



WRATH
FROM THE.

THE
SHADOWS
TARUN BALI

Prologue

Do you know what lengths people would go to for their loved ones? How far they would push themselves, how much they would endure, to seek justice for those who can no longer speak for themselves? Some would call it vengeance, others, a desperate cry for closure. But for those who have felt the sting of betrayal, the agony of loss, it is something far more primal. It is the need to make the world feel the pain they carry, to force it to acknowledge the wrongs that have been done.

In a dimly lit warehouse, far from the prying eyes of the world, shadows dance across the walls like spectres of the past. The air is thick with the scent of fear and the hum of electricity, a sinister symphony that sets the stage for what is to come. Bound and helpless, a family sits in silence, their muffled cries swallowed by the oppressive darkness. They do not yet understand why they are here, but they can feel it—the weight of something terrible, something inevitable.

From the shadows, a figure emerges. His eyes are cold, his expression unreadable, but there is a fire burning within him, a fire that has been stoked by years of pain and anger. He has waited for this moment, planned every detail with meticulous care. Tonight, the cycle of suffering will come full circle. Tonight, they will understand the depth of the pain they have caused.

“Welcome to your reckoning,” he says, his voice low and steady, each word dripping with purpose. “You thought you could escape justice, but you were wrong. Tonight, you will feel the consequences of your actions.”

What unfolds is a symphony of suffering, a brutal reflection of the torment that had been inflicted on an innocent soul. Every scream, every cry for mercy, triggers a chain reaction, an unrelenting cycle of pain that leaves no room for forgiveness. The figure watches, his expression unchanging, as the family struggles against their bonds, their desperate pleas falling on deaf ears.

“This is for Mia,” he whispers, his voice filled with a mix of satisfaction and sorrow. “This is all for Mia.”

Justice is not always found in the halls of courts or the pages of law books. Sometimes, it is carved from the raw, unfiltered rage of those who have been wronged. And sometimes, it is delivered not by the hand of the law, but by the hand of someone who has nothing left to lose.

Chapter 1: The Shifting Edge

The hallways of the school were full of the usual noise, sharp echoes of sneakers on tile floors mixed with bursts of laughter and shouts as students darted between classrooms, their footsteps quick and scattered. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest, knowing that today wasn't going to be any different.

As I hurried towards my locker into the empty hallway, the familiar sound of footsteps behind me made me flinch. They were coming. Again.

"Hey, Karl!" I heard the familiar voice of Jackson, the biggest bully in school. I stood still as the footsteps grew closer. "Watch out loser," Jackson's voice rung, this time accompanied by his sister, Casey. I could hear the laughter in her voice. The kind that hurt the ears. I had gotten used to it by now. Every day. For 4 years. Since middle school.

Jackson shoved me against my locker with a force that made me wince, but I didn't make a sound. I couldn't. Any reaction I give them will make this even worse. Casey, always the one with the taunts, chimed, "You know, Karl, you look even dumber with that haircut. Did your mom cut it for you?" The words pierced like daggers I swallowed, pretending it didn't bother me. They didn't know. They didn't know anything about me. They didn't know about my mom, my dad or my sister. I took a deep breath and tried walking away, but Jackson wasn't finished with just that. "You think you can just walk away like nothing happened?" He sneered; his face full of that smug confidence. He thought of me like a toy for his amusement. He thought I'd break. I stood still, clenching my fists. "Just leave me alone, Jackson."

"Or what?" Casey snickered. "You gonna cry? What's the matter, tough guy?"

I couldn't let them see me like that. I had learned to keep my emotions locked away. I was a pro at it. I stayed silent, pushing through the pain as I always did. Finally, Jackson let go of my bag.

"You're such a loser," he muttered, and they walked away, still laughing.

I had forgotten about the time until my phone buzzed in my pocket. I glanced down. It was a message from my sister. Hey Karl, I'm home! I sighed. She didn't know. She didn't know what I went through every day. She never would. I had to protect her. I made my way home, my feet dragging as the weight of the day pressed down on me. When I opened the door, there she was, sitting on the couch, grinning from ear to ear. "Guess what, Karl?" she said, her eyes sparkling. "I'm going to be in high school! Can you believe it?" I forced a smile. "That's great, Mia." I tried to sound happy for her, but it was hard. She was so excited, and I didn't want to crush that. She had no idea what high school was like for me.

But then she added, "You know what else? I'm going to your high school next year! I want to be with you, Karl." My heart sank. The thought of her at my school, seeing everything—seeing

them—made me feel like I was drowning. “No, Mia. You don’t have to. You’re fine where you are,” I said, trying to keep my voice steady. She tilted her head, looking at me with those bright, innocent eyes. “What do you mean? Don’t you want me to be with you?” I shifted uncomfortably. I didn’t want to tell her the truth. I didn’t want her to worry. “I just think you should focus on your own things; you know? High school’s tough. You don’t need to deal with all that.” She looked disappointed, but I wouldn’t change my mind. But she wasn’t giving up.

“Karl,” she said softly, walking over to me. “I am not a child anymore. I can handle myself, and I too want to be there for you.” I stayed silent for a long time, the weight of it all pressing on me. Mia had no idea how much of a hellish life I had at school. I didn’t want her to know that, I didn’t want to drag her into that mess. I looked at her and realized how much she had grown, I sighed. “Alright, Mia. You can join my school. But you have to promise me something.” “What?” she asked, eyes wide with hope. “Promise me you’ll stay away from the troublemakers. Promise me you’ll be safe.” She smiled and wrapped her arms around me. “I promise.” And for the first time in a long while, I felt a tiny bit of warmth in my heart.

Chapter 2: Stand Strong

The first day Mia was at my school was a blur. I hadn't expected her to show up so quickly, and I definitely hadn't expected the attention she would draw. She was walking beside me as we entered the school, and I could feel all eyes on us. The hallways were crowded, and I hated the feeling of everyone staring, especially since I was already dreading what was coming next.

When I reached my classroom on the second floor, I tried to blend in, but I knew the bullies were watching. Jackson, Casey, and their friends always found a way to make me feel small. I could see them from the corner of my eye as they leaned over the windowsill. The look in their eyes told me they had already formed some twisted plan.

I barely had time to react before Jackson reached down and grabbed my bag, flinging it to Casey. "Look, the monkey boy got himself a girl," he jeered, as they passed the bag back and forth, laughing like it was a game. I tried to catch it, jumping and twisting in a way that probably looked ridiculous. I didn't want to, but I had no choice. I couldn't let them make a mess of my stuff.

Finally, Jackson caught the bag and held it in the air. "You want it back?" he asked, smirking.

I nodded, my face heating up. "Yes."

"You forgot the magical word," Jackson teased, stretching the moment out for as long as he could.

I sighed, my patience wearing thin. "Jackson, *please* give me my bag."

He tossed it at my face with such force that it knocked me off balance, sending me stumbling back and falling to the floor. The class had stopped for a moment to watch, but I couldn't even look up. I just sat there, clutching the bag in my lap, trying to ignore the laughter that echoed around me.

Jackson and his friends closed in around me in a circle, they were like sharks, waiting for the right moment to strike.

"So, who was the girl with you this morning?" Jackson asked, his eyes glinting with curiosity.

"She your girlfriend?"

I froze. I couldn't let them know. I couldn't let them find out she was my sister. The thought of them making her a target made my stomach churn. I quickly lied, putting on my best indifferent face. "I don't know. I just met her."

Jackson and his friends snickered. "Oh, that's good. She's pretty enough for us to use," Casey added, her voice dripping with something darker. They all laughed, clearly enjoying my discomfort. My heart pounded in my chest as I held my anger in. I can't let them know; I can't risk Mia getting hurt.

As the day progressed, I couldn't focus in class, and my mind raced with worry about what would happen next. I just wanted to get through the day, to make it to the end without causing Mia any trouble.

Now, it was time for PT, and I was already dreading it. The last thing I wanted was to be stuck in the gym with those four. But of course, Jackson, Casey, and the others were there, picking at me the whole time. I was running laps when Jackson shoved me hard in the back, sending me

sprawling onto the ground. I could hear them laughing, their voices loud and cruel, echoing in the gym.

Just as I was trying to push myself up, I heard someone shout, “Stop that!!”

I looked up, and there she was—Mia, running across the field, her face flushed with concern. She reached me in seconds and knelt beside me. “Are you alright, brother?” she asked, her voice full of worry.

For a moment, there was a stunned silence from Jackson and the others. They were shocked, and it wasn’t hard to tell why. They had been so sure they could push me around, but now... now they saw that I wasn’t alone. Mia, with her striking beauty, was standing there, defending me. Jackson’s face turned red as he tried to scramble for words. He wasn’t expecting this. Neither was I.

Mia stood up, her hands on her hips. “If I ever see you bullying my brother again, I’ll make sure you all get detention. Got it?”

They didn’t say anything. They just stood there, flustered and unsure of what to do now. With one last look at them, Mia helped me to my feet. “Come on, Karl. Let’s go home.”

At home, Mia helped me clean up the cuts and bruises I’d gotten during PT. She asked me why I didn’t tell her about the bullying, but I just brushed it off, not wanting to answer.

“I’m fine, Mia,” I said, trying to sound as normal as I could. But I wasn’t fine. I was far from it.

"Just drop it, okay? I didn’t want you to know. Now you do, and there’s nothing you can do about it."

She looked at me, confused, but I turned away, heading to my room before she could say anything else.

I sat on my bed, staring at the wall. What would tomorrow bring? What would happen now that Mia knew? What would the bullies do next? I had no answers, but the uncertainty weighed heavily on me. I didn’t know how to protect her from what was coming next.

Chapter 3: Echoes Of Laughter

The next morning, I left my room to find Mia already in the kitchen. She was unusually quiet, her expression tense, her face still showing the faint bruise from yesterday. She looked up as I walked in, studying me, and I could tell she wanted to say something. I didn't meet her eyes, keeping my focus on getting ready for school.

We walked together, and I could feel people staring as we entered the building. The whispers and glances from other students made my stomach twist. I was on edge, knowing that yesterday's events had spread, and that Jackson, Casey, and their gang were likely planning their next move. When we reached my locker, I felt their eyes on us. Jackson and his friends stood nearby, leaning against the wall, watching us with narrowed eyes. I tried to ignore them, focusing on grabbing my books as fast as possible, but Mia noticed them too. Her posture stiffened beside me.

Jackson's sister, Casey, walked over, her smirk unmistakable. "Well, well, if it isn't the bodyguard," she sneered, looking Mia up and down. "Trying to protect little Karl, are you?"

Mia didn't flinch. "Only from people who don't know when to leave others alone."

Casey's face twisted in annoyance, but she forced a smile, stepping closer to Mia. "Maybe you'd like to join us sometime?" she said, her tone mocking. "Could be... fun."

I clenched my fists, anger boiling up inside, but Mia held her ground. "How about you just back off," she replied coolly, her voice calm but firm.

As we walked to class, I couldn't shake the unease that settled over me. They wouldn't let this go. I knew they'd be coming after me even harder now, especially if they thought Mia was someone, they could use against me.

At lunch, I avoided the cafeteria, slipping out to a quiet spot behind the school where I could be alone. I sat under a tree, grateful for the few moments of peace, but it didn't last long. Footsteps approached, and my stomach dropped as I looked up to see Jackson and two of his friends. They were smiling, and I knew I was in trouble.

"Where's your bodyguard, Karl?" Jackson sneered, crossing his arms as he stared down at me. "Or did she get tired of babysitting?"

I didn't answer, hoping they'd get bored and leave, but Jackson only laughed, stepping closer. "You know, your sister's quite the catch," he said, his tone darker. "Why didn't you tell us she was family?"

My heart raced. The last thing I wanted was for them to know Mia was my sister. They were already too interested in her, and I couldn't stand the thought of them targeting her.

"Stay away from her," I muttered, my voice low.

Jackson chuckled. "Why would I do that? She's got that... look. The kind that makes you want to get to know her better." His eyes glinted with something dangerous, and I felt a chill run down my spine.

Casey joined them, her smirk widening as she held up her phone. "Maybe you can help us out, Karl," she said, tilting her head. "Why don't you take a few pictures of her for us?"

I felt a wave of horror. "No," I said, my voice firm.

"Oh, I think you will," Jackson replied, leaning in closer. "Or maybe we'll show her what happens to people who say no to us."

My mind raced, and I felt trapped, my fear for Mia twisting into a knot in my stomach. I nodded slowly, feeling my face burn with shame as I agreed to their demand.

The next few days were a blur. I did what they wanted, taking harmless pictures of Mia and giving them to Jackson and Casey, praying it would be enough to keep them away. But each time, they pushed for more, their requests growing darker, more twisted, until they finally asked for something I couldn't give.

"No," I said, my voice shaking with anger and disgust. "I won't do that."

Jackson's smile faded, his face hardening. "Maybe it's time we make things more... interesting for her." He looked at his friends, a silent message passing between them. They didn't wait for me to react. A fist slammed into my face, and I stumbled back, hitting the ground hard. I tried to fight back, but they were too strong, their punches and kicks relentless. By the time they were done, I could barely move, my body aching, my face bruised and bloodied.

When I finally made it home, Mia was waiting for me, her face pale with worry. She reached out to touch my shoulder, her voice breaking. "What happened?"

I looked away, unable to meet her eyes. "Nothing. Just... leave it alone."

"Don't do that," she said, her voice trembling. "You don't have to protect me from this."

I pulled away, anger and shame twisting inside me. "Yes, I do! Don't you get it?"

Saying that I slammed the door of my room and laid on the bed contemplating how I could keep Mia safe from the bullies.

Mia's mind was set as she left the house, her heart pounding with anger and determination. She couldn't let this go on; she couldn't let them keep terrorizing Karl. She made her way through the dark streets, heading to the back gate of the school, where she knew Jackson and his friends often hung out. She was nervous, but her resolve was stronger than her fear. She wasn't going to let them hurt Karl anymore.

As she approached, she saw them—Jackson, his sister Casey, and a couple of their friends, laughing and smoking, leaning against the wall as if they owned the place. The sight of them only fuelled her anger. She stepped forward, her voice steady but laced with fury. "Jackson!" They looked up, surprised to see her. Jackson's smirk faded slightly, replaced by a flicker of surprise that quickly turned to amusement. He stepped toward her, sizing her up with a mocking smile. "Well, if it isn't Karl's little protector."

"Leave my brother alone," she demanded, her voice cold and clear. "If you touch him again, I'll go to the principal. I'll tell everyone what you've done."

Jackson chuckled, unbothered by her threat. "Oh, really? And who's going to believe you?" He moved closer, his eyes narrowing. "Besides, I think you're forgetting something—you're here alone. No one's around to see anything... or hear anything."

The others closed in, surrounding her, their laughter turning darker. Mia's confidence wavered as she realized she was trapped. She tried to back away, but Casey stepped in her path, her smile cruel as she held up her phone, ready to record.

"Maybe you should think twice before threatening us, Mia," Casey said, her voice a taunting whisper.

Mia's heart raced as Jackson grabbed her arm roughly, pulling her forward. She struggled, but they were too strong, their laughter filling the air as they pushed her to the ground. She cried out, telling them to stop, but they ignored her, pinning her down as her pleas were met with nothing but cruel smiles and mocking voices.

They tore at her clothes, laughing as they held her down, showing no mercy. Mia's strength faded as she tried to fight, fear overtaking her anger. She gasped for breath as Jackson tightened his grip around her neck, squeezing until everything started to go dark.

Her last thoughts were of Karl, hoping he'd find a way to be safe.

It was only hours later, when I came out of my room and didn't see Mia anywhere, that a feeling of dread settled over me. Panic started to rise in my chest as I glanced around the empty house. The memory of her confronting Jackson flashed in my mind, and a horrible thought struck me. Heart pounding, I rushed out the door, running toward the back gate of the school. The shadows stretched across the ground as I got closer, and the silence around me felt heavier than ever. My breaths came in short gasps as I approached the spot where I knew Jackson and his gang often gathered, a dark corner hidden from sight.

And then I saw her.

Mia lay sprawled on the ground, her clothes torn, her skin bruised and battered. Her face was pale, her eyes empty, staring blankly into the dark sky above. I stumbled forward, my knees buckling as I reached her, my hands shaking as I touched her cold skin.

Her neck bore deep, dark bruises from where she'd been choked, her expression frozen in a final, haunting moment of pain and fear. I wanted to scream, to cry, to do something—anything—but I was paralyzed, the weight of what I was seeing crushing me. She was gone.

Chapter 4: Shadows of Betrayal

The scene was burned into my mind as I knelt beside Mia, frozen in horror, struggling to understand what had happened. Her lifeless eyes stared into the dark sky, her face bruised and broken, her clothes torn. My sister—my only family, the one person who had truly understood me—was gone. I reached out, my hands trembling as I brushed her cold skin, hoping she'd respond, that this was just a nightmare. But she was silent, gone, and the emptiness inside me deepened with each passing second.

I whispered her name, my voice breaking, but there was no answer. I was filled with despair and rage. Jackson, Casey, and their friends—they had done this. They'd threatened her, tormented both of us, and now they had taken her life. I'd known they were dangerous, but I had never imagined it would end like this.

I stayed by her side, numb with grief, until the distant sound of sirens broke through the darkness. Police arrived, flashlights cutting through the shadows, landing on Mia's lifeless form. They pulled me back, asking questions, but their voices barely registered. One officer knelt beside me, his tone softer than the others. "Son, what happened here? Do you know anything about this?"

I forced myself to speak, to make them understand. "It was the bullies at school. Jackson and his friends. They were after us, always threatening her. This was them. You have to believe me—they did this!"

The officer frowned, his eyes filled with sympathy but laced with doubt. "We'll look into it, but for now, we need you to go home. You're in shock. Take some time to mourn and rest. We'll handle this."

I shook my head, unwilling to leave Mia here, to let them dismiss what I knew was true. But the officer guided me back firmly, his expression insistent. Reluctantly, I left, glancing back one last time, hoping they'd find the proof they needed to bring Jackson and his gang to justice. But deep down, a cold feeling of doubt settled over me.

The days that followed were filled with grief and disbelief. The police said they were investigating, but I could feel their scepticism. And then, rumours' began to spread, ugly whispers claiming Mia's death was more complicated than it seemed. I tried to ignore them, clinging to my memories of her, but a creeping feeling of dread took hold.

When the trial began, it was supposed to be straightforward. I'd told them everything I knew—every threat, every confrontation, every twisted look Jackson and his friends had thrown our way. But as soon as the court proceedings started, I saw that the truth was being twisted beyond recognition.

Jackson's parents were there, with their wealth and influence. They presented fabricated evidence, claiming I was the one who had killed Mia. According to them, I was a troubled teenager with a history of aggression and drug use. Their lawyers painted a dark picture, making it seem like I had hurt my own sister and was now trying to shift blame onto their innocent, well-off children for money.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. They had twisted everything, turning Mia's death into a grotesque lie, framing me as the monster. Whenever I tried to speak up, their lawyers silenced me, casting doubt on every word I said. They brought in fake witnesses, people claiming they'd seen me arguing with Mia, and reports that "proved" I'd been using drugs. Each lie they told hit me harder, making me feel smaller and more powerless.

The judge listened to their side of the story, his expression cold and detached, and I felt the walls closing in. I looked around the courtroom, hoping to find someone who believed me, someone who could see the truth. But all I saw were Jackson's smug family, their wealth and power shielding them from any consequence, while strangers stared at me with disdain, already convinced of my guilt.

When the final verdict was read, a sick silence filled the room. Ten years. Ten years in prison for a crime I hadn't committed, for a horror I'd tried to prevent. The words echoed in my mind, numbing me, crushing the last hope I'd held onto. They led me away in handcuffs, my thoughts spiralling, trying to make sense of how everything had fallen apart.

Mia was gone, and I was the one paying the price.

The door to the prison van shut behind me, the darkness swallowing me whole. To them, I was nothing more than a scapegoat, a way for the wealthy to protect their own. But as I sat there, the weight of betrayal pressing down on me, a new resolve formed within. They had taken everything, but I wouldn't forget. Someday, I would find a way to make them pay.

Chapter 5: Rise from the Shadows

The first few days in prison were as brutal as I'd feared. Fresh off a conviction with no allies, I was a target. My cellmates sneered at my story, and each day brought fresh threats, taunts, or worse. Fights became inevitable, and more often than not, I was on the receiving end, left bruised and broken by inmates who saw me as an easy mark. The guards didn't care. They'd glance in, see me struggling, and move on. And each time I hit the cold, hard ground, the rage inside me grew stronger. Mia's face haunted me, her voice calling me to fight back, to get stronger. They'd stolen my life, framed me, and thrown me away like I was nothing. But in here, I realized, I didn't have to stay weak. I could rebuild. I could survive.

Every day, I worked my body to exhaustion. I trained with every bit of time I had, pushing through the pain until I could barely stand. Push-ups, pull-ups, anything to make me stronger. I studied the routines of the other inmates, watched how the prison hierarchy worked, observed the leaders of each gang. Bit by bit, I learned who had the power, and I figured out how I could take it from them. At first, no one noticed. I kept my head down, doing my time quietly, staying out of the spotlight as I built my strength. But then, the fights started changing. One day, I fought back and won. Then again, and again. Each victory gave me more confidence, and I could feel respect slowly building among the inmates. Those who had bullied me at first now kept their distance, watching me with wary eyes.

Eventually, word spread that I wasn't someone to mess with. I took on anyone who challenged me, and as my reputation grew, so did my influence. Some of the smaller gangs even started to back me, seeing that I could offer protection and strength in return for loyalty. I built alliances, earned the respect of those who once sneered at me, until I had control over entire groups of inmates. Months passed, and I became a fixture of the prison's underground, a force no one could ignore. Even some of the lower-ranking mafia bosses who ran smuggling rings from inside these walls started to recognize me. They tested me at first, sending their lackeys to challenge my authority, but I put them down fast. Eventually, I subdued those gangs too, showing them that I could be ruthless when necessary. Soon enough, even they were under my control.

By then, I had more than just respect. I had power. And with power came information. The mafia bosses, the gang leaders, the drug runners—all had connections to the outside world, and they fed me news that would have otherwise taken years to reach me. I learned about the people who'd framed me, heard snippets about Jackson, Casey, and the others, who were all living freely, shielded by their wealth. They were out there, safe, while I was rotting in here. But I'd been patient this long. I knew now that I could control my rage, bide my time. I had the strength, and now I had the information. I knew who to contact, which strings to pull. And soon, I would have what I needed to finally make them pay.

In the shadows of this prison, I'd risen to the top.

Chapter 6: Unravelling the Fortress

I spent countless nights in my cell, my mind a whirlwind of plans and calculations. My body bore the scars of battles fought within these walls, but my spirit had only grown stronger. I had allies now, both inside and outside the prison, and together we were ready to dismantle the fortress of lies that Jackson's family had built. Every day, I worked tirelessly, using every scrap of information I gathered to weaken their defences. I reached out to a journalist, a determined soul who saw the truth in my story and was eager to expose the corruption. Through clandestine channels, I provided them with evidence and names, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive investigation.

The journalist's articles hit like a series of well-aimed strikes, each one chipping away at the family's reputation. Reports of shady business deals, bribery, and coercion began to surface, and the public's perception started to shift. Once seen as untouchable, Jackson's family now faced scrutiny and distrust.

My allies targeted their business empire, exposing illegal activities and forcing investors to withdraw their support. The family's finances crumbled, their influence waning with each passing day. I watched from my cell, feeling a grim satisfaction as the news reported on their downfall. But I knew this was only the beginning. Jackson and his family had to face the consequences of their actions, not just in the court of public opinion but in a court of law. Using my connections, I orchestrated a meeting with key figures who had the power to bring them to justice.

As the investigation deepened, the pressure on the family grew. They attempted to silence the journalist, but I had anticipated this. My allies protected the journalist, ensuring the flow of information continued uninterrupted. Each new revelation was a nail in the family's coffin, and they could do nothing to stop it.

When the time was right, I sent a letter to Jackson's parents, carefully crafting my words to draw them into a trap. I posed as a desperate figure willing to negotiate, offering a chance to salvage what remained of their empire. They took the bait, their arrogance and desperation blinding them to the danger.

On the night of the meeting, the family arrived at the decrepit warehouse I had chosen. The air was thick with tension as they stepped inside, the dim light casting long shadows. They expected a resolution, a way out of their predicament, but what awaited them was far from salvation.

The moment they were inside, Blunt objects swung with precision, and before they could react they were knocked out cold.

Chapter 7: This Is for Mia

The warehouse was silent, except for the occasional drip of water echoing through the vast, empty space. The air was thick with tension as Jackson's family slowly regained consciousness, their groans of pain and confusion filling the room. They found themselves in a nightmarish setup: Jackson's parents were strapped to an electrocution machine, their wrists and ankles bound tightly to the metal frame. Jackson himself was locked in a cage, still unconscious, while Casey was tied to a chair just outside the cage, her eyes wide with fear as she took in the scene. I stood in the shadows, observing them with a calculating gaze.

I stepped forward, the dim light casting eerie shadows across my face. I had waited for this moment, planned every detail meticulously. Now, it was time to make them understand the pain they had caused.

My voice cut through the silence, low and steady. "Welcome to your reckoning," I said, my eyes fixed on Jackson's parents. "You thought you could escape justice, but you were wrong. Tonight, you will feel the consequences of your actions."

I walked over to the electrocution machine, his fingers brushing over the controls. "Every scream, every cry for help, will trigger this machine," I explained, my voice devoid of emotion. "The longer you scream, the longer the electrocution will last. You will feel the pain you inflicted on Mia and me."

Jackson's parents struggled against their bonds; their eyes wide with terror. Casey whimpered, her body trembling as she realized the gravity of their situation. I turned my attention to her, my expression hardening. "And you, Casey, you will experience the same torment you inflicted on my sister pulling out a knife, the blade glinting in the dim light. "I won't kill you, yet" I said, my voice seemingly cold and detached.

I went inside the cage where Jackson was sprawled on the ground, crouching I took out the taser I had in my back pocket. I smirked thinking of how he is going to be waking up, adjusting the taser position at his groin I changed the output to maximum and turned it on.

He shrieked loudly—a high, jagged sound that ripped through the silence, but his scream only led to more suffering. The controlled electrocutioners hummed to life, sending jolts of electricity through the air. His parents cried out in agony, their shrieks echoing in the room, while Casey sat there frozen, wide-eyed, her face twisted in horrified disbelief.

"Welcome back, Jackson," I said, my voice sounding icy. "You've had this coming for a long time."

Jackson tried to speak, but his voice was weak and trembling. "Karl, please..."

I shook my head. "No more begging. You tormented me and Mia for years. Now, you'll understand what it feels like to be powerless."

I opened up the toolbox I was carrying, and using a string I tied Jackson to the bars of the cage to limit his retaliation. Holding out the knife I start by carefully slicing thin cuts across Jackson's fingers, wrists, and feet—especially along the fingers and toes, which have a lot of nerve endings. As the knife drags across, the Jackson flinches, involuntarily clenching their jaw from the sharp sting. Blood starts to seep out, but it's not enough to be dangerous, just enough to keep the pain fresh. He tried to hold his screams in but as the pain lingered, he groaned softly,

unable to stop the involuntary vocalizations.

I watched Jackson, his body trembling with anticipation, as I slowly took the pliers from my toolbox. The sharp glint of the metal reflected in the dim light. His eyes widened in fear, but there was nothing he could do to stop me. I moved closer, the pliers clicking open with cold precision, and gripped his finger tightly. With a cruel smirk, I began to pry at the nail, the first step of what was about to unfold.

The pain hit him instantly. Jackson inhaled sharply, his breath catching in his throat as I applied pressure. The moment the nail began to lift, he shrieked—loud, high-pitched, desperate—a sound that pierced the air, raw and primal. The scream rose in pitch as the pain mounted, his voice mixing with a gasping cry that echoed through the room. His body jerked involuntarily as if trying to escape, but there was no release. I could see the torment in his eyes.

I pressed the alcohol onto the raw, exposed nail bed, and Jackson's body stiffened, his face contorting with shock. He let out a choked, strangled sob, his voice breaking, the searing burn overwhelming him. His breath was shallow, ragged, and he jerked away from the sensation, but I held his finger steady, watching the struggle in his eyes.

As his screams filled the room, I heard the other cries—those of Jackson's *parents*, tortured in their own way. The electric current surged through their bodies, making them convulse violently. Their limbs jerked with spasms, their shrieks of agony twisting in the air. Every time Jackson screamed, the sounds of his parents' suffering seemed to echo his own. His breath hitched, his chest heaving in desperation, his mind tortured by the thought of his parents in pain.

But I wasn't done. I grabbed the needles from my toolbox, the metal cold and unforgiving in my hands. I placed them gently at the tip of his finger, just beneath the nail. As soon as the needle slid beneath the skin, Jackson's entire body tensed. The sharp sting caused him to gasp violently, his breath catching in his throat. A low, groaning cry escaped him as the needle sank deeper, the pulse of pain sending tremors through his body. Every insertion of the needle caused his cries to grow louder, more desperate, but each scream was mirrored by the cries of his parents.

The shockwaves that coursed through their bodies matched the pain Jackson was feeling. Their bodies spasmed uncontrollably, twisting with every new jolt of electricity. Their cries grew more desperate with each shock, their voices blending into the air with Jackson's, forming a tortured symphony of agony. Jackson's voice trembled with helplessness, the pain overwhelming him. Each new needle I pressed in caused his cries to escalate, each one punctuated by sharp, breathless gasps. His face twisted in agony, and the cries of his parents, though filled with the same raw desperation, only deepened the torment.

As the final needle slid in, Jackson let out a broken sob, his body shaking violently, tears streaking down his face. His parents' bodies were locked in their own unrelenting spasms, their shrieks filling the air with a haunting urgency. The sounds of their suffering intensified as the last needle pierced Jackson's skin, sending him into another spasm of pain. His breathless cry filled the room, matching the final, tortured screams of his parents, before their bodies finally stilled. Jackson's own cries, weakened from the overwhelming pain, faded into a strained silence as he fought to breathe.

I approached Casey, making cuts on her arms and legs, deep enough for her to writhe and scream in pain, each one a reminder of the pain she'd caused. Her cries of agony echoed through the warehouse, and each scream triggered the electrocution machine. Jackson's parents screamed in pain, their bodies convulsing as the electricity ripped through them.

The room was still now. Jackson, still gasping, still struggling for breath, while Casey whimpering

as blood dripped her cuts. Their parents were gone, and They were left to face the consequences alone.

I gestured the men to hook Jackson to the electrocutor while the other group circled Casey. The scene was set up, Jackson would watch Casey getting treated the same way he treated Mia. With a nod of my head the men got to work, Tearing of clothes, screams of pleas and hungry men growling was the sound echoing in the once quiet warehouse, All of this was being recorded and shown to Jackson live. With every scream Jackson got electrocuted, He already bled out more than what his body could afford to, barely hanging on to life.

I stepped back, watching the scene unfold with a grim satisfaction. I hadn't stooped to the same cruelty they had inflicted on me and Mia; instead, I'd made them understand the consequences of their actions. This was justice in my own way, a reckoning that no courtroom would have granted.

As the screams finally subsided, I dragged Jackson out, forcing him to his knees. "You're going to confess everything," I demanded, "Every lie, every threat, every act of cruelty. And you're going to do it on camera."

With nowhere left to turn, Jackson began to confess, his voice shaking as he recounted each instance of torment, he'd inflicted on me and Mia. I recorded every word, making sure there would be no escaping the truth.

I gave my men the last instruction, and they got to work.

I stood back in the shadows, watching them hang—Jackson and Casey, both suspended by thick ropes tied around their necks. Their bodies swayed slightly; the faintest movement caused by the subtle draft from the cracked window. It was a moment I had spent days preparing for, and now it had come to fruition. Every cut, every bruise, every agonizing second had led to this final, satisfying conclusion.

Jackson's body was a mess of bruises, cuts, and marks, his face swollen from the beatings he'd endured. The rope around his neck pulled tight, making his head tilt at a slight, uncomfortable angle. His feet, barely touching the ground, shifted with each agonizing sway, the rope making a soft creaking sound that echoed through the empty room. I could hear his breathing, shallow and strained—his every movement a reminder of his helplessness.

Casey hung beside him, the same look of terror still etched on her face, frozen in time. Her body was no better off, battered and bruised, her arms hanging limp at her sides. I had ensured that their suffering was not just physical, but psychological—keeping them on the brink, never allowing them to slip into unconsciousness. Every mark on their bodies was a testament to my control, each injury a reflection of my precision. They couldn't escape the pain. Not now. Not anymore.

I stood beneath them, watching as the ropes creaked and strained under their weight. I let the silence hang for a moment, feeling the power of the moment. Their every gasp of pain, every tortured breath, was proof of my control. I allowed them both to suffer just enough—just enough to remind them who was in charge here. The slow suffocation, the pain, the helplessness... it was all part of what I wanted them to experience.

"This is for Mia," I whispered feeling a mix of satisfaction and sorrow. "This is all for Mia."

I stepped back, allowing them both to dangle there. The room was still except for the faintest sway of their bodies, the soft creaking of the ropes, and their breaths filling the space around me. This was the culmination of everything I had done. Their bodies now hung like trophies,

each mark, each scar a final statement. They were my message—and it was a message they would never be able to escape.

And I watched, as the rope cut deeper into their necks, as their bodies slowly grew heavier, the life draining out of them in slow, agonizing fashion. My revenge was complete, and they had become nothing more than empty shells, their suffering now finished, but their pain forever etched into the walls of the room.

I had made sure of that.

THE END

Epilogue

The courtroom was silent as the verdict was read, the weight of the words hanging heavy in the air. “Not guilty.” Karl stood motionless, the chains around his wrists and ankles clinking softly as the judge’s gavel came down with a final, resounding thud. His name had been cleared, the truth of his sister’s death finally brought to light.

But the sense of victory was hollow, a bitter reminder of all that had been lost. Mia was gone, her life cut short by the cruelty of others, and no amount of justice could bring her back. Karl walked out of the courtroom, the sunlight harsh and blinding after so many years in the shadows. He took a deep breath, the air tasting of freedom and sorrow.

In his hand, he held a single, withered flower, a symbol of the promise he had made all those years ago. He knelt by his sister’s grave, placing the flower gently on the cool earth. “I did it, Mia,” he whispered, his voice breaking. “I made them pay.”

But revenge had come at a cost, leaving scars that would never fully heal. As he stood up, he knew his journey was far from over. There were others out there, others who had suffered like he and Mia had, others who needed someone to stand up for them.

Karl walked away from the grave, his footsteps steady and determined. He had become a symbol of vengeance, a force for justice in a world that had shown him only cruelty. And as long as there were people who needed his help, he would continue to fight.

For Mia. For himself. For all those who couldn’t fight for themselves. The cycle of revenge would end with him, and in its place, he would build something stronger, something better. A legacy of hope, forged from the ashes of pain.