

Midnight 1341

Chapter 1341

"I've never been married, but just by watching you and Mr. Lopez navigate the ups and downs of your relationship, I've learned a ton! It's a good thing you two ended up together, or else... I might have given up on love for good." After all, if someone as devoted as Mr. Lopez couldn't find happiness, then what was the point of love, right?

"But we would've been missing out big time."

"Now, I've got hope for love again!"

Dorothy couldn't help but notice she's been smiling a lot more these days.

Everything was finally looking up.

All thanks to Kenneth.

Thinking of him, Dorothy's smile froze for a moment before brightening even further.

She figured Kenneth preferred seeing her happy.

...

Everett had barely finished up at the office when he drove over to pick up Dorothy.

Turns out she was still tied up with work, nearly causing them to miss lunch!

"Sorry, had clients over, couldn't just leave them hanging," Dorothy said, flashing a smile as she got into the car.

You know what they say, you can't get mad at a smiling face!

But honestly, even if she hadn't smiled, Everett would've happily waited for her.

"Did you get everything sorted with the Bureau of Industry and Commerce?"

He leaned over to fasten her seatbelt himself.

"With Kevin on the case, it was smooth sailing!"

"So, what did we decide to call the company?" Everett hadn't forgotten about that.

Dorothy winked at him, "It's a secret for now! You'll find out at the launch. You're coming to the ceremony, right?"

The corners of Everett's lips turned up in a tender smile, his slender hands resting on the steering wheel, "Of course, I wouldn't miss it."

He could easily find out by asking Kevin, but if Dorothy wanted to surprise him, he wouldn't spoil her fun.

They arrived at the restaurant entrance.

Dorothy looked up-

Havenbrook City Cuisine.

"You've been into Havenbrook City food lately."

"Let's check it out." Everett took her hand, leading her inside.

At first, Dorothy didn't notice anything out of the ordinary, given that Eldorria City had its fair share of Havenbrook City cuisine, though none quite authentic.

That was until she spotted a familiar face!

"Isn't that... Isn't that the lady who runs the diner by the school?"

What was she doing here?

Everett's lips curled up slightly,

giving Dorothy a knowing wink, "het

knew you'd miss the taste, so I had

her set up shop here" City!"

Dorothy was momentarily stunned, standing there in disbelief.

The diner lady, seeing them enter, quickly handed off her tasks to someone else and hurried over, "Mr. Lopez, Ms. Sanchez!"

"Just call me Dorothy, like old times," Dorothy had always been grateful to the couple!

Back when not many places were willing to hire someone underage, and she was desperate to earn more for her mother's medical expenses, they had taken her in, often letting her bring delicious food home.

QUMS

And...

They were witnesses to her blossoming relationship with Everett!

"Of course! Seeing you two together, hand in hand, makes me so happy!" the diner lady clapped, "When's the wedding? You must tell me!" "We definitely will."

Dorothy nodded, feeling the warmth from Everett's hand tighten.

She looked up at him, "Hmm?"

He smiled, his expression triumphant.

"So... when are we getting married?"

Chapter 1342

Dorothy was caught off guard, standing there slack-jawed for a good three to five seconds before she could muster a response.

"Mr. Lopez, you're not proposing to me, are you?" she blurted out, clearly taken aback.

She wasn't prepared for this. Not in the slightest.

"Proposing? Oh, it's not as simple as all that... let's just say I'm gauging your interest," Everett said, lifting an eyebrow, "Tell me, do you fancy a winter wedding or a summer one?" "You want the truth?"

Dorothy had to crane her neck to meet his gaze, even as Everett stooped down.

"Is there any other kind?"

With a chuckle, Dorothy said, "Honestly... it feels like we've already had our wedding. I wore the dress and everything. Maybe we should just find some time to swing by the city hall and make it official." She had toyed with the idea of another ceremony. Every girl dreams of her big day, after all.

But then again... organizing a wedding, with all its fuss and bother, especially when both she and Everett were so busy, seemed unnecessary.

"That won't do," Everett replied, his voice firm and decisive.

"Last time didn't count."

That was a hurried affair, almost on the brink of divorce. How could that be considered proper?

Dorothy understood his sentiments, gently brushing his hand, "Everett, having you and the kids with me is more than enough. None of that other stuff matters to me."

After everything they'd been through, being with the ones she loved was all she cared about.

"Dorothy, I want to marry you properly. Every step, every ceremony, nothing should be missed!"

How could she say no to those earnest eyes staring back at her?

"I'm just worried you're too busy for all that."

"Nothing is more important than you."

Even if he was swamped, he'd never compromise the time meant for her.

"Alright, we'll have the wedding," Dorothy conceded, then paused, "But you said this wasn't a proposal?"

Had she just agreed without a formal proposal?

"It was merely seeking your opinion," Everett reiterated.

Dorothy pouted, "But I've already agreed!"

"I didn't exactly provide you with an

an

alternative," Everett said, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, "

did

you have someone else in mind to marry?"

Dorothy shrugged, her playful side surfacing, "Well, I might—"

Everett's handsome face suddenly turned stern, "You wouldn't dare."

"Of course not! Let's eat, I'm starving."

She knew better than to tease Everett on this subject.

Some jokes were fine, but this was off-limits.

The restaurant owner had the chef whip up a feast of Havenbrook City's finest, including dishes not even listed on the menu! The table was barely large enough to hold everything.

"Try these! You won't find authentic

flavors like these just anywhere," the owner said warmly, pushing dishes toward Dorothy, "We've been swamped lately, but let me know when you're coming next time, and I'll make you some dumplings! My filling is second to none!"

"Sounds great!" Dorothy nodded, her mood visibly brightened. She loved this atmosphere.

It reminded her of her college days, surrounded by old friends.

Everett, with his meticulous ways, was carefully deboning a fish for Dorothy, making sure each piece was perfect. His attention to detail was one of the many things she loved about him.

Chapter 1343

The diner owner caught the tender moment between Dorothy and Everett and gave Dorothy a conspiratorial wink. "Dorothy, you've struck gold, haven't you? Finding a man who's truly devoted to you in this lifetime." "Yeah, I guess I've struck gold."

There was a time when Dorothy would doubt her good fortune, feeling it was too much of a burden, but now, she readily nodded in agreement, accepting her good luck.

Who wouldn't feel blessed to have someone like Everett by their side?

"Enjoy your meal, lovebirds. I'll go attend to the other customers!"

The diner owner quickly went back to her bustling establishment.

Dorothy glanced around, noticing the crowd. "It's off-peak hours, yet it's so busy. Looks like Havenbrook City's flavors are really hitting it off with the folks in Eldorria City."

"Yeah, the food from Havenbrook City is delicious."

"Don't tell me... this place is one of your ventures?" Everett paused, his fork mid-air, "No."

"Oh."

"It was a gift from me to them."

Dorothy looked up, both surprised and not. That's how Everett was. If he had invited them personally, he would ensure everything was perfectly arranged for their new life in Eldorria City. If not gifting them this diner, he'd have found another way to lend his support. "To make me happy, you really go all out, don't you?"

Given Eldorria City's real estate prices, and the sheer size of this diner!

Everett carefully placed a piece of fish on her plate, his voice soft, "I'm grateful to them for being there for you when you needed help, on my behalf."

"Back then, it wasn't easy for me to support you directly."

Even if he had, she wouldn't have accepted it.

So, their arrival was perfectly timed.

Dorothy started eating her fish, but soon felt a lump in her throat, tears threatening to spill.

She hurriedly reached for a napkin, trying not to let Everett see.

But how could she hide anything from him?

"What's wrong? Was there a bone in it?"

Dorothy shook her head "No, it's just... this fish is so haven't had fish this long time!" Content y time!"

Everett didn't stop her tears; instead, he handed her a napkin.

Taking it, Dorothy muttered, "Everett, when you're free, could you come with me somewhere?" "Where to?"

She lifted her eyes, freshly cried, making them appear even darker, "To visit my mom."

Everett paused, momentarily lost for words.

Since mentioning it once to Dorothy, he hadn't brought it up again.

It wasn't that Everett was unwilling he believed such matters shouldn't be forced. When Dorothy was feady, she would say so.

And now, she was ready.

"I'm free whenever you need me to visit your mom."

"After I wrap up a few things these next days, shall we go?" Dorothy smiled Or... should we get married first, then visit my mom with our marriage certificate in hand?

"Get married now?"

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She nodded, her brows playfully arched, "What, you don't want to make it official?"

"Of course, I do! It's just that... it all seems so sudden."

Dorothy was unlike any other woman he knew.

She seemed to take these significant life decisions in stride, which surprised Everett.

Now, it was he who insisted on taking things seriously.

"Your love, Everett, is anything but sudden."

Chapter 1344

Everett paused for a moment, choosing his words carefully, "I want to make sure we go through all the traditional ceremonies that we missed, you know, like the whole 'engage the matchmaker and exchange dowries' kind of thing. I mean, we gotta do this by the book, right?" Dorothy, without thinking, blurted out, "But what about the ceremonies we can't make up for? Like, you know, Abigail and Langston's christening party-"

As soon as the words left her mouth, she realized she had stepped into a minefield.

But what's said is said, and there's no taking it back...

Looking up, Dorothy indeed caught a fleeting look of pain in Everett's eyes.

She really just wanted to make a point about how life is full of missed opportunities and ceremonies aren't everything, but... but that was definitely the wrong thing to say!

"Everett... I'm sorry."

"Hmm?" He managed to compose himself before turning to her, pretending as if nothing was wrong.

Seeing the apology in Dorothy's eyes, it was Everett who ended up comforting her.

"You haven't done anything wrong; you don't need to feel guilty. I'm the one who should be sorry for not being there for our kids from the start. How come you're apologizing to me?"

"Not being there to watch the kids grow up from the beginning... it bothers you a lot, doesn't it?"

Everett nodded, "Can't fool anyone, can I? I am bothered, but more accurately, I feel guilty."

As Dorothy opened her mouth to speak, he quickly interrupted her, "I know what you're about to say, Dorothy, and I disagree with you going back into the delivery room."

Even though he wasn't there with her at the time, just hearing from others what she went through to bring their two kids into the world was enough to scare him, how could he possibly let her go through that kind of risk again just to fix his regrets? It's not worth putting Dorothy back in harm's way.

"But before—"

He had clearly expressed his wishes before.

"Dorothy, this isn't up for discussion."

Alright then.

It seems she doesn't have a choice in this matter.

If she can't get through to Everett, her only hope is to turn to Karen, the unreliable one.

"I did some research, and the chances of poking holes in condoms aren't great, so I added a double safety net to Plan B for you!"

...

After much thought, Karen revealed

her ultimate strategy, "I got Jeffrey to find an excuse to get him tipsy! Not blackout drunk, just the right amount of buzzed where he can still, you know, do something. And then-ta-da! What do you think this is?"

She mysteriously pulled out several small, square packets.

Dorothy frowned slightly, "This... did you poke holes in these too?"

The previous ones hadn't been used; she had thrown them all away.

"NO! This is where it gets genius. These look like regular condoms, but guess what? They dissolve on contact with liquid!"

""

Karen was clearly impressed with her own ingenuity.

"I went through so much trouble to get these for you!"

She handed them over to Dorothy in one go.

Without waiting for a response, Karen started to rave about the benefits, "Everett was worried about tightness before, right? Well, with these, it's like wearing nothing at all! And he won't even notice. Plus, with a bit of drink in him... hehe, perfect!"

But Dorothy wasn't feeling too optimistic.

"Everett can hold his liquor really well."

"We're not getting him wasted, just a light buzz!"

Dorothy pursed her lips, skeptical, "And what if he finds out?"

"What are you worried about? By the time he realizes, you'll have already succeeded!" Karen winked at her, "And don't worry, even if it doesn't work out and you don't get pregnant, I still have a Plan C!"

Chapter 1345

Hearing Karen's words, Dorothy was torn between laughter and tears.

It was clear to see that Karen had way too much time on her hands, spending her days plotting away!

"Do you think... Everett will be mad when he finds out?" Dorothy, always one to overthink, was internally conflicted about going through with such a plan.

"No way!" Karen replied with certainty, "How could Everett ever be mad at you?"

Her response came naturally, without a hint of hesitation, as if it were a universally acknowledged truth.

Right...

Why would Everett be mad at Dorothy?

After all, he had forgiven her for far more serious matters in the past.

"Dorothy, this is also about wanting Everett to have no regrets, right? If it were solely up to you, I reckon you wouldn't even be thinking about having another child."

"Yeah, not being able to watch two kids grow up has always been a sore spot for Everett."

Even the slightest mention of it seemed to reopen old wounds.

Karen patted her shoulder, "Go for it! You two have such great genes, it'd be a waste not to have more kids!"

Dorothy smiled, glancing at Karen's gradually growing belly, and gently asked, "Are you planning on having another boy with Jeffrey?"

After all...

Though the Turners and the Lopezes might be in a different league, they were still prominent families. Jeffrey being an only child, Dorothy could understand if his parents wanted a son to inherit the family fortune.

At the mention, Karen immediately waved her hand, "Unless it's a surprise, we weren't planning on this one either!"

"And your in-laws..."

"Speaking of which, my in-laws are

one in a million! They've never interfered with whether we have a

boy or a girl! Especially my mother-in-law, she was thrilled when she found out we're having another girl, said she was scared we have a boy who'd turn out like his dad! Always up to no good, causing trouble for his parents."

Thinking of Jeffrey, Dorothy could still recall the scene at the hospital where he was protecting Heather.

In the blink of an eye...

He and Karen were about to welcome their second daughter.

Fate really works in mysterious ways.

Who would have thought Jeffrey would end up tamed by a wildcat like Karen?

"Seeing you and Jeffrey so happy, I think Kenneth can rest in peace too."

Every time Kenneth was mentioned, Karen would fall into a rare silence.

It wasn't

of heat Dorothy wanted to

bring it up at such times, but in front

of her best friend, she felt no need to hold back her thoughts.

"My brother was stubborn! No matter how many times our family told him to find a girlfriend, he wouldn't listen! And when he finally seemed to have found Eleanor.: then this whole mess happened!" Karen waved it off, "Let's leave it at that. What's done is done, and maybe this was the best outcome for him."

He would never have Dorothy in his life.

To continue being stubborn would only bring more pain and fatigue. Perhaps this was a form of liberation for him.

Seeing Dorothy's eyes well up with tears, Karen stroked her hand, "From a certain perspective, my brother got what he wanted." "What did he get."

"He saved the woman he cherished the most, ensuring you'd never forget him for the rest of your life."

Chapter 1346

Forget about not being able to forget him. For Everett, it was a lifetime of gratitude.

Dorothy lowered her gaze, remaining silent. It was Karen, her own sister, who tried to comfort her, "Don't be so down, sis. In the grand scheme of things, death is something none of us can dodge! And Everett, he really took care of my brother's funeral beautifully. He's looking after our parents now, too. My brother left with no worries."

"He was too young."

It was a loss that anyone would feel deeply, especially since Kenneth had died for her.

How could Dorothy not feel the weight of that?

"Just think of it like my brother regretted not meeting you earlier in life. He's in a hurry for the next one, trying to get ahead of Everett!"

Karen always had a way of finding a lighter note in the darkest conversations, making them a bit more bearable.

Dorothy's tears didn't fall, but Kenneth had indeed become an eternal knot in her heart.

The Lopez Corporation, CEO's office.

After wrapping up a meeting, Everett immediately reached for his phone to send a message to Dorothy on WhatsApp. Kevin knocked on the door in a rush behind him, "Mr. Lopez."

"Come in."

Everett turned to face Kevin, phone in hand, "What's up?"

"I just got a call. Lane tried to off himself in prison!"

Suicide?

Everett's eyes narrowed slightly, "Save him."

"I've already sent someone. Lucky we found out early, he should survive."

"He can't die before he's paid for his crimes."

To Everett, death would be too kind, too forgiving for Lane. And those were two things he didn't deserve.

If he had decided to stand against Everett, he should be ready to face the consequences. Especially for the unforgivable sins he had committed.

"I understand Kevin knew exactly

what Mr. Lopez meant. "When he was first tocked up, he went on a hunger strike and cursed you. Now, he'll never speak again. We've put him on a feeding tube! If he refuses to eat, we force it."

"Good, I trust you to handle it." There was not a flicker of emotion on Everett's handsome face.

It was as if they were discussing an object, not a person.

After Kevin left, Everett sat back down and called Dorothy.

He naturally wouldn't bother Dorothy with such irksome matters.

"Ms. Sanchez, busy as usual?"

Dorothy paused for second before responding with a laugh, "Yeah, Mr. Lopez! You're calling a small-time businesswoman after wrapping up your own work."

"I was wondering if Ms. Sanchez might be free to join me for dinner tonight?"

"I'll have to check my schedule. There's a long line of people wanting to meet me, Mr. Lopez. You might have to wait!"

Everett smirked, "And who might be in line ahead of me?"

Dorothy didn't catch the seriousness right away and joked, "Oh, loads! A bunch of handsome, young guys. All eighteen."

"So, Ms. Sanchez has a thing for

eighteen-year-olds." Everett tapped his fingers on the desk surface "Well then I won't invite Ms. Sanchez out for dinner."

"Huh? Giving up just like that? Doesn't seem like you're too committed."

"I'll change my invitation then. How about we spend the night together instead? I hope Ms. Sanchez can give this thirty-year-old man a chance to prove himself."

"..." Dorothy finally caught onto his jealousy and quickly replied, "There aren't any eighteen-year-olds. You don't need to prove anything!"

Her body definitely couldn't handle that.

"No, it must be proved."

Chapter 1347

"Better watch out, or some 18-year-old heartthrob might just snag your spot!"

But jest aside, what truly weighed on Everett's mind was Dorothy's health.

"I get that the company's just getting off the ground, and you want to handle everything personally, but you've got to consider your own health."

"I know, don't worry," Dorothy chuckled on the other end of the line. "You've practically sent over all the hotshots from the Lopez Corporation to help out. What do I have to be tired about? At this rate, my company will just become another branch of the Lopez Corporation." "That'll never happen." Just hearing Dorothy's voice made Everett's eyes soften with an undeniable warmth, "I promise, the Lopez Corporation will never take over your business."

"So, it's not worthy?" Dorothy teased.

"It's not that. It's that I wouldn't dare."

And he meant every word of it.

The last thing he needed was Dorothy feeling sidelined after her company was absorbed. Then he'd have to worry about losing her attention altogether.

"I might be a bit late picking you up tonight. If you wrap up early, have Kevin drive you back to Bay Residence."

"Alright! And you, take care of yourself," Dorothy paused deliberately, "especially since you're a man in his thirties now."

The call ended, but the smile lingered on Everett's face.

Dorothy was joking with him again.

It wasn't just for laughs; it signified her moving on from her past, which brought Everett immense happiness.

Those bygone days were heavy, and he'd always feared Dorothy might succumb to despair.

Soon after, Kevin knocked on his office door again.

"Mr. Lopez, the hospital called. They've managed to stabilize Lane again, but he's back to seeking an end. He says... he just wants to see you once." Kevin shared this, adhering to his principle of keeping Mr. Lopez informed, without expecting a yes.

Yet, after a few seconds of silence, Everett surprisingly agreed.

"I can spare him ten minutes."

...

Lane had attempted to end it all multiple times but failed each time.

Because Everett wanted him to suffer through every moment, denying even the mercy of death.

The hospital still reeked of that nauseating disinfectant.

After being revived, Lane had only requested to see Everett and remained silent otherwise.

In just two short months, he had withered to bones, seemingly lacking the strength to even lift his gaze. Everett's eyes held no pity as they landed on him.

Lane had brought this upon himself.

"You finally came..."

Lane's voice was a raspy shadow of its former self, his expression one of surprise upon seeing Everett. "What do you want to say?" Everett didn't come closer, stopping about three meters away.

Struggling to sit up, Lane's body simply didn't have the strength.

He weakly extended a hand, "Everett

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considering I... in a way et

rival for you...

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Lane was at his limit..

Physical torture was bearable, but the psychological torment was unbearable.

Every day was a living hell for him!

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"Even if Kenneth was my rival, he was an honorable one, not sneaking you, engaging in

around

orable one, ki

schemes."

Lane attempted a smile, "He would've laid down his life for... Dorothy... You might've had to worry about him stealing her from you one day! But now, that worry is gone."