny walked out. All three froze.

“What are you doing here? Haven’t you done enough damage to Gloria?” Norah shot him a cold glare.

Johnny glanced at Kevin but didn't argue. He stepped aside and let them in.

Lying in bed, Gloria looked even thinner than before. Her face had grown even paler.

Norah's tears fell instantly. "Gloria..." she choked out.

Gloria had so much to say, but the words caught in her throat.

"I'm going to find the doctor and ask what's going on. Stay here with her. I'll be right back."

Kevin understood—this moment belonged to them. Even if Gloria was still weak, Norah needed to be with her.

He quietly closed the door but didn't actually go to the doctor. Norah was pregnant—he didn't want to leave her alone for too long.

Inside the room, Norah's tears landed on Gloria's hand.

Gloria's fingers twitched—just slightly, but Norah saw it.

"Gloria! You're awake, aren't you? Please look at me." Norah gripped her hand, gently touched her face. "It's me—Norah. Please, open your eyes."

"Norah..." Gloria whispered faintly.

She was awake—but the spark in her eyes was gone, replaced by despair.

Norah's heart shattered. She leaned close and whispered, "I'm here, Gloria. I'm not going anywhere."

Tears streamed silently onto the pillow.

Norah quickly wiped her eyes and encouraged her, "It's okay. I'll handle everything. I won't let anyone hurt you again."

"Thank you... I want to leave here," Gloria whispered.

She didn't say anything more, just looked at Norah, waiting for a response.

Norah nodded. "Okay. Tell me where you want to go. I'll help you."

Hearing that, a faint smile crossed Gloria's face. "Thank you," she said again.

Norah shook her head and gently stood up, showing her pregnant belly. "Look—it's a girl. I've decided you'll be her godmother. She'll love and honor you."

"Then I've claimed this little one," Gloria said softly. "I haven't picked out a gift yet, but I will. It'll be something really special."

She reached out and touched Norah's belly, surprised to feel the baby move.

"She likes you," Norah said. "When Kevin tried, she didn't even react."

"Really? Baby loves her godmother already. I'm so happy." Gloria's voice trembled.

But deep down, it hurt.

She wanted a normal life too. A husband, a child—everything Norah had.

Chapter

607

As that thought sank in, Gloria's eyes dimmed again.

Seeing her expression change, Norah quickly took her hand and sat beside her. "Whatever happened, it's in the past now. Just tell me where you want to go—I'll take care of it."

After Gloria got into trouble, Norah had thought about a lot of things.

If Gloria suddenly needed to borrow money, something serious must've happened. And Norah was her only friend—there was no one else she could turn to.

So Norah had made up her mind: as long as Gloria woke up, she'd agree to anything she asked.

If she wanted to leave, then let her leave.

She wasted no time. There was a wheelchair nearby, and she gently helped Gloria into it, ready to take her out of the ward.

"What are you doing?" Kevin was surprised to see Gloria awake—but where were they going?

"She wants to leave, and I promised her. Let's go. I won't wait another minute."

Norah looked at Kevin with pleading eyes. "You'll support me, right?"

Kevin stroked her head. "Of course I will. But we need to give the hospital an explanation first. Take her downstairs, I'll handle the discharge with Cody."

Kevin didn't think Gloria's problems were solved just by leaving, but he didn't stop her either.

After Norah and Gloria got into the elevator, he went to find Cody.

The discharge process went quickly, and the three of them left the hospital.

Gloria let out a long breath, a small smile on her face.

Norah noticed and felt a surge of joy. She squeezed her hand and said, "Come to our house first. You can change clothes, eat something, and we'll get you to the airport after that."

"Thank you, Norah. I'm so glad I have you." Gloria hugged her tightly, but just as she was about to say more—

Kevin hit the brakes hard.

Gloria instinctively shielded Norah. "Boss Edwards, don't you know she's pregnant? What are you—"

Before she could finish, she saw who had exited the car in front of them: Johnny.

She started shaking.

Norah clung to her. "It's okay, Gloria. We won't let him win."

She urged Kevin to drive.

Johnny had sent three cars: one blocked the front, one blocked the left lane, and the third followed behind.

They were surrounded.

Johnny knocked on the window and pointed outside, demanding they get out.

"I'm not getting out," Gloria said, panicked. "Norah, I need to leave—now!"

Norah hesitated, but Johnny suddenly smashed the front passenger window and threatened, "If you care about the baby in Norah's belly, you'll get out now."

"Johnny! Don't threaten us. You wouldn't dare hurt us in broad daylight," Norah snapped.

"Mrs. Edwards, maybe you don't believe me. But what about Mr. Edwards? Are you really going to gamble with your wife and child's lives?"

Johnny's cold stare turned to Kevin.

Kevin couldn't risk it—not with Norah and the baby. But Gloria mattered deeply to Norah, and now he was stuck.

"I won't hurt Gloria," Johnny said. "I'm happy she's awake, but I'm angry you tried to take her from me."

He turned to Gloria. "Come out. I just want to talk. If you still want to leave afterward, I won't stop you."

"Really?"

Gloria didn't want Norah hurt either. Moved by his words, she hesitated.

Johnny seized the moment, repeating his promise.

"Okay. Make your people back off. I'll talk to you."

She still put Norah first—if things went wrong, Kevin could drive off and protect her.

The cars pulled aside, clearing the road. Kevin also parked off to the side.

As Gloria opened the door, Norah stopped her.

"I want braised pork," Gloria said with a smile. "Tell your maid to make some."

"I'll call right now. But promise me—you'll come right back if anything feels wrong."

Norah watched nervously as Gloria stepped out.

Johnny rushed over before she could even walk to him, pulled her aside, and hugged her tightly.

"You're awake... I thought... I was so scared."

His embrace was suffocating.

Gloria pushed against him. "You're hurting me. Let go."

But Johnny held her tighter. "I can't lose you. Not again."

"You promised—if I still wanted to leave, you wouldn't stop me. Did you forget?"

Gloria's panic returned. Johnny never kept his word—never had.

She tried to get back to the car, but she had just woken up. Her strength hadn't returned.

Johnny's grip scared her.

Then, he suddenly let go, cupping her face. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I was scared... so scared."

He rambled and then tried to pick her up. "Let's go home. I'll get your braised pork."

"I don't want to..." Gloria resisted fiercely.

Johnny didn't expect her to struggle so hard—and she broke free.

"Catch her!" he shouted.

Norah heard and threw open the car door. "Gloria, get in—now!"

But they were too far.

Gloria, out of options, darted into the busy street.

If she could make it across, she could escape Johnny for good.

She just wanted to start over somewhere no one knew her.

That's all she wanted.

She ran faster.

She couldn't see clearly through the traffic. A car hit her—and she smiled.

If this was how it ended, maybe it wasn't so bad.

"Gloria!"

Johnny's voice roared behind her.

That made her smile even wider.

Bang!

A loud crash—and Gloria was thrown aside.

The pain wasn't as bad as she expected. Just a scraped knee.

But when she opened her eyes, she froze.

Johnny lay in a pool of blood, unconscious.

"No... why? Why would you do this for me? Why can't you just let me go?"

Tears streamed down her face.

She wanted to crawl to him, to hold him—but she couldn't find the strength.

Chapter 608

Outside the hospital emergency room, Johnny's wife, Winnie Turner, stormed in with her people. The moment she spotted Gloria, she marched over and slapped her hard across the face.

Norah immediately pulled Gloria behind her, glaring at Winnie.

"Do you know why I hit you?" Winnie's voice was icy.

Gloria nodded.

She figured it was because of Johnny. If it weren't for her, Johnny wouldn't be in the emergency room right now.

"Since you know, are you still going to let your friends protect you?" Winnie asked again, her tone even colder than before.

Gloria stepped forward and choked out an apology. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry?" Winnie sneered. "You think 'sorry' is enough? If it weren't for you, none of this would've happened. You're the root of it all, Gloria."

Norah couldn't take it anymore. She pulled Gloria back behind her and faced Winnie head-on. "Mrs. Turner, I think you're missing some key facts. It was Mr. Turner who—"

"Norah, stop." Gloria cut her off before she could finish.

She took full responsibility for Johnny's accident. Even though she knew Johnny wouldn't let her leave, she insisted on it anyway. Winnie was right—she was the root of the problem.

Gloria apologized again. The fresh scar on her neck was jarring. Winnie frowned.

Winnie turned to her people. "Let everyone know—Miss Turner is not allowed anywhere near Mr. Turner unless I say so."

Then she looked Gloria straight in the eye. "That okay with you? Or are you planning to stay and take care of him?"

"No," Gloria replied softly. "I'll do whatever you say. And... sister-in-law, once he wakes up, I'll leave and never come back."

She wanted to make it clear that there were no hidden motives.

Unexpectedly, Winnie let out a few sharp laughs.

"Gloria, you really are something. No wonder Johnny's so hung up on you. You've got tricks. Maybe you should teach the rest of us."

Gloria knew she was in the wrong and said nothing. Winnie raised her hand to strike her again, but Norah grabbed her arm.

Winnie shot Norah a glare. “If Mrs. Edwards stops me again, don’t blame me for what I’ll do.”

“I’ll protect Gloria no matter what. I don’t care what happens to Johnny. Nobody is laying a hand on her.” Norah stood in front of Gloria, refusing to back down.

Winnie snapped, shouting curses.

Just then, the emergency room doors opened and a nurse rushed out, hurrying down the hall.

Everyone tensed. Gloria’s guilt intensified, and tears slid down her cheeks.

Winnie sat down, supported by her people, staring blankly ahead.

Norah, worried that Winnie might lash out again, pulled Gloria to the far side of the waiting area. She sat beside Gloria, on her left, deliberately blocking her from seeing Winnie’s furious expression.

Time dragged on. The nurse ran out and back in a third time.

Then Winnie spoke, voice low. “Do you really think you earned your success? Every art show, every connection—you think that was your doing? No. Johnny arranged it all. Without him, you’d still be nobody.”

She motioned to her man. “Show her what she owes him.”

The man handed Gloria a thick folder.

Inside were detailed records of everything Johnny had done for her over the years—from major exhibitions to small clothing items. Every little thing. It played back in Gloria’s mind like a film.

Pop.

The folder hit the floor.

Gloria dropped to her knees, clutching her head. “No... It’s not like that... It’s not...”

She had always believed Johnny controlled her life—dictated what she wore, where she went. But she’d never thought he was helping her behind the scenes. Supporting her.

Norah stepped in. “Mrs. Turner, even if what you said is true, that doesn’t give you the right to hurt Gloria.”

She still believed Johnny was at fault. After everything he'd done, especially today, she didn't want Gloria anywhere near him.

Winnie stood up, a cold smile on her face. She pointed at Gloria. "Didn't you say you were leaving? Go. Leave. I want to see if you really mean it, or if this is all an act."

"I'm not your guest. I feel nothing for you," she added coldly.

Her words were harsh and final—but they were also what Gloria needed to hear.

Still... she hesitated.

Johnny was still in surgery. Gloria couldn't just walk away. Not like this.

She just couldn't.

"Fine, we're leaving," Norah said firmly. "Mrs. Turner, keep Mr. Turner away from Gloria. She doesn't need any more pain."

She pulled Gloria away.

Kevin hadn't said a word the whole time. Once they got into the car, he turned to her and gently asked, "Gloria, are you still planning to leave?"

Norah turned, shocked. "Of course she is. You saw what Johnny's like. She has to go. We don't need anything from him."

Gloria bit her lip and said softly, "I'll leave after he wakes up. No matter what, the accident was because of me. I can't just run away."

Norah was frustrated—but she understood.

She squeezed Gloria's hand gently. "Okay. Stay at our place. I'll have someone keep an eye on Johnny's condition and let you know the moment there's news."

"Thank you, Norah."

Gloria was grateful, but the words felt stuck in her throat.

She knew she had to leave eventually—but she had to do it right. Tie up loose ends. Return what needed to be returned.

Like the art exhibition.

Since Johnny had made it happen, it only felt right to pull out of it.

Norah understood and supported her completely.

They made an appointment with the investor and went to meet him together.

When they arrived at the teahouse, Norah noticed someone following them. But since she couldn't confirm who it was, she didn't act on it.

The investor was already there. After some pleasantries, he began praising Gloria's paintings, even pointing out specific pieces. Clearly, he'd done his homework.

Gloria gave a modest smile. She was about to suggest canceling the exhibition—but before she could finish, the waiter interrupted.

After placing down the tea, the waiter looked at Gloria and asked excitedly, "Ms. Turner, are you the same Miss Turner from the art exhibition?"

"I am," she replied.

The waiter covered her mouth, tearing up with joy. "I can't believe it! I finally get to meet you!"

A fan.

The investor saw an opening. "Ms. Turner, we'd like to hold an exhibition across the capital. What do you say?"

Gloria hesitated.

Norah stepped in. "I'm sorry, my friend's currently overwhelmed and doesn't have time to manage another show."

The investor laughed. "Ms. Turner, you just focus on creating. We'll handle the rest."

Norah was about to say more, but the waiter jumped in again, holding Gloria's hands. "I'll definitely bring my whole family to support you!"

Chapter

609

Not wanting to disappoint her fans, Gloria agreed.

But the interview didn't go as planned. She rambled through the conversation, clearly distracted, just wanting to get it over with.

Finally, the investor got a phone call and left early.

Gloria quietly let out a sigh of relief.

Norah frowned. "What am I going to do with you? You don't want to keep enjoying Johnny's protection, but you also can't bear to let your fans down."

"It's fine. Johnny's still unconscious anyway. And I'm stuck here for now, so let's just go along with whatever the investors want. If we cooperate this time, maybe they'll go easier on us next time."

Gloria gave a bitter smile. Truthfully, she had no idea what was really going on.

If the other party wanted to buy Johnny's account, everything hinged on Johnny's decision.

She'd already prepared to pay for breaching the contract—but she never expected to have to hold another event.

Gloria sighed again.

Norah shot her a displeased look.

When they went downstairs, Norah spotted someone following them—it was the same woman Winnie brought with her that day.

Their eyes met. The woman calmly raised her teacup and nodded.

Norah returned the gesture subtly but felt her heart sink.

Winnie had someone tailing them. That much was clear.

Why? Norah didn't know.

In the days that followed, Gloria stayed holed up in her room, focused on her paintings. She only came downstairs occasionally to eat with Norah.

A week later, they received word: Johnny had been moved out of the ICU and into a regular ward. His condition was better—but he still hadn't woken up.

Norah wanted to tell Gloria but Kevin stopped her.

"I promised Gloria I'd tell her the moment there was news," Norah said, confused.

Kevin replied, "From what I know, Johnny is still in the ICU. I'm not questioning your source—but I do question the motive behind leaking that information."

He glanced upstairs, his expression serious. "I've been digging into this. Gloria's success really was due to Johnny's support. But why would Johnny go so far for her without a reason?"

"I don't know, and honestly, I don't want to know," Norah said, lips tight. "But if Winnie's trying to start something, then fine—I'll play along."

"Don't forget, you're pregnant now," Kevin reminded her, gently pinching her cheek. "If they don't move, we don't move. Let's wait to see who cracks first."

That sounded like a plan.

Norah leaned in and kissed him. “My husband’s so clever. For your reward—go fetch me some water to soak my feet.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Kevin grinned and headed upstairs.

As he passed Gloria’s door, he glanced at it, deep in thought.

The art exhibition was just three days away. People had been coming to pick up Gloria’s paintings for the event setup.

The promotion had gone well. If Johnny were awake, Gloria might have actually been proud of the outcome.

But knowing all of it was because of Johnny’s help left her feeling uncomfortable.

She didn’t know how to deal with it.

Outwardly, she looked successful and radiant. Inside, she felt like a mess.

Crash!

She’d accidentally knocked over her last painting.

Norah rushed in at the noise and was stunned. “Are you stressing too much? It’s okay. We’ll skip drawing any numbers today. Let’s go out, have a drink, do some karaoke, maybe shop a little.”

Gloria didn’t respond. She just sat on the ground, head in her hands. Then she lay down and fell asleep right there.

On the day of the exhibition, the moment the host announced the opening, fans flooded in.

“What the hell? There aren’t any paintings here. What kind of exhibition is this? I want a refund!”

“Yeah! Refund us now!”

The complaints grew louder and louder. Soon, the whole crowd demanded their money back.

The host was baffled. Gloria was even more shocked.

She’d been painting day and night—finishing 99 pieces. She’d ruined the 100th, but the rest should’ve been displayed.

But now, nothing was there.

The investor arrived after getting the news. Seeing the angry mob, he rushed inside to confirm for himself.

Nothing. Not a single painting.

Furious, he snapped, “If this is your idea of cooperation, then prepare to compensate me for the loss.”

Then he turned to the crowd. “If you want a refund, talk to Miss Turner. I got scammed too. I’m just a victim.”

“No, I didn’t scam anyone! Your people came to pick up the paintings—I don’t know why they didn’t put them back!”

Gloria pulled out the receipts. Each clearly listed the painting, who picked it up, and when.

The investor glared at the papers. “This is ridiculous. That person doesn’t even work for us. If you’re going to fake something, at least get one of our employees to play along.”

“I’m not lying! My friend has surveillance at her house. Come with me and I’ll show you—”

“Fine, but refund the tickets first. My lawyer will deal with you tomorrow.”

Then he shoved her toward the angry crowd.

Everyone surrounded Gloria, yelling for their money back.

She didn’t have enough to cover it and could only stand there, helpless, as the insults poured in.

Just as she felt like she might pass out, someone pushed through the crowd and caught her.

“Relax. I’ll handle the refunds. Everyone, go find that man and get your money.”

The voice belonged to Nathan Gendron, who was now holding up a suitcase full of cash.

The crowd rushed to him, eager for their refund—no longer caring who paid it.

Nathan carried Gloria to his car, gave her some water, and looked at her with concern.

She slowly came to. Her first reaction was to open the door and leave.

But Nathan locked it just in time. “I only got them off your back for now. If you go out again, I may not be able to save you next time.”

Gloria looked out the window, then sat back, giving up on leaving.

Still, she kept her distance. “I’ll pay you back tomorrow.”

“It’s not about the money. Just tell me what happened. Maybe I can help.”

“No. I’ll handle it myself.”

She thought of Norah. As long as she reached her, Norah would find a way.

Gloria handed him an address. “Take me here.”

Nathan didn’t ask a single question the entire way.

When they were almost there, he slowed down. “You know, you could try depending on me, Gloria. I swear I’m trustworthy.”

He raised one hand solemnly.

Gloria chuckled, then quickly shook her head with a sigh.

“Why? I’m not asking for anything. I just want to help.”

Nathan couldn’t understand why she still kept him at arm’s length.

Chapter

610

“Thanks for the ride. And for bailing me out today.”

When they got to Norah’s house, Gloria opened the car door and got out—no hesitation, no second thoughts.

Nathan stood there dumbfounded. Most girls would be eager to cozy up to him. But Gloria? She just walked away.

Feeling a little deflated, he called out, “Aren’t you going to invite me in?”

When she turned back, he gave a wide smile. “I’m suddenly really thirsty. Mind if I borrow some tea from your house?”

Gloria frowned slightly. “Sorry, I’m staying at someone else’s house. It’s not very convenient. Mr. Gendron, please head back.”

Then she turned and left without another word.

Watching her disappear, Nathan silently cursed himself for being an idiot.

Gloria wasn’t like other women. That pick-up line had no effect. What was he thinking?

Just then, he noticed her silhouette through the second-floor window—her graceful form made his blood heat up. That sight lit a fire in him.

It wasn't over. He was ready to go all-in.

He left, humming a tune.

Inside, Norah had been watching the car. After seeing him drive off, she asked, "Are you really not into this Nathan guy at all?"

"Yeah. I'm not staying here forever, and I don't want to get close to anyone except you. Besides, love feels out of reach for me. I can't afford to hope for it."

Her voice was soft, but heavy with sorrow.

Norah hugged her. "No matter what happened before, things will get better. What's yours will come back to you."

The words hit Gloria hard. Her eyes filled with tears. She quickly pushed Norah away and said jokingly, "I was finally done crying, and you brought it all back. I'm punishing you—you have to sleep with me tonight."

"No way. Kevin won't allow it. Besides, if you want to pay Nathan back properly, you'd better drop that idea."

Norah sat down and opened a notebook on the table. As soon as she saw the document on the screen, something clicked.

She checked the surveillance footage and saw that the same person came to pick up the paintings each time—and drove the same car.

It all seemed fine—until she rewatched footage from the first day.

That person had greeted Norah and the staff politely.

But the person who came the next day was cold, barely acknowledging anyone.

Someone had switched places.

So why wasn't the first painting displayed at the event either?

Then she noticed the license plate.

It looked familiar—too familiar. It was the same as the one the woman following them had used.

"The one behind this was Winnie. She sabotaged the whole thing," Norah said, pointing to the footage.

Gloria frowned. "Why would she do that? Wouldn't that hurt Johnny's reputation too?"

"She doesn't care. She couldn't act out before because Johnny was watching. Now, she can do whatever she wants," Norah snapped. "Don't worry, I'll make her pay. If she messes with you, she messes with me. I don't believe she can get away with this in the capital."

Gloria hugged her, thanking her over and over again.

She knew no words could fully express her gratitude.

Norah left the room and immediately told Kevin about her plan: gather evidence and hand it over to the investors so they'd go after Winnie.

Kevin shook his head. "It'll take too long. The investors are already furious. They're not going to wait. We need to make the enemy confess."

"You've got a plan?" Norah grinned knowingly.

Kevin nodded, then crooked his finger.

As Norah leaned in to hear it, he suddenly kissed her.

Blushing, she glared. "What? My husband's charging for kisses now?"

"Of course," he smirked. "But this one's not enough. Want to help me earn more?"

Norah giggled, climbed into his lap, wrapped her arms around his neck, and whispered in his ear.

Kevin groaned and pulled back. "Stop. You're playing with fire."

"How do you know I can't handle it?"

"Because you're pregnant."

Norah laughed. "So I can't even flirt with my husband now?"

Kevin had no comeback.

He didn't know how to explain just how hard it was to deal with this and how many cold showers it required.

He just kissed her neck.

Norah quickly surrendered. “No—stop. That tickles! Don’t—”

He let her go and tapped her nose. “Go rest. I’ve got a call to make.”

It was time to act.

Norah obediently left the study.

Meanwhile, the failed art show had gone viral online. Even though Gloria refunded everyone, it wasn’t enough. Another exhibition was vandalized at night—glass shattered, paintings destroyed, and a giant message scrawled on the wall: **“This evil person should die.”**

Gloria stood in front of it, her face pale.

She wasn’t stupid. She knew exactly who wrote it. Winnie.

“Why would she do this?” she choked.

“You know who did this?” Nathan’s voice cut into her thoughts.

She quickly wiped her tears and forced a smile. “Mr. Gendron? What are you doing here?”

She glanced around, looking for Norah and Kevin, and relaxed when she saw them nearby.

Nathan caught her subtle glance and sighed. “I’m not going to hurt you, Gloria. Even if I wanted to get close, I’d ask first. I’d never force anything.”

“Thank you... for respecting me.” Gloria gave a faint smile.