

Midnight 611

Chapter 611

He remembered the moment Karen blurted it out, except for a mix of shock and a subtle flutter in his chest, he did not feel the slightest hint of rejection.

So Jeffrey figured he must have a thing for her.

After all, he had an aversion to women who clang onto him. He even found them repulsive! He feared getting stuck with someone he couldn't shake off.

“So, when it comes down to it, what’s so special about me?”

The fact that Jeffrey had gone to such lengths for her was beyond Karen's belief; it felt like a surreal dream!

A dream where a wealthy bachelor falls for someone like her.

She thought of herself as utterly ordinary and invisible in a crowd! Even if he had eyes for someone like Dorothy, it would be understandable; with her stunning looks and knockout figure, she was a total catch.

But herself? She had nothing of the sort!

“I can’t quite put it into words,” Jeffrey confessed, “Don't think that I'm smooth with sweet nothings just because I've had a lot of arm candies. I rarely say such things, so when you ask me these questions, I'm at a loss for words. I don't know what to say! How about this; you tell me the answer you want to hear, and then I'll say it to you!”

This was harder than when Everett demanded the project report by the next day! He had no idea where to start, only knowing that if he messed up, he'd be back to square one trying to woo her!

Truth be told, aside from Karen, Jeffrey had never really fallen for any other fling. Those who he found attractive were simply handed a room key and settled with a wad of cash after the deed. So before Karen, he never needed to chase a girl and get beaten up like that.

Seeing Jeffrey scratching his head in frustration, Karen couldn't help but laugh.

He looked like someone new to dating, even more innocent than Levi.

"Let's do this, you let me go, I'll clear things up with Levi, and then I'll call you. We can talk more later, okay?" Karen wanted to give him some time to sort his thoughts.

This was about marriage, not just fooling around.

She needed to give herself time to think, to decide whether to take a leap of faith with Jeffrey.

After all, with his looks, their kid would surely be beautiful! That was probably the most convincing reason Karen could think of to persuade herself.

Talking about love and feelings was premature.

Karen wouldn't easily fall head-over-heels; she was pretty level-headed when it came to these matters. She would never be blinded by infatuation.

As soon as Jeffrey heard she was planning to leave and see Levi, he immediately grabbed her wrist, "No, you can't go see him!"

"I told you that I just want to check in. After what happened last night, it's impolite to vanish without a word. Jeffrey, you can't only think about your own feelings; you have to consider my situation too and how I'll explain this to my parents."

At times like these, he acted like a stubborn and irrational kid who was consumed by jealousy.

Jeffrey looked at her and after a few seconds said, "Then I'll go with you."

"What for? To hit him again?"

"To apologize, of course! It wasn't you who hit him, so you shouldn't be the one apologizing! Granted, he took my girl out for dinner, gave her roses, and they were alone in his car in the middle of the night, but I shouldn't have resorted to violence."

Her response was silent, but his words sounded less like an apology and more like an accusation.

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It was as if Karen had been caught red-handed by flirting with other men outside of her marriage.

"So that's settled. Let's go!" Jeffrey took her hand and was ready to lead her out.

Karen, scared that Jeffrey might start another argument, struggled briefly, "Can't I just go by myself? Don't you have work to do?"

"Work's done for today! Everett only left me in charge of the meeting before he took off. Everything else can wait and I stayed up all night finishing up. Taking care of you is my priority right now."

He was eager to marry her and experience the family happiness that Everett was enjoying now.

Karen rolled her eyes speechlessly. Then she suddenly remembered something, "Left? Where did Everett go?"

"He took Dorothy and the kids to Snowfall City. He's not in Eldorria City, so even if you wanted to complain, it's no use."

Jeffrey pulled Karen's cellphone from his suit pocket and handed it back to her with a grin.

Karen was dumbfounded.

"You took my phone to work?"

"Yeah, didn't want you finding it at home."

"You really are something..."

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Dorothy had never been to Snowfall City before.

The air was dry, and by autumn, the weather had already turned cold. The breeze was chilly, unlike in Eldorria City where you could still wear a T-shirt or maybe just throw on a light jacket at most.

When they disembarked from the plane, Kevin had already arranged for someone to pick them up from the airport.

Seeing Dorothy shiver, Everett immediately took off his coat and draped it over her shoulders.

Dorothy looked up to meet his gaze, "I'm not that cold. You wear it."

"I'm feeling hot."

Dorothy's got nothing to say about this.

First, they went to the villa Everett had bought. It had a large garden in the front with no obstructions, which made the inside look bright and airy.

Stepping inside, the decor was Everett's usual preference for minimalism - a sleek combination of black, white, and gray.

Abigail and Langston walked in. Hand in hand, they were looking around with clear dissatisfaction.

"Daddy, there's nothing to play with here!" Abigail pouted, tugging at Everett's trousers, "I want to go back!"

Everett bent down and picked up his daughter, "How could I not have prepared something for you to play with? Why don't you and your brother go upstairs and have a look?"

Abigail's eyes widened, "Then I want to go upstairs!"

She immediately dashed toward the staircase.

Langston, who was initially dragging his feet, wasn't very interested in children's toys; he was just there to accompany his sister. That was until Everett whispered, "There's a computer upstairs. Check out the internet speed, okay?"

Langston's face lit up with surprise, "Is it fast?"

"Of course. And it's equipped with an anti-tracking system. You can hack into networks without leaving a trace."

Without another word, Langston sprinted past Abigail up the stairs!

Everett's lips curled into a smile as he watched the two little figures scurry upstairs.

Dorothy, having just slipped off her shoes, watched their hasty departure in confusion, "What are they rushing off to?"

"There are toys they like upstairs."

"You prepared that here, too?"

"What else would the kids play with?" Everett spread his hands as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

Dorothy shook her head in resignation.

She should have known Everett would do something like this. He was meticulous, aiming for perfection in everything, and when it came to Abigail and Langston, his precious gems, he would spare no expense to keep them happy.

"You just spoil them rotten."

"Jealous?" Everett pulled her into his embrace and stole a kiss on her lips, "I have to make sure they're settled so nothing can interrupt us when we head to our bedroom."

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Dorothy was all too aware of what he was implying.

But lately, Everett had been pushing his luck, inch by inch. Where was the restraint that once defined the stoic CEO?

"You're still injured!"

"Are you questioning my capabilities?" he retorted with a raised eyebrow.

Dorothy rolled her eyes. How could she dare?

She quickly discovered just how capable an "injured" man could be!

He even had the audacity to claim they were testing the mattress quality.

After being fervently loved, Dorothy didn't even want to move. As Everett's wounds healed, his appetite for variety seemed to grow.

She thought about resisting, but lacking his strength, she could only plead for mercy.

Lying in bed, breathless, Dorothy gave him a sultry look; even her annoyed glare seemed coquettish.

"Who does this in the broad daylight, Everett?"

Everett didn't argue, simply scooping her up from the bed and carrying her to the bathroom.

"I'm drained too. What about the kids later?" she asked.

"I've hired a nanny to look after them and a chef to prepare nutritious meals." Everett would always ensure his children were well taken care of first.

Hearing this, Dorothy became even more irritated.

"So you've been planning to do this in the villa since we got off the plane."

Everett laughed with a deep, resonant sound. His voice betrayed a hint of hurt, "Dorothy, it's been over four years since I've indulged."

How could he be satisfied after just a few times?

If he didn't have to consider that Dorothy's small frame couldn't handle it, he'd have her in bed for a month!

Dorothy looked at him and teased, "Who knows? After all, you might have been with someone else in the meantime; I have no way of verifying that."

The hand around her waist suddenly tightened.

Everett pinched her fair face and said, "There's only ever been you, Dorothy."

"I know, I was just joking."

"I don't like that joke." His gaze was intense and sincere, as if his eyes had room for Dorothy alone, "Having you is enough. It was enough in school, and in the working world. It's enough for me now, and it will be enough for me in the future."

A blush crept onto Dorothy's cheeks, and she averted her eyes, laughing to change the subject.

"Are you trying to wear me out?"

He affectionately tapped her forehead, his voice a rumbling caress, "You ungrateful little thing."

The consequence of Dorothy's feigned suspicion that Everett had been with other women was being playfully but firmly taken in the bathroom one more time before he let her rest.

She lay in the bathtub. Everett was washing her hair, and Dorothy, with eyes half-closed, pondered one question.

Why did this man have so much energy?

After the bath, Dorothy was so exhausted that she fell asleep as soon as she hit the bed.

Everett, now in comfortable home clothes, stepped out of the bedroom and went upstairs.

Abigail and Langston was busy with their building blocks. To be precise, Abigail was engrossed while Langston was half-heartedly joining in, his mind on the laptop beside him.

"Daddy! Look at the castle I built!" Abigail waved excitedly upon seeing Everett.

He sat down beside her, folded his long limbs onto the carpet and touched her little braids, "You're amazing, Abigail."

"I did it all by myself; my brother didn't help at all!"

Langston snorted from the side, "I'm setting up our home network firewall; it's almost done."

Watching his son and daughter, and thinking of Dorothy asleep downstairs, Everett suddenly felt that life just like this might be touching the ceiling of happiness.

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When Dorothy woke up, the night had already wrapped the world outside in its dark embrace.

Stretching languidly, she rose from the bed. Her legs were still tingling with a residual soreness, but at least she could walk now.

Stepping out of the bedroom, the first floor was deserted, with only a single lamp casting a warm glow in the living room—it seemed like no one from upstairs had ventured down in quite some time.

As she reached the stairwell, the sounds of playful commotion drifted down from above. Everett was up there, his patience a well from which Abigail and Langston drew joyously. Each question they posed was met with careful attention, and Everett's answers were thorough, a testament to his commitment to their curiosity.

Dorothy knew that back at the Lopez Corporation, loads of work had awaited him, yet here he was playing with the children.

Hearing Dorothy's movement, Everett looked toward the staircase.

"Mommy's here!" Abigail's little figure darted into Dorothy's arms. "Look, Daddy got us new toys! I just unwrapped them!"

Dorothy surveyed the upstairs, relieved to find only a mountain of toys—no forts or anything too rowdy that might have prompted a mild reprimand to Everett. She understood his desire to make up for the lost time with his children, but he couldn't spoil them too much.

Everett stood up and circled Dorothy into a comforting embrace. "Awake now, are you hungry?"

"Not really." Dorothy's appetite was modest, and she could go a long while on little food.

"I'll have the chef whip up something light for you. You can't skip meals, it's not good for your stomach."

Dorothy nodded, uncharacteristically compliant. "Okay."

Meanwhile, Langston let out a sigh of relief as the progress bar on his computer finally hit 100%. He turned to share his triumph with Everett, only to catch the intimate moment between his parents. He scrunched his face and turned back to his screen, muttering something on his own.

After Everett instructed the chef to prepare snacks for the children, he returned with a gentle question. "Mommy and I are visiting Saint Cathedral tomorrow morning. You two want to come?"

Abigail was about to express her eagerness when Langston interjected.

"I'm not going. I haven't finished setting up the network security yet. Plus, why would I want to be a third wheel?"

"If brother's not going, I'm not either. I'll stay with him!" Abigail declared, wrapping her arms around Langston's neck with a giggle.

Dorothy sighed. "Langston, where did you learn all these phrases?"

"What isn't on the internet?"

She worried about the vastness of the web but before she could voice her concerns, Everett took her hand and whispered reassuringly, "Don't worry, I've filtered what Langston sees online. Nothing will slip through."

"You've thought of that too?"

"Of course. It's my responsibility."

Dorothy was no stranger to his meticulous nature, but this level of consideration still surprised her.

It was clear why not just anyone could handle being the CEO of an international conglomerate. Beyond managing a daily deluge of decisions, one had to anticipate every eventuality.

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In the end, Karen relented and accompanied Jeffrey to the hospital.

Levi had been assigned to a private room, which was an arrangement undoubtedly made by Jeffrey.

She had picked up fruits and gifts along the way, and as she entered the room, Levi's eyes lit up at the sight of her. However, the light quickly faded when he spotted Jeffrey, who was impeccably dressed in a suit, following closely behind.

"Levi, how are you feeling now?"

Karen's voice was as dry as an overcooked turkey, mostly because she was feeling guilty. She barely knew Levi, having only met him for the first time, but he had already taken a beating because of her.

Jeffrey's fists had been aimed straight for Levi's face. With bandages of all sizes plastered across his features, poor Levi looked like a mummy straight out of a Halloween party.

"I'm fine," Levi forced a grin, pain flaring across his face as he did so.

Karen moved to check on Levi's injuries, but before she could take a step closer, Jeffrey yanked her back.

"Look, I just told Karen here to apologize to you, man. We got into a quarrel and she wanted to make me jealous, so she invited you to have hot pot with her. It was all about getting a rise out of me, not because she was into you."

The way Jeffrey said "Karen" made her skin crawl with annoyance.

But to Levi, it sounded like cold, hard truth. A bitter smile twitched at the corner of his mouth. "So that's how it is. I thought she actually liked me."

"Oh, come on. That's nonsense." Jeffrey chuckled, arching an eyebrow mischievously. "Just look at me. One glance and you know who she's really into."

"Jeffrey!" Karen couldn't help but pinch his arm, even though he seemed to enjoy it way too much. To any onlooker, they were the picture of a couple playfully bickering.

Levi felt a pang of sadness but wasn't the type to hold grudges. Given his parents were close friends with Karen's, he wasn't about to make a big deal out of it.

"Well, just don't make her mad again, okay? Karen's a nice girl."

"I don't need you to tell me that." Jeffrey pulled Karen into his arms and planted a dramatic kiss on her cheek. "We've already decided to tie the knot."

Karen wanted nothing more than to sew Jeffrey's mouth shut permanently.

Levi glanced at Karen, wanting to seek some sort of confirmation.

She gave an awkward smile, at a loss for words.

"Don't listen to his nonsense. We're still figuring things out."

"So, he really is your boyfriend?" Levi pressed, not quite ready to give up. He had seen Karen struggling to break free from Jeffrey's grip the day before, and he thought maybe there was still a chance for him.

Faced with Levi's question, Karen had no choice but to nod in agreement.

"Yeah, he is."

Strictly speaking, he had only officially become her boyfriend about one hour ago.

"When we get married, you have to come for a drink," Jeffrey said, still grinning like a cat who got the cream.

Levi knew he couldn't compare to Jeffrey.

In looks, Jeffrey was the epitome of handsome, with his narrow, expressive eyes and an effortless air of laziness that made him irresistibly charming. But Levi was average-looking at best.

In terms of family background, Levi had seen the Rolls Royce Jeffrey drove the day before. The aura of wealth and privilege that Jeffrey exuded was unmistakable.

Even in height, Levi fell short compared to Jeffrey.

Other than offering insincere congratulations, there wasn't much left for Levi to do.

"If I'm available, I'll be there."

"Great!" Jeffrey said, taking Karen's hand. "Now that I've apologized, shall we go? Maybe head straight to meet your parents?"

After all, he and his parents were all set for it.

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"No!" Karen blurted out, her voice resolute. "Just give me some time, okay? I need to let this sink in with them."

The thought of breaking the news to her parents that her blind date had shifted from Levi to Jeffrey was daunting. There was no way her parents would take it lightly.

She needed a detailed plan on how to break it to them and, truth be told, Karen still found the idea of her and Jeffrey discussing marriage a bit ludicrous.

"Alright, you've got one day," Jeffrey conceded, setting his final limit. "I'm bringing my parents over tomorrow."

"What's the rush, Jeffrey?"

"Just jealous of Everett, I guess. I want my own little 'Langston' soon, too."

After seeing Everett with his kids, Jeffrey's desire for a child of his own had skyrocketed. He was so impatient it was almost as if he wanted to kidnap a baby and call it a day.

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The next morning, Dorothy and Everett left the house early.

Their first stop was Central Street.

Since it wasn't the weekend, the crowd was sparse, only with couples and friends chatting and laughing in twos and threes.

"Want a taste?"

Everett, donned in a dark trench coat, quickened his pace and bought a maple pecan ice cream from a street vendor.

Dorothy took a bite, "Delicious."

"Then I'll have Kevin buy some more and bring them back home."

"No need for that, really."

Hand in hand, they continued on their stroll, stopping occasionally and snapping several photos along the way.

They followed the navigation to the Saint Cathedral.

"Wow!"

The sight of the cathedral in front of her made Dorothy gasp in awe.

The sky was a striking blue, as if freshly washed by water, creating a visual spectacle against the cathedral's red brick and green domes.

She took out her phone, eager to capture the moment.

Standing behind her, Everett suddenly said, "Just taking a picture is boring."

Dorothy looked up at him, curious. "Then what would be interesting?"

Everett paused, his gaze shifting to a young student nearby with a backpack. He approached the student and tapped his shoulder. "Hey, mind if I borrow a pen and paper?"

The student was a bit startled by Everett's presence but nodded in agreement. "Sure, no problem."

After receiving the writing tools, Everett beckoned Dorothy with a finger.

"What do you want to write?"

She got the hint and playfully suggested, "Greetings?"

Everett chuckled with a hint of exasperation. "Isn't that a bit trite?"

"So what do you suggest?"

With a smile, Everett took the pen and wrote on the paper: Greetings from Everett & Dorothy.

Dorothy leaned in to read it. "What's the difference from my idea? I thought you said it was trite?"

"Trite, yes, but I have to listen to you," he replied with a wink.

He returned the pen and paper to the student with a thank you, then held up the note in front of cathedral.

"Let's take the picture this way."

Dorothy laughed and raised her phone, capturing the vibrant blue sky, the exotic cathedral, and their note in one frame.

"You really like it here."

She nodded enthusiastically. "Yeah! I remember seeing promotional images of Snowfall City and thinking how beautiful it was! But the photos were all snowy. It's even more beautiful now."

Everett tucked the note away and took Dorothy's slightly cold hand in his again.

"We'll come back when it snows," he promised.

Dorothy looked at him and smiled. "Yeah."

"Close your eyes," he suddenly instructed.

She complied instinctively. The next moment, the warmth of his lips pressed gently against hers.

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That heart-thumping sensation seemed to find its home only in the presence of Everett.

He kissed her with a focus that intensified from a whisper to a storm.

It wasn't until the onlookers began to tease that Dorothy pushed him away and bolted. Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment.

Everett knew she was shy. Striding with long steps, he caught up to her, "What's the worry? Think we're breaking the rules?"

Dorothy didn't know how to reply.

"Then let's make it official," he said, gripping her hand a bit tighter. "I'm back in town now. Let's head to city hall and renew our vows."

Dorothy blinked out of her daze and then smiled at him, "You think you can just whisk me away to sign papers? I've learned my lesson the first time around."

Looking for a proposal? Everett thought she was softening up.

But Dorothy shook her head, "I want to give it more serious thought before I give you an answer."

In the world of grown-ups, anything short of a yes was a no.

Everett understood.

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They bought some snacks and trinkets on the streets, and only when Dorothy felt a hint of fatigue did they head back to their place.

"Go rest up. I'll tend to the kids."

Everett stroked her hair, seeing the weariness in her eyes.

"Your company must be swamped, right? Don't dump it all on Kevin and Jeffrey. I'm not that tired. Playing with the kids is doable."

"Are you sure you're not tired?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

Dorothy nodded firmly, "Of course!"

"Then let's do something else." Without further ado, Everett lifted Dorothy into his arms.

She gave a start, then playfully hit his shoulder, a hint of complaint in her voice, "We just did... yesterday."

"Just kidding," Everett said as he laid her gently on the bed. "I've got the company matters in hand. Go to sleep."

Reassured, Dorothy was about to speak when Everett's phone suddenly rang.

He glanced down. It was Jeffrey calling. Dorothy also caught a glimpse of the name on the screen.

"And here you said you had it under control. Look who's calling now."

Everett sat on the edge of the bed, crossing his long legs. With Dorothy watching, he answered.

"Hello?"

"Everett! When are you and Dorothy heading back from Snowfall City?" Jeffrey sounded oddly excited, as if he'd stumbled upon some grand fortune, a stark contrast to his gloominess earlier when they had landed.

But this was the Jeffrey Everett knew, on his usual cheerful self.

"We haven't decided yet," Everett played with a strand of Dorothy's hair, twining it around his finger. "Is something up at the office?"

"No, it's my news!" Jeffrey chuckled, "Karen agreed to be my girlfriend, and I'm meeting her parents today!"

This revelation stunned both Dorothy and Everett.

Before their trip to Snowfall City, Jeffrey and Karen had been at odds.

"How did you pull it off?" Everett pressed immediately. "Jeffrey, you promised not to force her."

He could feel Dorothy frowning beside him.

"What do you mean 'pull it off'? I pursued her properly, and she said yes properly!" Jeffrey didn't appreciate the insinuation, his voice showing a hint of pique. "With my looks, do I need to resort to deceit?"

"Karen agreed willingly?"

"Of course! If you don't believe me, ask Dorothy to check with her!"

Everett paused, noticing Dorothy reaching for her phone, then asked again, "Jeffrey, you're serious about this, right?"

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"Absolutely!" Jeffrey's voice pitched up with excitement. "I'm not talking about just dating, man. I'm talking about meeting the parents, tying the knot!"

"How long have you guys even known each other?"

Everett felt they were rushing into things like kids playing house, not taking it seriously enough.

While he wasn't surprised Jeffrey could make such a move, the one in question was Karen. He couldn't help but throw in a few words of caution.

"Didn't you fall for Dorothy the moment you saw her? The only difference between us is—Dorothy didn't say yes back in our college days, but Karen said yes to me now."

Everett was at a loss for words.

"If Dorothy had agreed to be your girlfriend back then, you would've said no? That you'd complain about not knowing each other long enough, about not being cautious enough?"

Of course, Everett wouldn't have said no.

He was left speechless by Jeffrey's retort.

"Chill, dude. I'm serious this time. I want to get married and have a couple of kids, just like you and Dorothy!"

After a few more words of advice, Everett hung up. On the other side of the bed, Dorothy was already probing Karen.

"Did Jeffrey do something to you? You can tell me, don't be scared."

On the other end, Karen hesitated before saying, "Although he's done some pretty bold stuff, agreeing to be with him was indeed my choice."

"What made you change your mind?"

Dorothy clearly remembered Karen disliking Jeffrey before for his annoyance.

Even the time they met at the airport was a disaster! And that was just days ago.

"Just... I guess his parents are really nice, and it seems like Jeffrey is actually serious this time." Karen could feel that Jeffrey was different towards her.

Otherwise, he would have bailed on any other girl by now with his notoriously short patience.

Even if Levi did all this, it wouldn't be a big deal. But this was Jeffrey, the guy who's always been chased by women. He didn't need to try this hard.

"What about you? What do you think?" Dorothy didn't want her friend to start a relationship based on any side reasons. "Do you like Jeffrey?"

A long silence followed on the phone.

"He's pretty handsome, more so than any guy I've dated before."

"That's it? Just looks?"

Karen let out a dry laugh, "What else can I say that I'd even believe myself? I've only known him for a short while. Haven't really gotten to know him yet. What's drawing me in so far is that his parents are genuinely kind and their family vibe is so warm. And then, yeah, Jeffrey's got good looks."

Otherwise, there wouldn't be any start between them.

Especially since Karen truly disliked anyone who had been with Heather.

"Jeffrey mentioned visiting your parents. Are you guys planning on getting to know each other for a while, or... a shotgun wedding?" Dorothy was concerned when she heard Karen's tone. It was clear she wasn't quite smitten yet, and a wedding would definitely be premature.

"Don't listen to his nonsense! We've just agreed to try dating. Talking about marriage is way too early. I might be a sucker for a pretty face, but I haven't lost my mind!"

Hearing Karen say that, Dorothy felt relieved.

"Alright, as long as you know what you're doing."

"Don't worry, I'm not love-struck. If I were, I would've said yes to Jeffrey long ago."

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Dorothy hung up the phone, her mind whirling as she tried to come to grips with the reality of the situation.

Karen and Jeffrey - the thought of them together was, well, unexpected.

Everett rose from his seat and sauntered over to her. With an ease that spoke of years of intimacy, he wrapped her in a comforting embrace. "Don't worry, Jeffrey isn't just fooling around."

Dorothy sighed, her voice tinged with concern, "It's just that Karen has done so much for me over the years. I want to repay her, but she doesn't need money or love. I just don't know where to start. I feel guilty... like all I can do is protect her from getting hurt."

"If Jeffrey dares to mistreat Karen, he'll have me to answer to," Everett said with a grin. "Abigail and Langston aren't just your children. They're mine too. So we owe the debts together."

Dorothy looked up at him, "Will Jeffrey treat Karen right?"

"Jeffrey chased Karen with all his might. As for what happens next... Dorothy, I can't make guarantees."

No one could predict the future, not even someone like Everett.

"I'm not expecting them to go the distance, get married, have kids, and live happily ever after. I just hope that if they do part ways, it's not because Jeffrey broke her heart," Dorothy mused.

"I'd never let that slide," Everett assured her.

Dorothy laughed, her hand playfully encircling his neck. "Would you cut ties with Jeffrey for me then?"

His lips curved in a half-smile, his response immediate and sure, "I would."

"If he heard that, he'd accuse you of choosing love over friendship!"

"Maybe he would've in the past, but not necessarily now."

"Oh?"

Everett just smiled.

Isn't it different when one has a sweetheart and when one doesn't?

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As soon as Karen ended the call with Dorothy, she noticed two missed calls from Jeffrey.

Why was he so clingy?

"I'm heading over to your parents' place now."

Jeffrey's voice was buoyant and excited when she answered.

"I haven't even told my parents yet."

"Didn't we agree yesterday? I gave you a whole day!"

Karen thought for a moment and then scrambled out of bed. "You're not bringing your parents with you now, are you?"

She had a vague memory of Jeffrey saying he wanted to bring his parents over the day before.

"No, I didn't want to pressure you," Jeffrey admitted. He had considered it, but then thought it wouldn't be fair, like he was forcing her into marriage. So he decided to give Karen more time.

"Today it's just me visiting, and I've bought gifts for your parents."

"I still haven't told them about Levi's incident."

Karen found it odd that her parents hadn't asked about Levi since she'd been home.

"Don't worry about it. I gave Levi a sum of money to tell his parents he got hurt on his own, no mention of you." Jeffrey chuckled, "Trust me, your parents won't know what happened. Even if they find out Levi got hurt, they'll think it was just an accident."

"You're using your money to solve problems again."

"What's the point of having money if not to fix troubles?" Jeffrey retorted.

Karen didn't know what to say.

Well, he wasn't wrong! At least her parents wouldn't blame her now.

"So, how much did you give to Levi?"

Chapter 620

"A million bucks."

"You beat him up and then handed him a million?" Karen shot up with such force that she banged her head against the armoire, clutching it as she let out a pained "Ouch!"

Jeffrey grew anxious. "What's wrong? You think it's not enough?"

"No," Karen replied, checking her reflection to gauge the damage, then muttered with a tinge of sarcasm, "Jeffrey, why don't you just beat me up every day?"

Jeffrey was speechless.

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Jeffrey waited for Karen at the entrance of her apartment building. Soon enough, she emerged, donning a pink dress and draping a cardigan over her arms.

The pink hue stood out against her fair skin, making her look almost like a high school girl.

As Jeffrey watched her approach, the corners of his eyes crinkled in approval.

Sure, she looked pretty and vibrant in her outfit, but something about the pink seemed just a tad too glaring for his taste.

Karen walked over, her gaze drifting involuntarily to the empty back seat of his car.

He'd come alone, indeed, empty-handed.

Jeffrey, wise to her silent critique, curled his lips into a sly smile and wrapped an arm around Karen's waist. "Looking for something?"

"Not at all." Her cheeks flushed. "Can you keep your hands to yourself, please?"

"No! I'm your boyfriend now. Isn't it only right for us to be close?" Jeffrey teased, leaning in to whisper near her ear with a husky, playful voice, "Disappointed you didn't find roses on the back seat?"

Karen just wanted to zip his mouth.

Her little hope had been so blatantly exposed.

Jeffrey chuckled lightly, pulling out a set of car keys from his pocket and placing them in her hand. "Using Levi's old moves? Not my style. If he gave you flowers, I'll give you a car!"

Karen looked down to see the gleaming trident emblem on the key fob.

"You're giving me... a Maserati?"

"Yeah, a limited edition. One for each of us." Jeffrey raised an eyebrow smugly, "Just imagine, all the people in Eldorria City will know you're mine when we drive out."

After all, there were only two of that limited edition!

Karen paused and pushed the keys back into his hand. "I don't want it."

"Why not?"

"Jeffrey, this is too much." She felt like it wasn't a relationship but more like being kept.

Who gives a limited edition sports car on a first date?

"Too much?" Jeffrey's face was a picture of innocence. "The moment you say yes, all my assets are yours. Giving you a car now is just like moving money from one pocket to another—no difference!"

Karen sighed. "I didn't mean it."

She had only brought it up to test his sincerity and to dissuade him, never expecting him to take it seriously.

Seeing her reaction, Jeffrey's expression darkened. His excitement faded into seriousness.

"Are you having second thoughts?"

"No, it's just... I was thinking we could start with a normal relationship rather than rushing to marriage. I... I'm not ready yet."

Jeffrey frowned, prying her hand open and forcing the keys back into her palm.

"You have to accept my gift! You accepted Levi's roses, why not my car?"

"How can you compare a bunch of roses to a sports car?"

It was not the same thing!

"How much money does Levi have, and how much do I have?"