

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life Chapter 465

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Kevin had people around him, and on top of that, his sharp instincts gave him an edge.

Calvin's attempt to harm Kevin failed. But in any battle, casualties were inevitable.

Calvin never cared about Bianca, and Kevin had no intention of using her as a hostage—but he wasn't about to let her go, either.

Realizing the situation wasn't in his favor, Calvin quickly raised the white flag, attempting to negotiate. "Kevin, you came here for peacekeeping, to get the antidote, and to find someone. There's no deep-seated hatred between us, no grudge we can't move past. I can help you with your requests. I don't want to be your enemy."

Calvin's ultimate goal was power—he wanted to rule this land. Right now, Kevin had no weaknesses he could exploit, leaving Calvin at a disadvantage.

But Kevin wasn't even paying attention to Calvin. "I just want Norah."

What did the antidote matter? What was war? What was life or death?

All he wanted was to see Norah standing before him, safe and sound. Everything else was secondary.

Bianca stared at Kevin, her heart aching.

She had been so foolish. Even now, her heart still pounded for him. But in Kevin's eyes, she was nothing.

All that mattered to him was Norah.

For Norah, Kevin would sacrifice anything. And Bianca? In his eyes, she wasn't even worth a second thought.

Calvin had publicly dismissed her, and Kevin had exposed her for who she really was.

“Kevin, if you don’t back off, you’ll never see Norah again.”

“Then I’ll kill you first.”

Kevin’s voice was icy and unwavering.

Before Calvin could react, Kevin fired, hitting Bianca in the shoulder blade.

She let out a piercing scream.

Despite her training, she had never endured such pain. The gunshot tore through her, leaving her weak, dizzy, and overwhelmed by the scent of blood.

But no one cared.

Calvin had abandoned her. She was worthless now.

She might as well die.

If dying meant being with Kevin, then it was worth it.

That thought filled her mind, but her body betrayed her. She was too injured to fight back, and Kevin’s men quickly subdued her.

Meanwhile, in the slave camp, an uprising had begun. The slaves, driven by years of suffering, turned against Calvin. While Pharaoh was the master of the Yi tribe, it was Calvin who had conducted the cruel experiments that tormented them.

The slaves wanted revenge.

Calvin never expected his carefully crafted plan to fall apart at the hands of Jace and Kevin. Caught off guard, he had no choice but to throw out a bomb and flee.

“Chase him!”

Kevin wasn’t interested in pursuing Calvin. Right now, all that mattered was finding Norah.

This was a turning point for the Yi people. Kevin helped them rebuild, freed the slaves, and eventually met Baimo and the unconscious Pharaoh.

Kevin’s expression darkened at the sight of Baimo’s injuries. “Did you see Norah?”

“Jace took her. She’s safe with him. He won’t let anything happen to her.”

Kevin pressed his lips together. With a simple gesture, his soldiers stepped in to assist Baimo and Pharaoh.

Baimo was crucial to the Yi tribe. Stability was needed, and if peace could be reached now, that would be the best outcome.

Kevin then turned to Levi and Frank. “Find Jace and Norah. Search everywhere.”

Jace had no phone, Norah’s condition was unknown, Calvin had escaped, and there was even the possibility that Calvin was already after Norah.

Kevin couldn’t let himself dwell on that.

“Captain Edwards, don’t worry. We’ve already sent people out. We won’t let anything happen to Ms. White,” Levi and Frank assured him in unison.

Baimo noticed the determination in Kevin’s eyes. Their gazes met, but neither spoke.

Through Kevin’s actions, Baimo saw his deep love for Norah. And considering Jace’s attitude toward her, Kevin already knew the truth about certain things.

“Hm. Baimo, I need you to take the lead here. I don’t want war.”

Baimo understood. “Neither do I.”

He despised war and the suffering it caused. But he had never been able to change the fate of the Yi tribe.

Now, Calvin was gone, and Kevin had arrived at the right moment. None of this would have been possible without Norah. If not for her, the Yi tribe wouldn’t have had this chance.

Kevin said nothing more. He turned and walked away.

He still had unfinished business with Bianca.

She had brought Norah here, stolen her identity, and not long ago, tried to take Kevin down with her.

Where had she gotten the audacity?

Now, Kevin stood before Bianca. Her body was covered in deep lash marks, her wounds raw.

But that was only the beginning.

As her wounds opened, Kevin poured salt water over her torn flesh. Her agonized screams gradually weakened into hoarse gasps.

In her haze, Bianca saw Kevin's cold, indifferent face. A bitter smile crept onto her lips.

"Kevin, I was so obsessed with you. I gave you everything... and this is how you repay me? You really don't care at all? You'd just watch me die?"

She laughed, a broken, hollow sound.

"You weren't always like this. You used to be kind to me. You even let me go before! Why are you being so cruel now? Just because I tried to take you down with me?"

She was hysterical, her voice raw.

She had no strength left, yet she clung to her obsession with Kevin. She just wanted to be with him—whether in life or death.

But Kevin remained unmoved. His gaze never wavered.

She had asked him this question countless times before, and each time, his answer was the same: Norah was the only one in his heart.

For Bianca, that truth was devastating.

Once, they had seemed like the perfect match in everyone's eyes.

"Kevin, I met you first! I— I even saved—"

"Did you really save me?"

Before she could finish, Kevin cut her off with a cold smirk.

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Kevin loomed over Bianca, his towering height of one meter nine casting a shadow as heavy as a mountain. The icy darkness in his eyes was unrelenting, making him seem like a king standing above all, untouchable and commanding.

Bianca stared at him, feeling an unfamiliar distance between them. Even in the past, when Kevin had been cold and detached, it had never felt like this. He knew about the events that had unfolded, and there was no point in pretending otherwise. His indifference toward her had grown more palpable with each passing moment, and now, Bianca had reached her limit.

“Does it even matter if it’s me or not anymore? Kevin, you’re warm-hearted, but let’s be honest—what’s the difference between you and Norah? Do I really need to spell it out for you?” Bianca’s lips curled into a bitter smile.

Kevin remained silent, but the sharpness in his gaze intensified. Someone had inflicted a harsh punishment on Bianca, and Kevin watched it unfold without a flicker of emotion. The divide between him and Norah didn’t need Bianca’s words to highlight—it was already clear.

Norah was here.

Jace led her forward, his grip firm as they pressed on. Norah was weak, her body trembling, and despite the nausea churning in her stomach, she forced herself to keep moving. She didn’t know how far they’d gone, but her strength was fading fast. Finally, she couldn’t hold back any longer and vomited violently.

Seeing her like this, Jace’s worry deepened. “Norah, we still have a long way to go to reach Kevin. You have to stay strong. If we don’t keep moving, Calvin’s men will catch up to us!” His only thought was Norah’s safety.

Norah knew this, but the weight of her past with Pharaoh crushed her. The memories of the experiments, the lives lost, and the fact that she was Pharaoh’s own daughter—it was all too much. Who had subjected her to those horrors in the slave camp? Her mind was a whirlwind of chaos.

Leaning against a tree, she gasped for air. “Jace, if I can’t keep going, leave me behind. You don’t have to—”

“Leave you? Do you really think that’s an option?” Jace grabbed her hand, his expression resolute. If he could abandon her, he wouldn’t have risked his life to save her when she was poisoned. He wouldn’t have followed her into the Yi tribe, a place he never wanted to return to.

Norah gave a weak, bitter smile. “Pharaoh won’t let me die, and neither will Calvin. But you, Jace, you’re different. I don’t want you to die because of me.”

Jace gripped her shoulders tightly. “Norah, back in the slave camp, you were the one who kept me and Karina going. You protected us. If it weren’t for you, we wouldn’t be here today. You can’t give up now, do you hear me? Don’t you still want to see Kevin?”

Norah was exhausted. She fought to keep her eyes open, but her eyelids grew heavier by the second. She feared she wouldn't last much longer. If Jace left her, he could move faster. But if he stayed...

Her voice was faint, her smile pale. "Jace, I came here to help people. I don't want to be a burden. If I survive, we'll meet again. If not... well, that's just how it is."

Jace's heart sank as her voice faded. He shook her desperately. "Norah, stay awake! I know Calvin did something to you, but you have to fight this. Survive, please! I'm here with you—I'm your best chance. You'll make it through this!"

Tears welled in his eyes as he shouted, but Norah's eyes had already closed. She didn't respond.

"Damn it!" Jace gritted his teeth, his anger boiling over. Calvin's face flashed in his mind, filling him with disgust. He wanted to tear the man apart. Calvin had caused so much suffering, ruling the Yi tribe with an iron fist, turning his own daughter into a pawn of Pharaoh. And now, even after all this, he still wouldn't let Norah go.

If it weren't for Calvin's experiments and the poison he'd forced into Norah, she wouldn't be in this state. At that moment, Jace's only thought was to make Calvin pay—to destroy him piece by piece.

But survival came first. He could die, but Norah had to live. He hoisted her onto his back and ran, refusing to stop.

Calvin had escaped, but not without injury. Owen, after ensuring Calvin was settled, turned to leave, only to be stopped by Calvin's sharp words. "Do you really think running back now will save Bianca?"

Owen's mind was set: he had to rescue Bianca. Since she had arrived in the Yi tribe, he'd been by her side, witnessing her true self—beautiful and strong. Even as she became Julie (Journi), Owen never forgot the Bianca he'd first met. Protecting her was his duty, and he wouldn't abandon it.

Owen clenched his fists. "Elder Donnelly, I'm going back to save the young lady. She's in danger, and I can't leave her behind."

Calvin scoffed, his breathing labored. "Even if you go back, you can't change anything. You'll just be throwing your life away. Don't be foolish—you're no match for them."

Calvin knew the odds. If he hadn't been ambushed by Kevin, if he hadn't lost control of the situation, he wouldn't be in this position. But going back now was suicide.

"Do you want the young lady to die?" Owen's voice trembled with frustration.

A cold smile played on Calvin's lips. "She won't die. We still have the power to change things. It's only a matter of time."

Owen stayed silent. He was just a subordinate, and after years of serving Calvin, he knew the man too well. Calvin never acted without certainty.

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Bianca lay motionless before Kevin, her body weak from the brutal punishments. In those final moments, her life flashed before her eyes.

Her mother had given her away to Calvin. She had endured the agony of the experiments in the slave camp. She had never even known who her real father was.

As she faded, her last words echoed in Kevin's ears.

"Kevin, I've been obsessed with you for so long. You never truly saw me. I know you're taking revenge on me for Norah. But now that I'm gone, you won't have peace either. I curse you—you and Norah will never die well!"

Kevin remained unmoved. Her death didn't faze him. He turned to Levi and ordered, "Calvin likes experiments, doesn't he? Find him and return Bianca's body to him."

Levi, standing by Kevin's side, observed his expression and quickly reassured him. "Captain Edwards, don't take Bianca's words seriously. They mean nothing. If curses came true, everyone would be a prophet."

Kevin let out a cold smirk. "Of course I know that."

Word of Bianca's death spread quickly, and Kevin didn't hide the truth. He even made sure the news reached Calvin. Calvin, on the run, received a call from Siena—Bianca's mother.

Siena's voice was a piercing roar. "Calvin, when I entrusted my daughter to you, what did I tell you? What did you promise me?!"

Calvin remembered that day years ago when Siena had personally handed him a swaddled Bianca.

But now, Calvin was unbothered. He laughed darkly. "Kevin's just using you to track me down. Even if he comes after me with an army, I'll be fine."

Siena's fury only grew. "How can you talk like this?! Bianca is dead!"

She had believed Calvin's promise—that Bianca would have a better life. But when she saw her daughter's lifeless body, the truth crushed her.

Years ago, Calvin might have felt something hearing Siena cry. Now, he felt nothing but indifference.

“So she’s dead. Do you want her body back? Are you planning to parade her corpse at a press conference?”

His words dripped with sarcasm. He had once taken care of Bianca out of obligation, maybe even sentiment. But he had long since realized that power meant more than emotions. Bianca had been nothing but a tool. And now, that tool was broken.

He ended the call and immediately made a decision. If he couldn’t stay in the Yi tribe, he would go to his allies.

He took a step forward but noticed something—Owen wasn’t following him.

Calvin turned, his face darkening. “Why are you standing there like an idiot? Do you have a death wish?”

Owen had always been loyal, but Calvin knew the man had harbored feelings for Bianca. Now, he hesitated.

Finally, Owen bowed his head. “Elder Donnelly, forgive me. I can’t go with you anymore. I’m going back to the eldest lady.”

Calvin’s face twisted in rage. Without hesitation, he pulled out his gun and fired.

A loud bang echoed through the air. Owen collapsed.

Calvin fired a few more shots, ensuring Owen was dead before discarding his body in the mountains. Without another glance, he pressed forward toward the Confederate camp.

When he arrived, the allied soldiers raised their weapons, but Calvin held up the emblem of the Yi tribe.

“I am Calvin Donnelly. I seek asylum and wish to speak with your leader.”

...

Meanwhile, Norah had developed a fever.

Jace, worried for her health and fearing their pursuers, carried her deep into the mountains. After a grueling search, he found a cave. He bit his finger, feeding Norah a few drops of his blood before gathering dry wood to start a fire.

Norah shivered in his arms, mumbling feverishly, “Don’t take my blood... don’t hurt me... don’t experiment on me... I don’t want to be a medicine woman...”

Jace stiffened.

Norah had never been experimented on—he knew that. He and Karina had been the ones subjected to Calvin’s tortures, while Norah had fought to protect them.

Yet, she now believed she had lived through it.

Jace's heart clenched. Something was wrong. He shook her, his voice urgent. "Norah, wake up! That's not your memory! Don't sleep!"

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Norah didn't wake up immediately, but Jace kept whispering in her ear, repeating his words until she finally stirred. Her eyes fluttered open, and she saw Jace hovering over her. Her vision cleared, and she managed to speak, her voice weak. "Jace, let's... Where are we?"

Jace didn't answer right away. His lips were pressed into a tight line, his expression serious. When they had first reunited, he'd thought Norah had lost her memory entirely. But now, he realized something far more troubling—her memories were distorted, fragmented.

"We're in a cave," Jace finally said, his voice steady but heavy. "You have a fever, and I couldn't keep carrying you. Norah, look at me. There's something important I need to tell you."

He released her shoulders but stayed close, his gaze intense. The weight of his tone and the gravity in his eyes made Norah realize this wasn't going to be easy to hear. "Jace, what is it?" she asked, her voice trembling slightly.

Jace hesitated, then took a deep breath. "Norah, we met because you came to the lab..."

He began to explain, recounting how Norah had appeared in the slave camp, dressed in a pristine white princess dress, like an angel amidst the chaos. She had protected him and Karina, standing out like a beacon of hope in that grim place. As the eldest daughter of Pharaoh, no one dared to touch her. She had tried to shield others, but the horrors of the camp were too vast for one person to combat.

But here was the problem: Norah's memories weren't her own. She had absorbed the experiences of others, a phenomenon in medicine known as empathy. Jace's voice softened as he continued, "We escaped the slave camp because you started a fire. I don't know why you ended up in the imperial capital later, but Norah, you were never experimented on. Your brother Baimo, even Pharaoh—they loved you."

Norah's breath hitched. *Brother Baimo. Pharaoh.* The words echoed in her mind, but they felt foreign, like fragments of a story that didn't belong to her.

Jace gently rolled up her sleeve, revealing a small, round white mark on her arm. "This scar," he said, his voice steady but laced with emotion, "you got it when you saved me. I was being tortured with experimental drugs, and I pushed you away in a panic. A red-hot iron ball landed on your arm and bounced off. Only you and I know about this."

Back then, he'd been terrified that Pharaoh would find out and punish him. But Norah had never said a word. Over time, the scar had faded into a faint white spot, barely noticeable unless you were looking for it.

Norah stared at the mark, her throat tightening. She'd always thought it was a birthmark, but now Jace was telling her the truth. He had no reason to lie, especially not now, when they were running for their lives. This was proof—undeniable proof—that she was Julie, the daughter of Pharaoh and sister of Baimo.

The realization hit her like a tidal wave. She wasn't just Norah. She was Julie, tied to a legacy of cruelty and power. The Yi tribe had committed unspeakable acts, and Kevin stood on the opposite side of that divide. The weight of it all lodged in her chest, suffocating and inescapable.

"Julie," Jace said softly, using her real name for the first time, "I didn't want to tell you this. But I had to. I couldn't let you keep living in someone else's memories."

He reached out, gently brushing her hair back. His touch was tender, his concern genuine. Even though he knew Norah's heart belonged to Kevin, all he cared about was her well-being. Everything else was secondary.

Norah's mind raced. She thought of her confrontation with Kevin over Anthony, a memory that now felt like a cruel illusion. Anthony didn't exist—he was a figment of someone else's life, a memory she'd borrowed. This wasn't empathy; it was sickness. She felt broken, her identity shattered into pieces she couldn't reconcile.

Tears spilled from her eyes as she buried her face in her hands. They were stranded, with no way to contact Kevin, and Calvin's men were closing in. The thought of reaching Kevin felt impossible now.

Jace stayed silent, simply sitting beside her, a steady presence in the chaos. He had made up his mind: even if it cost him his life, he would stay by her side. He would protect her, no matter what.

"I'll go out and look for some wild fruit," Jace said finally, his voice calm but firm. "Stay here, Julie. Don't wander off, okay?"

Norah nodded, her voice hoarse. "Okay."

She watched him leave, her mind a whirlwind of emotions. Where could she even go? She was a liability, a burden to Jace. And with Calvin's men hunting them, running blindly would only make things worse.

Meanwhile, Kevin was tracking Norah and Jace's movements, but he hadn't made any progress. On the other side, Baimo had taken control of the Yi tribe, quelling the rebellion among the slaves. He had no intention of punishing them further. With Pharaoh unconscious and Calvin's influence waning, Baimo was determined to rebuild the tribe into something better.

“Kevin,” Baimo said, his voice low and measured as he approached, “I didn’t expect you to care so deeply for Norah.”

Kevin’s expression didn’t change. His voice was calm but firm. “Norah is Norah. You are you.”

He had already pieced together the truth about Norah and Baimo. No matter their differences, his feelings for Norah remained unchanged. He respected her choices, even if they put them on opposite sides.

Baimo’s lips tightened, but there was a flicker of determination in his eyes. “The Yi tribe is broken, but I’ll fix it. Without Calvin or Pharaoh, I’ll make it better. And when Norah returns, she’ll be welcomed as the eldest daughter, respected by everyone. She doesn’t need to be separated from her people.”

Kevin didn’t respond. His focus was on finding Norah, and nothing Baimo said would change that.

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Kevin didn’t respond immediately. After a few seconds, he spoke slowly: “Norah has the final say on this.”

Baimo didn’t bother with Kevin any longer. He walked over to Pharaoh, and while Pharaoh remained unconscious, Baimo removed the mask from his face, revealing a long scar.

Baimo had seen that scar once before. Since then, Pharaoh had always worn a mask.

Gathering all the medicines from the Yi tribe and the lab, Baimo had only one goal in mind—to wake Pharaoh up as soon as possible.

Three hours later, Pharaoh finally regained consciousness. He had worn a mask for so long that he immediately felt the weight missing from his face.

“Where’s Calvin?” he roared.

He had trusted Calvin completely, and now Calvin had betrayed him. He had even stripped him of his mask.

Baimo let out a low chuckle. “Still want to see Calvin? Is there no one else left?”

Pharaoh followed the voice and saw Baimo, unharmed. A wave of relief washed over him. “What about Julie?”

Baimo smirked. “Do you mean Calvin’s daughter, or your own?”

Pharaoh wasn’t a fool. He instantly understood what Baimo was implying. Calvin had replaced his daughter with Julie.

A haze of emotion clouded Pharaoh's eyes. "Do you know where Julie is?"

Baimo's demeanor suggested he knew everything.

"You've already seen her."

Baimo's words were slow and deliberate, and Pharaoh was momentarily stunned. No wonder Norah had felt so familiar when he saw her. It wasn't just a coincidence—Norah was his daughter. Norah was Julie.

Memories flooded Pharaoh's mind—Julie running toward him as a child, clutching lollipops and flowers.

"Dad," Baimo called out, snapping Pharaoh out of his trance.

"Where is she?" Pharaoh's voice was urgent. After the fire, he had lost Julie, but no remains had ever been found. He had always believed she was alive.

Calvin had brought back "Julie," and for a time, Pharaoh had been happier than ever. But "Julie" had always been frail and a little spoiled. Caught up in his work and unfinished plans, he hadn't paid much attention to her, assuming he would have time to make up for it later.

Now he realized the truth—he had been deceived. And worse, he had nearly killed his own daughter.

Thinking back to the day he raised his gun at Norah, Pharaoh felt a deep pang of regret.

Baimo's smirk deepened. "You really handed the Yi tribe over to Calvin, didn't you? Norah was dragged into his experiments, and you didn't even know?"

Baimo didn't believe Pharaoh had been completely unaware.

Pharaoh had always been focused on his own experiments and larger goals. He never paid much attention to what Calvin was doing on the other side of the lab.

When he first saw Norah, she had reminded him of someone. But at the time, he brushed it off as a meaningless resemblance.

What did it matter to him? She was just another insignificant person. And besides, her presence with Baimo had been a liability. If she had died, so be it.

He never expected this.

Pharaoh swallowed hard, at a loss for words. Guilt pressed down on him like a weight.

"Your body is weak," Baimo said coldly. "I don't know what kind of drugs Calvin used on you, but you've spent years in the lab—you should be able to figure it out yourself."

With that, Baimo turned to leave.

But Pharaoh still didn't have an answer.

"Did something happen to Norah?" A trace of unease crept into his voice.

Baimo paused. "Do you remember Jace?"

Pharaoh's face darkened. "Jace was one of my best creations. Of course, I remember."

Pharaoh had trained Jace to be a medicine man. Even after Jace escaped, Pharaoh had never stopped searching for him. But with the constant wars, he could only afford to send a small team after him.

His brows furrowed. "Jace has set his sights on Julie, hasn't he? What about the girl who was pretending to be Julie—Journi?"

Baimo's expression remained unreadable. "You should be glad that Julie isn't like you. At least she still has a chance to survive. When Calvin started his rebellion, Jace ran away with her."

Now that it was confirmed—Norah was Julie—Baimo no longer hesitated to call her by her real name. Especially in front of Pharaoh.

"Then send more people to find Julie! I need to get her back. I can't lose her again. I owe her too much..."

Pharaoh's voice broke.

Originally, he had planned to make things right after dealing with the current crisis. Now, it was clear—nothing mattered more than Julie.

Baimo's voice was ice-cold. "You're a little late to realize that."

With that, he walked away without looking back.

Pharaoh said nothing. His heart felt heavy, as if a boulder were crushing him. Several times in the span of a minute, he struggled to catch his breath.

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Calvin stepped into the Allied Army camp, and news of his arrival quickly made its way back to Kevin and Baimo.

If Calvin planned to attack with the Allied forces, they needed to prepare in advance.

Now that Norah was no longer in the Yi tribe, Kevin had no reason to stay there either.

As soon as he left, his phone rang.

“Captain Edwards,” a soldier reported, “Two people—one man, one woman—are asking to see you. They say they know you. One is named Jace, and the other is Norah...”

Kevin didn’t hear the rest.

He only knew one thing: “Take care of them immediately. Make sure they’re safe. Don’t let anything happen to them. They must be starving—get them something to eat right away!”

“Yes, sir!”

Kevin hung up. Nothing else mattered now.

He couldn’t lose Norah again.

—

Norah hadn’t had water in too long, and her body was exhausted. She collapsed onto a cot, her strength completely drained. Jace never left her side.

First, he fed her water. Then, he offered her his own blood.

Seeing the fresh wound on Jace’s hand, Norah instinctively resisted.

“Julie, just hang on a little longer,” Jace whispered. “This will help you.”

But before he could say anything more, a figure appeared at the entrance of the tent.

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Norah was the first to spot him.

He stood at the mouth of the cave, bathed in the golden glow of the setting sun, as if the light itself had wrapped him in a radiant halo.

Steven.

Instinctively, Norah pushed Jace aside and tried to stand, but her legs felt like they were filled with lead, heavy and uncooperative.

“Steven,” she murmured, her voice barely above a whisper. She wanted to move toward him, but her body refused to obey. Jace stayed close, ready to catch her if she stumbled.

Steven noticed her too. He’d heard others mention Norah’s name in connection with Kevin, and it had sparked something in him—a faint memory he couldn’t quite grasp. He

remembered Norah as someone important, someone beautiful, but the details were just out of reach.

Norah saw the clarity in Steven's eyes and realized the truth: he'd forgotten the past. The memories of their time in the slave camp, the bond they'd shared—it was all gone. She turned to Jace, desperation in her voice. "Jace, is there any way to help him remember? It's cruel for him to live like this, not knowing who he is or where he came from."

Jace nodded. "I'll do what I can."

Steven didn't leave. He stayed close to Norah, as if her presence might help him piece together the fragments of his lost memories. He didn't know why, but her name stuck in his mind, even when everything else was a blur.

Norah didn't push him away. She couldn't. Instead, she focused on Jace, who was preparing something for her. He held out a small cup, his expression serious. "Drink this," he said. "It'll help."

Norah hesitated, her stomach churning at the thought. She'd always been repulsed by the idea of drinking his blood, even if it was medicinal.

Jace noticed her reluctance and spoke softly. "Norah, I won't hurt you. You know what I am—a medicine man. My blood can help you. Remember the emerald green beads I gave you? They had my blood in them. They helped you before, and this will too."

Norah's mind flashed back to the beads. She remembered how they'd brought her a strange sense of calm. But this was different. This was raw, intimate, and it made her skin crawl.

Before she could respond, a voice interrupted them. "Ms. White! A call from Captain Edwards!"

A man in camouflage approached, holding a sleek silver phone. Norah took it, her heart skipping a beat as Kevin's deep, hoarse voice came through the line.

"Are you okay?" he asked, his tone urgent but controlled.

"I'm fine. No injuries. What about you?"

"I'm unharmed too." Kevin exhaled, the relief evident in his voice. "Wait for me. I'll be back soon."

"Okay."

The conversation was brief, almost mundane, but the weight of their connection was palpable. Jace and Steven exchanged glances, both aware of the bond between Norah and Kevin. They stepped back, giving her space.

After hanging up, Norah handed the phone back and turned to Jace. Reluctantly, she drank what he offered. The faint medicinal taste lingered on her tongue, and she shuddered. She couldn't imagine what Jace had endured to become what he was—a living remedy, a product of Pharaoh's experiments.

"Is the poison still in my system?" she asked, her voice trembling. "Is that why your blood helps me?"

Jace shook his head. "No, the poison is gone. Kevin's antidote worked. But your body is weak, and my blood can speed up your recovery. Julie, don't overthink it."

"Call me Norah," she snapped, her voice sharper than she intended. The name Julie felt like a chain, tying her to a past she didn't want to claim.

Jace sighed. "You've always been Julie to me. That's who you were when we met. I know it's hard, but you can't erase your past. We don't get to choose where we come from, but we can choose how we move forward."

Norah wanted to laugh, but the sound caught in her throat. "The Pharaoh I know—the one I've seen in my memories—he's a monster. He kills, burns, destroys. And he made you into this. How am I supposed to accept that?"

The images flashed in her mind like scenes from a nightmare. She couldn't reconcile the person she was now with the person she'd been as Julie. It was too much.

"I'm tired," she said finally, her voice hollow. "I need to rest. When Kevin gets back, wake me."

Jace nodded and stayed by her side, fanning her gently as she drifted into an uneasy sleep.

An hour later, Kevin arrived. He didn't waste time. After asking his men for Norah's location, he strode straight to her tent. When he pulled back the flap, he found Jace and Steven inside, both standing guard over her.

The moment Kevin entered, Jace and Steven exchanged a look and quietly stepped outside, leaving Kevin alone with Norah.

She was still asleep, her breathing shallow but steady. Kevin sat beside her, his eyes never leaving her face. When she finally stirred and opened her eyes, she thought she was dreaming. But then she remembered—she was with Jace, in Kevin's camp. This was real.

Norah reached out, her hand trembling as she tried to touch his face. Kevin leaned in, closing the distance, and gently took her hand in his.

For a moment, neither of them spoke. The silence between them was heavy but comforting, a language all its own.

“I’m sorry,” Kevin began, his voice rough with emotion. But Norah cut him off, pressing her fingers to his lips.

“Don’t apologize. None of this is your fault.”

Kevin hesitated, then nodded. “Stay here and rest. When you’re stronger, I’ll take you back to the imperial capital.”

Norah’s eyes searched his, and she saw the conflict there. She knew he had responsibilities, a mission that couldn’t wait.

“I’ll go back with Karina and Steven,” she said softly. “And... you.”

She squeezed his hand, her voice breaking. “I want to stay with you, Kevin. But I know you have your duty. I won’t be selfish.”

Kevin’s chest tightened. He wanted to tell her she wasn’t being selfish, that he’d find a way to make it work. But the words stuck in his throat.

Norah looked away, her breath hitching as tears threatened to fall. She knew the truth: Kevin had a calling, and she couldn’t—wouldn’t—stand in his way.