

# Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life

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## Chapter 671

Reina was safe.

Norah's face was pale from blood loss, her lips nearly white. She clutched the table for support, trying to stand, swaying slightly as she took a few shaky steps toward the ward.

"Ma'am, please sit and rest," the nurse said, gently holding Norah's arm. "You need a transfusion. A few more steps and you might pass out."

Norah knew her body was near its limit. She didn't fight it. She sat down, drank some brown sugar water, and waited until her strength returned before heading in to see her daughter.

Reina's condition had improved—her fever was finally breaking.

"Her temperature should normalize in about three hours," the doctor said. "If it spikes again, let me know immediately."

Norah nodded, memorizing every word.

After the doctor left, she sat beside Reina, gently brushing her daughter's forehead. "Baby, please wake up soon," she whispered, her voice soft but filled with hope.

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Meanwhile, Kevin was on his way home, already on the phone with his assistant. "Look into Aunt Wang's background. I want everything you can find—fast."

There weren't many people in the house, and Cooper would never hurt his sister. That left Aunt Wang as the main suspect. Sophia? She was just a kid—same age as Cooper. No way she could've done something so cruel.

Neither Kevin nor Norah suspected her.

When Kevin pulled into the driveway, Cooper ran out to meet him, worry written all over his face. "Dad, how's Reina?"

"She's doing better. Her fever's down. She'll be home soon. Go rest—I need to speak with Aunt Wang," Kevin said, giving his son's shoulder a reassuring pat.

Out in the garden, Aunt Wang twisted her apron nervously. “Sir, I’m so sorry I didn’t catch it sooner,” she said, voice shaking.

She was terrified Kevin would blame her. This was the Edwards family. Reina was their princess. If they held her responsible, her career would be over.

Kevin’s eyes sharpened. “What did you feed Reina today?”

“Just her usual warmed-up breast milk,” Aunt Wang answered quickly, though her nerves were showing.

“You’re sure that’s it? Because if you’re hiding anything, you know what’ll happen,” Kevin said coldly.

“I swear, Mr. Edwards, I would never hurt her. Ask my former employers—check my references. You’ll see I’m not lying.”

In the nanny world, reputation was everything. Aunt Wang knew that. The Edwards paid her double what other families did. She treated Reina like her own—carefully, lovingly, obsessively. She checked on her every two hours at night, afraid something might go wrong. Hurting her? That was unthinkable.

“Go back inside,” Kevin finally said. He had no evidence—only suspicion. If he’d just installed cameras, he wouldn’t be guessing.

His phone buzzed. “Boss, I sent over Aunt Wang’s info,” his assistant said.

The report was clean. Aunt Wang had a married daughter who co-owned a small supermarket with her husband. They had a young son. No debts, no sketchy finances. Past employers praised her, calling her a “second grandma.”

Everything checked out. So why was Reina poisoned?

Kevin’s head spun.

Then Norah called. Her voice was steadier. “Kevin, the toxins are out of Reina’s system. Her fever’s gone. She’s okay now.”

Relief hit him like a wave. “Thank God. I’m coming back—and I’m bringing Cooper.”

“Sophia, want to come see your sister?” Cooper asked before they left.

Sophia shook her head and avoided Kevin’s eyes, quickly turning away. No one noticed.

“Alright. Stay home and play. We’ll be back soon,” Cooper said, running off with Kevin.

Home alone, Sophia tried to keep herself busy with toys, but Reina's face and Cooper's worried voice kept replaying in her head. To her, Cooper was the best brother—her only brother. But to him, she could never compare to Reina.

And those bad people kept telling her: if she didn't follow orders, she'd never see her mom again.

What was she supposed to do?

She thought about it all day. When Kevin, Norah, Reina, and Cooper returned that evening, she still hadn't come to a decision.

"Mr. and Mrs. Edwards, how's Miss Reina?" Aunt Wang rushed over as they came in.

Everyone gathered around Reina.

Sophia sat alone on the couch, feeling invisible. She walked up to Cooper. "Hey, you were gone all day, and I was by myself. Now that you're back, can we play?"

Usually, Cooper would've said yes. But this time, he shook his head. "Not now, Sophia. I need to be with Reina until she's fully better. You can play by yourself for a bit."

## **Chapter 672**

"Isn't her fever gone?" Sophia asked, her eyes on Reina in the cradle. A bitter feeling started to grow inside her.

Reina already had everyone's attention. Now she was stealing Cooper too? All Sophia wanted was a little time with her brother, and she couldn't even get that.

"It's down, but I'm still worried," Cooper said sharply. "Play by yourself and stop bugging me. Reina's my sister—I care about her!"

He wasn't being as kind as usual. Sure, Reina was his real sister. But weren't they all supposed to be a family? Weren't they supposed to live together forever? If Reina was sick, shouldn't Sophia care too? Why did he think she was being selfish?

"Brother?" Sophia's voice trembled.

Cooper had never brushed her off like that. Tears welled up in her eyes. "I'm sorry for bothering you. I shouldn't have asked to play. Can I help with Reina instead?"

Cooper sighed, his tone softening. "I didn't mean to snap. I'm just not in the mood to play right now."

Reina, too young to understand, had no idea Sophia was the reason she was sick. But even babies can sense things. As soon as Sophia leaned in, Reina's mouth opened, and she started screaming—louder and louder.

“Don’t cry, sis. I’m here,” Cooper said, gently patting her.

But nothing helped. Reina cried harder with Sophia nearby.

The whole house rushed in to check. Sophia froze, not knowing what to do. Her tears flowed. “I didn’t do anything! I didn’t hurt her!”

She hadn’t yelled. She’d just wanted to help. Why was Reina crying?

No one answered.

Eventually, Norah calmed Reina and laid her back in the crib. Sophia tried to step forward again, but Cooper stopped her. “Don’t go near her yet. Go play with your blocks or something.”

“Why?” Sophia’s voice cracked. Her heart dropped. “Do you hate me now? You said I was your sister—that you’d protect me forever. That wasn’t long ago! I’m not a monster—why are you treating me like one?”

She hadn’t planned to hurt Reina—not anymore.

Cooper grabbed a tissue and wiped her tears. “It’s not that. But when you got close, she cried and I couldn’t calm her. I had to get Mom—and she’s already exhausted. I just don’t want to add to her stress.”

He remembered the nurse saying Norah had donated a ton of blood. Even with a transfusion, she was still weak. He couldn’t let her push herself more.

“So everyone else can see Reina, but not me? That’s not what a family does!” Sophia cried. “You’re pushing me out!”

If Reina were gone—truly gone—Cooper would only have Sophia. He’d love her, play with her, never snap because of someone else.

If she’d known this would happen, she would’ve used more of the medicine.

That little bottle was still in her backpack. The bad people had said it was powerful. Half a bottle could kill an adult. For a child? Just a few drops.

A few more drops, and Reina would be gone. Then Sophia could have Cooper to herself—and maybe even see her real mom again.

“Don’t overthink it,” Cooper said. “We’re family. That’s why we need to take care of Reina and let Mom rest.”

But Sophia wasn’t listening anymore. To her, family meant being equal. If Reina was always the favorite, what did that make her?

“Just play on your own for now,” Cooper said. “I’ll help Mom with Reina. Once she’s better, we’ll hang out—maybe go to the aquarium.”

“Will Reina come?” Sophia asked softly.

Cooper thought for a moment. “Probably, yeah.”

“What if she cries and doesn’t want to go?”

“Then we’ll go another day,” he said without hesitation.

There was always tomorrow. Or the next day.

But not for Sophia. For her, Reina’s presence meant she’d always be second. Even her time with Cooper could be ruined by a few tears.

Her decision was made.

While Norah went to her room to rest and Kevin cooked dinner, Sophia turned to Aunt Wang. “Can you make that cake you bake? Cooper and I really want some.”

“Mr. Edwards is making dinner. How about tomorrow morning?” Aunt Wang hesitated, still worried about leaving Reina.

“Aunt Wang, I won’t eat dinner without cake,” Sophia pleaded, eyes shining with fake tears. “Don’t worry—Cooper and I can watch Reina. She’s just a baby.”

Aunt Wang hesitated. Sophia’s tears pulled at her heart. Children needed to eat—especially a girl Sophia’s age.

Maybe it would be okay... just for a moment.

## **Chapter 673**

“Alright, I’ll bake a cake now. Just a simple one tonight, okay? I’ll make the fancy one tomorrow,” Aunt Wang said, giving in.

Sophia nodded with a bright smile.

It would only take a minute or two to poison Reina—plenty of time.

Once Aunt Wang left, Sophia turned to Cooper. “Hey, remember that Abebe toy Reina loves? The kitten one?”

“Yeah, I remember,” Cooper said, nodding. He’d picked it out himself at the toy store with his parents, knowing Reina would love it. And she did—she never let go of it.

"It's hanging on the upstairs balcony," Sophia said. "Why don't you grab it? Maybe it'll help her sleep better."

She sounded genuinely caring.

No one could've guessed the venom hiding behind her sweet face.

Cooper had no idea his absence would put his sister in danger again. "Okay, I'll get it," he said, heading up the stairs.

As soon as he left, Sophia slid the sofa pillow aside, grabbed her bag, and pulled out a small medicine bottle. She uncorked it and crept toward Reina.

Reina, half-asleep, stirred at the noise and began to wail. Sophia quickly clamped a hand over her mouth. "Stop crying! You always make everyone come running," she hissed, glaring at the baby with hatred.

She raised the bottle, ready to pour the poison into Reina's mouth.

But Norah was faster. She grabbed Sophia's arm, her voice sharp and cold. "What are you doing?"

"I—I wasn't doing anything!" Sophia stammered, loosening her grip on Reina.

Reina gasped for air and cried even harder.

Norah didn't have time to comfort her. She snatched the bottle from Sophia's hand. "What is this? If I hadn't walked in, were you really going to pour this into her mouth?"

Sophia lunged for the bottle, but at six years old, even jumping, she couldn't reach it. Tears streamed down her face as she dodged Norah's questions.

The cries pierced the kitchen. Kevin turned off the stove and rushed out, apron still on. "Norah, what's going on?" he asked, stunned by Sophia's sobs and Norah's fury as she held a tiny bottle.

"Ask her what's in this," Norah said, handing him the bottle. "If I hadn't walked in, she would've poisoned Reina!"

A chill ran through her. She'd suspected everyone—intruders, even Aunt Wang—but never a six-year-old.

"What?" Kevin's voice was hollow with disbelief.

But the truth was in his hands—Sophia, caught red-handed. He had no choice but to believe it.

Cooper came tearing down the stairs, Abebe toy in hand. When he saw the scene, he shoved Sophia hard. She fell, scraping her hand on the floor, crying out in pain and humiliation.

“You’re crying? Reina’s in way worse shape! She’s hooked up to tubes because of you! Why would you do this?” Cooper shouted, his voice breaking.

Hadn’t their family treated her well? Maybe not perfectly—but they took her in. Why repay kindness with cruelty?

Sophia curled up, hugging her knees, sobbing quietly.

Norah’s anger blazed, but she felt trapped. If an adult had hurt Reina, she and Kevin would’ve made them pay. But Sophia was just a child—a child who had lost everything.

“Where did you get this poison?” Norah demanded, a terrible thought striking her. “Your dad’s gone, your mom left you, you’re homeless—how’d you even get this?”

And then it clicked. The fire, the stampede—it was all a setup. Sophia had been lying from the start. They’d taken her in, fallen for it—and nearly lost Reina.

Sophia said nothing, curling in tighter.

Kevin’s fists clenched, rage flashing in his eyes. He grabbed her collar and lifted her off the ground. “Talk, or I’ll throw you in prison. No sun, no food—just torture forever!”

Sophia’s mind flashed back to her kidnapping—crying every day, waiting for someone to save her. No one came. She didn’t understand that minors couldn’t be jailed. Terrified, she broke. “Someone made me do it! They said if I didn’t put the drug in her water, I’d never see my mom or siblings again. I didn’t have a choice!”

“So you hurt my sister?” Cooper shouted, his eyes full of tears.

Her story was tragic, but it didn’t excuse what she’d done. She’d become just like the people who forced her to do it.

## **Chapter 674**

Cooper’s fury turned into guilt. He’d begged his parents to keep Sophia, convinced she could be the sister he always wanted. But she wasn’t a sister—she was a killer.

“Get out! I never want to see you again!” he yelled.

Sophia reached for his sleeve, but he shoved her away. She fell hard, her cries echoing.

Aunt Wang returned just then, holding a cake, and froze at the sight. “Stop pretending!” Cooper yelled. “You tried to poison my sister and think I’ll feel sorry for you?”

Aunt Wang's jaw dropped. Poison? That word didn't fit the sweet girl barely up to her waist. Then it hit her—Sophia's sudden obsession with desserts. "You didn't care about cake," Aunt Wang said, her voice trembling. "You just wanted me out of the room. I thought you just had a sweet tooth!"

Cold sweat broke out on her skin. If Norah hadn't caught her, Aunt Wang would still be clueless—baking treats for a child plotting murder.

"Kevin, she can't stay here another second," Norah said, turning to him. "Where do we send her?"

The problem was, Sophia had no legal status. A foreign child with no ID wouldn't be accepted by an orphanage. Even the police couldn't jail someone her age.

"Contact the embassy," Kevin said. "Send her back to her country."

"No!" Sophia cried. "I don't have a mom anymore—and Country Y is at war! I can't go back alone!"

Cooper's hands curled into fists. "You knew everything and still lied!" he snapped. She'd always avoided his questions about where she was from, pretending not to know.

Sophia clamped her mouth shut, but it was too late.

Norah ignored her, turning to Kevin. "The Country Y embassy's close. She came by plane—we can trace her entry records."

It would be a hassle, but better than keeping her in their home. Just looking at Sophia made Norah feel sick. But she couldn't bring herself to harm a child—and that helplessness burned.

Sophia dropped to her knees, bruising them, pleading. "Please, let me stay! I'll die if you send me back!"

This place was the first where she'd felt safe—kind people, a garden to play in, no fear of running. If they sent her back, she'd fail her mission, lose her family, and end up homeless.

"I know I was wrong," she sobbed. "I'll never hurt anyone again. Please don't send me away!"

Cooper shook his head at his parents. "Don't keep her. I'm scared she'll try to hurt Reina again."

Once, twice—it could happen again.

Kevin picked Cooper up. "We're taking her to the embassy. They'll take it from there."

Whatever happened to Sophia in Country Y wasn't their problem. They weren't saints. If she'd told the truth from the beginning, they might have helped. But after what she did to Reina, forgiving her would mean betraying their daughter.



Sophia wailed, but Norah was done. She grabbed her and marched her to the car.

And with her cries echoing behind them, they drove straight to the embassy.

## Chapter 675

Kian's hand froze in mid-air. He wanted to stop Ophelia but didn't want to hurt her. "Please don't go. I'm done with them—whatever they say or do. I just want a life with you."

Ophelia grabbed his hand and pressed it against her flat stomach. "And our baby? Where's our child? If you could bring them back, I wouldn't care if you were with someone else—I just want my baby."

To her, that child was everything. She'd give up anything before letting them suffer.

Kian's eyes burned with guilt. "Don't say that, Ophelia. You're the only one I've ever loved. Hit me, scream at me, just don't say things like that."

Her pain wasn't just physical—the miscarriage, the recovery, the emotional toll. He had failed her. Even if it wasn't intentional, he'd added to her pain.

"I never doubted that you loved me," Ophelia said, her voice breaking. "That's why I couldn't stand seeing you with her. I came to your house to drag you out, no matter what. But when I opened the door, you were in her arms." That memory tore her apart—betrayal, pain, and humiliation tangled around her like a web she couldn't escape.

What had she done to deserve this? Her only crime was loving Kian. "If we'd broken up sooner, listened to our parents, we wouldn't be here."

"You regret being with me?" Kian's voice trembled, his eyes red.

"Yes," Ophelia said without flinching. "If I had chosen someone else, I'd still have my baby. And my husband wouldn't have betrayed me right after I lost them."

That image would haunt her forever.

She walked away with her suitcase. Kian didn't stop her. He just followed silently.

"Madam, where are you going?" Aunt Chun asked, reaching for the suitcase. "Let me carry that. You need to rest—your health is important."

A miscarriage wasn't childbirth, but the recovery was just as vital.

Ophelia shook her head. "I'm leaving for good. I'm never coming back."

Kian stood by the stairs, overhearing everything. Aunt Chun froze, realizing just how serious the fight was. She glanced at Kian, silently urging him to act.

“Don’t bother, Aunt Chun,” Ophelia said sharply. “I’m leaving. No one’s stopping me.”

Aunt Chun backed off, helpless. She could only do so much—some things had to be handled between husband and wife.

“Ophelia,” Kian said, walking to the door. “If you need space, fine. But when you’re ready, call me. I’ll come get you.”

“Do you really not get it? Or do you think I’m stupid?” Ophelia let out a bitter laugh. “I’m not going to ‘clear my head.’ I’m done being Mrs. Paterson. I’m done with your dreams!”

It was over—just like their child. Gone, with no way to bring them back.

She walked downstairs alone. Kian reached for her, but his fingers only brushed her sleeve before it slipped away. She got into a car and disappeared.

“She’s really angry,” Aunt Chun said. “I’ve never seen her like this. But women soften with time—give her space, and she’ll come back.”

Kian knew she meant well, but the gap between him and Ophelia wasn’t just about today. The loss of their child, their families’ disapproval—it was a mountain range that seemed impossible to cross.

Letting her go? That wasn’t an option.

He stood at the door until a car pulled up. But it wasn’t Ophelia—it was his parents, with Teresa.

Teresa stood beside them like she belonged there, smirking. “Kian, we have—” she started, but the tone in her voice said more than her words.

Aunt Chun’s eyes widened. No wonder Ophelia left—Kian had let another woman in right after her miscarriage. A slap to the heart.

“Nothing happened,” Kian said coldly. “You know that. Don’t pin this on me. You’re a woman—you should know how much a reputation matters.”

“Even if nothing happened, who’s going to believe you? Will Ophelia?” Mrs. Paterson jumped in. She’d spiked the tea to break them up, and now she was making sure it stayed that way.

“You two should end it,” she said.

**Chapter 676**

"I'll only ever have Ophelia as my wife. I won't even look at another woman," Kian said firmly, hoping his parents would finally back off—and Teresa would get the message.

He thought Teresa would have some self-respect and walk away. He was wrong.

Teresa locked eyes with him. "I don't care if you're still hung up on her. We're young, Kian. We've got time. I know you'll come around. Your loyalty to her just proves you're a good man. And when you're with me, you'll love me just the same. We'll build a great life together."

Her words struck a nerve with Mr. and Mrs. Paterson. Mrs. Paterson squeezed Teresa's hand, clearly approving. Sure, Ophelia came from the powerful Labrie family, but the Patersons weren't desperate. They didn't need to trade their son's future for status. They just wanted a daughter-in-law who truly loved him—a steady life.

Ophelia? She was chaos. And who even knew if the baby had been Kian's? It was good she miscarried. Otherwise, Kian might've spent his life raising someone else's kid. Mrs. Paterson would never let that happen.

"No kid tying you down anymore," she said bluntly. "Why not just get divorced? Clean break. No baggage."

That was the last straw for Kian. "Baggage? That was my first child! I waited for them, named them, bought clothes and toys. And now they're gone—and you call them baggage? Do you have any idea how much that hurts?"

He never expected them to feel his pain, but at the very least, they could stop adding to it. Calling his child a burden? That was unforgivable.

Thank God Ophelia wasn't here to hear it. It would've crushed her—and erased whatever chance was left between them.

"You can't even prove that child was yours," Mrs. Paterson snapped. "That Labrie girl probably used you to climb the social ladder."

Aunt Chun, who'd been quiet the whole time, finally spoke up. She had a son and a grandson—she knew what motherhood meant. "Ophelia's a good woman. She's not some schemer."

"Who asked you?" Mrs. Paterson barked, her glare sharp. To her, Aunt Chun was just siding with Ophelia—a maid helping manipulate her son.

"You don't get to silence her," Kian snapped, bitter. "I was a fool to think you'd ever understand. I already lost my child. And now you want me to lose Ophelia too?" He laughed hollowly. "Aunt Chun, show them out."

“Kian, I’m your mother! You can’t just kick me out!” Mrs. Paterson shouted, face twisted with fury.

Teresa’s eyes filled with tears, playing the victim. “If you don’t want me here, I’ll leave. But don’t take it out on your parents. They’re doing this because they love you.”

Kian used to believe that. He used to think parents always acted out of love. But after the drugged tea, he saw the truth—this wasn’t love, it was control. “Aunt Chun. I said show them out,” he repeated, turning away.

Aunt Chun stepped forward. “Please leave,” she said firmly.

Mr. Paterson, silent until now, finally spoke. “How much does Ophelia pay you?”

“My salary comes from Kian,” Aunt Chun replied. “And it doesn’t matter how much—I work with a clear conscience. You don’t destroy a marriage.”

Mrs. Paterson opened her mouth to respond, but Teresa stopped her with a shake of the head.

Back in the car, Mrs. Paterson wiped her eyes. “What’s that woman done to him? He’s choosing a nanny over his own parents. If word gets out, we’ll be a joke.” She sighed bitterly. “I should’ve drugged him before the wedding. Better they never married than this disaster.”

“Don’t push him too hard,” Teresa said quietly. “It’ll backfire.” She didn’t just want the ring—she wanted Kian’s heart. A hollow marriage wouldn’t stop Ophelia from taking him back.

Mrs. Paterson let out a long sigh. “I know. But seeing him wrapped around her finger drives me insane.” She hesitated, then lowered her voice. “Teresa, it’s just us. Be honest—did you two...?”

## Chapter 677

If Teresa and Kian had slept together, Mrs. Paterson could’ve pushed for marriage. Kian had just lost a child—he wouldn’t turn his back on a pregnancy. Even a fake medical report would do. By the time he found out the truth, it’d be too late to walk away.

“No,” Teresa muttered, biting her lip and shaking her head. Despite the drugs, she couldn’t seduce him. Kian’s heart still belonged to Ophelia.

Mrs. Paterson’s face fell. “I dosed that tea heavily. Nothing happened? What went on in there?”

Blushing, Teresa described the failed attempt. Mrs. Paterson gasped. Ophelia must've put Kian under a spell—he'd rather risk his health than betray her. That only made Mrs. Paterson more determined. They had to break them up. Now.

"If Kian won't do it, I'll go after Ophelia," she said, her eyes blazing. "She's gone. Let's keep it that way."

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### **Ophelia's Side**

Ophelia drove aimlessly until she ended up parked near the ocean. Alone on the beach, her vision blurred with tears. She couldn't go back to Kian. And going to her parents' house? Unbearable. They'd lecture her about her choice in men. She'd defied them for Kian, believing in the life they could build together. Reality had smacked her in the face.

Going home now meant admitting defeat—facing their "I told you so" and the stream of suitors they'd throw at her. She wasn't ready to fall in love again.

"Ophelia."

She turned at the sound of her name. Emilio.

Wiping her tears, she forced a smile. "Out here for the ocean too? Small world."

"I came for you," Emilio said as he stepped closer, draping his coat over her shoulders. "You're out here alone, freezing. Did he hurt you?" He paused. "I told you he wasn't right for you. I'm good at reading people—he doesn't deserve you."

Ophelia looked away, missing the intensity in his gaze. "It's over. I don't want to talk about it."

Emilio's breath grew heavier. He grabbed her hand. "Then... have you ever thought about me? I love you, Ophelia. I've always been here, waiting. Just turn around. I'll protect you."

"I know you're a good guy, Emilio, but don't waste your time on me," she said, shaking her head. "We'll never be more than friends."

"You still love Kian."

"No. We're done."

"Then why not me?" Emilio pushed. "You're still young, Ophelia. You can't stay alone forever because of him."

She didn't know how to answer. Let him think what he wanted—she stayed silent.

"You're not tied down with a kid," Emilio said, glancing at her stomach, a flicker of relief crossing his face. No child meant a clean break from Kian. He could take Kian's place.

"Enough," Ophelia snapped, her voice rising. "That baby wasn't just Kian's—it was mine. Don't speak about it like that."

"I'm sorry," Emilio said quickly. "I shouldn't have said that. I'll leave. You need some space."

He didn't follow her when she walked away. Instead, he snapped a photo of her back, angling it to look like his hand was on her waist. He sent it anonymously to Mrs. Paterson.

At dinner, Mrs. Paterson exploded, slamming her hand on the table. "Look at this! Ophelia runs off and finds another man!"

Mr. Paterson dropped his chopsticks. He tried to calm her as her breathing grew erratic.

"We can't let Kian keep chasing her," she fumed. "We need to bring him back."

## Chapter 678

"I'm with you," Mr. Paterson said, trying to soothe her. "We can't let Kian throw his life away, but don't wreck your health over it. If you get sick, the whole family falls apart."

Mrs. Paterson's eyes lit up. "What if I *pretend* to be sick? Say I'm in the ICU. Kian's loyal—he'd come home, even if he's still in love with Ophelia."

"You can't fake something like that," Mr. Paterson said, alarmed.

"It's not real," she said, annoyed. "We've got money—we can stage an ICU admission. It'll bring him home and push him closer to Teresa."

Mr. Paterson chuckled. "I must be getting old. That's actually smart. Kian's a good son—he won't ignore his mother."

They'd poured everything into Kian—love, money, their entire lives. No matter what Ophelia said, he couldn't just cut them off. Now that she was gone, it was their chance to end things for good.

"Let's bring in Emilia," Mrs. Paterson added. "Kian trusts her. They've known each other since childhood."

The next morning, Emilia arrived from a nearby province, having taken time off from college. Mrs. Paterson handed her a thick red envelope—easily five figures.

"Aunt, what's this?" Emilia tried to return it. "It's too much."

"It's our love for you," Mrs. Paterson said. "Just help us, okay?"

Emilia hesitated. “But Kian’s married. I can’t break up someone’s marriage.”

Then she saw the photo—Ophelia and Emilio together. Fueled by Mr. and Mrs. Paterson’s anger, she seethed.

“That Labrie girl thinks she’s too good for Kian? How could she treat him like this?”

Affairs were disgusting—man or woman. If Ophelia didn’t cherish Kian, she never should’ve married him.

“Don’t worry,” Emilia said firmly. “I’ll help break them up. Kian deserves better.”

Mrs. Paterson smiled. Ophelia might be a rich heiress, spoiled from birth—but with her in-laws, a cousin, and Teresa all against her, let’s see how long she could hold on to Kian.

## **Chapter 679**

“I just left Kian,” Ophelia said, cutting her mother off. “I need space. Why are you pushing me to marry someone else? I can’t do this right now.”

She wasn’t ready for a new relationship—especially not with Emilio.

“We thought you’d move on after some time,” Paloma said gently. “But look at you—alone in a hotel, living on takeout. How can we not worry?”

To them, having Emilio nearby was better than watching her spiral alone.

Brody jumped in. “Emilio’s a good guy. You’re too blind to see what’s good for you. Break his heart, and then what? What’s your future?”

Sure, the Labries could support her forever—but they were getting older. If Ophelia stayed alone, what then? Why should Kian get to move on while she stayed stuck?

“I just lost my child, and now you want me to accept someone else?” Ophelia said, her head pounding. “I’m not some pet you can just pair off to breed.”

“Watch your tone,” Brody warned, his frown deepening.

He wasn’t pushing her to marry, but he could see she was still caught up on Kian. If they got back together, it would destroy her parents.

“Let them rest next door,” Emilio said softly. “We’re the same age, Ophelia. It’s easier for us to talk.”

Brody and Paloma reluctantly left the room.

Alone, Ophelia turned to him sharply. “You called them, didn’t you? You knew they’d show up and lecture me. I came here to be alone.”

“That’s what you think of me?” Emilio said bitterly.

She didn’t answer, but her silence was loud. He’d tracked her down, and suddenly her parents were there too—he didn’t seem so innocent.

“You’re wrong,” Emilio said. “I didn’t bring them here to pressure you.”

“Then why are you all together?” she snapped. “Go join them. I don’t want to talk anymore.”

“If I leave, your parents will think we argued and start interrogating you,” Emilio said calmly. “I just don’t want to make things harder.”

She knew he was right—her parents would question her nonstop. So she didn’t kick him out, but she didn’t engage either. She just stared out the window, watching traffic, while he rambled on.

Until he brought up something that hit a nerve. “Your parents will never abandon you, Ophelia. They know everything—including where you are. The Labrie family owns part of this hotel.”

Ophelia checked her phone. He was right—they held a small share in the hotel chain. Just enough to access guest records. She had misjudged him.

“I’m sorry,” she finally said, turning to face him. “But we can’t be together.”

“I know we’re just friends,” Emilio replied, feigning innocence. “Our parents don’t get it. You and Kian just fought—they want you to move on.”

What he didn’t say: he’d exaggerated Kian’s betrayal and used it to manipulate her parents. He’d planned this.

“Let’s just pretend for now,” Emilio suggested. “Your parents are watching you closely. If we play along, they’ll ease off.”

Ophelia hesitated. It could work... but why was Emilio so persistent? She’d just escaped a painful marriage. She wasn’t ready for anything new. Emilio, though, clearly wanted more—family, kids, commitment.

“You’re a good guy,” she said carefully. “But I can’t be selfish. I’ll tell my parents I’m not marrying anyone. They can’t force me.”

“They’re just worried about you,” Emilio said, pushing gently. “They’re getting old—try to see it from their side.”

After much coaxing, Ophelia finally nodded. “Fine. We’ll pretend for now. That’s it.”



Emilio's heart leapt. Pretend or not, this was progress. He'd make it real. Kian? Just a former assistant riding on Kevin's coattails. Emilio would bury him.

## Chapter 680

Sophia cried the entire drive, but Norah and Kevin were unmoved.

At the embassy, Norah got out first, turning back to pull Sophia from the car.

"No! I won't go!" Sophia screamed, clinging to the seatbelt, her small hands turning red from gripping it so tightly. Tears drenched her clothes. "You said I was family—why are you throwing me away?"

Norah almost laughed from sheer frustration. Sophia was still trying to guilt-trip her? She bent down, pried her fingers free, and carried her into the embassy.

In front of the embassy staff, Norah kept it brief.

"I'm not from your country!" Sophia protested, still struggling. "They're my parents! Cooper's my brother!"

As if lies would save her. Adults needed facts.

The staff ran her entry records, confirming her real identity. "We'll send her back and notify her relatives," they said. Whether anyone showed up was no longer Norah and Kevin's concern.

Once the paperwork was done, Norah turned to leave. But Sophia broke free, ran to Cooper, and held up a matching pendant.

"Brother, remember this? We both have one."

Cooper glanced at it. He remembered buying them at an amusement park—one for him, one for Sophia, and even ones for his parents. But it meant nothing now.

"I just realized something," he said coldly. "You sent me off to grab that toy to get me out of the way, didn't you? But you forgot Mom was right there. The door was open."

Reina had just recovered. Their parents would never have left her alone.

Sophia froze. She hadn't thought of that. "Brother, I—"

"Sir," Cooper said to the staff, cutting her off, "take her. I want to go home with my parents."

Just the four of them—him, Reina, Mom, and Dad.

The staff gently picked Sophia up. "Don't struggle. Be good."

She kicked and screamed, but she was too small to escape. All she could do was watch as Norah, Kevin, and Cooper walked away.

In the car, the air was heavy. “It’s over,” Kevin said, finally breaking the silence. “Want some music?”

Norah nodded. “Sure.”

Kevin turned the key—but the car’s screen didn’t light up normally. It flickered to life, revealing a masked man, face hidden except for cold, mocking eyes.

“Who are you?” Kevin demanded, voice like ice.

This had to be connected to Sophia.

The man laughed—a long, cruel sound. “Kevin, don’t you have two kids? Only one here. Can’t bring the other one back, or don’t want to?”

Kevin’s eyes turned dark. “You sent Sophia.”

It wasn’t a question.

The man gave no confirmation, no denial. “Want answers? Come find them. Let’s see who’s faster.”

Then the screen went black.

Norah’s face was grim. “We just dropped Sophia off, and he already knows. He hacked our car. He’s not just some amateur.”

Poisoning a child? This man was beyond ruthless.

She racked her brain but couldn’t remember ever crossing someone this heartless.

With Cooper in the back, Kevin kept his cool. “I’ll take you home. Stay close to the kids. Even with Aunt Wang around, we need to be there—especially for Reina.”

Cooper was old enough to ask for help. Reina barely spoke, mostly just slept. She was vulnerable.

“Let’s install cameras once we’re back,” Norah said. “Reina’s room, her stroller—everywhere. We have to be prepared.”

“Who was that guy?” Cooper asked, worried. “He seemed bad. I didn’t like him.”

His instincts screamed danger. That man’s stare felt like a snake watching its prey.

