

# Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life

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## Chapter 701

Brody couldn't stand the thought of Ophelia hurting herself over this. How would he and Paloma survive that?

"Dad, what's going on?" Ophelia pressed, standing her ground. "Don't carry this on your own."

Paloma stepped in. "We're a family. If Kian did something, Ophelia has the right to know. Don't keep this from her."

Brody tried to brush it off. "It's nothing. Someone mentioned their amazing son-in-law, and it made me think of Kian. I got angry. Let's not dwell on it."

But Ophelia saw through him. "If you won't tell me, I'll find out myself." She grabbed her phone. "You're not the only one who has access to information."

"Don't," Brody said quickly, stopping her. If she saw the posts, it would break her. He cursed himself for speaking too freely. If he'd kept quiet, his assistant could've buried the story.

"You're trying to protect me," Ophelia said quietly. "But we're getting divorced. I can handle it."

Brody seemed to age right in front of her. He handed her his phone. "If you really need to see it, go ahead. My assistant's working on damage control. Our lawyers will get you justice."

No one would hurt his daughter without facing consequences. He'd make sure Kian paid.

Ophelia braced herself, but what she saw hit like a punch to the gut. Kian did this? He cheated—*and* framed her? He knew the public would judge her more harshly. She had suspected Mrs. Paterson and Patrice, but without Kian's approval, could they have pulled it off? He ran a company. He could've stopped it. He didn't.

How had she ever loved someone like that?

"Are you okay?" Paloma asked, heart aching for her, furious at Kian. Even a con artist wouldn't have made her this angry. Kian clearly wanted Ophelia destroyed. People had taken their lives over cyberbullying like this.

"I'm fine," Ophelia replied with a forced smile—more heartbreaking than tears.

Her calm terrified Paloma more than any breakdown. She hugged her tightly. “You’re our only child. If anything happened to you, we wouldn’t survive it.”

Ophelia returned the hug, noticing how frail Paloma felt—worn thin from worry. “I lost my child, but I still have you. You’ve always been the best parents. I’ll take care of you now. As for the internet’s lies—we’ll clear them up.”

The doorbell rang. Ophelia peeked through the peephole—Emilio.

She opened the door. “How did you know I was here?”

“Your parents live next door,” Emilio said, nodding toward a video doorbell. “I saw you on the camera.”

Ophelia glanced at the device, uncomfortable. Was he watching her? But it was his home—he had the right. “Coincidence,” she replied politely.

“Is that Emilio?” Paloma called, coming to the door. “Ophelia just moved in—things are a mess, or we’d invite you in.”

She was already overwhelmed with the online chaos and had no energy to host—even someone she favored as a son-in-law.

Emilio got straight to the point. “Aunt, I saw the posts.”

Paloma’s heart dropped. “What do you mean?”

If Emilio wanted to distance himself now, she wouldn’t blame him. But she had always liked him for his unwavering devotion to Ophelia.

“I want to help,” Emilio said, eyes red. “I care about Ophelia. Watching her get attacked—it kills me.” He wiped his eyes. “Sorry. Got a little emotional.”

“Don’t apologize,” Paloma said warmly. “Come in. Sit down. We’re family.”

She saw his tears not as weakness—but as love.

## **Chapter 702**

To Paloma, Emilio’s tears showed how deeply he cared for Ophelia—true empathy.

Ophelia wanted to turn him down, but the exhaustion on her parents’ faces made her hesitate. Kicking Emilio out would just make things worse. She watched as he sat with them on the couch.

“Uncle, Aunt, I’ve got a plan,” Emilio began. “If they want to fight dirty, we fight back. Let’s expose Kian. He cheated, caused her miscarriage—let the world see who he really is.”

Ophelia quickly objected. “We just need to clear my name and sue the accounts spreading lies. My company’s legal team can handle it. No need to take it that far.”

A back-and-forth battle would never end. And despite everything, a part of her still cared about Kian. They’d once loved each other deeply. She didn’t want a public war—or to use their lost child as ammunition.

Emilio didn’t press too hard, but he didn’t back down either. “Ophelia, I know I shouldn’t say this, but your parents are worried sick. What parent wouldn’t be, watching their daughter get torn apart online? And this impacts the Labrie Group too—their whole life’s work.”

Ophelia felt trapped. No choice seemed right. She didn’t want to be dragged into a circus, didn’t want her grief to become a weapon. But this wasn’t just her problem anymore.

If Kian still had a shred of decency, wouldn’t he come forward and clear things up?

She clung to hope and texted him.

A red exclamation point popped up. Message blocked.

He had begged her not to divorce him—yet now he’d cut her off.

Ophelia deleted the chat. Chasing after him now would only humiliate her.

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### **Kian’s Side**

Outside the operating room, Kian waited anxiously. After leaving the Civil Affairs Bureau, he’d gone straight to the company—but a call from the hospital stopped him cold. His mother had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. The situation was critical.

He’d rushed to the hospital and now paced the hallway, heart racing. In the chaos, Emilia quietly checked her phone.

The operating room door swung open. Kian rushed forward. “Doctor, how’s my mother?”

“Not done yet,” the doctor replied. “Her condition’s serious. Her heart was already weak—now this. Honestly, it’s the worst case I’ve seen.”

Kian’s heart dropped. He had resented his mother’s constant interference, even wished she’d leave him alone. But losing her? That thought was unbearable.

“Doctor—”

“Sign the critical condition form,” the doctor interrupted. “We’re losing time.”

Kian scribbled his name as the doctor hurried back inside. The red light over the door glowed steadily. Dread knotted in his gut.

But inside the OR, Mrs. Paterson was sitting up, completely fine. “Doctor, did Kian believe it?” she asked, smiling smugly. “If I hadn’t put on this act, he’d still be defying me. But now? He’s finally obedient.”

“He believed it,” the doctor said. “Just remember—post-op patients need to look weak.”

His cousin ran the hospital. With no surgeries booked, they’d borrowed the room for this show.

“I know,” Mrs. Paterson said. “I’ll sell it.”

She chatted with the doctor, carefully timing her “recovery.” When ready, she lay back down and let Doctor wheel her out.

Kian ran up. “Doctor, how is she?”

“She’s alive, but it’s serious,” the doctor lied. “Don’t upset her—any stress could be fatal.”

Mrs. Paterson opened her eyes and gave Kian a weary sigh. “I know you hate me. But just seeing you one more time makes it all worth it. Do what you want—I won’t interfere anymore.”

“Aunt!” Emilia cried, pinching her thigh to force tears. She gripped the stroller dramatically. “You’re still so young. We need you.”

“Emilia, focus on your studies,” Mrs. Paterson said. “Get a good job, find a man who truly loves you.” Then she looked at Teresa. “Come here.”

Teresa approached, and Mrs. Paterson grabbed her hand tightly.

Kian watched it all, heart in turmoil. He couldn’t say a word—too afraid of making things worse. If she died because of him, like the doctor warned...

He swallowed his fury and gave in. Again.

## **Chapter 703**

Teresa’s eyes filled with tears. “Auntie, I’m not lucky enough to be your daughter-in-law.”

“Don’t say that,” Mrs. Paterson said gently. “You’re a good girl. Your blessings are on the way.” She waved Kian over.

But Kian stayed back, completely avoiding Teresa.

Mrs. Paterson grabbed his hand and placed it in Teresa's. "Kian, all I ever wanted was for you two to get married, but you refused. So fine—let Teresa be my daughter, your sister. That's okay, right?"

"Mom, I already have a sister—Emilia's right there," Kian said, confused. His mom wasn't losing her mind, so why this? If she wanted another child, there were other ways—surrogacy, adoption, whatever. After drugging his tea and locking him in with Teresa before—nothing happened, but it was still creepy—now she wanted them to pretend to be siblings? Ridiculous.

"Emilia calls me aunt," Mrs. Paterson said. "That's different. I'm not pushing you two together. I just want to treat Teresa like my daughter. You can treat her like a sister. Is that really so hard?"

Her eyes welled up like she might cry.

"Mom, if you want to treat her like a daughter, fine. But I don't need a sister. Just keep it separate from me," Kian said flatly. He'd gone along with so much for her sake, but this crossed a line.

Mrs. Paterson didn't argue. She was just trying to keep Teresa around. If Kian agreed to the "sister" act, he couldn't push her away so easily.

She pretended to have a headache, then said she was hungry, dragging Kian into the hospital room. By the next morning, seeing how tired he looked, she backed off. "Go home and rest. Don't come today—Teresa's here."

Kian left, completely drained.

Mrs. Paterson smirked. After a full day, Ophelia was probably getting roasted online. There'd be no coming back from that.

But she didn't count on Brody, Paloma, and Emilio. They lived for drama. Emilio posted about Kian's "affair" and pinned Ophelia's miscarriage on him. Then he hired accounts to spin the whole thing as a tragic love story between Kian and Teresa.

While the Patersons were busy playing their hospital game, the internet exploded. Kian got to his company, only to be greeted by his panicked secretary.

"Boss Paterson, it's bad. The internet's a mess—people threw rotten eggs at our building!"

The staff were being harassed, and the company's reputation was tanking fast.

"What mess?" Kian asked, his head pounding. He assumed it was a rival company's doing.

The secretary explained. And Kian's first thought wasn't about his own name being dragged—it was about Ophelia. "She never did anything wrong. She doesn't deserve this. Who started it?"

Even if Ophelia had moved on, he still wanted her to be happy—with someone decent. He was the one who failed her.

“A netizen posted a video,” the secretary said. “Then marketing accounts pushed it to the top of the trending page. The Labries hit back, too.”

“Get a statement out now,” Kian ordered. “Send cease-and-desist letters to those accounts. They’ll face legal action if they keep this up.” Then he stormed out, heading straight for Ophelia.

The secretary rushed to carry out the order. But Emilio was already watching online, making sure the fire didn’t go out. He sabotaged the clarification post, twisting it so it backfired.

Then Emilio went to the Labries. “Ophelia’s too sweet. She was raised right—she never saw Kian’s cruelty coming. He’s heartless—he destroyed her.”

“That bastard!” Brody exploded, slamming the table. Kian’s company wasn’t even public, but if it ever tried to go big, he’d crush it.

“Stay with Ophelia,” Brody told Paloma. “I’ve got business to handle.”

“Where are you going?” Paloma chased after him. “Don’t do anything crazy—I’m worried.”

“Auntie, I’ll go with him,” Emilio offered. “I’ll keep things under control.”

He couldn’t monitor both Labries if they split up. By sticking with Brody, he could steer the chaos.

Paloma agreed. “Alright. I’d worry too much if he went alone. Thank you, Emilio.”

“No problem,” Emilio said with a smile. “We’re going to be family soon, after all.”

In his mind, this was his chance to get closer to Ophelia. A few gifts, a little comfort—she’d be his.

## **Chapter 704**

Emilio’s words to Brody sounded calming, but they only fanned the flames.

Just as they were leaving, they ran into Kian.

“You’ve got some nerve showing up here,” Brody growled, rolling up his sleeves. “You hurt my daughter. What do you want now?”

“Uncle, I’m sorry,” Kian said sincerely. “I failed to protect Ophelia. I—”

"You're divorced," Emilio cut in quickly, panicking. "You've got no right to be here. You ruined Ophelia—now you're coming after her parents?"

"Emilio, even homewreckers have limits!" Kian snapped. Emilio's manipulative behavior—scheming and provoking—was disgusting.

Emilio smirked. "It's over for you, Kian. Just leave her alone. Quit with your dirty tricks."

Kian pieced it together—Brody's anger, the online storm. They thought *he* did it. "Uncle, about that online stuff—"

Emilio threw a punch, desperate to shut him up. If Kian revealed the truth, Emilio's act would crumble. The Labries liked him now, but that wouldn't last.

Kian caught the punch. He would've taken a hit from Brody, but Emilio? No way. He kicked back, and a full-on fight broke out. Kian was stronger, but Emilio fought dirty, aiming for weak spots.

"Calling you despicable is being nice," Kian said, dodging.

Emilio shouted, "Look at you! I bet you used to beat Ophelia too. That scar on her arm? She always wore a jacket to cover it—even with a skirt!"

The scar was from a stair fall. Kian had never laid a finger on her. Their marriage had been tender. But Emilio was painting him as an abuser, and Ophelia as the victim.

Brody snapped. Already biased, he bought into Emilio's lies. What if Ophelia had really suffered that much? The brutal online hate pushed him over the edge. He jumped in, beating Kian.

"Uncle, Emilio's lying!" Kian said, dodging. "I never hurt Ophelia, never framed her."

But Brody couldn't hear him through his rage. "Your mother tormented my daughter, and you stood by. You're no better!"

Kian hesitated. He understood Brody's pain. If someone had hurt his daughter, he wouldn't listen to excuses either. His mother had left scars on Ophelia, and by blood, he was tied to that guilt—even if he didn't cause it.

"You're only here now because you're scared of what the Labries might do to your pathetic company," Emilio spat, kicking Kian hard in the side. Just thinking of Kian touching Ophelia made him want to destroy him.

Ophelia was *his*.

"If you'd treated her right," Brody growled, grabbing Kian's collar, "we would've supported you—even if we didn't like you. But you bullied her. You'll pay for that."

He was going to wreck Kian's company—tear it apart piece by piece.

But Kian didn't care about the company. He only cared about Ophelia. Still, every time he tried to explain, Emilio twisted his words, fueling Brody's fury. Kian was trapped, infuriated, and helpless.

Suddenly, Teresa rushed over and threw herself in front of Kian. Tears streamed down her face as she shielded him. "You're our elder, and we respect you—but this is going too far! How can you treat Kian like this?"

"Your little lover?" Brody snarled, glaring between her and Kian, his eyes blazing.

## **Chapter 705**

"Of course not," Kian said quickly. "There's nothing going on between us."

Teresa's tears fell faster. She glanced at Kian, then lowered her head, as if bracing herself. "I see Kian as a brother," she told Brody. "We're like siblings. Please don't misunderstand or say things like that."

Her words pushed Brody past his limit. He wasn't naive—her expression said otherwise. Siblings? "You're lovers," he snapped. "You're divorced now, so go cuddle at home. Don't pretend in front of me. It's disgusting."

He let go of Kian, brushing his hands like shaking off filth.

Poor Ophelia, wasting years on this trash.

"No, really, there's nothing," Teresa insisted, stepping closer to Kian. "Kian, say something—your divorce wasn't because of me." She grabbed his hand, leaning in.

Emilio snapped a photo and sent it to Ophelia with a quick message.

Kian shoved Teresa away in disgust. "Get lost!"

He'd only tolerated her because of his mother's so-called near-death episode. That didn't mean he had to accept Teresa being around. Her constant presence—especially now—was unbearable. She and Emilio were made for each other, not him and Ophelia.

Brody's brow furrowed. Kian's reaction looked genuine. Was there really nothing going on?

"Uncle, he's just acting," Emilio cut in. "He fooled Ophelia for years. I've seen them coming out of hotels together. Now he's pretending again."

Brody nodded slowly. If Kian were really loyal, Teresa wouldn't be clinging to him like this. He had avoided women for years, staying faithful to Paloma. This betrayal hurt Ophelia deeply.



“Get out,” Brody said, pointing at the door. “Don’t come back, or I’ll have security throw you out.”

“Uncle, that’s going too far,” Teresa said as she stood. “You started a bunch of lies online about me and Kian. People are tearing him apart. Don’t you think you owe him something?”

Brody’s jaw dropped. They actually had the nerve to demand something? Ophelia was the one who’d been hurt.

“Move, or I’ll strangle you myself,” Kian growled, eyes blazing.

He had only wanted to clear things up with Brody, but these two kept stirring trouble and twisting the truth.

“Go ahead, strangle me,” Teresa taunted, baring her neck. “I don’t care.” Her tears kept falling, but she knew he wouldn’t lay a hand on her.

She was gambling big. If she could earn Kian’s disgust while cutting ties with the Labries, it was still worth it.

Brody saw right through it. This wasn’t a TV drama. Furious, he kicked Kian. “Take that!”

“Uncle, hit me instead!” Teresa cried, rushing in front of Kian.

At that moment, Ophelia stepped out, having just seen Emilio’s text. She saw Teresa shove Brody, making him stumble. She ran toward him, too far to catch him, but Emilio reached him just in time.

Ophelia helped her father up and thanked Emilio. Then she turned to Kian. “Leave. I don’t want to see you.”

“Your dad beat up Kian and that’s it?” Teresa said sharply, putting all the blame on Brody.

Emilio, who had landed most of the blows, chimed in. “He deserved it. Uncle did the right thing.”

“This is assault,” Teresa snapped, pulling out her phone. “I’m calling the cops.”

If this went public, it would destroy Labrie Group’s reputation. Kian was already under fire, and dragging Ophelia into this would only make it worse. He snatched Teresa’s phone and smashed it on the ground. “Enough!”

“This is my home,” Ophelia said coldly. “We’re divorced. You and your girlfriend are trespassing. I can call the police. Don’t think we’re idiots.”

Kian had brought Teresa, enraged her father, and almost gotten him hurt. And those bruises on Kian? He came here uninvited. Nothing compared to the pain of losing their child.

## Chapter 706

"Ophelia, do we really have to be enemies?" Kian asked, seeing nothing but coldness in her eyes.

His heart sank. He missed how her gaze used to shine with love, like sunlight at noon. That warmth was long gone.

"You made your choice," Ophelia said, laughing bitterly. "Now you want to backtrack? That's pathetic. We're not kids. You can't have everything."

He had made his decision—siding with his mother, meeting up with Teresa again and again. That killed whatever future they had left. She could never forgive a husband with a "sister" always hovering or a mother-in-law who practically forced a mistress on her.

Let someone else deal with that. She was done.

"But I chose you," Kian said, desperate. "I'm cleaning up the mess online. I'll handle my mother. Can we try again?"

Ophelia snapped a branch from a nearby tree and shoved it into his hand. "Can you fix this? A broken mirror doesn't mend. We're over. Take your girlfriend and get lost."

Love, marriage—they were all illusions. She was done trusting men.

Kian tried to follow her, but Teresa clung to his arm. "Kian, don't go. They've hurt you enough. Don't let them insult you, too!"

He shook her off. She collapsed, grabbing his legs and wailing.

Brody, worried about Ophelia, chased after her with Emilio close behind.

At the gate, Kian grabbed Teresa's chin, his eyes like ice. "You did everything you could to break us up. Did my mom put you up to this?"

"No, it was me," Teresa admitted, gently touching his bruises. "I was worried. Your face—it must hurt."

Kian twisted her wrist until she winced. "I only love Ophelia. I'll never want you. Stop your games. My parents like you? Fine—let them marry you. I won't. Think about that."

Even if forced, he would never touch Teresa. What was she even hoping to gain?

Teresa watched him walk away in silence. His rejection couldn't be clearer. But Mrs. Paterson had promised—once she had a child, the entire Paterson empire would be within reach. With Kevin backing them, Kian's company would soar. If she endured a little now, she'd be rewarded. Kian was a good man—he'd come around for the child's sake. She wasn't giving up.

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## Ophelia's Side

Back in her room, Ophelia stared out the window, tears silently falling. She kept telling herself Kian wasn't worth it, but her heart refused to listen.

A knock came at the door. Thinking it was her father, she took a deep breath and opened it. Emilio stood there.

"You okay?" he asked. "Kian and that woman crossed the line—calling him 'Brother Kian'? Your uncle loves you. How could he stay calm?"

He sighed. "I know you're hurting. Talk to me—it might help."

"I'm tired," Ophelia said. "I just want to sleep."

She didn't want his comfort or his attention.

"Get some rest," Emilio said, disappointed. Downstairs, he stirred up more drama with Brody and Paloma, continuing to trash Kian well into the evening.

"Thank you, Emilio," Paloma said when he left. "Kian really is awful."

"Anything to help Ophelia get rid of that scumbag," Emilio replied, pleased. His trap was set—Brody and Paloma were on his side now. Ophelia wouldn't be able to escape him.

But after he left, Ophelia's mood didn't lift. She just wanted a drink to take the edge off. With her parents gone for the night, she slipped out, driving to her city apartment.

As she passed a bar, the warm lights pulled her in.

She parked and walked inside, unaware of the familiar car hidden in the shadows next to hers.

## Chapter 707

Ophelia's elegance cut through the smoky haze of the bar. The moment she stepped in, men swarmed her.

"Hey, gorgeous. I've got a booth and a bottle of Ace of Spades. Want to join me?" one said, holding up his wine glass.

"Forget him," another chimed in. "I'm a member—name your drink, it's on me."

Ophelia's face remained icy. "Move."

She pushed past them, slammed her card on the counter, reserved a booth, and ordered an entire case of beer. Alone, she started cracking bottles open and chugging like clockwork. The pile of empties grew, but instead of dulling her pain, the alcohol sharpened every thought.

Kian's face flashed through her mind—at work, in their quiet routines, the memory of him kneeling and proposing with a diamond ring. She used to be the happiest woman alive. A perfect childhood, a successful career, true love. And now? A fool.

"Waiter," she slurred as she stood, swaying. "Bring me white wine."

The beer wasn't cutting it. She needed something stronger to drown the ache.

Across the bar, Kian sat in a booth, silently downing drink after drink. His sharp features and cold aura screamed money and power. Still, no woman dared sit beside him—he looked too untouchable.

A woman in a skimpy outfit slid in next to him, her arm snaking around his waist. "Handsome, drinking alone? How boring. Let's make it fun—loser strips," she teased, voice dripping with seduction, cleavage on full display.

Most men would've caved. At least stared. Kian didn't even glance at her. "Get lost," he said, voice like steel.

He only wanted Ophelia. No one else came close.

"You're seriously kicking me out?" she pouted. "So cold. Feel my heart—it's racing for you." She grabbed his hand, trying to press it to her chest.

Kian shot to his feet, smashing a beer bottle against the floor. Glass shattered in all directions.

"What's your problem?!" she shrieked, startled and shaken.

"I said get out," he repeated, finally looking her dead in the eye—his expression full of contempt.

Humiliated, she snapped, "Whatever! Think I care? No decent woman comes here anyway!" She stormed off, muttering about men pretending to be saints in a bar full of sinners.

Kian didn't react. He just sat back down and kept drinking. If only Ophelia were here. But that was just a dream.

Just as he reached for another bottle, Emilio walked past—headed for Ophelia's booth. She'd been fending off creeps all night, and it had escalated to her throwing a bottle that nearly hit someone. That finally made them back off—but they still hovered, watching her like vultures.

Emilio snatched the bottle from her hand. "Ophelia, what the hell are you doing? Sitting here drinking alone? Why aren't you home?"

“Not your problem,” she snapped, reaching for another.

He grabbed her wrist. “We’re friends. That makes it my problem. This place is full of guys watching you. You keep drinking, you’re going to be vulnerable—and you know exactly what they want.”

He threw a glare at the men nearby, practically itching to punch someone.

“I’m not a kid,” Ophelia said, half annoyed, half amused. “I have bodyguards. I know you mean well, Emilio, but I don’t need it. Can’t you understand that?”

His concern only added to her frustration.

Emilio got it. But he couldn’t stop himself—he loved her. Just like she couldn’t stop loving Kian. “You do need it,” he said firmly. “You’re not in the right state to handle this.”

## **Chapter 708**

“Emilio, I don’t need you,” Ophelia said, irritation creeping into her voice. “Go home.”

She hadn’t come here to get lectured.

Instead of leaving, Emilio plopped down beside her and opened a beer. “If you’re drinking, I’m drinking. When you’re done, I’ll take you home.”

Ophelia sighed. Her urge to drink vanished. She set the bottle down and stared blankly at the wild dance floor. All she wanted was for Kian to be here.

“Want to dance?” Emilio asked.

He’d seen Kian earlier. Call it fate or strategy, but he planned to use this moment to break their bond. He wanted Kian to see Ophelia with him—close, intimate.

Ophelia shook her head. “You go. I just want to sit.”

“Then I’ll stay right here,” Emilio said, scooting closer. “I only want to dance with you. The rest of them don’t exist.”

He reached toward her hand, but Ophelia stood up abruptly.

“Where are you going?” Emilio asked, rising too.

“Just getting some juice,” she replied. “I’ll be back. Wait here.”

Relieved, Emilio sat down again, pulling out a jewelry box. He’d give it to her when she came back.

At the bar, Ophelia barely got close before a man lunged at her, grabbing. She caught his wrist mid-air and drove her stiletto heel straight into his foot, grinding it hard.

“Argh! Acting all pure? Women like you don’t belong in places like this!” he yelled, reeking of booze.

Her flushed face and smell of alcohol made him think she was easy. He reached for her waist.

Ophelia grabbed a bottle and smashed it over his head. “Try that again in your next life!”

The man roared, his pride and scalp stinging. He swung a fist.

Before it connected, Kian charged in, tackled him to the ground, and landed a slap across his face. “You awake now?”

Dazed, the man blinked and saw Kian’s furious glare. He backed off instantly. “I’m awake! She’s yours—I’m out! Enjoy, brother!”

“Women aren’t property,” Kian snapped, grabbing his collar. “You don’t get to ‘give’ them.”

He wasn’t there to claim her—he was there to protect her. Ophelia was the only one who mattered.

“Right, right,” the guy stammered, scrambling away while muttering about Kian’s so-called morals.

Kian turned to warn the woman about the dangers of bars—but froze when he saw her. “Ophelia?”

“Kian?” she blinked, stepping closer. “Am I dreaming? Why are you here?”

His face—the one that haunted her every night—was right in front of her. She thought she must be imagining it, but reached out to touch him, just to be sure.

“It’s me,” Kian said with a crooked smile. “Looks like we’re both here for the same reason.”

He’d driven by, saw the bar lights, and just *knew* she’d be here. And there she was—drunk, just like him, soaking in the same misery.

“Is it really you?” Ophelia slurred. “Why did we end up like this? I love you, Kian. I just wanted us. But...”

She couldn’t hold it in anymore. Everything spilled out, raw and real. Kian listened, heart aching. When she stumbled, he caught her, wrapping his arm around her waist. “Careful,” he whispered, leaning in close.

Their eyes locked—and all they saw was each other.

“Ophelia...” Kian’s voice was hoarse, his grip tightening. He couldn’t hold back anymore. He leaned in and kissed her.

She didn’t stop him.

That kiss unleashed everything they’d been holding in. Kian lifted her into his arms and walked out. The hotel next door was close.

Seeing them in a tight embrace, the receptionist rushed their check-in.

Inside the presidential suite, Kian carried Ophelia in, barely holding onto a shred of reason.

“Ophelia,” he said, voice low, “do you know who I am? Do you know what we’re doing?”

## **Chapter 709**

Kian paused, ready to walk away if Ophelia didn’t recognize him. He would never take advantage of her in this state.

“Kian, I could never forget your face,” Ophelia whispered, locking eyes with him. Though her vision was blurred by alcohol and dim light, she knew it was him. This had to be a dream. Her sober self might’ve kept her distance, but not tonight. She kept calling his name.

To Kian, her voice was sweeter than any liquor. He took off his shirt, turned down the lights, and kissed her deeply. They wrapped around each other, completely lost in the moment.

Eventually, they collapsed, exhausted. Ophelia didn’t even shower—she just drifted off. Kian lay beside her, falling into a rare, peaceful sleep.

Morning light crept in through the curtains. Kian opened his eyes and saw Ophelia beside him. A quiet joy washed over him. He wished time could freeze. Gently covering her with the quilt, he got dressed and left to buy breakfast—she’d be hungry after last night. They’d eat, talk it out, and fix what was broken.

He had no idea Emilio was watching.

Emilio hadn’t slept all night, scouring the city for her. Seeing Kian walk out of the hotel crushed him. Rage surged—Kian had been with her. Emilio rushed inside, claiming he’d lost something valuable, and asked to check the surveillance footage. Once he confirmed the room, he slipped in.

Seeing Ophelia asleep in bed made Emilio’s eyes burn. Despite everything he’d done—hiring detectives, sabotaging her—Kian had still won her. The marks on her neck said everything. A dark thought hit him. She was alone. Kian was gone. Could he...?

He began unbuttoning his shirt, but the moment Ophelia stirred, he froze. Panic set in. He quickly redressed. He couldn’t let her wake up and find him like that. Still, walking away felt

like surrender. He lay beside her, staring at the ceiling, letting his jealousy imagine what had happened between them.

When Ophelia finally woke and saw Emilio next to her, her whole body tensed. “Last night... was it us?” Her memories screamed *Kian*, not Emilio. But how?

“Ophelia,” Emilio said smoothly, lying with ease, “I told you to leave the bar, but you didn’t. You were surrounded by creeps. You must’ve been drugged. You passed out while getting juice, and I saved you.”

Ophelia’s brows furrowed. She remembered a man grabbing her—and Kian stepping in. Not Emilio. “Are you sure?” she asked sharply. “You’re not lying?”

Emilio nodded solemnly. “Why else would I be here? You were unconscious. We should get you checked at the hospital. Make sure there are no side effects.”

The word *unconscious* hit hard. Maybe Kian had been a hallucination. Maybe she’d imagined it. She’d thought it was a dream, something beautiful and fleeting... but had she really been with Emilio?

“Go shower and get dressed,” Emilio told her. “I’ll wait outside. Then we’ll head to the hospital.”

He stepped out, glancing around to make sure Kian wasn’t nearby.

Inside the bathroom, Ophelia looked in the mirror. Hickeys trailed down her neck. Her legs still felt sticky—undeniable proof. But with Emilio? She didn’t want that. She didn’t want a future with him. Her heart felt hollow.

After showering and dressing, she met Emilio outside.

“Let’s go,” he said, quickly guiding her to the elevator, eager to avoid running into Kian.

At the front desk, the receptionist looked at them with confusion. She clearly remembered someone else with Ophelia the night before.

## **Chapter 710**

“I’d like to check out,” Ophelia said, pausing at the counter.

“No need,” Emilio cut in. “The room was under my name. Head to the hospital—I’ll take care of this.”

They walked out just as Kian walked in, breakfast in hand. He’d waited half an hour in line at her favorite spot. He didn’t mind—he would’ve waited even longer if it made her happy.

“Sir,” the receptionist called, a hint of sympathy in her voice. “Your girlfriend already left. Would you like to check out?”



Kian froze, stunned. She had woken up and left. Maybe she wasn't ready to face him. Maybe she just needed time. He nodded and checked out, unaware Emilio had stolen his moment.

Emilio drove Ophelia straight to the hospital. The tests came back clear, but she sat quietly, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Is it that painful being with me?" Emilio asked, voice cracking. "Do you really hate me that much?"

The thought of Kian touching *his* Ophelia made his blood boil.

"I don't hate you," Ophelia said softly. "But I can't accept this. You're just a friend."

That word—*friend*—cut deep. Emilio reached for her hand. She pulled away instantly. Every part of her resisted his touch.

"Things happened," he insisted. "I'll take responsibility. Marry me. Our parents approve. We've known each other forever. We're a good match."

If she married him, she'd be locked in. Even if she found out the truth one day, he wouldn't agree to a divorce. The law would side with him.

"I'm not thinking about marriage right now," Ophelia said firmly.

"That was before," Emilio argued. "We've crossed the line. If I don't marry you, I'd be a jerk."

"Sleeping together doesn't mean we're meant to marry," she snapped. "It was a mistake—let's not make another one. I won't settle."

She couldn't jump from a divorce to a new relationship, especially not when she was still in love with Kian. Even touching Emilio made her sick.

Emilio hid his disappointment. "Think it over. I'm not rushing you."

But if she didn't agree, he had a plan. He'd get Brody and Paloma involved—they'd force her hand.

Ophelia stayed quiet, her silence full of resistance.

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## Norah's Side

Ever since Ophelia left, she hadn't reached out. Kevin had offered Kian a project, but with everything happening in his family, Kian turned it down. He didn't want to delay the work.

“Handle your family problems,” Kevin said. “If you need help, call me. There’ll be more projects later.”

Kian appreciated it but knew this wasn’t something others could fix. Love wasn’t a team effort. He had to deal with his issues first.

Kevin shifted his focus back to Norah and the kids. Every night, he picked up Cooper from school.

“Mom! Dad! I got a red flower today!” Cooper shouted, running over with a flower pinned to his chest.

Norah kissed his cheek. “That’s amazing, sweetheart. How’d you get it?”

“I won the hygiene contest! I even showed everyone how to fold their quilts!” Cooper beamed. “Can we get KFC tonight?”

“Nope,” Norah smiled, buckling him into his seat. “We agreed—once a month. But I’ll make you a hamburger tonight.”

Cooper’s eyes lit up. “You can make hamburgers?”

“Your mom’s got a few tricks up her sleeve,” she laughed.

At home, Reina was sipping milk, looked after by Aunt Wang. Norah got to work in the kitchen while Kevin played with the kids. When the burger was ready, Cooper dug in, full of praise for his mom’s cooking. After dinner, they played and laughed until it was time for bed.

“Can I sleep with you tonight, Mom?” Cooper asked, carrying his blanket.

“Of course,” Norah said, scooting over to make space. Cooper nestled between them, and soon, their breathing settled into a quiet, peaceful rhythm.