

# Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life

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## Chapter 971

The car stopped outside the Seguin family's building. Rhea's stomach twisted as she got out.

Seguin's mother opened the door, scowling. "Why are you here?" she snapped, then turned and walked off.

Inside, the room went quiet. Seguin's father sat on the couch, glaring. "You've been gone so long, I thought you were dead. That would've been better than showing up now."

Seguin's mother joined in. "You ruined this family. Just look around."

The house was bare. Gone were the fancy mahogany sofa, the fish tank, and the tea collection—bought with Rhea's money. After Phillip's spiral, it had all vanished.

"Good," Rhea replied coldly. "That's how it should be."

Seguin's mother's eyes blazed. "You ungrateful—"

Phillip cut her off, rolling forward in his wheelchair. "Mom, stop. She's here. Don't make this worse."

Rhea blinked. Was he defending her?

Even Phillip looked unsure. Ever since seeing her at the orphanage—happy, shining—he couldn't shake the image. He used to think she'd always be quiet and obedient. That smile proved otherwise.

He avoided her eyes. "It's my sister's memorial. She loved you. She wouldn't want all this."

Rhea's gaze shifted to the black-and-white photo on the wall. Her sister's smiling face looked alive, but the absence was loud.

Her chest tightened with grief.

They ate in silence. Her sister's name lingered, unspoken but heavy.

Later, Rhea burned paper money in a metal basin. Phillip knelt beside her. "Let me help."

She opened her mouth to reply, but he spoke first. "The past is over. No point digging it up."

He stared into the fire. “In rehab, I had time to think. It shouldn’t have ended this way.”

Who was to blame—him, their parents, the whole family?

Rhea said nothing.

When the paper was all ash, she stood to leave. Phillip watched her at the door.

“Don’t come back, Rhea,” he said quietly. “Forget everything.”

She turned, stunned. But he shut the door before she could answer.

Outside, Jace was waiting. He opened the car door and draped his coat over her shoulders. “How did it go?”

Snowflakes started falling, soft on her hair.

“It’s snowing,” she murmured.

“Yeah,” Jace said. “It’ll get colder tonight. Let’s go.”

She nodded, about to get in—when thick smoke rose from upstairs. Flickers of fire lit up the window.

Her heart dropped. “Is that a fire?”

Jace was already calling 911, giving the address. He pulled her to the side. “Stay clear. People are evacuating.”

Neighbors rushed out in a panic. Rhea searched the crowd—no sign of the Seguin family.

A voice shouted, “The Seguins are still inside! Their place is on fire! Has anyone called emergency?”

Rhea froze. Her mind went blank, her knees weak. Jace steadied her.

“Rhea, stay with me,” he said firmly.

“How?” she whispered. “Everything was fine just minutes ago.”

Fire trucks arrived, sirens blaring. She tried to follow, but Jace stopped her gently.

“Stay here. Let them handle it. You’re pregnant—remember that.”

She nodded, breathing deeply, holding on to his voice like a lifeline.

**Chapter 972**

Rhea stared at the stairs, heart racing, until firefighters came down—carrying people.

“It’s bad,” one shouted. “Two unconscious, possible smoke inhalation. We need emergency care now!”

An ambulance was already waiting. Rhea and Jace followed, flashing their badges as doctors.

At the hospital, Rhea slipped into her white coat, hands shaking. She’d done hundreds of surgeries—but never on family.

A colleague saw her. “Dr. Neufeld, you’re going in? Dean Jace is already operating.”

“I need to be there,” she said.

Jace frowned when she walked in but saw her determination. “You’re assisting. Nothing more.”

She nodded, pulling on gloves.

Phillip, protected by his parents, only suffered minor smoke inhalation and was stabilized quickly. But their parents were in bad shape—burns and severe smoke damage. Half of Seguin’s mother’s face and neck were scorched.

Rhea stayed focused, hands steady. The surgery went well.

Later, police gave an update. “The fire’s out. Cause was suicide—deliberate arson.”

Rhea’s ears rang. “What?”

It didn’t make sense. For all their faults, the Seguin family didn’t seem suicidal. But the evidence pointed at Phillip. His parents were badly burned—he wasn’t. If they’d done it, why protect him?

Jace put a hand on her arm. “Don’t dwell on it. Ask him when he wakes up.”

The next day, Phillip opened his eyes. Rhea visited.

He didn’t look surprised. “You saved me. Why?”

“Why not?” she replied calmly.

He let out a dry laugh. “Still so naive.”

Then he confessed—he’d started the fire himself. He wanted to die, dragging his parents with him. Guilt, disability—he couldn’t take it anymore.

Rhea lost it. "So you give up and drag others with you? That's your way of making things right?"

She didn't hold back. "I worked eight jobs, couldn't afford a doctor, was starving—and I didn't quit. Why should you?"

He stared at her, stunned. He thought he was doing something noble. Now he saw it for what it was—running away.

"If you really regret it, then live," she said. "Don't make me your excuse."

He promised he wouldn't try again. His eyes were blank, but something had shifted.

She left the room.

Over the next few months, Seguin's parents recovered. When they found out Rhea saved them, they were ashamed. But she felt nothing—not anger, just nothing. That was her closure.

She didn't ask how they handled Phillip. Like he said, that part of her life was over.

Meanwhile, the orphanage thrived. Three months later, the renovations were done. The staff cheered.

Even better, Joaquin's condition improved. "He had a check-up," the director told her, ruffling the boy's hair. "He cooperated. Doctor says he's doing great."

Joaquin didn't pull away from her touch. When she smiled at him, he smiled back—for the first time.

The director gasped. "He's never smiled like that before. He really likes you."

Rhea gave him new building blocks. He loved them.

With the project complete, she launched an online donation page, full of pictures for transparency. Support poured in. The orphanage's finances finally stabilized.

At home, Jace wrapped his arms around her. "You've been working nonstop. I got you maternity leave."

She turned to him. "Just me?"

He grinned, tapping her nose. "Nope. Me too. We're doing this together."

**Chapter 973**

Cody's life was chaos—between medical lectures and nonstop surgeries, he barely had time to breathe. Then his dad decided to play matchmaker, ambushing him at the hospital with a surprise blind date.

"Cody, all your friends are married," his father complained. "Dean Jace married a top doctor. You're a doctor too! I'm not even forcing you to run the family business. There are nurses, doctors—take your pick! This girl is Uncle MacLean's daughter."

Cody barely glanced at her. "Why should I get married just because everyone else did?"

His dad's face turned red. "What, you plan to stay single forever? Kevin and Bonian have kids already! Don't tell me you're into guys?"

Cody sighed. "Not wanting a relationship doesn't mean I like men."

"There were rumors about you and Kevin," his dad insisted. "He's married now, so what's going on with you?"

"Rumors?" Cody cut in. "That's ridiculous. Kevin and I were just friends."

"But you were *close*," his dad pushed. "If you're not into guys, prove it—go out with this girl."

Before Cody could argue more, his phone buzzed. He checked it and gave a relieved sigh. "Take her home, Dad. I've got something to take care of."

He walked off, leaving his father fuming.

The girl, **Jimena MacLean**, dug her nails into her palm. Her family's business was collapsing, her brother was missing, and her father was sick. She'd agreed to this date because she had no choice.

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Cody arrived at a luxury apartment after getting an urgent call. Inside, a woman in white silk sat on the couch, gently stroking a cat in her lap.

"Miranda Gaudet," he greeted softly.

She looked panicked. "Cody, Tyler won't eat. Please check him."

Cody, a doctor with some basic veterinary training, examined the aging ragdoll cat. "He's in heart failure," he said gently. "He doesn't have much time left."

Miranda's eyes filled with tears. "He's been with me for years. I can't lose him. Isn't there *anything* you can do?"

Cody's chest tightened. He had never seen her like this—so vulnerable. "Miranda, everything has its time. It's natural."

"He's family," she whispered. "I can't handle this."

Cody knelt beside her, voice hoarse. "I'll take care of Tyler with you. Miranda... marry me. That guy's not coming back."

He'd loved her since college—always there, always waiting, always asking, and always being turned down. He thought maybe, just maybe, she'd finally say yes.

But then her phone rang.

"Miranda, I'm back. Can we talk?" a man's voice said.

Her face lit up. "Ronan? Where are you?"

Cody felt like the floor dropped beneath him. Ronan—her first love—was back.

She touched Cody's face gently. "He's back, Cody. Please take care of Tyler for me. You know I've always loved *him*."

She left. Cody stood there, numb. "Take Tyler yourself. Or drop him off at a shelter."

Miranda froze. "Cody, it's just a meeting. Why are you being like this?"

"I'm not mad," he said coldly. "I've always been there for you because I love you. But friendship doesn't mean trampling someone's heart. I'm done."

He walked out. Years of silent love disappeared like smoke.

## Chapter 974

Miranda stood frozen, her voice tight. "Cody, that's not fair. I never led you on. I always told you no."

Cody nodded. "You did. But whenever something happened, you called *me* first. I showed up because I cared. Now that Ronan's back, go be with him. And let Tyler live the rest of his life in peace."

He didn't look back.

If Ronan hadn't come back, Cody might've kept hoping. But now he saw the truth—he never stood a chance.

That night, Cody went to a bar to clear his head. He didn't want to call Esteban, worried about fueling old rumors. But fate had other plans—Esteban was already there.

"Dr. Cody, out at a bar? That's rare," Esteban joked.

Cody sighed. "You know what they say about us?"

Esteban shrugged. "Smart people ignore gossip. You can't control what others say. Besides, I've just been covering for you—dodging your blind dates."

Cody blinked. "Covering for me? Esteban, the rumors are bad enough already. Now my dad's parading girls through the hospital!"

Esteban chuckled. "Wow. He's really that desperate?"

Cody took a step back. The last thing he needed was his dad overhearing something and jumping to more conclusions.

Esteban's face darkened. "You think I'm into you? Cody, I should punch you."

"Then stop messing around," Cody shot back. "You're just making it worse."

Esteban smirked. "Tell your dad we're dating. Problem solved. No more blind dates. You think anyone can force you into anything?"

Cody narrowed his eyes. "What are you saying?"

Esteban flicked his arm. "Don't take it so seriously. I'm joking. You're spiraling for no reason."

"Joking?" Cody's voice rose. "You sound way too convincing."

Before Esteban could reply, a voice interrupted. "Sorry, Cody's my fiancé."

Jimena—the blind date girl—walked up and grabbed Cody's hand.

Cody frowned. "What are you doing?"

Esteban raised a brow. "Your dad's at it again, huh? Sending girls straight to your table now. Guy's *really* determined."

Jimena didn't flinch. "He's my fiancé. And you—if you keep harassing him with your... orientation, I'll file charges."

Cody's face twisted in frustration. "Fiancé? Who even *are* you? You're ruining my reputation!"

Jimena lowered her gaze. "Your father arranged everything. He already approved our engagement. I'm just doing my part."

Esteban chuckled. "She came prepared. I'll let you two talk."

Cody shot Jimena a look of pure frustration. "Tell my dad to quit this nonsense. If you don't leave me alone, you *will* regret it."

## Chapter 975

Jimena didn't even blink. Compared to her family's collapse, Cody's anger meant nothing. She'd follow him anywhere—Franklin had promised to wipe out her family's debts if she could win Cody over.

Cody's expression turned cold. "What deal did you make with my dad? Tell me now, or I'll find out myself."

He could uncover anything if he tried.

Jimena didn't hesitate. "My family's in deep trouble. Your dad needed someone for you. I stepped up. We've known each other since we were kids, Cody. Whatever you felt before, I'm here now. I won't let you end up with some guy."

Cody let out a disbelieving laugh. "You think this is some kind of arranged marriage? Fine, you made a deal with my dad. But look around—this place is full of guys. Go choose one. You don't need me."

Jimena's face burned with shame. She had always been the MacLean family's cherished daughter. No one had ever humiliated her like this. But now, she had no choice. "Your dad paid me. Cody, you're not a bad guy. I've even thought about the worst-case scenario..."

She looked away, too ashamed to continue.

"The worst case?" Cody pressed.

Before she could speak, Esteban jumped in. "She obviously thinks you're into guys."

He'd been watching the whole time, eager to stir trouble.

Cody's frustration boiled over. Jimena's silence felt like agreement. Her family's situation must be beyond desperate if she'd agreed to something like this.

Before he could explode, he spotted Miranda across the room, holding Ronan's arm. She looked stunning in a black dress, her long hair flowing. The two of them looked perfect together.

Cody's jaw tightened.

"Cody," Ronan called, giving a casual nod. Miranda's eyes were icy.

Esteban smirked. "Acquaintances? Come on, let's all hang out."

Cody's tone was flat. "No thanks. We're not on the same level."

He grabbed Jimena and turned to leave. He wouldn't normally touch her, but Miranda's cold stare—like she thought he was still chasing her—got under his skin. Why did she get to look down on him?

Ronan spoke up. "Miranda told me how much you helped her. She said she wouldn't be here without you."

Esteban's ears perked up, ready for drama. Cody's face darkened. Had Miranda told Ronan about the countless times he'd proposed?

"It's what friends do," Cody replied stiffly. "Anyway, I'm busy today—with my fiancée."

He pulled Jimena closer, using her as a shield. Since she made a deal with his dad, she was fair game for this little performance.

He glanced at Miranda one last time—but she didn't even look back. Ronan pulled her in closer.

"Let's go," Miranda said, walking away without hesitation.

Cody instantly let Jimena go.

Esteban started putting the pieces together. Cody's years of being single, avoiding relationships—it had all been for Miranda. But her heart had always belonged to Ronan.

"That one?" Esteban said, nodding at Jimena. "She's better than the other. Your dad actually has better taste than you."

Cody's eyes narrowed. "Watch your mouth, Esteban."

Esteban smirked. "What, you planning to hand your fiancée over to me?"

Jimena blinked, completely thrown. Who were these people?

Cody yanked her away, fuming. He didn't want Jimena or his dad's interference. But he also wasn't going to let Esteban treat her like a toy. She was still a person.

## Chapter 976

Cody dropped Jimena off at the club's front door, his patience wearing thin.

"Stop following me," he said flatly. "I'm not into you. And if you're just chasing money, there are better ways than this."

Miranda and Ronan were still inside, and Cody wasn't about to stick around. But Jimena walked beside him, refusing to leave.

“Don’t you have somewhere else to be?” Cody snapped, irritated.

“Your dad hired me to stick with you and win you over,” Jimena said quietly, not looking up. She wasn’t going anywhere until she finished what she started.

Cody didn’t know how to respond. Her determination was obvious—and it annoyed him even more. “How much money would it take for you to stop humiliating yourself?”

Jimena’s voice cracked. “A lot.”

Her family had fallen apart, and no one else was helping. This was all she had left.

Cody looked at her carefully. She reminded him of a lost, stray dog. As a doctor, he’d seen all kinds of pain, but this felt different. He’d spent years by Miranda’s side—and Miranda was nothing like Jimena. The two couldn’t be more opposite.

“I’m not a charity case,” Cody said, his voice firm. He already knew what would happen next—his dad would just swap her out for someone else if this didn’t work. “Let me make one thing clear: you’re not going to change my mind.”

Jimena lifted her head, meeting his eyes. “Don’t you want your dad to stop messing with your life? I can help. And those rumors about you and Esteban? They’d disappear if we were together. Need a kid? I’d be okay with that too.”

Cody raised an eyebrow, voice dripping with sarcasm. “You’re okay with everything, huh? And if we’re not together anymore—what happens to the kid?”

Jimena froze. She hadn’t thought that far ahead. “You’d keep the kid,” she whispered. “I wouldn’t fight you on it. We could sign something if you’re worried.”

Her willingness to give up everything for her family was obvious—but Cody wasn’t having it. As a doctor, he could technically make her pregnant without breaking ethics. But the whole idea felt messed up—cruel, even.

“No contracts. No deals,” he said, brushing her off. “You’re young. You’ve got time to fix your debt.”

He turned to walk away.

“There’s no time,” she said behind him, barely audible. “Your dad and mine are close, but his help isn’t enough. If I follow his plan and win you over, everything changes.”

Cody stopped and turned. “You don’t even have money to get home?”

Jimena’s cheeks flushed. “Your dad told me where you’d be and had someone drop me off. He gave me some cash, but... I returned it.”

Cody let out a short, humorless laugh. “So, you’re broke, and what—clinging to me is your big plan?”

Jimena looked down. “The court seized our house today. My dad’s in the ER—furious and sick. We’ve got nowhere to go.”

Her words hit harder than he expected. Cody wasn’t heartless—but he wasn’t her savior either. “I can get you a job—”

“A job won’t fix this,” Jimena cut in, her voice trembling. “I owe too much. You’re all I’ve got left.”

Cody’s jaw tightened. “You made a deal with my dad. Not with me. You’re chasing me like I’m some prize—but did you ever stop to think that maybe I don’t want this?”

He had been holding onto Miranda all these years, even after every rejection. But now, Jimena needed to understand—he wasn’t the answer to her problems.

## Chapter 977

“You made a deal with my dad—so talk to him,” Cody said sharply. “My mom’s gone, and I’m not—”

“What are you even saying?” Jimena cut in, eyes wide.

Her throat tightened, but she didn’t argue. Cody didn’t owe her anything. Still, he was her only hope.

“Your dad picked me to change your mind,” she said, voice shaking. “I’m out of options. We can fake it—pretend to be together. If he pushes for marriage, we’ll handle it then. Fair enough?”

Before Cody could respond, someone yelled, “Move!”

A man rushed by and knocked Jimena off balance. She braced for impact, but Cody grabbed her arm and steadied her. For a moment, their eyes met—his dark gaze unreadable—then he let go.

“I’ll take you to the hospital,” he said, walking to his car. “Talk to my dad. Get what you need and pay him back later.”

Jimena followed quietly, her head down. “I can’t just string him along. That’s lying. We don’t have to make it real.”

Cody didn’t reply. His phone buzzed with a text about a Peking University alumni event—Miranda would be there. Another message popped up: a friend request from Ronan.

**[Cody, are you pushing Miranda away because of me?]**

He ignored it.

**[She never agreed to be with you. You've been chasing her for years. Don't guilt-trip her.]**

Cody's grip tightened. Guilt-trip? He never forced Miranda. He proposed—quietly, sincerely—but never made it public. He didn't owe Ronan an explanation.

"You drive," he muttered, handing Jimena the keys.

She nodded and got behind the wheel. But instead of the hospital, she pulled up at his villa. Cody's face darkened.

"Jimena, who told you to come here?"

"I thought—" she stammered. "You asked me to drive, so I figured I'd take you home."

"Home?" Cody's voice went cold. "And how exactly are *you* getting back?"

Jimena avoided his eyes. She hadn't thought that far. "I'll walk."

"Walk? It's pitch black out and miles away. You think I'm buying this act?"

Her cheeks flushed. "I wasn't thinking. I just wanted to do what your dad asked."

Cody laughed bitterly. "So you *do* admit you have an agenda, after denying it earlier? We're not kids, Jimena. Stop playing games."

She looked down, ashamed. "I wasn't trying to fool you. I just want to make things right."

His tone hardened. "You're not my responsibility. And if you think you're the best option I've got, you're dead wrong."

## **Chapter 978**

Jimena swallowed hard and stepped closer, grabbing Cody's hand. "Look at me, Cody. I'm not your worst option. Real or fake—I'm in."

"You can sleep in my car tonight," he snapped, yanking his hand away and walking off without another word.

She stood there, heart sinking. She never thought her life would come to this.

...

In the middle of the night, Cody's phone rang. Miranda's voice was faint, full of pain. "Cody, can you come over? My stomach's killing me..."

His heart clenched. He still loved her, even when it hurt. But he tried to stay rational.

“Isn’t Ronan there? Call him.”

“Ronan’s with his daughter,” she pleaded. “You’re a doctor. I can’t go to the hospital right now. Please...”

A loud crash came through the phone. Something had shattered. Cody hesitated. As a doctor, he couldn’t ignore that.

He grabbed his keys—but found Jimena asleep, hunched over the steering wheel. Annoyed, he knocked on the window.

“What’s wrong with you? Why sleep like that? The back seat’s empty.”

She jerked awake, blinking at his black loungewear. “You’re going out?”

“Come on,” he muttered. “I’ll drop you at the hospital after.”

Jimena bit her lip. He still didn’t trust her. She had to try harder. “It’s late. Don’t send me back yet.”

“I’ve got things to do,” he snapped. “Stay here or leave at dawn.”

Not wanting to be left behind, she followed. “I’ll drive.”

He glared. “Passenger seat. Now.”

They drove to a wealthy neighborhood. Cody stopped at a familiar house.

“Get the first-aid kit from the trunk,” he said.

Jimena obeyed, trailing him to the door. He punched in a code and walked in. Miranda lay curled up on the couch, pale and sweating. Cody rushed over, checking her vitals.

“Appendicitis. We’re going to the hospital—now.”

Miranda saw Jimena and froze. “Cody... why’d you bring *her*?”

“You called me,” he said tightly. “You’ve got appendicitis, Miranda. This is serious.”

He ignored her protests, picked her up, and carried her outside. Jimena beat him to the driver’s seat.

“I’ll drive,” she said. “You take care of her.”

He hesitated but nodded.

At the hospital, Cody rushed Miranda to the ER and arranged the surgery. Jimena handled the paperwork, listing Cody as the payer.

"I told them it's on you," she said when he returned. "Go pay."

He nodded and left to settle the bill. When he came back, Jimena had disappeared. A nurse mentioned the ward her family was in. He found her asleep on a bench in the hallway.

"Why're you sleeping here?" he asked, nudging her awake.

Jimena stirred, startled. "Is Miss Gu out of surgery already? Why are you here?"

"I'm not doing the operation. And we're not finished talking," Cody said. His voice had softened—but his guard was still up.

## Chapter 979

Cody's words hit Jimena hard, leaving her more confused than ever.

He'd brought her to help Miranda, and now that Miranda was safe and recovering, what else did he want? If this was a game, why find her now instead of just texting?

She kept quiet, waiting.

After a long silence, Cody spoke, his tone gentler. "You're broke, sleeping in a regular hospital ward. If you don't rest, how are you going to take care of your dad? Here." He pulled a key from his pocket. "This is to my dorm at the hospital. I don't use it much. You can go, clean up, sleep."

Jimena blinked, stunned. Cody had made it very clear he didn't want her around, yet here he was offering her a place to stay. "You're just giving me this? Aren't you worried someone might get the wrong idea?"

What she really meant was: *Aren't you afraid I'll spread rumors?*

Cody saw right through her. He smirked. "If I cared, I wouldn't have offered. Our families go way back. And you helped today."

She didn't reply, but the truth was obvious. This was all because of Miranda. She was the one Cody cared about. If he really ended up with Miranda, Jimena's deal with Franklin would fall apart.

Swallowing hard, she forced the words out. "You'll probably think I'm pathetic, but I have no options. The money's probably nothing to you. I can sign an IOU."

She looked down, ashamed to meet his eyes.

Cody had already told her he wasn't her savior. But who else did she have? He was all she had left.

He sighed, visibly frustrated. "Jimena, we barely know each other. If you were a close friend like Kevin or Bonian, sure, I'd help no questions asked. But you're not. I can't just throw you into some sugar daddy arrangement or something worse. You need to figure this out on your own."

When she didn't take the key, he set it on the bench beside her. "The dorm's 306," he said, turning to leave.

Then he paused. "Open your WhatsApp payment code."

She hesitated, then opened it. Cody transferred five thousand dollars. A lot—for someone who was basically a stranger.

"My dad's just caught up in his own plans," Cody said. "He'll give up when it doesn't work. I've been in love with someone who doesn't love me back. It's brutal. And you and I? We don't even have feelings. I don't want a loveless marriage. I don't want a kid growing up without love from their mom. What happens when they start asking questions? I won't trap either of us in that kind of life."

Jimena didn't expect him to be so blunt. She was left speechless. Even with his dad pushing him, Cody refused to settle.

"Cody, if you won't connect me with someone who can help, then just loan me the money," she begged. "I'll pay you back. No one else will help me. Your dad's the only one offering anything, even if it comes with strings."

Franklin had been clear—if she married Cody, she'd be treated like family, no questions asked. That's why she'd agreed without hesitation.

She clenched her fists, nails digging into her palms. "I'm not someone who dodges debt. I'm begging you. My family's got nothing left to sell."

No bank would loan her anything. Her relatives had cut her off. Without Franklin's offer, she would've had to sell herself to survive.

Then, desperate, she dropped to her knees.

Cody froze, stunned. The amount she needed wasn't small. "Get some rest first," he said, voice tight. "I've got to check on Miranda. I'm out."

He walked away without another word. Jimena slowly stood, watching him go. He was right—the money was too much. They barely knew each other. But he was still her best shot, even if it made her feel like a horrible person.

Cody returned to Miranda's room. Her surgery had gone well. He sat beside her, waiting for her to wake up.

## Chapter 980

Cody stayed until Miranda stirred, groggy from the anesthesia. "Where am I?" she mumbled, frowning at the harsh hospital smell.

"You're in the hospital," Cody said gently. "Appendicitis. Surgery was the only option."

Miranda looked around nervously. The unfamiliar room made her tense.

"It's just me here," he added. "I got you a VIP room."

She relaxed slightly, glad no one else knew she was there. She hated hospitals, especially when people found out.

"Unlock your phone and call Ronan," Cody said flatly. "He should take care of you."

Miranda frowned. Something in his voice had changed. "Cody, I just woke up, and you're already kicking me out? I told you—Ronan's with his daughter."

"Then call your parents. Or someone from your villa. I'm not your backup plan," he said, cold and distant.

Miranda stared at him, confused. Was this how he was getting her attention now—by pulling away? "Cody, do you really have to act like this? You know how complicated things are with Ronan. If I could've called someone else, I would've. And Ronan's right—you've been chasing me forever. I never said yes."

Her soft voice when mentioning Ronan stung. No matter what Cody did, she saw him as the one in the wrong.

Cody gave a bitter smile. "Yeah, you're gorgeous, and I've been in love with you. But don't act like I'm pressuring you. If Ronan's the guy, then call him. He's got his daughter, sure, but I've got my own life."

Miranda stayed silent, stunned.

Cody's voice dropped, sharp and tired. "You probably think I showed up because you called, like I had nothing better to do. You're right. I came because I care. But just because I care doesn't mean you get to walk all over me."

Her voice cracked. "I never tried to hurt you, Cody. I never accepted any of your proposals. I kept my distance. I thought we were friends. You're the one dragging other people into this—like that girl you brought to my place."

Cody laughed bitterly. "You don't owe me anything. And I don't owe you either. I'm not your personal doctor or emotional support. That girl? She's my fiancée. You're safe now. Call your family—or a nurse."

He placed her phone on the side table and walked out without another glance.

Miranda thought he was just upset, that he'd come back like he always did. But hours passed, and he didn't.

Meanwhile, Jimena didn't go to Cody's dorm that night. She waited until the next day—during work hours—before using the key. She knew people would see her and start talking.

And they did.

[Dr. Cody, you didn't tell us you had a girlfriend?  
[She's so pretty! When's the wedding?  
[You two make a cute couple.]

Cody hadn't expected her to show up during the day. Now it was clear—Jimena was still scheming. Frustrated, he grabbed his spare key and headed to the dorm.

He opened the door and heard the shower running. A few minutes later, Jimena walked out, drying her hair, wearing only his white shirt.

His expression turned cold. "Jimena, I told you to stop. And you're still doing this? You really think this isn't crossing a line?"

She flinched but didn't back down. "I know it's a lot. But I don't have a choice. If I don't push, you'll never show up. Your dad won't believe I'm serious, and if he doesn't, I don't get the money."

Her fists were clenched so tight her nails dug into her palms.

Cody's lip curled. "And what exactly does that have to do with me?"