

The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires #Chapter 401 - Read The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires Chapter 401

Chapter 401

Dorothy had finally decided to stay in Eldoria City. She had Karen bring Abigail along.

Although it was a risky move, as a mother, she couldn't continue to leave Langston alone abroad any longer.

Kenneth, her trusted advisor, had his reservations, but in the end, he respected her decision and offered his full support.

As dusk settled over the city, Dorothy stood by the window of her hotel room, lost in thought as she watched the streetlights flicker to life outside. She took a deep breath and dialed Lane's number on her cell phone.

"Hey Lane, I'm gonna need you to pass off my project to someone else. I'm quitting."

"Quitting?" Lane's voice spiked with surprise. "Do you even know what you're saying Dorothy?"

She had always been reliable, and the idea of her throwing in the towel was completely off the radar for Lane.

"I do, and I'm sorry for letting you down, but I can't continue with my position right now Dorothy had no idea when she would be able to return, and with the fast paced nature of their work, even a few hours could mean a world of difference.

By bringing it up with Lane now, she hoped he'd find someone to fill her shoes without the company suffering any losses.

"I already agreed to give you a break. You can take as much time off as you want. Why do you want to resign? You promised to stay until the end of the project!"

"Lane, as the head of the company, you should understand that my resignation from the project is the best course of action."

His plea was personal

"I don't see it that way! And I'm not accepting your resignation. The contract is clear, after your promotion to supervisor, you need to give a so-month notice. Dorothy, I don't think you're someone who would breach a contract."

"But I can't contribute anything to the company right now!!

"You can work remotely. With Austin's help and me in the country, it'll be

manageable, Lane countered firmly, leaving no room for negotiation.

Dorothy massaged her temples, feeling a headache coming on. She knew Lane's game, he didn't want her leaving his company and was willing to overlook profit losses to keep her. 'Lane, think it over. I'll give you all my bonuses for the year' "That won't change my mind, and I'm having your contract notarized for salekeeping"

Dorothy was speechless

"Get back to work soon. I'll be waiting for you."

Lane hung up, leaving Dorothy overwhelmed with frustration and a sense of powerlessness. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door.

She rushed to open it and found Kenneth, with excitement written all over his face. "I got in touch with Byte 71 He said he can meet with you in three days to discuss the specifics!"

Meanwhile, Lane had already instructed his secretary to retrieve Dorothy's contract. He was well aware that letting Dorothy go, or her resignation, would be the best thing for the company at the moment. But if he did that, Dorothy would no longer be part of East Star Enterprises.

That meant losing any pretext to see her again.

His secretary was efficient, having the contract notarized and a copy made in no time. Lane was about to commend him when his phone rang

"Hello, this is the secretary to the president of the Lopez Corporation. Mr. Lopez is interested in acquiring East Star Enterprises, Please, name your price."

Chapter 402

Everett Lopez's sudden move caught Lane off guard.

"Who did you say you are again? The Lopez Corporation?"

"That's right."

Lane let out a low chuckle, "I have no plans to sell East Star Enterprises. You can tell Mr. Lopez to forget about it! Don't think I don't know what he's up to."

This wasn't about acquiring East Star Enterprises at all, it was a ploy to get to Dorothy!

"Mr. Lopez will give you one day to consider," said the voice on the other end.

"I've already told you, there's nothing to consider! Can't you understand? I'm

not selling!

Kevin chuckled on the other end. "You can consider whether to sell the enterprise willingly or under duress,"

Regardless, selling was inevitable

"Are you trying to force a buyout?!" Lane stood up in frustration. "Let me make it clear, it's not happening! I am currently the largest shareholder of East Star Enterprises. As long as I don't approve, you won't be able to acquire!"

Kevin's voice remained calm, and Lane could hear the rustling of papers through the phone.

"Here's the thing, Mr. Lane You currently hold 34% of East Star Enterprises shares, indeed making you the largest shareholder

However, the Lopez Corporation has already acquired 27% of the company's shares, and with just one more share transfer

contract I'm about to sign, you will no longer hold that title Mr. Lopez, considering your past support for Ms Sanchez, would still like to offer you the chance to make your own choice."

Lane was silent, immediately turning on his computer to check the company's shareholder information.

Kevin, ever so polite, waited on the line for him to verify the information.

When Lane saw the shareholder change notifications, he thought he was dreaming!

How could it have happened so fast? It was almost impossible!

"You call this giving me a choice

"Absolutely! You can choose to sell your 34% stake to us, or not. But... once the Lopez Corporation becomes the majority shareholder your shares could drastically lose their value, as we won't be operating with East Star Enterprises as our focus."

When that happened, East Star Enterprises cash flow would plummet until it ceased to sign any new projects, rendering its shares worthless

The price Lane could get for his 34% today might not even fetch one percent in the future.

Lane frowned, unable to believe Everett would go to such lengths for Dorothy! Such ruthless takeover of a company with ongoing projects could tarnish the Lopez Corporation's reputation and would surely drain their finances!

It was hard to believe that this was the same Everett known for his calculated and cool approach to business

"Everett better not forget, Dorothy is his ex-wife! He will not win her back by

doing this!”

“That’s Mr. Lopez’s concern. You need not worry. Mr. Lane.”

“Fine! You want to play this game? Don’t assume that I, Lane, haven’t built up my own resources over the years! A bidding war for shares is? can play the game if I want. Well see whether our shareholders prefer to sell to you or to me!”

Lane understood the stakes, but his pride had overshadowed his reason, “Alright then.”

Kevin had nothing more to add and was about to hang up.

But Lane suddenly laughed, “And one more thing... If Everett wants Dorothy so badly, I can just fire her from East Star Enterprises right now!”

Chapter 403

“You might want to give it a shot! I shall not bother you any longer goodbye.”

Kevin hung up the call, and Lane was so furious that he smashed his phone to bits!

The broken pieces scattered all over the floor, creating a total mess.

He stood up and immediately called his secretary over “Get on it, now! Fire Dorothy from East Star Enterprises!”

“What?” The secretary was dumbfounded.

He had just made sure to file Ms. Sanchez’s contract, and now he’s supposed to fire her?

“Do it now!”

“But... to retrieve the stored contract, it takes three business days”

Lane clenched his fists in frustration, “Then fire her without following protocol 111 cover the severance pay myself!”

The secretary nodded hurriedly and scurried off.

But in no time, he came stumbling back, his face ashen, “Mr. Lane, the HR department says you’re no longer the majority shareholder of East Star Enterprises. The decision to fire Ms. Sanchez has been overruled by the current majority shareholder...”

“Everett!” Lane slammed his fist on the desk, “Well played!”

The secretary had never seen Lane like this. He typically wore a cheerful demeanor rarely adopting a stern expression. Clearly, the secretary was a bit intimidated

“So what do we do now?”

“Contact the other shareholders of East Star Enterprises right away. Tell them, no matter what price they’ve been offered, buy

their shares for double! Have them wait for me.”

“Understood, I’m on it”

After the secretary left, Lane logged into the financial system and moved all the liquid assets he could muster.

Indeed, Everett was loaded, and Lane’s assets couldn’t match his. But when it came to liquid funds, that was a different story!

Lane hadn’t been too wrapped up in investments over the years. His earnings from East Star Enterprises and his other assets were mostly in savings, readily available cash flow.

Now it was a race to see who could secure over 50% of the shares first.

Whoever did would own East Star Enterprises.

At the Bay Residence, with nightfall wrapping the outside in darkness, Everett had all the lights on inside.

There was a new little one in the house, and he couldn’t just think about his own preference for quietness. The child needed to be in a bright place.

After back-to-back video conferences, Everett postponed the next one and stood up to knock on the bedroom door, “Langston, what do you want

for dinner? It’s time to eat”

Langston’s voice came quickly from inside, “I’m not hungry!”

“Eat a little then, I have an international video conference soon and might not be able to attend to you.”

After saying that, he heard the sound of slippers scraping the floor inside the room,

Soon after, the bedroom door opened a crack, revealing Langston’s little head, want KFC then.”

“It’s not nutritious. Tell me what you want to eat, and I’ll make it.”

“You can cook?!” Langston looked skeptical.

“Of course.”

“Then I want pork ribs, and mandarin (sh Langston didn’t care whether he actually liked those dishes or not. He just wanted to make things difficult for Everell.

Unexpectedly. Everett glanced at his watch and quickly agreed, “Alright, I’ll go grocery shopping now. Wait for me”

“You’re actually going to make #17

Everett nodded, serious as ever. He turned to leave but paused, glancing back at Langston with a hint of a smile curling his lips.

“Oh, and next time you hack into the Lopez Corporation’s servers, don’t

bother wiping your tracks. Others might not notice, but for me, even if you do wipe them, I can restore them with just one click.”

Chapter 404

“No way! You’re lying” Langston yelled.

Everett shrugged, pulling out his smartphone with a smirk, 1:03 AM 10:27 AM, and looks like you were snooping around the server again just a minute ago.”

Langston’s eyes widened in disbelief. “But I reset everything!”

Watching his son’s frustrated little face, Everett couldn’t help but walk back and pinch his cheek affectionately.

“Who taught you these tech moves”

“My mentor. He’s the real deal

As his son excitedly praised someone else, Everett felt a twinge of jealousy and raised an eyebrow, tossing out a challenge.

“After I wmp up some stuff, Ill teach you myself

Grabbing his car keys, he headed out to the grocery store. He made sure to pick up some extra veggies to give his son a nutritious meal.

Just as he was about to leave, Everett spotted a bunch of toys on sale at the entrance. Drawn by the colorful array, he started to wander over.

“Hey, could you help me get these toys to the car?”

“Sure thing sir!”

With his shopping done and realizing the meeting time was approaching, Everett realized he wouldn’t have time to cook After a brief pause, he dialed Kevin

“Postpone the meeting by three hours.”

“Mr. Lopez, you’ll be skipping out on rest tonight then?”

“My kid wants to taste my cooking”

With that one line. Kevin understood. “111 let everyone know right away.”

“And Kevin, have you settled the East Star Enterprises issue?”

“All settled, Mr. Lopez Lane tried to use his clout to fire Ms. Sanchez intercepted and cut off his power.”

Kevin blabbered on, eager to boast, mentioning Dorothy Sanchez, causing Everett to frown.

“Did I ask about Dorothy? I asked about East Star Enterprises!”

“Ah, right! I got it, Mr. Lopez, everything’s in order! Both Ms. Sanchez and East Star Enterprises, all settled”

Everett was speechless

Hanging up the phone, Everett, who had been expressionless, suddenly cracked a thin, unexpected smile.

He had been too cautious before, too concerned with propriety. Now, he just wanted to bring the person he cared for closer.

That's human nature, isn't it?

Even if he couldn't stand beside her as a husband, he could as a boss.

If Lane had the audacity to pursue her knowing she was married, then why couldn't he, Everett, try his hand at the same game?

If Dorothy could tolerate Lane, what was stopping him?

Everett returned to Bay Residence, groceries in hand. As he entered, he found Langston tinkering with his laptop on the living room couch.

Hearing his dad, Langston guiltily set the laptop aside, pretending to watch TV instead

Everett, both exasperated and fond, quirked a smile, "You can play all you want. I've locked the conference channel. You can't get into that"

Langston pouted, "I crack it someday!"

"You can try."

With a chuckle, Everett carried the ingredients into the kitchen, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and began to cook methodically, chopping and frying. Langston shuffled in after him, watching in awe as dish after dish came together and was placed on the

table

Looking at the spread skeptically, he doubted it could taste as good as it looked, until he tasted a piece of the fish

"Wow! This is delicious! If my sister were here, she'd love it too!"

Everett paused, his eyebrows arching slightly. "Your sister?"

Chapter 405

Langston nearly dropped his fork in shock. "1... It's my neighbor's sister!"

Everett placed the dishes on the table and sat down in front of him.

"Langston, it's not good for kids to lie all the time."

"I'm not lying."

"You have a sister. Your mom had two kids." Everett's words weren't a question. They were a statement – a statement of certainty.

But that wasn't the point. The real issue was the panic visible in Langston's eyes after Everett spoke.

That meant Everett had hit the nail on the head. Even if it took a little cunning

to draw it out

"I'm not hungry anymore!" Langston felt like everything was laid bare before Everett, and it was better to just avoid the topic altogether. He tried to put down his fork and leave.

But Everett grabbed Langston's wrist before he could pull away.

"You need to finish your dinner. Before that, you're not going anywhere."

"You're trying to bully me! I'll start crying, just you watch!"

Everett shrugged. "Go ahead and cry. No one else lives near the Bay Residence anyway."

"I know that!" Langston was well aware because on his first day here, he'd scanned for electronic devices nearby and found very few, a sure sign that it was sparsely populated.

Everett piled some meat and veggies onto Langston's plate and ordered, "Eat up."

Langston was actually hungry, especially after getting a taste of the food, which had whetted his appetite.

But he was still wary. "Then you can't ask me any more questions! I won't tell you anything!"

Everett smiled, then asked out of the blue, "Did your mom remarry and have another daughter after you?"

"My mom didn't remarry! Uh... Langston realized his slip-up too late. "I'm done eating. I'm leaving!"

"Eat. I promise I won't ask any more questions today

"But you just said you..."

"I didn't make any promises before. It was you who spoke. Now I'm promising not to ask for the rest of today."

Everett knew he couldn't rush these things. There would be plenty of time later.

Today was a big win. He now knew he probably had not only a son but also a daughter!

Langston had blurted out that Dorothy hadn't remarried, it likely wasn't a lie.

So, the sister Langston talked about could be his full sibling!

Twins, perhaps?

Surely it couldn't be that he'd accidentally done it with other women twice without knowing!

"What?! I'm supposed to report to the Lopez Corporation?" Dorothy was flabbergasted when she got the call from HR.

Why would she, minding her own business, receive a call from the Lopez Corporation's HR department? Could it be that Everett

was onto her?

"Yes, your company, East Star Enterprises, is now part of the Lopez Corporation, and your employment contract has been transferred to the Lopez Corporation."

"That's impossible!" How could Lane sell the company to Everett? "I need to verify this."

"Alright, you go and check."

After hanging up, Dorothy dialed Lane's cell phone immediately.

It rang a few times before he picked up, his voice muffled with panic but trying to sound calm.

"Dorothy, what do you need?"

"What's going on with the company? I just got a call from someone at the Lopez Corporation, telling me to come to work, saying East Star Enterprises now belongs to them!"

"Dorothy, listen to me, you don't have to worry about that right now! I'm working on getting East Star Enterprises back."

Hearing this, Dorothy felt her heart sink

"So the Lopez Corporation acquiring East Star Enterprises is a fact!"

"Yeah... But don't worry, I regain control of East Star as soon as I can! If money doesn't do it, I'll use public opinion to fight Everett to the end!"

Chapter 406

"Wait, you're taking on the Lopez Corporation?" Dorothy's delicate brows furrowed. "Lane, you don't stand a chance."

"Am I supposed to just let them walk all over me?" Lane was fuming.

Because of his pursuit of Dorothy, Jeffrey must have spilled the beans to Everett. There had been no sign of trouble, making Lane believe that Everett had accepted it.

But this counterattack, the abrupt acquisition of East Star Enterprises, was too sudden! It was like being thrown a bone, only to be shooed away like a beggar!

Lane had never faced such an insult in his life!

"Lane, you can't beat the Lopez Corporation," Dorothy said, not out of favoritism for Everett, but because it was the cold, hard truth.

East Star Enterprises might have been substantial, but everything is relative.

If Everett set his sights on taking down East Star Enterprises, it wouldn't matter if the whole domestic industry declared a

boycott against the Lopez Corporation unless he had a change of heart. After

all, the Lopez Corporation would merely lose the local market by doing that.

Besides, in the world of business, how many companies would cut ties with a giant like the Lopez Corporation just to take a stand for someone else?

“Dorothy, he’s doing this because of you!”

“I know.” By now, if Dorothy couldn’t see Everett’s intentions, she’d be a fool. What worried her was the possibility that Everett knew about Langston and was acting out of that knowledge.

Years of knowing Everett had given her insight into his temperament and character; he was always the gentleman, logical, considering all angles before making a decision.

This aggressive move to crush East Star Enterprises overnight didn’t seem like his style.

So, Dorothy suspected that Everett had gotten wind of something and was trying to force her into his orbit.

Could it be he was looking for an opportunity to compare her DNA with Langston’s?

“Dorothy, are you even listening?” Lane had been talking non-stop, and Dorothy hadn’t heard a word.

Snapping back to reality she quickly said, “Lane, something’s come up. Let’s talk tomorrow.”

After hanging up, Dorothy immediately dialed the HR department of the Lopez Corporation.

“Hello, this is Dorothy. I received a call earlier about reporting to the Lopez Corporation. I’m sorry, but I can’t make it.” “Ms.

Sanchez, you’re under contract with East Star Enterprises.”

She was painfully aware of that. “Then I resign.”

“Alright.” The person on the other end didn’t give Dorothy a hard time. “Here’s the situation. I checked your contract, and it

clearly states that if you’re promoted to director, you need to apply for resignation half a year in advance to HR, or it’s considered

a breach of contract. You agreed and signed this! If you submit your resignation now, you can process your departure in six months.”

Dorothy felt a headache coming on. She had to wait half a year to resign!

She hadn’t anticipated this at all! Things had changed so quickly, who could have expected East Star Enterprises to be

swallowed up by the Lopez Corporation overnight?

“What if I have to breach the contract? It’s really inconvenient for me to take a

position at the Lopez Corporation.” “Then, Ms. Sanchez, you need to think carefully. Looking at the penalties for breach of contract, you’re not only liable for the breach fee, but also for any losses incurred on your projects. You’ll be responsible for those too.”

Dorothy was silent.

“Your current project includes the development of Everglow City Resort. If you back out now, you’ll be on the hook for any and all financial risks. Are you sure you want to breach the contract?”

Chapter 407

Dorothy hesitated.

It wasn’t that she suddenly fancied a career switch to Lopez Corporation; it was the steep penalty for breaching her contract that she couldn’t afford.

Had it been just the stipulated penalty in the contract, she could have clenched her teeth and paid it, but to shoulder the entire responsibility for the Everglow City Resort project? That was out of her league.

After all, if Everett was willing to shell out big bucks for the acquisition of East Star Enterprises, would he really care about the resort’s development costs? As the CEO, he could make the resort lose as much as he wanted, couldn’t he?

A project worth hundreds of millions – once the responsibility was transferred, she might as well sell herself and still fall short of the payment!

“Ms. Sanchez, please reconsider. Should you change your mind, you’re welcome to join us at the Lopez Corporation.”

The person from HR hung up, leaving Dorothy slumped back onto her bed, the picture of defeat.

It was clear that Everett had cut off all her escape routes, leaving no room for maneuver.

But what on earth made him decide to do this?

In the hospital, Jeffrey still hadn’t woken up.

After a day of observation in the hospital, his life was out of danger, and now they were just waiting for the specialist Everett

had invited to examine Jeffrey and hopefully find a way to wake him up.

Lane had called Jeffrey several times to ask about the Lopez Corporation’s acquisition, only to discover that Jeffrey had been involved in a car accident and was hospitalized.

He dropped everything and rushed to the hospital where Jeffrey was being

treated, but now, no one could see Jeffrey. They could only wait outside the ICU.

Huxley recognized Lane and approached him as he arrived. "I appreciate you coming."

"With the kind of friendship I have with Jeffrey, how could I not come when he's in such a serious condition? What exactly happened?"

"The police are still investigating, but all we know is that a car rear-ended Jeffrey's at high speed, causing a serious collision."

"And the driver at fault?"

"Still in resuscitation and haven't pulled through yet."

Lane sighed, feeling like all the troublesome issues had converged at once. As they were talking, Huxley suddenly looked up and gestured towards someone.

Lane followed his gaze.

It was Everett

This was their second encounter since that episode outside the restaurant, but given Jeffrey's situation and Huxley's presence, Lane couldn't lash out. He gritted his teeth as he watched Everett and Huxley discuss bringing in the doctor.

While Lane was visibly resentful, Everett remained composed in his Impeccable suit, his demeanor still cool and aristocratic, as if forcing the takeover of East Star Enterprises and pushing Lane out wasn't his doing at all.

"Well, Huxley, I should head back to the office. I'll come back when Dr. Smith arrives in Elorria City"

"Sure! I'll walk you out," Huxley was just about to take a step when Lane quickly interjected, "Let me escort Mr. Lopez. Huxley, you stay here and rest."

Huxley hesitated, instinctively glancing at Everett.

It was only after Everett nodded that he agreed, "Alright, I appreciate it, Lane."

"No problem."

With that, Lane quickly followed Everett, and they left the hospital, one following the other.

Once outside and certain no one was following, Lane sped up to block Everett's path.

"Everett, what are you playing at?"

"Hm?"

“You are using these tactics to chase after Dorothy, and you’re not exactly being subtle!”

Everett chuckled, his fingers nonchalantly undoing the buttons on his shirt cuffs, “I acquired East Star Enterprises because I wanted to. What does it have to do with Dorothy?”

Chapter 408

“Who do you think you’re kidding?”

Before Dorothy came into the picture, Everett wouldn’t have even noticed East Star Enterprises. Now, out of the blue, he’s gunning for a takeover. It’s as clear as day he’s got his sights set on something, or someone, rather.

“What proof do you have?”

Everett’s words left Lane dumbfounded.

Everett towered over Lane, a slight smirk playing on his lips as he looked down at him.

“Instead of wasting your time arguing with me, why don’t you hustle and snap up some more shares? Keep that majority stakeholder status of yours intact.”

“You bet I will!”

Everett chuckled, “Mr. Lane, I heard through the grapevine that you are willing to pay double my offer to buy those shares.”

The mere mention of it straightened Lane’s spine, a scornful smile spreading across his face. “That’s right, I said it. And his fa I’m purchasing it directly using cash flow.”

Everett nodded, his tall, lean silhouette casting a shadow over Lane, lacking every inch the CEO receiving a report from a subordinate, and Lane the eager to please employee..

“Sounds mighty attractive! Best of luck to you.”

With that. Everett turned to stride towards his car

Lane, seething with the realization that he hadn’t even made Everett sweat, stepped in front of the vehicle to block his way.

“Everett, I never pegged you for a coward! You’ve got the nerve to make moves but not the guts to admit you’re still hung up on Dorothy!”

“Did I ever deny it?”

Lane was taken aback.

“Anyone who’s close to me knows I’ve only got eyes for Dorothy. If you’re out of the loop, that’s on you,”

"Don't think for a second that snatching up East Star Enterprises will help you win Dorothy back. She divorced you, so what more is there to say?"

Everett shrugged, gesturing first at Lane and then at his car, "Lane, don't be a roadblock."

"You..."

Before Lane could stop him, Everett was in his car and off with a roar of the engine, disappearing from Lane's view within moments.

"Damn it!" Lane cursed under his breath as his phone rang.

He glanced at the caller ID. It was his secretary.

"Mr. Lane, the funds you provided for the acquisition have run dry!"

"How many shares have been acquired now?" He only needed just over 17% to maintain his majority stake in East Star Enterprises.

But the secretary hesitated, clearly uncomfortable with the news.

"We've... we've only secured 2%..."

"What? My nearly eighty million in funds got just 2%, and that's it?"

"Yes, sir... You wanted to offer double what the Lopez Corporation was paying. We'll need at least another billion to continue."

Lane hadn't expected Everett to have such deep pockets!

And now, having put up his last dime, Lane felt the sting as Everett seemed unfazed.

"Stop the acquisition." Lane closed his eyes, wrestling with his pride, before finally admitting defeat.

The secretary, aware of the situation, cautiously suggested, "Should we sell the shares we've already acquired? The Lopez Corporation expressed interest in buying them."

"No, I won't sell it!" Lane clenched his teeth, his words seething with defiance, "If Everett thinks he can worm his way back into Dorothy's life through the company, I won't let him win! Even if he becomes the biggest shareholder of East Star Enterprises, I won't leave, and I won't give up on Dorothy! I'm going to be a thorn in his side, and I'll make damn sure he watches her grow closer to me!"

Chapter 409

If Lane couldn't outspend Everett, he decided to see who could get closer to Dorothy!

She had leverage in Lane's hands, after all. Creating scenes to ruffle Everett's

feathers was well within his wheelhouse.

It was ironic, really, how the CEO of Lopez Corporation, Everett, held such a high and mighty position, yet Dorothy remained his Achilles' heel.

Heather was well aware of Everett's efforts to find a doctor for Jeffrey.

Yet, at this point, the most panicked person wasn't Huxley, but Heather!

If Jeffrey woke up, all secrets would come tumbling out! It wouldn't matter even if Everett learned of other things like the

kidnapping of Langston. Because his parents could cover for her, but... but if Everett found out the truth behind Dorothy's divorce...

She couldn't bear to think of the consequences.

After so many years, Dorothy still had a place in Everett's heart, a testament to his profound love. If he discovered that Heather had caused the death of Dorothy's mother...

He would surely seek retribution.

Heather had no choice but to pin her hopes on Amanda, her only lifeline.

"Amanda, I'm afraid Everett will dig up the past about Bella!"

"What's there to fear? So what if he finds out? Is he going to personally throw me into prison?" Amanda seemed unfazed by the severity of the situation, "Don't panic! I promised to help you, and I approved the whole plan. I'll protect you."

"But... you don't understand how much Everett loves Dorothy."

Heather didn't doubt for a second that Everett was capable of avenging Dorothy, even if it meant sending his own mother to jail.

It was a gamble she was forced to take.

Sending Amanda to jail would be like casting her into hell! Her illness was so severe that countless doctors dared not promise

stability, let alone facing incarceration after being betrayed by her own son.

"How much can he possibly love her? It's probably just a fleeting infatuation."

With no other choice, Heather relayed the conversation she had with Everett to Amanda.

"Did he really say that?"

"Yes, or else why would I be so scared? Amanda, as long as Dorothy is around, Everett won't give up. Even the slightest hint of her presence risks him digging up the past. It feels like I'm on the edge of a cliff, about to fall into an abyss!"

"All your fears are based on the assumption that Dorothy will reappear in Everett's life. So, why not ensure she never does?"

Amanda's tone had softened, betraying her concern, "Heather, rest easy.

Your mother and you risked your lives to save me, a debt I'll never forget! Everett is my own son, so he owes me this favor." In the past, such words would have reassured Heather.

But now she was truly restless.

"How do you plan to make Dorothy disappear?"

"Send her to join her mother, Amanda hissed. "I was too kind-hearted back then. I should have killed them together, and we wouldn't have all these troubles now!"

Heather's voice was hoarse with emotion, "Amanda, I've caused you so much trouble, yet you don't blame me."

"Because I can never forget how you looked, battered and bruised, trying to save me. Without you, I'd be dead. So, in my eyes, you're my only daughter-in-law."

Chapter 410

"Amanda, when I saved you back then, I didn't think too much about it. I just wanted to protect Everett's mother because I knew he would be heartbroken if something happened to you."

"That's why I've always believed you're the one who truly understands the big picture and loves my son the most! I don't acknowledge all those other girls, like Dorothy! When I was kidnapped, if those thugs had really taken those compromising photos and used them to blackmail the Lopez Corporation, our family would have been like lambs to the slaughter! My husband and I..."

"Please, Amanda, stop!" Heather interrupted quickly. "There's no need to dredge up the past! I have never regretted saving you, even if it meant that Everett and I wouldn't end up together."

The more Heather spoke, the more guilt seeped into Amanda's heart.

Those thugs were after one thing, that was to humiliate Amanda, to take those lewd photos to threaten the Lopez Corporation! If they had succeeded, Amanda couldn't bear to think how she and her husband would have faced each other, let alone how the Lopez family would have been manipulated by others!

It was Heather who had barged in recklessly offering herself in exchange for Amanda, claiming to be Everett's fiancée.

The kidnappers thought that pictures of Everett's fiancée might be even more damaging, so they agreed to the trade.

To this day, Amanda vividly remembered how Heather looked when she was rescued battered and bruised, her clothes torn to shreds, blood staining her legs...

She couldn't imagine the inhumane torture Heather had endured during those hours. Without her, Amanda would have had to bear that agony herself.

So even though those scandalous photos were intercepted before they could do any damage, and the whole incident was completely hushed up by the Lopez family, Amanda still insisted on Heather as her daughter-in-law, because it was a debt the Lopez family owed her!

"He'll marry you, I'm sure of it. Trust me, Heather. I'll clear every obstacle from your path, including Dorothy."

"Okay."

In the boardroom of the Lopez Corporation.

Leaders from every department, along with the high-profile shareholders, were gathered for a crucial meeting.

The domestic market had peaked, and the choice lay between expanding overseas or scooping up even the smaller investment opportunities within the country.

Everett was in favor of expansion abroad, believing in leaving some breathing room for domestic investment firms rather than dominating to the point of suffocating the competition.

But some shareholders felt that it was foolish to pass up guaranteed profits.

"Mr. Lopez," one of them spoke up. "You talked about setting up new branches domestically, but I've heard you've just acquired a local investment firm, East Star Enterprises. What's the rationale behind that?" Everett had anticipated the question and came prepared with an answer.

"I acquired East Star because it has a talent I've been unable to recruit through headhunters. The only way to bring them on board was to merge the company with the Lopez Corporation."

"Talent?" The shareholders exchanged glances.

The notion of buying a whole company for one person seemed rather extravagant.

"The acquisition was funded through my personal accounts, so I didn't feel the need to consult you all in advance. This doesn't conflict with our strategy for international expansion."

When Everett said it was his own money, no one dared to argue.

"Mr. Lopez, may I inquire about who this talent is? What expertise does that person have?" one shareholder asked, curiosity piqued. Anyone who could capture the attention of the Lopez Corporation's CEO must be extraordinary.

"It's an assistant. You don't need to concern yourselves with the details. I

brought her in simply because I'm accustomed to working with her."

The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires #Chapter 411 - Read The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires Chapter 411

Chapter 411

It was an ironclad excuse that sealed everyone's lips in an instant.

When the CEO handpicks an assistant, who dares to utter a word?

After the meeting. Everett stood up to leave, with Kevin trailing just behind him as they entered the CEO's private elevator.

Once the doors slid shut, Kevin finally broke the silence. "Human Resources has notified Ms. Sanchez about the position."

"Right," Everett responded, his face the picture of serenity. "She'll probably ask to resign."

He had Dorothy figured out long ago.

"Indeed, but she's got a contract. Ms. Sanchez won't resign so easily."

The elevator dinged, and the doors opened.

Everett strode out, then paused and glanced back at Kevin. "Tell me, do you think what I'm doing is a bit underhanded?"

Despite the years at the helm, Everett had never abused his power or coerced anyone. Even when he wanted Dorothy to join the Lopez Corporation's headquarters, he had Kevin mentor her rather than parachuting her into the position.

This was, perhaps, the first time Everett had been so oblivious to someone else's wishes

Kevin didn't see the issue. He chuckled, "Mr. Lopez, why do you think we earn this money and hold this power?"

Everett raised an eyebrow, prompting him to go on.

"Isn't it so we can do what we want and keep who we want?"

"Makes sense when you put it like that"

Everett chuckled, feeling the strain of his ungentlemanly actions fades. It was an unfamiliar way of operating for him, but Kevin had no trouble adapting; he believed this was how a CEO should act.

Kenneth was unusually firm and adamant about Dorothy working at the Lopez Corporation.

"Dorothy, you can't go!"

"I don't want to, but I have a contract! It's written clearly. How can I afford to pay the penalty?" Dorothy wanted nothing more than

to steer clear of the complexities of the Lopez Corporation, especially with the whole Langston situation. The last thing she wanted was to get closer to Everett.

"I'll pay for it. However much it is? I'll cover it!"

Dorothy sighed, looking at him helplessly. "Knowing the way Everett is forcing my hand, I'd owe billions."

"That's extortion! I'll get a lawyer to fight this."

"Forget it. We can't twist the arm of a giant." Dorothy had come to terms with the reality.

She'd thought about struggling, about recklessness.

But the truth was, as long as Everett was set on having her, there was no escape.

Kenneth paced in front of her, clenching his fists.

"Kenneth, don't worry. If he wants me there, I'll go. It just means I'll be more cautious and steer clear of him. There won't be anything between Everett and me again."

"Don't you get it?" Kenneth furrowed his brows, his eyes full of concern. I'm not afraid you'll get back with Everett! I'm afraid that if you reappear, Everett's parents and that woman named Heather will see you as a thorn in their side again!" Their tactics were never bound by morality, like how they had directly killed Bella.

Chapter 412

Kenneth couldn't even bear to think about it—If one day he received news of Dorothy's death....

He was certain it would drive him mad.

"I know you mean well, but I have no choice but..." Dorothy hadn't finished her sentence when Kenneth suddenly stood up and headed for the door.

She paused, then hurried after him, grabbing his arm. "Where do you think you're going?"

"I'm going to find Everett! I need to know what the hell he's up to! Your mother's already dead because of him. Does he also have to take you down before he's satisfied?"

"Don't." Dorothy blocked his path. "Kenneth, I promise you, I'll take extra care. We can't draw attention to ourselves until the security systems in Byte 7 are back online."

She was determined to make everyone who had hurt her mother pay, but now wasn't the time to tip them off.

"You're walking straight into the lion's den! Dorothy, I'm terrified of losing you." He couldn't imagine a life without her or the torturous schemes their enemies

would concoct once they set their sights on Dorothy.

"I've got it under control. Don't worry." Dorothy was ready to move forward. She should've known it wouldn't be so simple to end things.

It wasn't as easy as she'd hoped, there were bound to be complications. Kenneth held back, knowing he had no standing to keep persuading her. In the end, he could only make a small request. "You can work at the Lopez Corporation, but you have to let me drive you to and from work every day!"

"You'd stay in Eldoria City for me?" Dorothy was taken aback, frowning. "But you have a job!"

"Nothing else matters. I need to ensure your safety," Kenneth said, patting her shoulder. "Don't worry about me: I can find a good job in Eldorria City. I'll look for a place close to the Lopez Corporation. It'll be convenient for your commute, and if you need me, I

can be there in no time."

Dorothy wasn't concerned about these.

She couldn't bear the weight of such a debt.

"Kenneth, you've already sacrificed too much for me. I don't want you to do this!"

"You are a sister to me. It's only right for a brother to protect his sister.

Besides, Langston has always been under my care, and now that he's with Everett, I'm worried. I'm begging you, let me stay in Eldorria City!" Kenneth's plea left Dorothy no room to refuse.

The dangers were blatant; it was clear he wouldn't leave.

Kenneth had made up his mind. If Dorothy agreed, he'd stay without question. If she didn't, he'd stay secretly.

Dorothy had guessed as much.

"You wouldn't leave no matter what, would you?"

"No, I can't leave."

"Fine." Dorothy laid out her terms. "You can stay in Eldoria City, and you can drive me to work, but you have to go on the blind dates your family has set up."

Kenneth froze, his brows furrowing. "Did my parents talk to you?"

Dorothy shook her head, her voice soft. "No, but Kenneth, you should have a family of your own. You can't spend all your time on me; it's a huge burden!"

Kenneth just looked into Dorothy's eyes, his lips barely moving. "Do you really want me to go on these blind dates?"

Chapter 413

Dorothy held his gaze with a steadfast and earnest look in her eyes.

"Yes,"

Kenneth suddenly burst into laughter, taking a few steps back as he pulled at the corners of his mouth in a bittersweet grin.

"Alright, alright... as you wish, I'll go on blind dates."

After wrapping up a day's work, Everett declined overtime at the office, opting to drive back to Bay Residence instead.

He even made a detour to the supermarket to pick up some fresh vegetables and fruits before heading home.

Parking the car, Everett bent down to get out and looked up at the brightly lit living room window, unconsciously smiling. Now he had a little rascal waiting for him at home every day, and he had to admit, it felt pretty good.

He was now pushing off as much work as he could, and he didn't stay at the office to do whatever he couldn't postpone. Instead, he brought it home to work on.

All so he could spend more time with the little rascal!

Unlocking the door, Everett was greeted by the sight of a small figure engrossed in his laptop on the sofa.

Langston no longer hid away, he now boldly used Everett's computer, trying to figure it out!

Unfortunately, he hadn't managed to crack it yet.

"What would you like for dinner? I'll cook it for you."

Hearing Everett's voice, Langston set down the laptop, shuffling to the door in his slippers, his large eyes blinking rapidly. "I'm not picky! Did you go to the hospital today? Is Mr. Turner feeling better?"

At the mention of Jeffrey, Everett let out a heavy sigh, setting down the groceries and bending down to scoop his son into his arms.

"Mr. Turner's still sleeping, but once the doctor I found for him gets here, he'll be fine!"

"Is he very sick?"

"You could say that." Everett didn't want to hide the truth from Langston.

He believed that building a strong relationship with his son started with honesty; he never lied to the boy. Even when it came to setting Langston up, he always stuck to little tricks.

Langston tilted his head, making a face. "Can I visit him in the hospital? Mr. Turner's always been nice to me, and I miss him."

“Sure, I’ll take you tomorrow!” Everett felt reassured that his son wanted to visit Jeffrey in the hospital.
It showed that his boy had a heart full of loyalty and compassion! He’d been right to let Jeffrey dote on Langston.
After settling Langston in, Everett headed to the kitchen to cook.
No one would have guessed that the man who ruled the Lopez Corporation by day would also be in the kitchen at night, tying on an apron and wielding a spatula.
Soon, a hearty meal was laid out on the dining table.
Langston climbed onto his chair, clutching his laptop, a frown etching his small face.
Everett placed a plate in front of him, his lips curving into a smile. “Any progress on hacking into my computer?”
The topic instantly soured Langston’s mood even more.
“You made the program so complicated on purpose! Just to make fun of me, didn’t you?”
Everett shrugged, taking a seat across from him. “I told you before, you were the one who boasted you could crack it.”
“I will! I have to find your weakness!”
“My weakness, huh...” Everett pondered for a moment, an image of a serene and delicate face suddenly flashing in his mind, lingering there, “I do have one.”
Langston immediately leaned in closer at his admission.

“What’s your weakness? Give me a hint!”

“My weakness is a person.”

This answer was too cryptic for Langston, who frowned, thinking hard.

“A person? Are you afraid of being lonely? Afraid of being alone at home?”

“It’s not that kind of alone!” Everett said, exasperated. “It’s a person named Dorothy.”

“Cough, cough, cough.” Langston choked, caught off guard by the unexpected revelation.

Chapter 414

Langston choked on his burger, coughing violently!

Everett quickly got up and patted his back, “Easy there, cowboy. Ain’t no one gonna rustle that burger from ya.”

“I’m fine!” Langston waved him off, avoiding Everett’s gaze.

At first, Everett was genuinely concerned about the choking hazard, but Langston’s shifty behavior tipped him off that something was amiss.

He was trying to play it cool, but the more he did, the more it screamed that there was something fishy.

But this time. Everett didn't go for the direct approach. Instead, he played it off like he hadn't noticed a thing and finished the meal as if everything was normal.

He knew Langston was onto his old tricks, but there were plenty more tricks up his sleeve.

Let Dorothy start working at the Lopez Corporation first. The rest... well, they would cross that bridge when they come to it

At the hospital, Jeffrey showed no signs of improvement.

The deep gash across his face was beyond healing, leaving a scar that would never fade. The multiple fractures throughout his body posed no threat to his life, but any thoughts of manual labor or heavy lifting in his future were dashed.

The only silver lining was that his condition hadn't worsened.

Paloma's eyes were swollen from crying, and she had fainted more than once. Eventually, Huxley had to strong-arm her back to the hotel to rest, leaving him to stand vigil alone.

When Heather arrived, she found Huxley staring at the ICU sign, lost in thought.

She balanced a bunch of stuff in her arms and composed herself before approaching

"Huxley."

He stood up when he saw her, though not with the warmth he reserved for Everett. His demeanor was cooler, almost frosty.

"Yeah, you're here."

"I came to see how Jeffrey's doing. Is he better?"

Huxley nodded grimly, "Just waiting on the doc and see if surgery is needed."

"Ah, Huxley, you're not in the best shape yourself. How about I come by after my shift to keep watch? I'm free anyway. and you and Paloma should get some rest at the hotel."

"It's okay. I'm worried someone might try to harm my boy." Huxley's words were blunt as a hammer.

He figured if Heather was innocent, she wouldn't take offense. But if she were up to something, she needed to hear this straight.

Sure enough, he caught a fleeting look of discomfort crossing Heather's face.

"Huxley, didn't the cops say it was an accident? No one's out to get Jeffrey!"

"That's debatable. My son's a straight shooter, not a sly fox. He might've

rubbed someone the wrong way. Didn't you say it yourself? Jeffrey had a habit of sticking his nose in your business with Everett. I've told him off for it, but he never listens. Said he considered both of you friends and couldn't ignore trouble."

"Jeffrey's a good guy. I know his nature!"

Huxley gave her a pointed look, a smile playing on his lips, "Right. Speaking of which, I wanted to ask you about something. I heard my son had a spat with you at the Lopez Corporation right before he drove off. What was that all about?"

"Just... work stuff."

"Really? 'Cause what I heard didn't sound like a work chat." Huxley coughed lightly, waving it off, "Anyway, if you don't want to talk to me about it I'll let Everett take a gander when he gets here, just found it out myself and didn't get the chance to tell him.

Thought I'd ask you since you're here first."

The implication was clear as day; he didn't buy Heather's story one bit.

Chapter 415

Huxley had left a door open for Heather, a chance for redemption if she chose honesty over deceit. But if she continued to cover her tracks, Huxley was certain that the car accident that had landed his son in the hospital was tied to her in some hidden way

"Huxley, don't you trust me? Heather's voice quivered slightly, a mix of indignation and fear

"Should I trust you?" Huxley met her gaze with an unfaltering stare, not bothering to sugarcoat his suspicion. "Heather, have you been lying so much that you can't even keep your stories straight? When my son was first admitted here, you were on your knees admitting that you had argued with him over Everett's affair, which led to him storming out of the office. And now, all of a sudden, you're claiming it was work-related?"

Decades in the cutthroat world of business had honed Huxley's skills in reading people, and he wasn't about to be hoodwinked by a slip of a girl.

He hadn't pressed her further at the time, opting instead to let the matter rest a strategic retreat that allowed him to spring a surprise interrogation later

If her story remained consistent, he might believe her for once. If not, she was the prime suspect in his book. And. Huxley had no ties to the Garcias, if someone was gunning for his son, he wouldn't stand idly by.

"It started with work, but then it escalated because of Everett Heather murmured, feeling mentally stretched thin lately. causing these silly mistakes.

When Jeffrey had been rushed to the hospital, her only thought was to distance herself from suspicion, but it seemed her eager defense had only drawn more attention to herself.

"There's no need to backtrack now. The truth will come to light soon enough, Heather. If you're innocent, you have nothing to fear Huxley said as he took a step back, gesturing dismissively. You've seen how much is going on with my family lately; I'm not in a position to play host. You may as well go about your business. When my son wakes up, if he does, I'll have him get in touch with you."

Dismissed so coldly, Heather had no choice but to leave. Reluctantly, she gathered her belongings. "Huxle

I'll come by when I have a chance."

"Don't bother. Until my son wakes up, you won't be able to see him anyway."

"Huxley...

"I won't see you out," Huxley cut her off, pushing the gifts she brought back into her arms. "Keep these. I'm alone in this hospital and have lost my appetite for anything."

With her pride wounded by such a blunt rejection, Heather had more pressing concerns than her bruised ego, if Jeffrey truly woke up, her world could come crashing down.

Once in her car, she hastily called the person she had hired for the car accident job.

"You promised there would be no loose ends. Now you're telling me there's a chance he could wake up?"

"I didn't expect it, okay?" the voice on the other end was laced with frustration.

"What if I take care of it at the hospital, one more time?"

"I don't care how you do it. The money I paid was for a permanent solution. Figure it out."

With the call ended, Heather's heart raced with anxiety. She felt a sense of foreboding that she couldn't shake off.

"Jeffrey, don't blame me for this. I warned you not to get involved. It was your choice not to listen."

He knew she intended to marry Everett, yet he persisted in actions that worked against her. If that was his choice, then Jeffrey was a fool.

The tragic end of Dorothy's mother hadn't sounded the alarm for Jeffrey to stay out of Heather's way. What more could she say?
It was pure folly.

Chapter 416

Dorothy never in a million years thought she would set foot in the grand halls of the Lopez Corporation again. Although she was a project director at East Star Enterprises, and her ID badge proudly displayed her affiliation, her new office was now situated within the imposing skyscraper.

Luckily for her, Austin had also been called back to the Lopez Corporation, so at least she had a familiar face in the new office.

While Dorothy was anything but thrilled about the move, Austin was on cloud nine. As soon as he spotted Dorothy in the waiting room of the Lopez Corporation, his face lit up like a Christmas tree, and he immediately launched into conversation,

"Last month, my horoscope said I'd hit the jackpot, and look at us now! Working at the Lopez Corporation is like striking gold. I never dared to dream it!" Austin was buzzing with excitement, looking around as if he was ready to snap a selfie with the legend himself at any moment.

To the uninitiated, Austin might have seemed like he was there to rub elbows with celebrities, not to clock in for a nine-to-five.

Of course, Dorothy understood the hype. Back in her days at the branch office of the Lopez Corporation, everyone was eager for a glimpse of the man, the myth, the legend—Everett.

She too had once been curious, but not anymore. She didn't want to and couldn't afford to think about it.

Austin, oblivious to the history between Dorothy and Everett, kept chattering away. "The Lopez Corporation's investment in

Everglow City must be part of some big takeover plan, right? It's all so sudden! They must have something up their sleeve."

Dorothy, not wanting to seem standoffish, humored him with a nod, pretending to ponder his theory. "Yeah, you might be onto something."

"Maybe they're after the talent at East Star Enterprises since none of us got the axe. We all just got absorbed into Lopez

Corp!TM

"Possibly"

"Anyway, no use guessing about that now! We're part of the Lopez Corporation, and I'm gonna roll up my sleeves and work my

tail off. Who knows, maybe I'll even get a chance to report directly to Mr. Lopez himself." After his spiel, noticing Dorothy's glazed

expression, Austin pulled out his phone, typed something, swiped a few times, and suddenly flipped the screen toward her.

"Don't tell me you've never seen a picture of Everett, the big boss of the Lopez Corporation. You're too calm about this!

Look! This is Everett. Handsome, right? Even as a guy, I can tell he's a knockout! His features are even more refined than Lane, that heartthrob!"

Before Dorothy could react, the image of Everett appeared in her sight, catching her completely off guard. She instinctively recoiled, "Uh, I've... I've seen his picture before."

"You're not swooning over him?"

Dorothy managed an awkward smile, "I'm... I'm married."

Austin nearly rolled his eyes. "Dorothy, you've got that love-struck look, always talking about being married. But honestly, even if you were single, it's not like you and Everett would ever mix."

No sooner had he spoken than a tall, imposing figure strode into the waiting room.

The man was dressed in a sleek black suit, exuding an air of nobility and gentlemanly charm.

Austin reached to nudge Dorothy, about to tell her that Everett, the man himself, had actually arrived, when Everett's voice preempted him.

Everett said, "Dorothy, to my office, please."

Chapter 417

Dropping a bombshell like that, Everett turned on his heel and left.

The rest of the work assignments were to be handled by the head of the HR department.

Dorothy hadn't expected Everett to call her out by name in public. Back when they were still married, he had never made such a display at the office. At most, he would wait for her after hours to head home together.

Today, he had marched into the waiting room and said her name aloud.

Wasn't that the same as announcing to everyone at East Star Enterprises that they shared an extraordinary connection? Had he lost his mind?

"Mr. Lopez... he just said your name, didn't he?"

Dorothy was stunned, and Austin was even more bewildered, almost thought

it was an illusion.

"It seemed like it..."

"Do you know him?" Austin's eyes widened in surprise.

"We went to the same middle school! Don't read too much into it, okay? I'll explain when I get back."

With that, Dorothy hurriedly got up and left the waiting room because it was too complicated to explain her relationship with Everett right now, especially not knowing what his intentions were with such a display.

It had been so long since she left the Lopez Corporation that Dorothy was surprised she still remembered the way to the CEO's office.

Her steps were hesitant; she didn't want to face Everett alone and was seriously considering turning around and running away.

She had reached the executive floor and was still debating the feasibility of escaping when she didn't want to step out of the elevator.

"Ms. Sanchez, there you are!"

Before she could make up her mind, Kevin had already spotted her.

So much for the plan.

Dorothy could only manage a strained smile, then hurried out of the elevator, pulling Kevin aside and whispering, "Did you tell him about me coming over the night he got drunk?"

"No way, I promised you I wouldn't tell and I meant it."

"Then what's up with Everett?"

His aggressive takeover of East Star Enterprises, announcing her name in front of a crowd... None of it was like Everett! Kevin shrugged helplessly and said, "I have no idea! When Mr. Lopez explained to the shareholders about the acquisition, he just said he did it because he wanted to, and that was that."

Dorothy was confused.

It couldn't be that in these four years, Everett hadn't become more composed and restrained, but instead had grown childish and capricious, right?

Honestly, with this series of actions, Dorothy was starting to wonder if Everett was possessed by Jeffrey!

"Ms. Sanchez, you're overthinking it. Mr. Lopez has his reasons for what he does."

"But my situation is different! You know my history with him, and now that Everett has a girlfriend, it's going to be awkward for me

at the Lopez Corporation!" She couldn't believe Everett hadn't thought of that! With a forced smile, Kevin asked, "What if... what if Mr. Lopez doesn't have a new girlfriend at all?"

"That can't be, he does." Dorothy had seen the bite marks on Everett's body herself.

And not just one, but several!

Those were clearly evidence of their intimate moments.

"Did Mr. Lopez tell you that himself?"

"No," but she had seen it with her own eyes.

"Then rumors are even less reliable!"

Dorothy frowned, unable to bring up the bite marks.

"Anyway, he definitely has someone. They're living together! Kevin, can you think of a way to transfer me out of the Lopez Corporation?"

Before Kevin could reply, Everett's voice suddenly boomed from above her.

"He can't do that"

Chapter 418

"Mr. Lopez, you're here! I'll leave you to it then."

"Sure."

Kevin caught sight of Everett, flashed him a grin, and gave Dorothy a little wave goodbye as he headed out.

Dorothy wished Kevin had taken her with him.

The executive floor was usually reserved for Everett and Kevin, and anyone else needed Everett's permission to come up, which meant Dorothy was on her own.

Instinctively, she took a step back to maintain a safe distance from Everett.

She didn't want anyone to get the wrong idea about her relationship with the CEO. Not just for the sake of her own reputation, but also to spare the feelings of Everett's current girlfriend.

Woman to woman, Dorothy figured if Everett's ex knew they were alone together, it would hurt her. Not that Dorothy knew who the "her" was.

"What are you dodging for?"

"Nothing"

Everett knew she was being stubborn, so he just raised an eyebrow and said, "Let's talk inside."

He strode toward his office, but when he didn't hear footsteps following, he paused.

"Can't we just talk here? There's nobody else around."

“Dorothy.” Everett turned around, standing under a spotlight that bathed him in a gentle glow, making his eyes like starlight.

For a moment, Dorothy looked lost in thought.

“Remember your place, Dorothy, or should I say. Ms, Sanchez?”
shimmer

As the project director, she shouldn’t be talking back to the CEO. He was reminding her that this was work and they were at the company.

Two heavy weights seemed to press down on her, leaving Dorothy with no choice but to comply.

She knew Everett was doing this on purpose.

Reluctantly, she followed Everett into his office. The door clicked shut behind them, and the room was as neat and orderly as it had been years before.

He preferred simplicity and cleanliness.

The documents on the desk were perfectly aligned, and even the pens were neatly placed.

Dorothy’s gaze inadvertently moved forward and caught sight of a framed photo!

It appeared to be a woman as Dorothy caught a glimpse of a skirt.

But before she could get a clearer view of the face, Everett stepped forward and flipped the frame face down on the desk.

“Ms. Sanchez, drop the Everglow City project. There’s a mall development in Eldoria City you’ll take over.”

Everett handed her a stack of documents from the pile on his desk.

“But my contract with East Star Enterprises was primarily for the Everglow City project.” Dorothy naturally didn’t want to switch projects.

Continuing with Everglow City meant she could use the project as an excuse to get away from town. But taking on Eldornia City meant she’d have to stay put.

“The agreement, Article Three, Section Two, states that the party shall comply with the company’s personnel arrangements.”

“There should be a valid reason for a transfer! I’ve been doing well with the Everglow City project”

“Doing well? How long have you been on leave?” Everett raised an eyebrow at her.

Well, well, Everett was waiting for Dorothy there, huh?

Dorothy wanted to kick herself.

Arguing with Everett was like digging her own grave. As the CEO, he could find a dozen “valid reasons” to transfer her without breaking a sweat.

“Everett! You’re doing this on purpose!”

Everett looked up behind the desk, his lips curving into a slight smile. “Ms. Sanchez, you should call me Mr. Lopez.”

Chapter 419

Dorothy was fuming, her usual filter gone in the heat of the moment as she snapped back, “It was you who insisted I shouldn’t call you Mr. Lopez!”

That comment hit Everett just as she intended.

“What was our relationship back then, and what is it now?”

“You...”

Everett sat there with a businesslike demeanor, as if the one causing a scene was Dorothy herself!

“Ms. Sanchez, we are discussing professional matters. If you have any personal issues you’d like to address with me, we can talk after hours.”

“I have nothing personal to discuss with you!” Dorothy glared at Everett, her words bitten off sharply, “Since the decision has already been made, why not just have HR inform me of my transfer? Dragging me to the CEO’s office like this is bound to cause misunderstanding, Mr. Lopez.”

She emphasized the last words with particular force.

Everett didn’t seem bothered. He just pursed his lips in a slight smile. “What kind of misunderstanding?”

Seeing him play dumb, Dorothy decided to lay it all out. “That you may have a secret crush on me!”

“Oh.” To her surprise, Everett suddenly stood from his chair, his long strides bringing him right up to her.

His towering height alone was enough to impose a heavy sense of pressure!

“Why are you getting so close to me?”

“I believe the matter you mentioned deserves some clarification.” Everett’s eyes locked onto her face, his voice deep and haunting, every word a deliberate hammer to her heart. “This is no misunderstanding.”

Dorothy waited for Everett to continue.

“I do have a crush on you. Haven’t you known that all along?”

Dorothy ran from the CEO's office in utter disarray.
Even in the elevator, she had to press a hand to her chest to remind herself she was still alive!
What had Everett just said?
She must be hallucinating. Yes, that had to be it!
"Hey! Ms. Sanchez!"
Just as the elevator reached the lobby, she ran into Austin, who was on his way out.
Dorothy felt as if her soul had left her body but stopped when he caught her arm.
"What's wrong with you?"
"Nothing, nothing at all."
Austin looked her up and down, raising an eyebrow. "What did Mr. Lopez say to you in private? Did he offer you a sweet deal?"
Ms. Sanchez, I've been good to you at East Star Enterprises. Don't forget about me if you've got promoted!"
Dorothy's face stiffened, at a loss for any response other than nodding.
"You could have told me you knew Mr. Lopez! I thought you'd never met him."
"We are not close... What's the point in mentioning it? It's just embarrassing myself, Dorothy tried her best to downplay any connection between them,
Thankfully, it seemed Austin wasn't reading too much into it
"Why so modest? Mr. Lopez came out to the waiting room for you. That means he values you! Ms. Sanchez, don't say I didn't warn you. With a connection like that, you should think about how to leverage it! The Lopez Corporation is a goldmine, and just a flick of Everett's pinky could set you up with a life of luxury, so don't be so naive!"
Austin thought Dorothy had been too stubborn when Lane showed interest, always harping on about being married, and now that Everett turned out to be an old friend of hers. With a possible link, she shouldn't waste such an opportunity!

Chapter 420

If it were anyone else, they'd have to land a fortune from Everett big enough to make a Rockefeller blush!
Austin wasn't just being a Good Samaritan when he nudged Dorothy to make use of her situation. A lot of it was him seeing a golden opportunity to get a foot in the door with Everett through her! Schmoozing a bit here and there, and who knows? He could be up in the high society ranks in no time.

Back at East Star Enterprises, Austin had made a pretty penny, but that money was pocket change compared to the wealth of the Lopez Corporation!

In case Everett saw his ability to work and appreciated him a little bit, how much would he earn in the future? Well, he didn't even dare to think about it!

"Hey, thanks for the heads-up, but I just want to make an honest buck without sucking up to the big boss, she said.

Truth be told, she wanted out of the Lopez Corporation if she could.

"Could you maybe, you know, get me some face time with Mr. Lopez?" Austin finally laid his cards on the table. Your help me now, and I swear I won't forget the favor if I strike it rich!"

Dorothy could only smile and nod. "Sure, if the opportunity arises."

Seeing her response, Austin didn't push further, just patted her on the shoulder to let her know she should seriously think it over.

Having survived the most awkward part of her day, Dorothy looked forward to diving into the project files that afternoon. Maybe she could get on-site the next day, avoiding bumping into Everett in the office. But no sooner had she settled into her new office than Kevin knocked on the door.

"Ms. Sanchez, Mr. Lopez wants you to join him for the afternoon."

Dorothy frowned, puzzled. "Why me?"

Kevin looked just as surprised. "Didn't Mr. Lopez tell you about handing over the project to you? This afternoon is with the head of the partnering company!

"He did, but why would he also go?" Dorothy glanced at the project, knowing it wasn't something that would typically involve Everett, the CEO.

Kevin pondered seriously before coming to a conclusion, "Maybe Mr. Lopez just wants to?"

After all, as CEO, he did as he pleased. Nobody dared to question his decisions!

"Buying out East Star Enterprises was his wish, and now dragging me to talk projects is also his wish? Kevin, that's a bit far-fetched! Who would believe that?"

But Kevin just shrugged helplessly.

"I'm just the messenger, Ms. Sanchez! Maybe... you could ask Mr. Lopez yourself 'm his office. I bet he'd be happy to answer."

Dorothy was at her wit's end, standing up to face Kevin with a look of distress,

"Kevin, he and I are divorced. Any further entanglement is no good for anyone! I know you carry weight in Everett's eyes, so please talk to him for me!"

To her, Everett seemed intent on petty revenge, like a child throwing a tantrum. And it was a child's game she didn't want to play.

"If I could've talked sense into him, things wouldn't be as they are four years later, Kevin spoke with a seriousness that carried weight.

He had once thought Dorothy was the villain in the story and had sincerely advised Everett to let go.

But it was to no avail.

How many times had Everett vowed to move on?

Yet here he was, still at square one.

The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires #Chapter 421 - Read The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires Chapter 421

Chapter 421

Dorothy was on pins and needles, feeling every breath she took in the Lopez Corporation was laced with danger.

"He's announced marriage, for crying out loud! How can Everett justify this to his wife?"

"Why don't you take that up with Mr. Lopez yourself?"

What could Kevin possibly say? Mr. Lopez wasn't one to take kindly to loose talk

"Forget it, I won't press you" Dorothy's shoulders slumped in resignation.

"Thanks anyway, Kevin."

"Don't mention it." Kevin offered a reassuring smile before glancing at his watch. "Mr. Lopez should be out of his meeting in about an hour. Just wait for him in his designated parking spot."

"Just text me the location, I'll find my own way there!" The further she could stay from Everett, the better.

"Oh, come on, Ms. Sanchez, what's the point of all this squirming? Maybe Mr. Lopez just wants to discuss work with you. By resisting, you're just making it awkward for everyone. Unless... you've got other things on your mind."

Dorothy didn't answer.

Kevin was almost out the door when he paused, as if struck by an

afterthought. "Actually, there's something else I might say."

"Go ahead, Kevin."

"Remember what you told me back at the Bay Residence? Maybe you should try telling Mr. Lopez. Who knows... maybe you're the one he's chosen."

Dorothy was taken aback, her gaze falling silently to the floor.

Kevin sighed before finally leaving her office.

Once the door clicked shut, Dorothy whispered to the empty room, "And what if I'm not the one he chooses?"

She couldn't bet on Everett standing by her side against his own mother, especially not to the point of sending his mom to jail!

After all, if she had to choose between Everett and her mother Bella, she knew she wouldn't be able to do it either.

An hour later, Dorothy found herself in the CEO's private parking spot.

Maybe, just like Kevin said, she needed to be more open. Just consider Everett as a new boss and nothing more.

And tonight, she'd draft her resignation letter, hand it in tomorrow, and after a six-month notice period, she could leave the Lopez

Corporation behind. She was no match for him; she had to play by the rules.

Lost in her thoughts, she suddenly heard footsteps behind her.

Her body stiffened involuntarily as if she'd been plastered in place.

In sharp contrast to her tension, Everett maintained his impeccable CEO demeanor, approaching with long, confident strides.

"Get in the car," he commanded.

"Okay," she complied without argument.

The silence in the car was so profound that Dorothy found herself counting Everett's breaths.

Then, abruptly, he broke the quiet.

"Have you reviewed the project materials?"

"Yes, but I didn't have much time to go through them thoroughly"

"Just get the gist of it for now. Take them home tonight and look them over in detail."

She nodded and looked out the window, only to realize they were on the road to Bay Residence.

15:21

"Aren't we supposed to meet with the head of the partner company?"

Why were they heading to his house?

Everett caught her eye in the rear view mirror, his voice calm. "I need to stop

by Bay Residence to sort out my son's lunch, and then we'll head to the meeting."

His son?

He must mean Langston!

hast as she n

Dorothy's heart skipped a beat as she realized she was facing Everett's first test.

Chapter 422

Dorothy knew that Everett's insistence on having her return to the Lopez Corporation was a setup—a chess move in his grand strategy. And sure enough, barely a day back and he was already itching to introduce her to Langston, and then he would find out what was going on!

As Dorothy pieced this together, she reminded herself to tread carefully around this man. Traps could lurk in the most innocuous of places.

She hoped that when she did see Langston, nothing would give them away. Deep down, though, she yearned to see her son, to know how he was doing.

"You don't seem surprised about my having a son, Everett suddenly said, breaking into her thoughts

Dorothy snapped back to the present, shrugged nonchalantly, and said, "Should I be? We've been divorced for over four years.

You're a grown man, so remarrying and having kids is hardly unusual."

"announced my marriage this year."

"Oh, well then, congratulations!"

She had zero interest in prolonging this conversation.

And she certainly didn't want to dive into a chat about Everett's new bride, which would only remind her of the bite marks she had seen on his shoulder!

"I thought you'd be curious about my marriage."

With a practiced professional smile, Dorothy deflected, "Mr. Lopez, we're here on business. This isn't the time to discuss your wife, I still have a mountain of paperwork to get through. Let's meet the project manager sooner, so I can get back to the office and finish my other work.

Everett didn't push her. With a slight nod, he continued driving towards Bay Residence.

Soon, they arrived outside his home.

Dorothy was all too familiar with the place, having just been there a few days ago.

Everett got out first, then came around to open the car door for her.

Hesitating, Dorothy said, "Do I really need to come in? If you've arranged for your son to be taken care of, can't we just head out?"

"Considering his nutritional needs, I prefer to cook myself. You haven't had lunch, right? Join us."

Quickly, she waved him off, "No, that's fine! You're married, I'm married—it's not appropriate for us to have lunch together."

"It's precisely because we're both married that there's nothing to be concerned about."

Dorothy was speechless.

Everett had a way of making the odd sound reasonable, leaving her at a loss for a comeback.

As she was debating whether to get out of the car or not, her phone inside her bag rang.

It was Kenneth calling!

The name 'Kenneth' was large enough for Everett to see.

Dorothy quickly got out of the car and walked to the side to answer the call.

"Hello... Yes, I'm at work... No, I haven't forgotten, you'll pick me up after and we'll go together! Yes, see you tonight!"

After hanging up, she looked up to find Everett's eyes fixed on her clearly displeased.

Hadn't he left?

Was he just standing there, eavesdropping on her call?

1/2

1571

Dorothy pursed her lips, preparing to confront him about his invasion of privacy, but Everett beat her to it.

"Kenneth is picking you up after work tonight, right?"

"Yes,"

"What are you two up to this evening?"

He was like an interrogator grilling a suspect, his gaze sharp and ominous.

But she hadn't done anything wrong! Why was she being questioned like this?

"Mr. Lopez, do I need to report my after-hours activities to you? I already said it's after work, so it has nothing to do with my job!"

"Dorothy!"

"So, Mr. Lopez, you can spend your evenings nibbling and biting whoever you please, and I'm supposed to devote myself solely

to work?”

At the mention of biting, Everett's eyes abruptly stilled, then narrowed. “You saw my shoulder?”

Chapter 423

“I... I have no idea what you're talking about!” Dorothy stammered, her gaze dorting away from Everett's Intense scrutiny.

Everett leaned in, his handsome face inches away from hers. “Then what exactly do you mean by ‘nibbling and biting’?”

Trying to feign composure, Dorothy averted her eyes. “Mr. Lopez, surely your marriage isn't a celibate one. We're both adults here, so there's no need to play coy.”

“Heh.” Everett's gaze lingered, and suddenly, he let out a chuckle. “You're blushing”

Dorothy was at a loss for words

Looking at the man before her, she felt as if she didn't recognize him anymore!

Since when had Everett become such a rogue?

“Come on, we've already got out of the car. Let's go inside and grab a bite to eat.

Without waiting for her response, Everett walked off, leaving Dorothy no choice but to follow.

All she could hope for was that Langston wouldn't make it too obvious when he saw her.

As the front door swung open, the first thing Dorothy saw was Langston sprawled on the couch, fiddling with his laptop. well aware that his “lunch” had arrived. Shuffling in his slippers toward the entrance, he was about to greet Everett when he caught sight of the two familiar figures.

Dorothy, spotting Langston, quickly shot him a warning glance.

Fortunately, Everett didn't linger in the hallway but strode straight to the kitchen, leaving Dorothy and Langston a moment alone.

But even then, Dorothy couldn't let her guard down.

“Hey there, kiddo.” She crouched down and shook Langston's hand as if they were meeting for the first time.

Langston couldn't help but cringe at her act. It was comically awkward.

He glanced towards the kitchen and sighed, “Mom, you don't have to worry. We don't have any cameras in here.”

Smart as he was, Langston knew exactly what Dorothy was concerned about.

"You sure? Dorothy raised an eyebrow, her eyes scanning the surroundings. She feared that Everett might have installed cameras just to test her.

"Trust me, if there were cameras, I'd know. Langston cocked his head, "Are you here to take me away?"

"No, Everett brought me here on purpose to test my relationship with you."

"Oh..." Langston's eyes twinkled with a scheme. "Then I'll just say I hate you and don't want you near me. He won't bring you here again."

Dorothy thought it over and nodded, "Good idea!"

But after a second thought, something didn't sit right with her. "Wait, you seem... really close to him!"

Since she had walked into the Bay Residence, Dorothy hadn't sensed any hint of the supposed vengeance between Langston and Everett.

They seemed to get along quite well!

Everett had even come home at noon to cook for Langston. And Langston didn't seem surprised at all, suggesting it wasn't a one-off but a regular occurrence.

Langston paused, then whispered sheepishly. "His cooking is so good! He also teaches me about computer networks! I've decided to postpone my revenge."

1001

Dorothy frowned in exasperation, "Langston, do you have any idea how worried we've been about you?"

"Don't worry about me. Look, I'm doing great here!"

Before Dorothy could say another word, Everett came out from the kitchen.

Caught off guard. Langston was the first to speak up. "I don't like her! Can you just make her leave?"

Everett glanced over, wiping his hands on a dish towel, raising an eyebrow.

"Langston, Auntie Dorothy is just here for a meal."

"Well I don't want her here! If she stays, I'm not eating!"

Langston had a flair for the dramatic, and his disgruntled demeanor was so convincing it seemed he might throw a tantrum at any second.

Chapter 424

Dorothy couldn't lag behind when she saw Langston muster up his confidence like that, so she quickly said, "Mr. Lopez, I just wait outside for you, then! We wouldn't want to disappoint the little guy."

She had expected Everett to show some sort of reaction, but he simply nodded. "Sure."

Dorothy stepped out of the Bay Residence, her mind racing with doubts about Everett's strange demeanor, but she couldn't quite put her finger on what was off!

Wasn't the whole point of bringing her here to meet Langston to test her? Yet, he didn't seem to do anything suspicious. In fact, he went straight to the kitchen to cook as soon as they got home!

What hidden trap had she failed to detect?

With a heart full of unease, Dorothy waited in the car for a while until she saw Everett come out from the house with a paper bag in hand.

Once in the car, he handed the bag to her.

"Got you some takeout."

"It's okay I can skip a meal. I'll eat after work!"

Everett glanced at her, his lips barely moving. "You need to work overtime tonight. Triple pay."

The mention of overtime had her protesting in an instant, "I can't tonight; I've got plans!"

Kenneth had finally secured her a meeting with Byte 7, and she couldn't miss it.

But Everett wasn't asking, he was informing

"Dorothy, it's a new project you've just taken on, overtime is to be expected. Be professional."

"Can't it wait until tomorrow? Any time, late, whatever, just not today, I have plans with Kenneth..."

"No." His response was sharp, leaving no room for discussion.

Dorothy's brow furrowed, sensing that he was deliberately making things difficult for her.

Ever since the acquisition of East Star Enterprises, it seemed like he was set on getting back at her!

"Mr. Lopez, even if you want me to work overtime, you should at least consider your employee's opinion. And with such short notice, I have the right to refuse."

"You can certainly refuse. I have plenty of other ways to make him disappear from Eldoria City"

Everett delivered this threat with a gentlemanly poise that almost disguised its menacing undertone.

Dorothy, however, knew exactly what he meant and who he was referring to.

"Don't you dare touch Kenneth!"

Everett's gaze darkened in the rear-view mirror

"On what grounds do you make that demand?"

Dorothy's mind raced for the right words, but she eventually realized she had to tear down the wall of pretense between them.

"We've both moved on with our lives/ What's the point of doing this?"

Everett remained silent, just staring at her through the mirror,

After a long pause. Everett let out a barely audible sigh.

"Dorothy, I never married anyone else. All these years, I've been waiting right here."

He had tried many times to move on, to forget Dorothy, to let go of the past, but every time he tried, he realized he couldn't do it.

15:21

He'd rather be trapped in a hopeless wait than convince himself to move on.

Dorothy was astonished.

Maybe, had she heard these words earlier, she would have believed them without hesitation.

But after witnessing the ambiguous traces on him, she was skeptical.

He must have a
another woman!

The kind he shared a bed with, intimately!

So after a few seconds of shock, she let out a laugh, "Mr. Lopez, it seems you have learned the art of sweet-talking women with lies after all these years."

Chapter 425

Everett furrowed his brows, turning around to lock eyes with her, their gazes ensnaring each other in a silent battle.

"I haven't lied to you"

His gaze was fiery, laden with a sincerity that seemed to threaten to pull Dorothy into its depths entirely!

Now she regretted bringing up such matters with Everett. It was she who found herself unable to end the conversation. Clearing her throat with feigned composure, Dorothy averted her eyes. "Mr. Lopez, let's stick to business, shall we?"

"Sure, business," Everett responded. "You're working late today."

"Everett..."

Annoyance clenched at Dorothy's teeth, "What exactly are you playing at?

When we divorced, you said that you hated me. What

now? Has the mighty Mr. Lopez decided to go back on his word? After being dumped by me once, are you really going to

shamelessly chase after me again?”

Perhaps her words were too harsh, as Everett’s handsome face paled slightly, a flicker of rationality returning to his eyes.

He had been thrown off balance by a call from Kenneth.

Hearing Dorothy speak so affectionately about Kenneth coming to pick her up after work had sent a surge of jealousy through his entire being, overwhelming all his thoughts!

Taking a deep breath, Everett turned back to his seat, his posture rigid.

In an instant, he seemed to revert to the Everett Dorothy knew – aloof, reticent, and untouchable.

He didn’t respond to Dorothy’s questions, instead silently driving towards the meeting place they had arranged with their business partners.

Throughout the meeting, he acted very professionally. From negotiation to finalizing the deal, and even when dropping Dorothy off at her office, he spared her not a single extra glance.

It was as though they had reverted to square one.

He was the CEO, and she was just a lowly assistant.

After spilling her heart out, Dorothy was naturally in turmoil.

She knew Everett wasn’t a womanizer, that... perhaps it was just a physical craving. But even though Everett hadn’t remarried, nor loved another, did that mean the barriers between them had dissipated? No.

Everett hadn’t moved on because he didn’t know that for all these years, her energy had been focused on getting his mother in jail!

No, maybe not just his mother, but his father and everyone who had aided Heather!

She wouldn’t let any of them off the hook.

Everett had promised Langston a visit to the hospital to see Jeffrey.

So once he wrapped up his company affairs, he headed back to Bay Residence to pick him up.

Once in the car, Langston was engrossed in his phone, a jumble of code refreshing on the screen every few seconds.

Everett knew this was undoubtedly a new virus concocted by his tech-savvy son.

As they neared the hospital, Langston finally set aside his phone, leaning forward in the passenger seat.

“Something’s off! You’re off!”

15.22

Everett spared him a glance, “Hmm?”

“Why’d you suddenly bring that lady over today? You never bring anyone home.”

Langston had sensed something amiss too.

If it was a test of some sort, why was Everett acting so nonchalant?

There was no follow-up whatsoever!

“Langston, it’s not the first time you’ve met her, is it? Confronted so directly, Everett no longer played coy, “You think your acting’s good, don’t you?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

“Let’s make it plain then. I suspect Dorothy is your mother.”

Langston felt his heart stop! He instinctively denied it.

“That’s not true!”

“Langston, she left me. I had no idea you existed.”

Chapter 426

Everett’s voice came a hint of defeat, a stark contrast to his usual assertive demeanor. Seeing him this way. Langston couldn’t help but feel a pang of discomfort. After a moment’s thought, he reached out his small hand and gently wrapped his fingers around his.

Everett suddenly looked up, locking eyes with him

What did this gesture mean? It was an acknowledgment of the words he had just said.

As Everett began to speak, his throat tightened, his voice quivering with emotion. “She... she’s really your mom, isn’t she?”

Langston instinctively wanted to feign ignorance, but after spending these past days together, he knew all too well that his so called acting skills were no match for Everett’s sharp perception. The look of loss in Everett’s eyes, the sorrow in his words—they didn’t seem feigned.

So after a few seconds of contemplation, Langston gave up the charade

“Just... promise me you won’t tell her I said anything.”

Everett froze, even though he had suspected Dorothy all along, the confirmation of the truth left him speechless with shock.

Dorothy had a child with him. No, not just one!

“You have a sister too, right? Is she my child as well?”

Langston nodded vigorously. “Of course! Mom doesn’t have a boyfriend! It’s just that my sister doesn’t look as much like you”

“And Kenneth?”

“Kenneth is just a friend of Mom’s. They hardly ever meet, blurted Langston, unaware of the gravity of his words. Having said it all, he quickly added, “You have to promise me, you absolutely cannot let my mom know that I told you! She would be furious!”

Langston remembered his mother’s repeated warnings to keep this secret. Seeing Everett still in a state of shock, Langston gave him a nudge. “Don’t rat me out. You figured this out on your own, not from me!” Everett covered his heart with his hand, slowly nodding.

“Okay, I won’t tell.”

“Jeez, when did I get on your side? Langston muttered, puzzled, but he seized the opportunity to make a request. “I helped you out today, so you gotta teach me virtual programming tonight! I want to know how you set up the firewall for the Lopez Corporation!”

“Alright... alright... I teach you” Everett agreed, nodding slightly, trying to maintain composure in front of his son.

But the hand that remained over his heart betrayed his current state of excitement, disbelief, and overwhelming shock.

It had been so long since he had felt this way, his mind a complete blank. Everett even had to pull over to the side of the road, his trembling hands unable to control the steering wheel any longer.

It was true. His suspicions were confirmed.

Dorothy, so adamant about the divorce, had given birth to two children after they parted ways!

She certainly didn’t love Kenneth. She had lied to him!

But why?

Why did she make that choice?

Back then, he had truly believed Dorothy wanted to be with Kenneth. He agreed to the divorce simply to make her happy.

But now, it seemed the story of their past was far more complicated than a simple love triangle.

It took him a while to compose himself before he called Kevin, “Look into the real reason behind Dorothy’s mother’s death, and focus on Heather”

Chapter 427

Ever since he found out about Dorothy’s mother’s death, he hadn’t dug any deeper, believing that Dorothy and Kenneth were the golden couple, living their picture perfect life. He felt like an outsider, an

intruder, and he was sure that butting in would only make Dorothy despise him!

At the time, he truly wanted to move to start afresh, and to say a final goodbye to what was

With that in mind. Everett didn't order any further investigation.

But boy, had he been wrong, spectacularly wrong!

He had taken 99 steps towards Dorothy, only to halt at the very last one!

Meanwhile, Dorothy, oblivious to all this, was busy compiling her reports, her mind set on meeting with Kenneth after work to

track down the elusive cyber wizard known as Byte

couldn't miss

After all, snagging a meeting with this shadowy hacker was a chance she wouldn't miss.

Even if Everett docked her a month's pay, it wouldn't matter, she had to go today.

Four long years!

She had scrimped and saved, begged and pleaded to get in touch with Byte 7, and now, four years later, she was on the brink of

unraveling the truth behind her mother's death. She knew she had just one shot at this and there was no room for error. She

couldn't afford to give Heather or Everett's parents a moment's respite.

If they caught a whiff of her plan, destroying the evidence or silencing her for good would be all too easy

She had gone through hell and high water to retrieve that formatted surveillance hard drive!

It was the only lead that might reveal the identity of the killer.

On this matter, she couldn't even trust Everett.

The minutes ticked by until it was finally time to clock out

Fearing Everett might try to stop her, Dorothy didn't waste a second. She grabbed her purse and left the office.

Kenneth was already waiting downstairs. He rolled down his window and waved frantically at her as she approached.

Clutching the purse that held the hard drive, she quickened her pace.

But suddenly, a strong force gripped her shoulder from behind, rooting her to the spot!

Kenneth, who had been in the car, saw who it was and his face went pale. It was Everett.

That familiar presence – Dorothy didn't even need to turn around to know who stood behind her.

Panic surged through her with the fear of losing the hard drive.

"You're working overtime today. You can't leave. Everett's voice boomed from above.

Dorothy tilted her head back to meet his deep eyes.

"I already told you, I can't work late tonight."

"Then you're not leaving with him either Everett's tone was unusually commanding, brooking no dissent.

Dorothy struggled, but she couldn't break free from his grip..

"I have the right to choose who I spend my time with after hours!"

Across the street, Kenneth had gotten out of the car and started heading their way.

Just as Dorothy was about to lash out, Everett's hands suddenly cradled her face, and his lips crashed down on hers!

The kiss was intense from the start, devoid of any tenderness, his hot tongue wildly claiming her, as if trying to steal away all her breath

It was less of a kiss and more of a punishment.

It was unclear whether it was meant to punish her or himself.

Dorothy was stunned for only a second before she began to push him away with all her might, but to no avail. Everett's towering and muscular frame was unmoved by her feeble efforts.

"Mmmh... Mmm! Everett, stop...!"

When her attempts to fight proved futile, she bit down hard on his lip in desperation.

Soon, the taste of blood filled her mouth.

Chapter 428

Despite her reservations, Dorothy couldn't bring herself to bite again after tasting blood. She was left struggling, not having the heart to bite again.

It wasn't until Kenneth strode over from across the way and punched Everett's shoulder that the two were finally separated!

Everett staggered back a few steps, while Kenneth, his face flushed with rage, was ready to punch him again, completely devoid of

reason!

Seeing this, Dorothy quickly intervened.

"Kenneth, stop! Don't hit him!"

Kenneth managed to halt his fist in time, looking up at Dorothy.

Her lips were flushed red after the kiss, with faint traces of blood still visible, evidence of Everett's intense passion!

It was clear that this had been a show for Kenneth.

“Dorothy, he’s bullying you!”

“No, that’s not it! Kenneth, please go back to the car, I’ll come to you in a bit!”

Dorothy certainly didn’t want the two men to come to blows! After all, Kenneth was no match for Everett. Whether it strength or social standing.

“Dorothy!”

Kenneth, frustrated, glanced towards Everett who was not too far away.

I was physical

Everett, his long fingers wiping the blood from his lips, locked eyes with him, his gaze defiant and thumphant, like a victor assured of his win!

“Kenneth, let me handle this, okay? We’ve got our appointment with Byte 7 today. We can’t miss out on important stuff! We’ll talk about this later!”

Dorothy dreaded the thought of their meeting being delayed because of this confrontation, and she feared that Everett might harm Kenneth

After all, this was in front of the Lopez Building in Eldoria City, Everett’s domain.

Kenneth was grinding his teeth in anger, but ultimately, he could do nothing but turn around and storm back to his car.

However, he didn’t leave; the car remained parked there.

Once she confirmed Kenneth was gone, Dorothy turned back to Everett, frowning in disapproval.

“What are you trying to do? This is harassment!”

“Why don’t you call the cops then, have me arrested.” Everett’s lips, broken by Dorothy’s bite, continued to bleed, and with a cocky tilt of his mouth matched with a neatly tailored suit, he looked every part of the unhinged CEO.

Dorothy was speechless; even now, he was still smiling!

“You really think I won’t?”

“Yeah, you won’t.” Everett’s tone was certain, his eyes never leaving her face. Faced with Everett’s shamelessness, Dorothy felt both unfamiliar and helpless. In the end, she could only resort to her last-ditch threats, which had worked earlier in the day to free herself. “Mr. Lopez, don’t tell me you think this will make me worry about you.

I urged Kenneth to leave because I was afraid you’d hurt him, not because.....”

“If you didn’t care, why didn’t you let Kenneth continue?” Everett cut her off and started closing the distance with long strides,

cornering her. "Dorothy, you couldn't even bring yourself to bite me a second time!"

Her deepest feelings were exposed, and her face stiffened

"Dorothy." Everett closed the gap quickly, backing Dorothy into a light corner, forcing her to look at him. "Tell me what really happened back then. I want to know the truth."

Dorothy didn't want to look at him, because in front of Everett, it seemed all her emotions were impossible to hide!

But Everett lifted his hand, holding her chin firmly, refusing to let her look away.

"Dorothy, tell me, whatever it is, we'll face it together."

He had said those words before.

Chapter 429

Dorothy remembered the last time she heard Everett speak with such tenderness; it was because Bella insisted on taking her boyfriend to the hospital.

Back then, his tone was just like it is now—gentle, affectionate, as if he wished he could drown her in his love.

Unfortunately, she hadn't believed in his declarations of love back then.

As for the second time, she couldn't even trust that he would betray his own kin.

"Everett, you wouldn't want to know the truth."

"No, I do." Everett cradled her face as if holding a precious gem, his gaze resolute, "Dorothy, tell me."

He was tired of being pushed away whenever trouble brewed, of having to investigate on his own. He wanted to be Dorothy's

rock, to have her confide in him, share her grievances, bitterness, and rage, and then face it all together.

As Dorothy's mind raced through countless possibilities, she suddenly snapped back to reality and shoved Everett hard.

"The truth is I despise you, and I despise your entire family, I want you to stay away from me! I've fallen for Kenneth and.."

Her words were cut off as Everett's kiss swallowed the rest of her sentence.

But this kiss wasn't as fierce as the last

Once Everett breached her defenses, his tongue began to gently draw out the sweetness of her, carefully tracing every contour of her mouth.

Today's Everett was extraordinarily off-kilter, Dorothy didn't know what he had gone through.

After a few futile attempts to break free, she slapped Everett across the face. A red mark instantly appeared on his handsome cheek.

"Have
you

lost your mind?

"Yes, I've gone mad" Even he didn't understand what he was doing. He hadn't just lost it today: he'd been mad since the day they divorced.

Otherwise, how could he be compelled to obsessively track down news about her, repeatedly urging himself to let go of the past, to release Dorothy from his thoughts? Yet, at the slightest rustle, his heart would resurrect, impossible to extinguish.

Dorothy's name was etched into his DNA, unalterable.

How could Everett not feel shame? He had always been the golden boy, the focal point of adoration wherever he went!

Confronted with her indifference and the harsh words that fell from her lips time and time again, he felt hurt and discomfort. Yet,

he found himself drawn to her like a moth to a flame

Heaven knows how elated he was when he confirmed that Langston was the child Dorothy had borne for him.

He wanted to confront her immediately, demand to know why she'd been so cruel as to keep it from him, why she lied!

But he said nothing, choosing instead to continue the charade with Dorothy.

Now that he had maneuvered her back into his life, he couldn't let her slip away again.

"Let me go, I have to leave!" Dorothy didn't want to tangle with him anymore; she had more pressing matters today.

But after just a few steps, Everett's icy voice reached her from behind.

"I've already invited the person you were planning to meet with Kenneth for a chat."

Dorothy froze, then slowly turned around, "You've been investigating Kenneth?"

"Indeed." Everett admitted without hesitation

If he could ruthlessly deal with a Lane, what made Kenneth any different?

"Everett, I need to see Byte 71 It's vitally important!" Dorothy wouldn't let go of even a sliver of hope.

"If I'm in a good mood, maybe I'll consider letting you meet him."

Dorothy clenched her teeth, "And what will put you in a good mood?"

"Come back to Bay Residence with me."

Chapter 430

The phrase was so easily misconstrued, it was almost comical.

Dorothy's eyes suddenly filled with caution, and Everett's voice softened, shedding his wild persona and reverting back to his usual Suave self.

"Just for dinner."

"And you'll take me to see Byte 7 after?"

"Yes."

Dorothy didn't have much of a choice at this point.

She crossed the street and approached Kenneth's car, tapping lightly on the window.

Before she could speak, Kenneth blurted out in panic, "Dorothy, I can't get a hold of Byte 7 anymore!"

"Everett look him."

"Then I'll go find Everett!"

Dorothy quickly intervened, "He's on edge right now; don't provoke him! Going head to head with Everett is not a smart move.

You should head back for now, and I handle him,"

"Are you asking me to leave you alone with Everett? Just a moment ago, he was..

"Kenneth, I'm so close to the truth! I can't afford any mishaps

"But if Everett discovers the true reason behind your search for Byte 7, he might intercept any evidence! Are you counting on him choosing you over his parents?"

Of course not.

Even Dorothy understood Everett would protect his parents first and foremost. His mother was seriously ill; sending her to prison would be like a death sentence.

"That's why I need to placate Everett, to find a chance to contact Byte 7 alone, out of his watchful eye! I fear we might never get this opportunity again."

Her rationale was always persuasive, leaving Kenneth at a loss for words.

"Dorothy, I'm worried he might force you!"

"He said it's just to have dinner with him."

"Do you believe him?"

Dorothy nodded, "I do. He's never lied to me."

As Kenneth's car drove away and out of sight, Dorothy turned back around, Everett was still there, waiting, but now with a lit cigarette in his hand.

The slap mark on his face had faded somewhat, and the blood on his lips had clotted. His usually immaculate hair was slightly

disheveled, a departure from his cool, aloof Mr. Lopez persona. Everett had taken off his suit jacket, casually draping it over his arm. Even in this somewhat ragged state, he carried the air of a privileged aristocrat.

His gaze had never left Dorothy, tracking her as king her as she walked to Kenneth's car and back again. His lips curved slightly, reopening the fresh wound, and blood seeped out once more.

"Let's go." Dorothy kept her head down, trying not to let him read her thoughts, but after a few steps, she couldn't resist pulling out a tissue from her bag and offering it to him. "Wipe it off."

Everett chuckled, casually wiping his lip with his finger, "No need. I was hoping you'd bite harder."

He wished the wound would last a bit longer, savoring the memory of today's kiss.

"Are you sick or something?"

His eyes lowered, "Perhaps I do need to see a doctor"

He was afflicted with a severe case of lovesickness.

Dorothy was at a loss for words, "Everett, don't think playing the martyr will stop me from holding you accountable! If you try anything..... with me again, I bite you just as hard"

Everett paused with the cigarette dangling from his hand and looked up. His captivating gaze appeared almost as if it intended to swallow her whole.

"Really?"

The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires #Chapter 431 - Read The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires Chapter 431

Chapter 431

"Everett, cut the crap!"

The man on the receiving end of the scolding just shrugged nonchalantly, pinching out the last embers of his cigarette.

"I'm just weighing my options here, seeing if a peck on the cheek is worth getting bitten."

Dorothy pretended she hadn't heard his blasphemous remark and kept her gaze fixed firmly on the pavement ahead.

But Everett had a dead-serious look on his face, as if he were negotiating the finer points of a business deal. Is there a limit to

the number of kisses per day?”

Dorothy struggled for a response.

She was convinced that Everett was possessed or something

The news of Dorothy returning to work at Lopez Corporation spread quickly, reaching Heather’s ears as she clocked out from the legal department

Heather was rooted to the spot, her mind racing. As soon as she heard the news, she knew that Everett never had a new bride;

there was only ever Dorothy, his lingering old flame!

She hadn’t even sorted things out with Jeffrey, and now there was a new complication.

In the midst of her irritation, her phone suddenly rang.

A strange number flashed on the screen.

Heather was tempted to ignore it, but worried it might be critical information from the other side, unsuitable for the regular contact number

Moreover as it was her personal phone and outside of working hours, she didn’t think it would be unacceptable to answer the call.

Hesitating for a moment, she finally pressed the answer button.

A male voice came from the other end, “Is this Heather Garcia?”

“Yes, it’s me. Who is this?”

“My name is Lane, from East Star Enterprises.”

Heather’s brow furrowed in annoyance. She didn’t know the man, but she was familiar with East Star Enterprises—that was the company Dorothy worked at! Everett suddenly wanting to buy it out was undoubtedly for that wornan,

“How did you get my number? And what do you want?”

She had to be cautious; her position was precarious, and for all she knew this caller could be investigating her.

“Of course, I’ve got a proposition! Do you have time for a face-to-face meeting?”

“Sorry, I’m not available for a meeting in person. Let’s talk over the phone.”

“I got your number from Jeffrey’s phone! There’s no need to question my motives; it’s just to discuss some collaborative matters with you!” Lane chuckled lightly on the other end. “Maybe I didn’t explain myself properly... Well, I’m interested in Dorothy. I want to win her over.”

Heather was taken aback, her grip tightening on the phone, “And what does

that have to do with me?"

"If Everett reconciles with Dorothy, I'd be left out in the cold, wouldn't I? And I'm sure you wouldn't want to see that happen either.

Of course, she wouldn't want to

But she couldn't reveal it to anyone else.

I'm a friend of Everett's. If he's happy with Dorothy, why wouldn't I want to see that?"

"Ms. Garcia, let's just be frank! In a way, we're on the same side. I want Dorothy, and you want Everell. We could work together,"

Lane paused, then continued, "You don't have to pretend with me. I'm sure you understand the nature of Everett and Dorothy's relationship better than anyone. Without you, it would be quite difficult for me to split them up, and without me, you'd also have a hard time."

Heather laughed, maintaining her facade, "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Dorothy had a daughter for him after their divorce! Just imagine what would happen if Everett found out"

"What?! Dorothy had a child with Everett!

"I can show you pictures of the child, but I think we need to meet face-to-face. What do you say?"

"Send me the location."

Chapter 432

Dorothy followed behind Everett, entering his car with the assumption that he was going to the restaurant for takeout. To her surprise, he headed straight to the local grocery store.

As the car came to a halt, he hopped out, swiftly opening the rear door.

"Come on."

"I'd rather not. Either you go shop, or you tell me what to get, and I'll go myself
Dorothy protested, reluctant to be seen with him
in public outside of work.

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Being recognized or caught by the paparazzi would be a nightmare. She was no celebrity, but Everett certainly was!

"I can't carry it all by myself, and don't worry, there won't be any sneaky cameras here" Everett said as if he could read her mind!

With that, Dorothy reluctantly got out of the car.

Once inside the supermarket. Everett grabbed a shopping cart and led the

way

Dorothy watched his figure from behind, her heart filled with a bittersweet feeling.

If it weren't for all that had happened, they could have been the perfect loving couple, with Everett being an exemplary husband.

By day, he was a titan of the business world at the helm of Lopez Corporation, every decision weighed with precision, influencing not just the company but the future of the entire industry.

But after hours, here he was, sleeves rolled up, pushing a shopping cart along the supermarket aisles, bending down to carefully select fruits and vegetables, disarmingly gentle.

If only if could change reality.

"Hey there, could you please prep this fish for me?" Everett paused, indicating the freshly weighed fish to the seafood counter attendant

After giving the instructions, he glanced sideways at Dorothy, who was still lost in thought, and his lips curved into a slight smile.

"Langston adores this, never leaves any behind."

Dorothy didn't know what to say.

"If you have any favorites, feel free to let me know." Everett said, his gaze fixed on her face, causing Dorothy's cheeks to burn.

She just wanted to escape the range of his gaze. The farther away from him, the better!

"No, I'm not picky about food."

As long as she could see Byte 7 after dinner!

While they were talking, her phone rang. It was Kenneth, obviously worried about her.

Of course, Everett noticed the caller ID, and his eyes immediately veiled with a cold intensity, despite being well aware that there was nothing between Dorothy and Kenneth.

"Hello. Yeah, I'm fine! You should head to bed early, I'll talk to you tomorrow. Okay- yeah, bye."

Dorothy kept pace with Everett as she spoke on the phone, and after hanging up, she realized her hand had somehow found its way into Everett's!

Their linked hands had attracted curious glances from the people around them.

Instinctively. Dorothy tried to pull away.

But Everett lightened his grip, his handsome face turning to her with a serious tone. "I'm afraid you'll lose your way."

"Let go of me

"Dorothy, if you happen to get lost here, I won't have time to search the entire store for you, so be good."

She wasn't buying his pretense of a reason, struggling subtly against his hold. But the more Dorothy struggled, the tighter Everett's grip became

"You said we were just having dinner"

His eyes bore into hers, "What have I done? I just don't want to waste time looking for you if we get separated."

Dorothy was astounded by his ability to lie so convincingly!

"You"

"Your hand is cold. You haven't been taking good care of yourself over these years," he observed.

Chapter 433

Everett couldn't bring himself to think too deeply about the years Dorothy had spent raising their two kids alone. It must have been a Herculean task.

"I'm fine. My hands are cold because you've infuriated me."

If he could spew nonsense, so could she!

Everett just chuckled. As long as he could hold her hand again, she could say whatever she wanted

After finally finishing their grocery shopping and stepping out of the supermarket, Dorothy swiftly withdrew her hand and hopped into the backseat of the car.

She was determined to avoid any excuse for Everett to have her sit shotgun! Once everything was stowed away. Everett got into the car without comment on her choice of seats and drove off toward Bay

Residence

Langston had been waiting for ages, almost ready to sit at the dining table with knife and fork in hand!

At last, the sound of the door code being entered echoed, and he dashed to the entrance, "You're finally back huh?"

Langston paused as he saw not only Everett but Dorothy too.

The three of them stood in the foyer, silent, each lost in their own thoughts. Everett was the first to break the silence with a smile, tousling his son's hair.

"I'm off to cook. Langston, be a good host to our guest, will you?"

Langston gave an awkward thumbs-up.

Only after Everett disappeared into the kitchen did Dorothy pull her son aside and whispered urgently. "Did you tell him

something?"

"No, nothing!"

"Then why did he invite me here after our fake fight last time? Dorothy was no fool; she sensed something was up.

Langston licked his lips, and suddenly, a spark of insight dawned upon him.

"That's right! After you left last time, he gave me a lecture! He said you were his favorite person, urging me to get along with you!"

Dorothy was dumbfounded..

"Mom, just sit for a bit! Ill go help in the kitchen!"

With that, Langston darted off.

He dared not stay any longer, a few more questions and he'd surely spill the beans.

Sneaking into the kitchen, Langston made sure to close the door behind him, his tone laced with complaint. "Why'd you bring my mom here again? Now she's suspecting that I told you something?"

"Don't worry. Just deny everything, and she can't pin anything on you"

Langston pouted, "Didn't you say kids shouldn't lie all the time?"

Everett dried his hands and lifted his son into a hug.

"If I don't bring her back, she'll end up with your Uncle Kenneth!

How could he allow that?

It was no secret that Kenneth had his sights set on Dorothy

Langston pondered for a moment before it clicked, "Oh I get it! Kenneth is your rival, right? You're afraid hell steal Mom away, and then you'll have no wife!"

"My boy's the smartest Everett's lips curled up, liking the sound of the word wife. "Langston, do you know where your sister is now?"

"No clue. Ive been abroad all this time. Aunt Karen's been looking after her.

Mom said we look too much alike, and she was

afraid someone would take me, so she didn't let me stay in the country"

"Do you miss your sister?"

"Of course!" Langston's enthusiasm bubbled over at the mention of his sister,

"She's a bit like Mom, kinda ditzy, but super cute!

And she loves sweets!

Everett's mind flashed to the little girl he had encountered in Everglow City.

The resemblance was sudden and startling

Laves sweets?

Chapter 434

She was a real sweet tooth, her plump cheeks reminiscent of freshly baked dinner rolls, framing a pair of big, sparkling eyes.

“Staying with your Aunt Karen, huh...” Everett’s voice sank, speaking more to himself than anyone else, “You’ll see her soon.”

The first time Heather laid eyes on Lane, she was struck with a moment of stunned silence, quickly followed by a surge of jealousy.

Why did all the men around Dorothy have to be so outstanding?

On her way over, she had done her homework on Lane. Although his background and assets couldn’t touch Everett’s, he was still considered a rising star, with a chiseled face of mixed heritage, a tall and slender frame, and a resume that was nothing short of impressive

And there she was, having hit the books hard for over a decade, striving for perfection in everything, confident that in both appearance and capability she was no less than Dorothy. So why wasn’t there a man out there scheming to court her?

“Ms. Garcia, pleasure to meet you.”

Lane had secured a private booth, and even booked the surrounding areas just to ensure their conversation remained confidential.

As Heather took her seat, she offered a polite smile, “Hello.”

“I’ve heard about Mr. Lopez’s chief legal eagle, tirelessly dedicating herself to the Lopez Corporation. I never imagined I’d have the honor of meeting you today.”

“There’s no need for all that flattery. We both know why we’re here. Just get to the point,” Heather said, her mind cluttered with a myriad of issues, leaving no room for small talk, Lane smiled, pulled out his phone, and showed her a photo.

“This is Dorothy’s daughter. She visited the office once, and one of my employees snapped this picture without her knowing.”

Heather took the phone and examined the photo closely. Indeed, the girl had Dorothy’s features, and there was a hint of Everett in her eyes as well.

“I want this picture.”

“That’s not possible,” Lane replied. He came to propose a partnership, not to make charitable donations. “The condition of our collaboration is that you do not harm Dorothy or her daughter.”

His intention might have been to snatch Dorothy from Everett, but certainly not

at the cost of hurting her.

Heather bristled at his protective stance towards Dorothy

“So how do we collaborate? To split them up, there has to be a party that gets hurt! If you’re planning to harm Everett, I won’t stand for

“Ms. Garcia, our aim is to separate them, not to push either to their demise! It seems you’re the one considering extremes, Lane

observed Heather’s malice towards Dorothy. “Once they part ways, you’ll have Everett, and whisk Dorothy and her daughter

away. From then on, she’ll be mine, and I’ll certainly have to protect her just as you’re defending Everett now”

Heather scoffed, “Do you know who Dorothy really is? She never should have come into this world! Her mother was a

homewrecker, and she’s following in her footsteps, trying to seduce Everett!”

Lane straightened up, his thick brows furrowing slightly.

“I have the ability to judge Dorothy’s character for myself. I don’t need your concern in that regard. I came here today to discuss

a potential partnership and showed a photo of her daughter as a gesture of goodwill. However, if your intention is solely to speak

ill of Dorothy, then this meeting serves no purpose,” he said, beginning to rise from his seat.

Heather clenched her fists, gritting her teeth. “Do you genuinely like her that much? Even after she caused you to lose East Star

Enterprises and offended the Lopez Corporation, you’re not angry?”

“I was raised abroad, where the importance of a good life partner surpasses all wealth and fame. To me, Dorothy is the ideal choice.”

Chapter 435

Lane wasn’t one to dwell on Dorothy’s past.

As long as her future was with him, that’s all that mattered!

As for Heather’s remark about Dorothy’s mother being the other woman, whether it was true or false held no significance for

Lane. He wouldn’t even bother to investigate.

He had known Dorothy for more than a hot minute, dating back to her first day at East Star Enterprises. Witnessing her ascent

through the ranks, he observed her tenacious defense of projects time and time again. It was her resilience and perseverance

that Lane truly valued.

“Do you truly not mind that she’s had another man’s kids?” Heather asked.

“Of course, it bothers me, but I don’t care. It’s all in the past, and she hadn’t

met me back then, right? What's important is that she belongs to me now."

The more Lane spoke like this, the more Heather seethed with anger, In Heather's eyes, Dorothy didn't deserve Lane! That woman should have met her demise alongside her mother! If it weren't for them, how could her own mother have been the talk of the town, shamed for years?

But then it struck her

If Lane could assist in breaking them up now, it might not be a bad idea! After all Everett's mother had already planned to make Dorothy disappear for good. Whether Dorothy could be protected was Lane's problem! And if Dorothy were to die, it wouldn't be considered a breach of their agreement, right?

"I can see that you are truly in love with Dorothy, just as I am with Everett! Shall we talk business then?"

Her sudden change of attitude raised Lane's eyebrows..

"You have to promise me you won't hurt Dorothy

"Don't worry. If I wanted to hurt her how would she still be living so comfortably after all these years? If she hadn't reappeared in Everett's life, I wouldn't have anything to do with her Heather explained with a sigh. "It's a twisted fate. If I had stayed by

Everett's side, he never would've used Dorothy as my stand-in, and none of what followed would have happened."

Lane glanced at Heather's face.

True, she bore some resemblance to Dorothy. But Dorothy was serene and gentle, while Heather seemed to carry an underlying sharpness, a hidden malice that she couldn't conceal no matter how hard she tried

"I'm not interested in your history with Everett, but if you hurt Dorothy, I won't let you off the hook either."

Heather shrugged nonchalantly and smiled, 'Deal! I promise you"

Everett had cooked up a storm, a table full of dishes that were a feast for the senses.

Langston had been staying with him for a while and had probably put on a good few pounds!

"Take it easy, you'll have trouble digesting if you eat too quickly at night Everett would always say, meticulously picking out the bones from the fish before serving it to Langston.

Dorothy felt at ease with her son being with Everett. If it weren't for the threats from the Lopez family, she knew just how caring

Everett
could be

Holding her bowl, Dorothy watched as Langston gobbled up the meat Everett had served him, smiling up at him repeatedly. The sight twisted her heart with an increasing ache

*Excuse me, I need to use the restroom”

She couldn't bear it any longer, her eyes were already showing hints of redness. She stood up and left, hoping to compose herself without letting Everett notice anything amiss.

No sooner had Dorothy left than Everett instinctively thought to follow and check on her, but Langston tugged at his shirt first.

“Are you planning to have Mommy stay over tonight?”

Everett paused in surprise. “You have a plan?”

“Sure do! But you have to let me into the Lopez Corporation's CEO's back end just once!”

Everett nodded without hesitation, “It's a deal”

Chapter 436

Langston eyed him suspiciously. “Aren't you afraid that I might access the back-end, erase your data, and throw the Lopez Corporation into chaos?”

Getting into the CEO's back-end was like getting the keys to the kingdom. All the important files and top-secret data were laid out clear as day.

Everett's crisp and magnetic voice chuckled, “Go ahead, delete away. It's all going to be yours anyway”

“What?” Langston's mind raced to a TV drama he had seen recently, and he smirked, “Just wait until you've got a new wife and kids. You won't be saying that then!”

Everett smiled indulgently, tousling his son's hair.

“I'll only ever have your mom as my wife. Or else, I'll end up a lonely old man.” Looking at his bright and adorable son, Everett felt he shouldn't be too greedy. The idea of having a pair of children with Dorothy was something he hadn't allowed himself to dream of in the four years since his divorce.

The more he had, the more he feared it was all just a pipe dream.

Dorothy emerged from the restroom to find the father and son, sharing one beaming smile, laughing heartily

When was the last time she had seen Langston genuinely smile?

Ever since he had started to look more and more like Everett, and she had

sent him abroad, their meetings had been few and far between. Now, with his dad, his happiness was tangible, even his laughter was bright and open-hearted.

This was the innocence a child deserved to have.

If it weren't for Everett's presence, she would have loved to capture her son's smiling face on her phone.

"Feeling alright?" Everett noticed her first and rose to join her,

"I'm fine." Dorothy sat back down, glancing at him, "I'm almost done here. Can I see him now?"

"Sure, I'll drive you over tomorrow morning." His word was his bond.

Dorothy didn't object. It was late, and an evening visit wouldn't be appropriate.

"Then I'll be on my way."

As she stood to leave, Langston clutched his stomach and groaned, "Ouch. My stomach suddenly hurts so much!"

Dorothy had never seen her son like this and, in her panic, almost forgot to hide her concern from Everett. She quickly turned back to Langston's side.

"Where does it hurt? Let me see!"

Langston looked up with a pitiful expression, "I think it's because I sneakily drank a cold soda today. Ms. Sanchez, can you rub my tummy?"

Dorothy instinctively reached out, then caught herself with Everett still nearby.

Was she too anxious for just an "Ms. Sanchez"?

"Uh, why don't you ask your dad to do it?"

Everett, taken aback, caught Langston's cue and spoke with feigned difficulty.

"But I've got a video call starting soon, Dorothy.

Could you look after my boy for a bit?"

Dorothy, already reluctant to leave her son, eagerly agreed upon finding an easy out, though she feigned reluctance for appearance's sake.

"Is that okay? The boy doesn't really like me much"

"Just for a little while, I take over after my call."

"Alright then, I'll do you this favor! But make it quick"

Dorothy stood up, lifted her son into her arms, and walked toward his bedroom.

Langston wrapped his arms around his mom's neck, sneakily grinning and winking at Everett as they left.

Chapter 437

Everett watched as they entered the bedroom, feeling a wave of tranquility

wash over his heart.

His Bay Residence was once more graced with its lady of the house.

After tidying up the dining room table. Everett retreated to his own bedroom and noticed several missed calls from Kevin.

A glance towards Langston's room prompted him to walk over to the floor to ceiling window. He cracked it open for a breath of fresh air before returning Kevin's call.

"Mr. Lopez, regarding the death of Ms. Sanchez's mother, we've been hitting dead ends," Kevin sounded defeated. "All potential evidence has been destroyed—medical records, hospital footage, and even the bodyguards stationed at her mother's door have passed away under suspicious illnesses."

Everett's fingers clenched, the knuckles stark white against his skin..

"It seems they were anticipating my investigation,"

"There is... another way we could find out the cause of Ms. Sanchez's mother's deadly Kenn said hesitantly.

But before he could elaborate, Everett dismissed the idea outright

"If Dorothy found out I exhumed her mother's remains, she'd never forgive me Silence fell on the other end.

"To erase traces this thoroughly, Heather couldn't have acted alone."

Everett was convinced his mother had a hand in this

Again, it was her doing!

What Everett feared most wasn't uncovering Heather's involvement, it was the possibility that his mother was deeply implicated in the affair

"Also, Mr. Lopez, the owner of that warehouse we were investigating has mysteriously vanished. The strand of hair we found there matches the DNA—Langston was definitely held captive by those people."

"Keep searching. I want them found, dead or alive."

"Understood, Mr. Lopez."

After ending the call, Everett looked out the window, his eyes revealing a deep-seated resentment.

He dialed his mother, who was abroad. As soon as she picked up, he didn't wait for her to speak before his voice cut through the line, cold as ice.

"There should be limits to your betrayal."

"Who do you think you're talking to? Amanda's fury flared instantly. "Everett, you've grown bold, threatening your own mother for

a woman?"

Rubbing his temples, his tone was stern, "Tell me the truth. How involved were you in the death of Dorothy's mother?"

"Dorothy's mother? Should I know who she is? You're out of your mind, blaming everything on your mother!"

"I know Heather is implicated, but you..you'd better have only spoken on Heather's behalf, not acted on it."

The thought of his mother actually being involved was unbearable.

That would take things in a completely different direction.

"Stop blaming everything on Heather! She's been working her heart out for Lopez Corporation. Our clean reputation to this day is thanks to her efforts!" Amanda trembled at the memory of that harrowing event. "Without Heather's Intervention, I would have been the one tortured, and Lopez Corporation would have become the world's laughingstock. We owe hell"

"Mom, what exactly happened when you were kidnapped?"

were met with sudden health

Everett had wanted to ask for details since the incident, but Amanda had kept silent, and any inquiries were scares.

There was a long pause on the other end before Amanda finally sighed.

"My son, to save me, Heather was dragged into a dark room by a gang of men... and they... Uuy brutalized her"

Chapter 438

Everett was shocked and at a loss for words.

I've kept it a secret because it's a stain on the Lopez family's honor and on Heather's purity as a young woman. I haven't even told your father the details. Do you understand why?"

Everett truly hadn't considered the depths of the situation.

At the time, he had just taken on a portion of the workload at Lopez Corporation, so busy he barely had time to sit down for a glass of water, let alone delve into family scandals. His parents had intentionally shielded him from it. He knew only of a kidnapping incident that had left his mother with severe depression and frequent heart problems.

"Mom, there are many ways to compensate her without forcing her to marry into the Lopez family."

"But only someone truly loyal to the Lopez family deserves to be my daughter in law!" Amanda's voice was thick with emotion.

"You've been in the business world for years, and you should know that if the photos or videos of my assault were to get out, the Lopez family would become a laughingstock forever! Your father would never truly accept me; no man could endure knowing his wife suffered like that! Then... Heather's misfortune would become the Lopez family's curse. Even if you're in a high position now, you can't be sure no one's snickering behind your back with your mother's private photos!"

Everett understood all too well.

In the cutthroat business world, any family weakness would be exploited and magnified.

"For years, you've protected her that should be enough! I can arrange a good family for her, and ensure the past stays buried."

"So, you're saying you won't marry her?"

"That's right, I never intended to."

"Well then! I never thought I'd have such an ungrateful and heartless son! Since you've pushed it this far today, let me make it clear – I've chosen to stand by Heather. If you have the guts, come after me, your mother who brought you into this world!"

Amanda ended the call abruptly, leaving a dial tone that filled Everett with silence.

The past was far more complicated than he had realized.

Everett stood by the window for a long time before turning back and lighting a cigarette.

It was only when the ash fell, and the sting of the burn hit his palm that he snapped back to reality

He had debts to pay, family obligations as the sole heir to the Lopez name But this had nothing to do with Dorothy! Heather would have to face the consequences for what she had done to Dorothy!

Langston's room wasn't decked out like a typical child's playroom; instead, it was filled with computers and gadgets. It's not that

Everett hadn't considered it, but simply because Langston didn't prefer it.

Dorothy sat by Langston's bed, gently rubbing his stomach.

Langston, refusing to sleep, just watched his mom.

"What's wrong? Are you still in pain? Maybe we should head to the hospital," Dorothy suggested, her entire focus on her son's well-being. without pausing to question the logic.

"I feel better now, but I want Mommy to stay!" Langston was steadfast, holding onto Dorothy's hand, unwilling to let go as per the pact he had with Everett

Faced with her son being clinging suddenly, Dorothy couldn't bear to pull away.

All these years, she'd been preoccupied with work and the pursuit of justice, leaving pitifully little time for her son.

"Okay, mommy won't leave, Dorothy soothed, stroking Langston's hair and gazing tenderly at his little face, the spitting image of Everett's

"Langston... do you like him?"

Langston blinked, instantly understood who "he" was.

Chapter 439

Dorothy knew the answer was already within her heart, but she longed to hear what her son thought.

Langston furrowed his brow in contemplation, and after a moment, he pouted and exhaled deeply. "If he never bullied you, then I

like him! He's nice to me! But... but if he bullied you, I can't forgive him!"

She smiled gently. "He never bullied me, darling

"Then why did you guys split up?" Before meeting Everett, Langston had

conjured an image of him as a playboy scion, a man

who had won his mother's deep affection, fathered children with her only to

carelessly indulge in his pleasures, leaving his

mother heartbroken.

However, since moving in with Everett, Langston found him to be nothing like the rogue he had imagined. Everett would come

home from work on time to cook dinner, postpone meetings to help him

troubleshoot computer issues, and countless nights, he

would tuck Langston in, a gesture Langston was well aware of.

The more Everett showed his caring side, the more Langston couldn't

understand why he and his sister were taken away by their

mom.

He thought, if his sister were here too, Everett would surely shower her with love as well.

"Langston, Mommy and he are apart for various grown up reasons. You might not understand now, but remember your dad is a

very good man. He's warm, thoughtful, and adores his children."

"Can you just tell me? Mom, maybe I can help you!"

Flashes of a conversation with Kenneth crossed Dorothy's mind. Kenneth had mentioned how skilled Langston was suggesting

that perhaps he could attempt to retrieve some vital evidence.

But after a moment's hesitation, she chose to remain silent.

with computers.

Langston was already different from other kids his age, he was thoughtful and perceptive. Exposure to surveillance footage depicting violence against his grandmother had the potential to leave lasting scars on him.

Dorothy didn't want to seek vengeance for her mother at the expense of her son's mental well-being

"Sweetheart, go to sleep. Mommy can handle it," she soothed as she patted him gently, watching him drift off to sleep, his hand still clinging to her sleeve.

When Everett entered the room, he found Dorothy asleep beside Langston's bed.

The workload at the office had been heavy that day, and the recent emotional strain had taken its toll on her.

Quietly, Everett moved closer and scooped Dorothy up, laying her alongside Langston so she could rest more comfortably.

Everett then sat by Dorothy's side, holding her hand, greedily soaking in her warmth as if only by touching her could he feel truly grounded. He let out a long sigh, the corners of his lips curling slightly upward. Adjusting his position slightly, Everett unintentionally nudged Dorothy's bag with his slipper. It tipped over, causing a cascade of folders and brown paper bags to spill out. These contained new project documents sent by the company, materials Dorothy planned to review at home.

Everett began to collect the items when he noticed a photograph face down on the floor. He paused, picked it up, and stared at the image of Dorothy embracing two children, a boy and a girl, one on each side.

His gaze locked onto the little girl with two braids, and he froze, his breath catching.

That girl...

Wasn't she the sweet child from Everglow City who had once pleaded with him to buy her candy?

Was she his daughter?!

Chapter 440

Everett hastily grabbed the photo and stood up, reaching for his phone to call his trusted associate, Kevin.

"Hey, I need you to check the surveillance footage for room 908 at the Dreamscape Hotel in Everglow City. There's a little girl who looks a hell of a lot like Dorothy. Find out where she is."

“Right away. Mr. Lopez!”

“Hold on...” Everett’s voice softened, almost a whisper, “Once you get the footage, send it straight to my email. I want to see it myself.”

He couldn’t bear the wait – not for Kevin’s investigation, nor for the child to be brought back to Eldonia City. He needed to see his daughter now!

“Got it, boss.”

After hanging up, Everett traced the photograph with the pads of his fingers, over and over again.

In the photo, Dorothy’s smile was radiant, her eyes brimming with tender warmth

The two kids were giggling with joy, each clinging to their mommy’s arms, their affection and reliance unmistakable.

Everett’s eyes dimmed as he stared at the empty space in the photo

If only he hadn’t been shackled by the gentlemanly upbringing of his youth, if only he’d thrown caution and decorum to the wind sooner, maybe he’d be in that picture too

But it wasn’t too late. Not yet

I won’t let go of you again.”

Dorothy never imagined that her deepest sleep in days would be at Bay Residence, in Everett’s home.

The next morning, as she turned over in bed, she felt a small hand still clutching her sleeve. Langston hadn’t let go all night long.

Dorothy checked Langston’s forehead for fever, he seemed fine, no furrowed brow, no sign of pain.

Tiptoeing out of bed and exiting the room, she was greeted by the aroma wafting from the kitchen.

For a moment. Dorothy thought she had traveled back four y years in time.

“Morning, sleepyhead. Breakfast’s ready Everett said as he emerged from the kitchen, drying his hands on a dish towel. His tone was casual, as if they’d always lived this way.

“Everett, I need to see Byte 7.”

“Have a seat first,” Everett suggested, pulling out a chair before looking up at her. “Can you tell me why you’re looking for him?”

Dorothy bristled defensively.

“No! That’s my private business”

“I’m not trying to force you to tell me, just thought maybe I could help if you wanted to share.”

Help her?

Dorothy's lips twisted into a wry smile.
That was only because Everett didn't know what was at stake.
"It's fine. I'll deal with Byte 7 on my own! Everett, I expect you to keep your word."
"Of course. Finish up your breakfast, and I'll take you to him."
Though anxious, Dorothy knew she couldn't just drag Everett out now. So, she took a tentative sip from her glass of milk.
"What about Langston? Should I wake him up for breakfast?"
"He likes to sleep in. I've kept his portion warm in the kitchen. He'll eat when he wakes up naturally," Everett explained, having already anticipated Langston's needs.
Dorothy felt a twinge of guilt watching Everett's meticulous core. She hadn't made Langston breakfast in years! Here with Everett, her son was treated like a young lord, with everything provided for him on a silver platter.

She said nothing more and focused on her food.
Then, breaking the silence, Everett mused, "You know, I visited Everglow City a while back, stayed at the Dreamscape Hotel. I met sweet little girl there, quite the sugar fiend."

The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires #Chapter 441 - Read The CEO's Hidden Love Midnight Temptations and Deep Desires Chapter 441

Chapter 441
Dorothy faltered her grip, nearly sending her coffee mug crashing to the floor. Why was he bringing this up now?
Was it his other test?
"That little girl looked so much like you, especially those piercing eyes."
Everett reminisced, recalling how he'd noticed her instantly.
What an inexplicable destiny of kinship!
He'd never been fond of children, not averse to them, but not keen on either. Yet, for some reason, he was drawn to that little girl.
At this, Dorothy lost her appetite and set down her mug. "Just spit it out, what do you mean?"
"Nothing serious, Everett replied, looking up with an innocent expression that suddenly highlighted the emotional overreaction of Dorothy.

"Please don't misunderstand. I went to Everglow City for work, not to track you down. The resort project there is quite impressive. Since you left Lopez Enterprises, your career has taken off. I'm happy for you."

Dorothy, thinking he had no ulterior motive, was about to relax when Everett dropped a bombshell.

"By the way, I ended up buying some candy for that little girl, and her mom even had the front desk pass me her business card! I have to look for it later, it should be in my briefcase."

Dorothy choked on her breath, nearly leaping from her chair!

The man who bought Abigail candy was Everett?!

It was him?!

She couldn't have dreamed of such a coincidence. Their paths had crossed without her knowing!

"Are you okay there? Everett handed her a napkin, feigning ignorance of the panic flickering in her eyes

"I'm fine! Mr. Lopez, please hurry up with your meal. As he mentioned looking for the business card, she squirmed with discomfort. Tim really eager to meet with Byte 71"

Everett raised an eyebrow. "So eager you can't even spare a moment for me to find a card?"

"Yes!"

How could she let Everett find that card?

The moment he called the number or rather, he wouldn't even need to call before finding her name on that card!

"Wright, I'll just change my clothes, and then we can leave"

He didn't tease her any further, wiped his mouth with a napkin, and retreated to the bedroom.

Truth be told, there was no business card.

He hadn't taken it that day because he had made up his mind to forget Dorothy and leave Everglow City. When the receptionist of the front desk handed him the card, his heart was heavy, and his mind was troubled.

if only he could turn back time, he would hold that little girl tighter and tell her how much he loved her mother.

Or perhaps go back to when Dorothy confessed her love for Kenneth, he would never believe it.

However, there was no its.

Dorothy followed Everett into the cat, and he drove her to a secluded suburb in Eldoria City.

If it had been anyone else taking her there, Dorothy would have been frightened.

Finally, the car stopped in front of an old, standalone villa.

Dorothy got out and looked up, shielding her eyes from the glaring sun to get a clear view of the three-story building

“Byte 7 is here?”

“Yes.” Everett confirmed with a nod

Dorothy reached into her bag, gripping the hard drive that held the surveillance footage, then turned to Everett. “You can go now I need to meet with turn alone”

Everett swept over her bag, pressing his lips into a thin line. He said in a porous and stern voice, “No matter how much my parents favor Heather, I won’t cover for her”

He thought she had evidence to incriminate Heather

Chapter 442

Dorothy had no doubt in her mind about Everett’s sincerity. Unfortunately, the real culor is behind all this mess were his parents, not Heather.

“I said I wanted to see him alone”

She had decided not to lean on Everett for support.

“Alright... I’ll wait outside for you”

Everett stepped back, watched her enter the building, then turned to lean against his car. He pulled out a cigarette from its pack, placed it between his lips, and lit it.

His phone buzzed with a stream of work emails.

Most of them were urgent, but Everett couldn’t possibly learn now!

[Meeting postponed. You need to get the documents stamped. Tell them you have my approval]

[Understood, Mr. Lopez.]

Kevin was meticulous and rarely made mistakes. Everett trusted him.

Everett got a cushion from his car and found a step to sit on. Lowering his gaze, he began to reply to the messages that needed his immediate attention.

Before long, Kevin was on the phone again.

“Mr. Lopez, are you not coming back to the office today?”

With a cigarette between his fingers, Everett took a drag. “Not sure. Proceed as if I’m not.”

There was a pause on the other end before Kevin acknowledged.

"If there's something on your mind, just spit it out Everett knew Kevin had something more

Kevin chuckled nervously before venturing. "You already know about the kids and they have been confirmed. So why not just come clean with Ms. Sanchez? You've taken over Fast Star Enterprises, and Ms. Sanchez has obediently returned to her job."

At the mention of Dorothy, Everett arched his eyebrows arch, with his tune tinged with rare frustration, "If I lay all my cards on the table now, she'd bolt faster than a rabbit to never let me find her again."

"Then why not keep tabs on her? She can't slip away right under your watch

"Shell be living in constant fear. With the weight on her heart, if I push too hard, shell only look to flee from me further

Dealing with someone like Dorothy, who lacked a sense of security required a gradual infiltration.

Just as the saying goes, the watched pot never boils.

Dorothy was not as meek as she looked like. Inside, she was fiercely stubborn. To enter her heart, he needed to gain her trust and consent. Otherwise, she was the type to rather see everything destroyed than yield.

Right now, the person most anxious to reel in Dorothy and keep her by his side forever was Everett. Hadn't he already considered the suggestions of Kenn?

Taking over East Star Enterprises had already escalated Dorothy's anxiety. Any rash move now would stimulate Dorothy to feel

As for the probing attempt he'd made earlier, Dorothy would likely spend days tossing and turning over it.

Sometimes Everett felt that Dorothy's sense of security was even less than that of a child!

He himself had to weigh every option before making a decision.

Everett wished he could be impulsive, play the domineering CEO, and simply lock her by his side. But that approach would drive Dorothy Insane.

"Mr. Lopez, you really have it tough Kevin couldn't help but express his sympathy and admiration for his patience.

If it were Kevin, he would have immediately gone to fetch the kids and then forcefully taken her to register their marriage.

"You know who? Sometimes I think I should just be content with what I have."

Back when he had a secret crush on Dorothy with his confession unanswered, he had hoped that one day she would become his girlfriend, even if just for a day.

Chapter 443

Everett had finally made Dorothy his wife, with her name inked next to spouse on his official documents, he found himself too giddy with joy to sleep for several nights

Dorothy was always surprised at how Everett, who appeared so stoic, seemed to have an insatiable desire for her, as if he couldn't get enough. But for Everett, it wasn't just a newfound appetite for pleasure. It was only in their intimate moments, in the tender whispers and the closeness of their bodies, that he felt a deep sense of reality.

She was truly his.

His was her first love, his first sex experience, and his first wife.

Now, it seemed like the heavens had even blessed them with two children!

Everett was over the moon, yet that joy brought with it

a fear

of loss

Having gained so much all at once, he tread carefully with every step, considering all aspects to avoid future regrets.

As Dorothy stepped into the villa, she was immediately hit by a musty smell, a clear sign that no one had lived there for a while.

Dust lay thick on the chandeliers in the foyer.

She frowned delicately and scanned her surroundings, searching for the elusive cyber hacker she had managed to make an

Appointment with.

"Hello!"

Out of nowhere, a youthful voice called from behind her.

Dorothy turned toward the sound and saw a young man in a black hoodie lounging steady gaze

ng

on a

on a sofa by the villa's window, watching her with a

"Are you Byte 7?" she asked.

"And you're the one sent by the big shot at Lopez Corporation?" he countered without answering her question.

Dorothy nodded, "Yes, that's me."

The sunlight streaming through the window made it difficult for her to see his

face clearly, but she tried to make out his features as best she could against the blinding light

“Spit it out. What do you want?” The impatience in the young man’s voice was palpable, his fingers still tapping away at a keyboard. Hesitating for a moment, Dorothy asked with uncertainty. “The job I need you to do... Can you keep the details to yourself? Don’t tell anyone, including Everett.”

“I don’t do arson or murder, and I’m not in the business of gossip for the smaller stuff, he replied briskly.

“Till take that as a yes, Dorothy said, taking out a damaged surveillance hard drive from her bag. “I need to recover the data on this”

Finally, Byte 7 looked up at her, put his keyboard aside, and stood up. He had seemed average height sitting down, but standing, he towered over her.

When he stepped out of the direct sunlight, his features became clear to Dorothy. He was a young man with shining vigor. He was tall, easily over six feet, but skinny. His clothes hung loose on his frame, and he had a slouch that gave him a slightly rebellious air.

He was not at all what Dorothy had expected from a top-tier hacker. Byte 7 ignored her gaze, inspected her hard drive, and frowned, “This thing’s ancient.”

“Yeah, it’s almost five years old,” she confirmed

He took a piece of gum from his pocket, popped it in his mouth, and casually asked, “So, what’s your offer?”

Dorothy’s face lit up, “You can do it?”

“Whether I take the job depends on what you’re offering.” He locked eyes with her for a few seconds and then suddenly smiled slyly “You’re quite pretty. Are you single?”

Chapter 444

“Uh?” Dorothy thought she must have misheard

“It’s nothing.” Byte 7 lifted his hand to pull the hoodie over his head, concealing his pale, gaunt, yet striking face, and then he returned to his provicus spot, cradling his laptop. “But frst, you need to tell me what you’re hoping to recover from this gadget.”

Dorothy blurted out, ‘It contains the truth about my mother’s death’

“Then you should be taking that thing to the cops, rat me! And just so you

know, my services don't come cheap."

"I know you're expensive, and I have money! How could she dare hand over the hard drive to the police?"

The Lopez family was untouchable back home, and she stood no chance against them

it weren't for the involvement of Everett's parents, maybe she could have asked him for help, but... this drive contained evidence that could incriminate the Lopez family!

"People often try to haggle with me, but you're the first to outright claim you're flush with cash. Byte 7 seemed amused as he leaned back and locked up at her. "You're Everett's girl, aren't you?"

Dorothy was speechless.

"Boring" Byte 7 snorted. "Thirty million, half upfront. After I'm done, I'll come looking for the rest"

Thirty million...

Even though Dorothy knew hiring Byte 7 would cost a pretty penny she was still taken aback by the figure.

At the sight of her hesitation, Byte 7 chuckled "Didn't you just say you had money?"

"But... not that much."

"What now? Go ask Everett for it! I saw his car parked outside. Byte 7 really was the epitome of a rebellious youth, a smirk perpetually playing on his lips.

What a cocky youth

Dorothy wasn't used to dealing with the young crowd and felt awkward standing there.

She didn't want to be the butt of his teasing, but her only hope of recovering the data on the hard drive was in his hands!

Tim just Everett's subordinate, nothing more. I can give you the fifty percent, and figure out the rest."

Fifteen million, she had that much.

She had saved quite a bit over the years.

It was Byte 7 who asked for an astronomical sum

"And what if you can't come up with the rest later?" pay you in installments.

Byte 7 sculled his lean brows arching. "No way I don't have time to chase down debts."

Dorothy pursed her lips and had an instinct that this young man already had his answer in mind, so she decided not to bargain

and just asked, "What do you propose?"

"I'd like to see what it's like to date an older lady"

Dorothy didn't know how to respond to this request.

"If you can't scrape together the remaining balance, how about being my girlfriend for a month? Byte 7 paused, then quickly

amended. "No, a week is enough. Women are such a hassle, I reckon I'd lose interest after a week anyway"

Dorothy watched him rumble and felt a bit lost, but she was the one seeking his help after all.

"I'm married, with kids. I don't think I meet your criteria."

Byte 7 spread his hands, his prominent wrist bones catching the light. "I'm not looking to marry you. What does it matter to me whether you're married or have kids??"

"But-"

"Stop nagging me. If you're not up for it, forget it and let me be," Byte 7 said, pushing the hard drive aside and returning to his devices

Dorothy hesitated, then clenched her jaw to answer "Fine, I agree"

After a quick calculation in her mind, she thought she could sell her property and stocks if push came to shove, she could ask

Kenneth for a loan. There was no way she couldn't come up with the balance, but if she missed this chance, she might never see Byte 7 again.

Chapter 445

Handing over the hard drive to Byte 7, Dorothy stepped out of the villa and was surprised to see Everett still there!

He had been sitting at the front door, waiting for her all this time.

At the sound of her footsteps, Everett stood up

With his obsession for cleanliness, he had collected his few smoked cigarette butts and ashes, planning to dispose of them in a trash can.

"Did he help you?"

"Yeah." Dorothy nodded, but it was clear she wasn't in the mood to share details with Everett

Everett didn't press further simply getting into his car.

Dorothy noticed that Everett never insisted she sit in the passenger seat, which is why she could tolerate his car rides

If he had demanded from the start that she sit beside him, there wouldn't have

been a second time. She would rather walk!

On the ride back, Dorothy bowed her head as she calculated the funds and assets she had left.

She didn't fancy becoming that oddball's girlfriend!

The car smoothly entered the underground parking of the Lopez Corporation.

Just as Dorothy was about to get out, her phone rang.

Glancing at it she saw it was Kenneth.

Assuming he was calling about the meeting with Byte 7, she didn't answer immediately. Instead, she quickened her pace, putting some distance between herself and Everett before coming back.

"Hey, Kenneth"

On the other end, the typically calm and gentle voice was replaced by one filled with urgency.

"Dorothy, I can't reach Karen! She said she was taking Abigail out yesterday evening, and I didn't think much of it when she didn't answer my calls this morning. But now there's been no word from her all day!"

Dorothy froze, her heartbeat seemingly yanked up a notch.

"How come? I'm heading back now!"

"Okay, I'm driving to Karen's place as we speak. Let's keep in touch"

After hanging up, Dorothy turned and dashed toward the parking garage exit. Everett had just parked when he saw her panicked expression and sensed an emergency.

"Dorothy!" With his long strides, he caught up to her in no time, "What happened?"

"Karen's gone missing. I need to find her!"

"I'm coming with you."

Dorothy immediately refused, "No need, you've got your things to handle"

If Everett got involved, he'd learn about the child with Karen! It wasn't clear yet if Karen had been abducted or had simply forgotten to check her phone, so it was too risky to let Everett help.

Watching her race away. Everett also had a call from Kevin the next second.

"Mr. Lopez, Ms. Sanchez's friend Karen has been kidnapped! And Abigail too, they've both been taken."

"Track their location immediately! Send me their last known whereabouts!"

Racing out of the garage, Dorothy hastily hailed a cab and got in.

Recent events had left her in a perpetual state of crisis!

As she neared Karen's place, her phone buzzed with a text from an unknown number.

if you want your daughter alive, come to me obediently and alone! Tell anyone, you'll be picking up her corpse.]

Before Dorothy could react to the message, the cab driver suddenly turned his face toward her with a sinister smirk, Ms.

Sanchez, I'd advise against any futile resistance",

Chapter 446

At that moment, Dorothy realized gravely that she wasn't just an incidental target. The kidnappers weren't after Karen or Abigail but after herself.

Her cell phone kept ringing insistently, with Everett's name flashing on the screen.

But she wasn't one to silence her phone, and the driver had heard it too.

He glanced at the caller ID and sneered, "Hand over the phone. Now Don't try anything smart, or you'll see if your backup arrives faster than my guys killing your daughter!"

"Here." Dorothy ended Everett's call, powered off the device, and handed it to the driver,

At the sight of her compliance, the driver shot her a satisfied look. "Pretty girl! No wonder you've got people wanting to pin you down!"

These words flickered a lightbulb in Dorothy's head.

Only Heather and Everett's parents would ever think of her as such a thorn in their side!

It looked like they were impatient to make their move, and the matter with her child hadn't stayed secret after all. This was why

Dorothy had been avoiding Everett and laying low from the Lopez family.

Now, she was squarely in their sights.

Dorothy clenched her fists, fighting to keep her composure. Panic wouldn't help. She needed to think about how to get herself out of

this.

"What does Heather want with us?" she asked, naming the puppet master behind this mess.

The driver, taken aback, glanced at her in the rearview mirror.

"We're not working for her!"

"Then it's the Lopez family," Dorothy shot back, "You've kidnapped Everett's daughter. If he finds out, have you thought about the consequences? What he would do to you?"

The driver laughed at her words.

“Are you trying to scare me? Save your breath. I’m just a middleman, Once I drop you off, my job’s done. Whatever they want to do with you is none of my business. You better pray for yourself.”

As the car continued to a remote location, Dorothy considered jumping out and risking injury, but her children were still in their hands.

These were the same people who had caused her mother’s death. There was no telling what they might do to Karen and Abigail

She had to go to them.

The car stopped in a secluded place near a stream, Dorothy could hear the water flowing as she stepped out.

The driver was so sure she wouldn’t run that he didn’t bother to restrain her. After a leisurely exit, he pulled out a black hood and swiftly covered her head.

“Behave well, and you’ll be seeing your daughter soon.”

She was led forward for what felt like an eternity, following the sound of the man’s footsteps and the babbling stream.

Eventually, they reached their destination.

A door creaked open, its rusty hinges screeching.

“This is Dorothy”

“Good. You can leave.”

After this brief exchange, Dorothy felt herself being handed off to another person who led her further inside.

“Where’s my child? I want to see her!”

Blind and increasingly anxious, Dorothy only worried about her daughter’s solely.

But before she could get an answer, the sound of high heels approached.

Suddenly, a sharp pain exploded in her knee as a cane struck hard, buckling her legs and sending her crashing to the ground.

“Dorothy, you’re finally in my grasp!”

Chapter 447

It was unmistakably Heather’s voice.

Of course, it was her.

Dorothy wasn’t surprised in the least.

Pain shot through her knees, paling her complexion in an instant as sweat rapidly beaded on her forehead. Gritting her teeth so

hard that her nails dug into her skin, she managed to say, “Do whatever you want to me, but let Karen and my daughter go!

They’re innocent!” “Innocent?” Heather’s laugh was devoid of warmth, “Oh,

dear sister you don't think anyone's walking out of here today, do you?"

"But she's Everett's child!"

"That's exactly why she needs to die!" Heather raised her voice, almost to a scream, "What did you promise me all those years ago? You said you'd never go back to him, that you'd vanish! And yet, here you are, back in his life and with a child! Oh, Dorothy, you thought you could hide the secrets, but you never expected me to find out, did you?"

How Heather had discovered Abigail's whereabouts was beyond Dorothy. The only people who knew of Abigail's identity, aside from herself, were Kenneth and Karen. Nobody else!

Suddenly, she froze.

"Did Lane tell you?"

"That's right" Heather admitted openly, stepping closer to Dorothy and ripping the blindfold from her face. As they locked eyes, Heather's face was smug with triumph. "Surprised? And to think, it was Lane who came to me first!"

Dorothy was stunned.

Lane had always been relentless in his pursuit of her, but she never believed he would do anything to harm a child.

"He's such an idiot. He came to me for a deal, and before I even agreed, he spilled everything, telling me you had Everett's daughter!" Heather's mocking laughter filled the room. "And then the fool had the nerve to tell me not to hurt you or the child! Can you believe

that?"

"Heather, that's because not many people are as vile as you. Lane couldn't have imagined he was dealing with someone like your

d

Heather struck Dorothy with a brutal smack, leaving a fiery red welt on her face and sending her tumbling backward.

"Don't you dare preach to me from your moral high ground! Are you any better? You slept your way into Everett's bed for money. You're nothing more than a whore, just like your mother. Cheap and worthless"

With blood filled with Dorothy's mouth, she spat it out defiantly meeting Heather with fierce determination.

"You hate me and my mother. Now that you've had her killed, I'm in your

clutches. Release Karen and Abigail. Do what you want with
mer

“Oh?” Heather arched her eyebrows, curling her lips into a smirk. “Do you think I’d let you off that easily?”

“Let them go, and I’ll do whatever you want!”

Heather played absently with her nails, then her face lit up with a twisted excitement.

“Fine! I have two people in my grasp, so you’ll agree to two conditions. For each one you fulfill release one of them. How about that?”

“What conditions?”

“I want you to sleep with several men at once and make it look like you’re enjoying every second of it. Use all your seductive tricks to lure them in. Once they’ve each had their turn with you, I let Karen go.”

Chapter 448

Heather couldn’t help but revel in the thought of Dorothy toyed with by a bunch of guys. She loathed the fact that she couldn’t capture the moment on video to show to Everett

She wanted to check how he reacted when his cherished belle could be claimed by others just as eagerly.

“We share the same blood after all. Does it make you happy to degrade me like this?” Dorothy tried to stall for time, though deep down she knew it was a long shot that anyone would come to her rescue. She hadn’t dared to hope for Everett to be her savior because he was utterly clueless about her ordeal. Before they parted ways, she had been so dismissive, insisting he should just focus on his work. Most likely, Everett was still buried in meetings at the office. Her only prayer now was that Kenneth would find her soon.

“Now you remember our family ties? Dorothy, have I ever begged you? I asked you to let Everett go and take your pick of any other man! But what did you do? You not only married him but also bore his child!” At the thought of it, Heather surged her resentment, wishing she could tear Dorothy apart right there.

The sacrifices she had made for the Lopez family far outweighed Dorothy’s, yet it was Dorothy who ultimately won Everett.

How could Heather accept that?

“All I wanted was to pay for my mom’s treatment,” Dorothy said truthfully. If it hadn’t been for that one misdirected text message, she never would have

aspired to reach for Everett. Even when she was just an employee at the Prosperity Consortium and saw Everett from a distance at company events, she never tried to network with him.

As for Dorothy, they came from different worlds. He was the golden boy, while she felt like nothing more than dirt underfoot, always rushing between work and the hospital, barely finding time to breathe. How could she dare to imagine someone like Everett, the CEO would ever look her way?

For Dorothy, all of this felt like a dream. And if she had known from the beginning who Heather was and that Heather had always adored Everett, Dorothy might have never continued any contact with him. She was the kind of person who preferred to avoid confrontation, keeping her world free from unsettling disturbances.

“Oh, please. Do you think I’d believe that? You’re as hypocritical as your mother, always waving the banner of righteousness to mask your true intentions! Your mother paraded around refusing to divorce, branding my mom the marriage breaker forever. But did Maxton Sanchez ever return to you two after falling for my mom? Who’s the hypocrite now?”

Dorothy knew this had always been Heather’s narrative that Dorothy and her mother were the villains.

“I did try to convince my mom to let it go, not because I agreed with your twisted theory, but because it pained me to see her deceived, trapping herself in a miserable life.”

Before encountering Maxton, Bella was so joyful.

Adorned in beautiful dresses, she was always photographed with a beaming smile. But after meeting that philanderer, all she had left was anger and bitterness, locked in an endless struggle with herself.

“And you just followed in her footsteps? After she brought you into this world, you sneak off to secretly bear Everett’s child!

You’re indeed mother and daughter, both contemptible Heather boiled her rage as she gestured to one of the men. “You, take off your pants! Now!”

Chapter 449

Dorothy instinctively shrank back as the man approached her with a sleazy grin plastered across his face.

His hands were nonchalantly undoing his belt, whistling at Dorothy in a tone that was both disgusting and greasy. “Ain’t she a

peach! Ms. Garcia, are you planning to let me take care of her right here?"

"Cut the crap! You're here to get on with it, not to dawdle!"

"Aw, I'm just a bit shy, you know?" he chuckled with a leer. "I've been with plenty of dames, but never in front of an audience!

Time for a thrill, hely*

He stripped down to his underwear in no time and reached out for Dorothy.

"Back off, don't touch me!" Dorothy, fighting the searing pain in her legs, desperately scrambled backwards.

Heather, seeing the man's procrastination and apparently itching for a bit of drama, marched forward in her stilettos and yanked

Dorothy's hair, dragging her back.

"What's the matter? Can't get it up for one lousy girl?!" She looked up and signaled to the other two men by the door. "You two, get over here. I'm generous today Here's a girl for you to have some fun with! Help yourself!

Heather was so focused on speaking that Dorothy took the opportunity to viciously bite into her leg.

At this point, Dorothy didn't care where she was biting and just clamped down hard, not refusing Heather to let go. If she was

over today, she did not let Heather slip,

"Ahh" Heather screamed. "You bitch, biting me?!"

She reflexively let go, then started pounding punches onto Dorothy's head and face.

The other men tried to intervene, but Dorothy wouldn't release her grip.

Dorothy knew that if she was separated from Heather she would become a plaything for these brutes.

"Get this crazy woman off me!" Heather yelled, her voice distorted with pain, feeling like the flesh would be torn from her leg at any

moment.

"But... but if we pull her off, won't it hurt you more?" the men hesitated.

They could only kick at Dorothy, too wary to make a move.

Heather, through gritted teeth, barked, "Grab my gun! And bring that little girl we caught today! You wanna play tough Dorothy?

I'll send you and your daughter to hell together!"

Dorothy, now dizzy from the beating and bleeding from her forehead, reluctantly released her grip when she heard Heather threaten to kill her daughter.

She could drag Heather down with her but what about her daughter?

The others wouldn't spare Dorothy and Heather.

Finally free, Heather slapped Dorothy across the face.

"I'm giving you two options for the sake of Maxion! If you wanna play tricks, let them have a go at Karen too! Isn't she your dear friend? Ill make her regret ever knowing you!"

In the next moment, cries from Abigail and Karen echoed from nearby

"Mommy!"

"Dorothy"

Struggling to her feet, Dorothy looked toward the voices. Her vision blurred with blood; she couldn't see clearly, but she knew it was them.

"Heather, let them go... I'll take your deal... I agree!"

Chapter 450

From the get-go. Heather had no intention of letting Dorothy off the hook, and certainly not Dorothy's daughter

That little brat hanging around Everett was not dead due to her oversight for not having dealt with him earlier Now that she had Everett's

her clutches, she wasn't about to let her go

The child of Everett would only be herself to bear

"What are you do'ts waiting for? Stro her down!" Heather barked at the men surrounding her.

Jolted from their stupe, they descended upon Dorothy like a pack of wolves.

"Mommy! Let go of my mommy!" Abigail, bound and helpless, burst into terrified cries at the sight.

Karen, meanwhile, unleashed a torrent of curses, "Heather you bastard You're nothing but a maggot from the gutter! Even if you let them defile Dorothy today, shell still be a thousand times cleaner than you, and Everett won't give you a second glance!"

"Shut your damn mouth Heather stormed over and slapped Karen hard across the face before yanking her hair viciously "Don't get ahead of yourself, youll get your tum soon enough! Just wait and see how they treat your dear friend, and then you'll take turns to taste the gang rape!!

"Yuck!" Karen wasn't one to be easily cowed. She spat right in Heather's face.

"Even if you killed me, Everett would never love you! Keep fantasizing about him! You're so pathetic, offering yourself up and he still doesn't want you. Hilarious! Ah!"

Rage flared in Heather's bloodshot eyes, her grip tightening as if she wanted to bear Karen's scalp off

"Say that again!"

“You’re unwanted: A bitch! A bastard and your mom’s a homewrecker’
Despite the pain contorting her features, Karen’s sharp
tongue didn’t let up.
Making Karen beg for mercy w was impossible!

While Karen stood her ground, Dorothy was already being manhandled by
several men, her clothes tearing and exposing her
skin. One of the men, impatient, dropped his pants first, Tim going first! I love
this feeling”

The men broke into lewd laughter

Dorothy remained curled up, enduring their hits and kicks without yielding, but
her consciousness was fading. She knew she
couldn’t pass out

She couldn’t afford to!

down from her neck, staining her delicate, pale back with a stark red trail.

Blood began to trickle de

“This dame’s got some fight in her!” One of the men, having worked up a
sweat, took off his shirt and pulled out a knife from his
pocket. Another frowned, “What are you going to do, skin her? I don’t want a
woman covered in blood! Let me have my fun first,
then you can punish her as much as you want!”

Heather, her hand aching from hitting Karen, turned back to see the bumbling
fools still hadn’t succeeded, which infuriated her.

She slapped one of the men across the face!

But before she could speak, someone rushed in, panting heavily.

“Trouble, Ms. Garcial We’re surrounded the gatekeeper gasped before he
could finish.

Suddenly, a towering figure burst in behind him, sending the man sprawling
with a single kick!

Heather instinctively looked up. As she recognized the newcomer, her legs
gave out

“Everett Everell...”

“Heather, I’ll kill you!”