

## Midnight 621

### Chapter 621

Karen couldn't help but recognize Jeffrey's knack for smooth talking.

Opening the trunk of his car, Jeffrey revealed a bounty of gifts for Karen's parents.

Peeking inside, Karen was struck speechless.

Skincare products and fine wine were one thing, but bringing a solid gold ornament as a first-time gift to meet the girlfriend's parents?

"You're going to scare my parents with that," she chided.

Jeffrey's style of gift-giving was extravagant to the point of suspicion. Anyone would wonder if Karen had struck it rich or was hiding some scandalous secret.

"What should I bring then? I'll go buy it now," Jeffrey said, clearly inexperienced in this personal matter.

At Lopez Corporation, he was used to throwing his weight around, not currying favor with gifts.

He had no precedent for what to give when meeting a girlfriend's parents. He'd never gotten this far before.

"No need," Karen replied quickly, "My parents aren't home. They're probably visiting Levi. Let's just pick a nice restaurant and have dinner tonight. Your treat."

Subconsciously, she didn't want Jeffrey coming to her house. Compared to his mansion, her family's simple home felt embarrassingly modest. She knew he didn't care, but she didn't want her parents to feel inferior.

Relieved to see her relent, Jeffrey readily agreed, "Sure, I'll follow your lead! I'll just let my parents know. Whenever you want our families to meet, they'll be there."

Karen nodded, "Your parents are really nice. I can tell they really love each other."

Jeffrey opened the passenger door for her and waited for her to get in before he walked around to the driver's side.

"My dad can be tough, but he rarely loses his temper with my mom. He's only strict with me." His eyes crinkled with a smile as he reached over and pulled Karen towards him, sealing the gesture with a kiss.

Caught off guard, Karen struggled briefly before remembering that Jeffrey was her boyfriend now.

He deepened the kiss, refusing to let go, as if trying to savor every bit of sweetness from her lips.

When they finally parted, Karen's cheeks were a bloom of red.

"You can be quite the charmer," Jeffrey's voice dropped, husky with emotion.

"Aren't you supposed to be taking me shopping? If we don't leave now, I'm going back inside."

"Don't be mad," he teased, his gaze returning to the road ahead, but the engine remained silent.

Karen turned to him, "What's wrong?"

The smug look on Jeffrey's face had turned into a rueful grin.

"I regret kissing you just now."

"Why?"

He took Karen's hand and pressed it against his body.

The heat from his desire was palpable, even through the fabric of his pants.

"What do you think?"

Karen snatched her hand away as if shocked, glaring at him, "It's your own fault."

He sighed, "You're right. Just give me a moment to cool down. I can't drive like this."

Karen had been ready to tease him, but seeing his discomfort, she realized he was genuinely struggling.

"Jeffrey, maybe we could just..."

"Please don't talk to me right now! I'll be fine in a moment, really."

Chapter 622

Karen clamped her lips shut, taking her place in the passenger seat and waiting patiently.

She couldn't help but sneak peeks at Jeffrey's lap, noting with a suppressed giggle that the situation hadn't deflated much. It was almost comical.

It hadn't been that long since their last tumble between the sheets. Was he always this sensitive?

The atmosphere in the car grew thick with awkwardness for almost ten minutes.

Karen was about to break the silence again when Jeffrey cleared his throat, "Um... could I possibly use your bathroom?"

He needed a cold shower.

He had really overplayed his hand earlier, kissing Karen with such fervor that now he was in quite the embarrassing predicament.

Trying hard not to burst into laughter, Karen thought of every sad thing she could to stifle the giggles, "Sure, follow me upstairs."

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In the bathroom, Karen's cheeks flushed as she listened to the sound of Jeffrey showering. She had never considered him in a romantic way before, let alone as a potential husband.

But now, things were different.

"Is it okay if I use your towel?" Jeffrey suddenly called out from inside.

Karen touched her heated face, then walked over to the door, "The pink one is mine, did you see it?"

"Yeah."

His voice trembled a bit, perhaps from the cold shower.

In no time, Jeffrey stepped out of the bathroom, his hair dripping wet, awkwardly wrapped in Karen's pink towel. He looked so out of place, especially in the small confines of Karen's room, his towering figure almost invading the entire space.

"You didn't have to take such a cold shower," Karen said, noticing his shivers and quickly draping a blanket over his shoulders.

Jeffrey adjusted the blanket and gave a big, toothy grin, "Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to enjoy our day out."

"You good to go now?"

"Yeah," Jeffrey confirmed, turning to look for his clothes, only to hear Karen's voice behind him.

"We could have just... you know, instead of the shower."

They had been intimate before. What was the difference now?

Jeffrey froze for a second before slowly turning to face her, "Why didn't you say so earlier?"

"I did, in the car. I started to say 'maybe we could just...' but you cut me off, told me to be quiet!"

Who's to blame here?

Before Karen could finish her retort, she found herself suddenly lifted into the air and pinned firmly on the bed!

Jeffrey's freshly chilled body contrasted starkly against her warm skin, causing goosebumps to erupt all over her body.

"What are you doing?" she exclaimed.

"It's not too late to make it happen now."

Karen's eyes widened, the rest of her words swallowed down.

Jeffrey was impatient, not nearly as smooth and collected as before. He plunged forward without waiting for her to be ready.

"Ah... Jeffrey, it hurts..."

"Try to bear with it," Jeffrey urged through gritted teeth. "After I've been with you, I haven't been with anyone else. Count the days, how long has it been?"

Karen clutched his arms, glaring at him, "Who asked you not to see other women?"

"Would I dare? Then you'd accuse me of playing around!"

"I never stopped you—Ah! Are you trying to kill me?"

With a forceful move, Jeffrey gave her a mild punishment, "Would you be happy if I was with other women?"

Chapter 623

Karen bit down hard on his chest, her agitation bubbling like a pot about to boil over.

The more she bit, the harder he held her. What began as an intimate tangle turned into a full-blown wrestling match.

In the end, Karen had to admit defeat, her energy flagging as she pleaded with him in a softer tone to just hurry up.

If they kept this up, her parents would be back any minute.

After what felt like an eternity, they finally stopped, leaving only the sound of their staggered breathing.

Jeffrey tried to reach for a cigarette before remembering he was at Karen's place.

"Want a cigarette?" Karen asked.

"Nah, I'll quit if you don't like it. No more bad habits." He chuckled.

"I don't care what you do," Karen said, turning away and reaching for her clothes, her arms trembling.

Just as Jeffrey was about to speak, he sneezed several times in a row.

She handed him a tissue, frowning slightly, "You've got a cold, haven't you?"

"Maybe," Jeffrey replied, using the tissue and then heading back to the bathroom for a hot shower.

"How about we skip shopping today? I'll check when my parents are getting back, and we can all go out for dinner instead."

Karen hadn't really planned on moving things forward this quickly. After all, she and Jeffrey didn't truly know much about each other.

But he'd been pushing, and she'd been stalling the meeting of their parents. It was already causing some tension. If she kept her own parents from him, it would seem like she wasn't serious.

Plus, her parents had their doubts about Jeffrey's family background and were wary of asking too much. A face-to-face meeting could dispel those concerns, making future dates and meet-ups more natural.

And most importantly, she could finally stop the relentless pressure from her parents to find a boyfriend.

"I'm all ears for you," Jeffrey said in high spirits. He was so cheerful he'd agree to plan their wedding right then and there if she asked.

With a sigh, Karen got up to find her phone.

She'd barely dialed when the ringtone sounded from just outside the door.

Oh no! Her parents were back!

Karen froze, her grip on the phone slipping.

Had they returned earlier? The noise they'd made in the bedroom would have been unmistakable if her parents had been home.

In the bathroom, an oblivious Jeffrey hummed along to a tune.

Karen's heart sunk further as her mother didn't answer the call.

She walked to the bathroom door and knocked, "Jeffrey?"

"Yeah? I'm here."

"My parents... they might be right outside."

Jeffrey's humming stopped abruptly, and the bathroom door flew open.

There he stood in the buff, a mix of shock and bewilderment on his face.

"When did they get back?"

"How should I know?" Karen's face was a mask of despair. "What do we do now?"

Jeffrey was at a loss. They were boyfriend and girlfriend, sure, but not engaged yet. Being caught in his girlfriend's room under such circumstances by her parents was hair-raising, to say the least.

Seeing Karen close to tears, Jeffrey quickly grabbed her hand. His expression was serious, "Don't cry, okay? It's fine! I'll call my parents right now to come over for a formal meeting. You just tell your parents that we've already discussed marriage. That's why we... you know, got ahead of ourselves."

Chapter 624

As soon as he said that, Karen felt an even stronger urge to cry.

"Any other ideas? I'm not ready to settle down this early..."

"Nope, this is it!" Jeffrey had been eager to make things official, and this little mishap seemed like an assist in his favor!

At his words, Karen couldn't help but let a few tears slip out.

"Well, then you should call your parents. It's perfect timing since you've got that gift in the car. Let's make it a meet-and-greet today."

Jeffrey's anxious expression morphed into an even brighter smile, "Deal! I'll call them right now!"

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After wandering all the spots they wanted to visit in Snowfall City, Everett and Dorothy had Kevin book their return flight.

Dorothy was mindful that Everett had a pile of work waiting for him back in Eldorria City. He couldn't shirk his corporate duties entirely to keep her company, after all.

Having seen the highlights of Snowfall City, including Central Street and the majestic cathedral, Dorothy felt content.

She carefully packed all the souvenirs she bought in Snowfall City into her suitcase.

Everett watched her with a hint of a smile, "You know, I could buy you heaps of these."

"But souvenirs are special because of the memories attached to them. If you just swamp me with them, they lose their sentimental value."

"So, will you think of me when you look at them?"

Dorothy laughed, a bit exasperated, "Oh, there's plenty that reminds me of you."

It wasn't just the trinkets from Snowfall City, was it?

Everett stepped closer, wrapping his arms around her, "Have you missed me these past four years?"

"Guess it yourself."

"I bet you did," Everett grinned. "Otherwise, why haven't you dated anyone else?"

Dorothy looked up at him, "How can you be so sure?"

"I just know." Everett's certainty was unshakeable. "As long as you didn't end up with Kenneth, you wouldn't have settled for anyone else."

"Why's that?"

"If someone could waltz into your heart that easily, why would I have spent all these years scheming to win you back?"

Getting close to Dorothy, whether as a friend or a lover, required endless patience and preparation. She wasn't one to open her heart easily!

In fact, one might say that to even touch base with her, you'd need to invest a lot. And even then, you might not get the outcome you desired. Whether you called Dorothy cold or overly cautious, that's just who she was.

Jeffrey had suggested countless times that Everett should reveal everything he'd done for Dorothy, claiming it would help win her back. But Everett never even entertained the thought.

He knew it wouldn't work.

If he barged into her world as a dominant presence, Dorothy would probably run for the hills, not give a second thought to any supposed romantic feelings.

"So why the heck are you so set on cracking this tough nut?" Dorothy sometimes wondered if Everett's patience would have made any other woman fall in love by now.

"Because I only want you. No one else can take your place."

"Everett, you know about my family background. Sometimes, I get so frustrated with my own personality, but I can't help it! There's just so much that I'm afraid of, so many things beyond my control that I obsess over."

Everett took her hand and placed it in his, "As long as you don't let go of me, I'll always stand by your side."

Chapter 625

Dorothy peered into his eyes, which burned with an earnest intensity, unmarred by even a hint of evasion.

For a fleeting moment, she yearned to spill the beans about what his mother, Amanda, had done to Bella, just to see what he would do.

Would he still stand by her?

But the words died on her lips.

It wasn't fear that Everett wouldn't choose her. It was dread that he'd be torn apart by the decision, plummeting into an abyss.

On one side was the mother who raised him, and on the other, the love he'd pursued for years. Either choice could shatter him.

Rather than witness such torment, she chose to release her grip.

She couldn't bear to see Everett struggle, so she decided to make the choice for him.

After all, it was his duty to stand by his mother as an only child. No one could fault him for that.

If he sided with her, she feared the wagging tongues and the judgmental whispers would drag him into despair.

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Once Jeffrey was tidied up, Karen slowly opened the bedroom door.

There sat Derek and Serena in the living room as expected, each looking more sour-faced than the other.

Upon seeing his daughter emerge, Derek was the first to speak, "Karen, come here."

"Dad." Karen didn't dare bring any bravado to the table, approaching with the timid steps of a kitten.

"You remember I'm your dad? Seems like you've forgotten everything I've taught you!"

Derek was known for his good temper, rarely showing anger. But today, he was livid.

He was incensed by his daughter's lack of self-respect!

The thought of his daughter entertaining a man at home in broad daylight, it was a father's nightmare!

"Dad... Jeffrey and I..."

"What about you and him?" Derek's stern voice cut her off, then his gaze shifted to Jeffrey, his voice clearing, "Young man, your persistent visits to see my daughter have already displeased me, but I can't fault you for my daughter's actions! If Karen had truly cut ties with you, you wouldn't be tangled up with her like this. Given today's events, I'm deeply disappointed with how I've raised her, and I'm afraid it's not a good time for you to stay. Please leave. I won't see you out."

"Mr. Miller, Karen and I are truly in love. It's not like what you're thinking," Despite his usual nonchalance, Jeffrey approached the situation with utmost respect in the presence of his potential father-in-law, "Today was actually the day my parents were supposed to come over to formally ask for Karen's hand in marriage, and then... well, I just wanted to take a shower."

"Sorry, but I can't agree to your proposal," Derek stood firm, "A relationship that sprouts under these circumstances is too flimsy to support a lifetime commitment."

"I really do love Karen!" Jeffrey was getting anxious, "I want to marry her."

Derek turned his gaze to his daughter, "And you? Do you love him?"

Caught off guard, Karen hesitated before giving a muffled acknowledgment, "Yeah."

"What do you love about him?" Derek scrutinized the young man before him, his expression unyielding, "His good looks? Or the fancy car parked downstairs?"

Karen didn't dare to reply.

"Karen, we're a humble family. You're the only daughter of ours. We never expected you to climb the social ladder. Just look at him. He's got 'playboy' written all over him. Can you handle that? He says he loves you today, but tomorrow he could be saying that to someone else. Then who will you cry to?"

Chapter 626

Derek just wanted his daughter to marry someone from an equivalent family, so that if the marriage hit a rough patch or if she ever felt mistreated, he could step in and help her.

But what if she married into a much more powerful and influential family than theirs? Even if Derek put his life on the line, justice might be hard to come by in this cruel world.

What if his daughter was mistreated then?

The thought of his daughter suffering while he could not offer any help was something he couldn't bear.

Jeffrey was well aware of the family's concerns, so he immediately assured them, "Karen and I have discussed this. I've transferred all my assets to her. If I ever mess up and make her mad, I agree to a no-fault divorce and will walk away with nothing but the shirt on my back."

His declaration left Derek and Serena momentarily stunned.

"I swear, my feelings for Karen are true. I'm not just playing around," Jeffrey raised his hand solemnly, an earnest look on his face. "I've been chasing her for ages, wanting to marry her isn't just some whim! You're right, I've had a checkered past, but I promise, from now on, Karen is the only woman for me."

He spoke with such conviction that even Karen couldn't help but give him a few extra glances, wondering if he was just making well-rehearsed pledges.

After all, she only knew about his past from hearsay and his own accounts. Who knew if he would fall for every girl he met?

Perhaps these sweet nothings were second nature to him by now.

"We need to think this over. You should head back for today," Derek exchanged a glance with his wife, feeling that things had escalated too quickly and it was best to cool off before making any decisions.

"But my parents are already on their way to come." Jeffrey had called his parents earlier, and as soon as they heard, they dropped everything to come over.

Especially Paloma, who was eager to have Karen as her daughter-in-law and save herself the trouble of playing matchmaker.

"We don't wish to meet them today," Derek said flatly, "As you can see, the timing isn't right."

Silence fell on Jeffrey's side.



Seeing her parents' firm stance, Karen spoke up, "Dad, Mom, I'll explain everything to you in detail, but Jeffrey's already asked his parents to come. It would be rude to turn them away now. After all, they might be my in-laws in the future. Starting off on the wrong foot wouldn't be good, right?"

The term "in-laws" sounded like a charm.

Jeffrey's gaze brightened considerably at hearing it!

It was an indirect acceptance of the engagement. How could he not be thrilled?

"Karen, come with me," Serena said, pulling her daughter into the master bedroom.

Once the door was closed, Serena took a deep breath.

"Do you realize you almost gave your father a heart attack?"

"I'm sorry..." Karen hung her head, feeling guilty.

The truth was, she hadn't anticipated this. If she had known, she would have avoided being at home with Jeffrey.

"What's going on between you and that young man? Weren't you and Levi dating well? We heard he's been in hospital after an accident. Your father and I visited him today and he kept singing your praises!"

Karen didn't have the courage to reveal the real cause of Levi's "accident" and could only awkwardly rub her forehead, "He's nice, but we're not right for each other."

"And the guy outside is right for you?"

"He really treats me well," Karen admitted, "Mom, I want to give it a try with him."

Chapter 627

Even if Jeffrey had been quite the ladies' man in the past, Karen really wanted to give him a chance.

"Your dad's worried he's not reliable! With that face of his..." Serena sighed heavily, "Being handsome and rich, do you think he's going to settle down with you?"

"Mom, it's not like the ordinary ones would be any more likely to settle down if you only judge them by their looks and wealth. Rather than that, I might as well choose someone easy on the eyes."

She'd had her fair share of relationships with less attractive guys, and where did that get her? Only heartbreak.

If Jeffrey turned out to be a jerk, at least she'd have seen it coming and wouldn't be so blindsided.

"You sure about this?"

"Yeah."

Serena was torn for a moment before letting out another long sigh, "You two... have already gone this far, I won't say much more. Just remember, don't get pregnant before you're married! Or else you'll be stuck with no way out."

Karen felt extremely embarrassed, not knowing what to say.

She knew her parents must've overheard something when they came back.

How mortifying it was.

Jeffrey's parents arrived in no time, not only bringing the items he'd previously bought but also a collection of treasured gifts.

The array of gifts piled up in Karen's house like a small mountain, feeling completely out of place.

It was like Huxley and Paloma standing there in the room, all suited and booted, looking so formal and serious.

Jeffrey took the opportunity to pull Karen aside, eyes crinkling with a smile, "I've finally got you in the palm of my hand."

"My parents haven't agreed yet."

"You're already mine. They can't say no." He said, casually draping his arm over Karen's shoulder.

Karen quickly brushed him off, signaling him not to act like a rogue in front of her parents.

Her parents were still going through the motions, but the Turner family seemed genuinely earnest. It wasn't just about the lavish gifts. They never spoke down to Derek and Serena or acted superior. Instead, they kept praising Karen for being a great girl, saying their son was so lucky to have met her.

Watching the drama unfold, Karen felt like it was winding down and she could relax finally.

Jeffrey let out a sigh of relief, "If my parents hadn't shown up, I might not have gotten through to yours!"

Karen looked at him and asked softly, "What if my parents just flat-out didn't agree to us being together?"

Jeffrey raised an eyebrow, "You want the truth?"

"Of course!"

"I'd have to figure out a way to get you pregnant. Then they'd have to accept me as their son-in-law!"

At that, Karen's brows furrowed in disapproval.

"Why do you only come up with rotten ideas?"

He looked aggrieved, pursing his lips, "Why don't you believe me? I've never had to chase anyone before, and all these tactics are new to me – used only on you! You're just so tough to win over, what other choice do I have?"

He did want to be a gentleman, but Karen wasn't just any girl! He'd already tried sweet-talking and had his share of cheeky moves, even earning a few slaps for his efforts. What else was he supposed to do?

"Don't act like you're so hard done by. It's not like I asked you to chase after me."

"Right, right, it's all my doing because I just want to whisk you home and find new ways to please you every day!"

Karen pinched him hard at the waist, "Let's see if you've got the guts to repeat that to my parents."

Chapter 628

"Actions speak louder than words, babe."

Karen was about to pinch Jeffrey again but her hand was suddenly caught in his firm grip.

"You don't just go grabbing a man's belt without permission."

His voice was a deep, husky whisper that made Karen freeze in surprise.

Jeffrey leaned in close, his breath tickling the fine hairs on her earlobe, "And you can only touch mine."

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Dorothy was utterly shocked. When they had left Swevia Country, Karen and Jeffrey were at each other like cats and dogs. But as they returned to Eldorria City from Snowfall City, the two were hand in hand at the airport.

"Wow! Aunt Karen, you're not smacking Mr. Turner anymore?" Langston blurted out with a surprised look plastered all over his little face.

He vividly remembered the sound of Karen's slap on Jeffrey's face during their last dinner together – it echoed!

Such an embarrassing moment being aired like dirty laundry, Jeffrey felt a tad awkward. Hastily, he scooped up Langston and covered his mouth, "What do you know, kiddo? That's how Aunt Karen shows love! Haven't you heard? 'A smack means love, a scold means affection!' The harder the smack, the deeper the love!"

"So, my dad not spanking my mom means he doesn't love her?"

Smile on Jeffrey's face disappeared in an instant.

Karen was exasperated and pushed him away, "Don't fill the kid's head with nonsense!"

Everett, cradling Abigail, glanced over at the two and softly pulled Dorothy closer, "No need to worry. Jeffrey's serious this time."

"Let's hope so."

Dorothy noticed the genuine smile on Karen's face and the intimate interactions between them, which did put her mind somewhat at ease.

Once they were all in the car, with the men and kids laughing up front, Dorothy chose to sit in the back row with Karen.

"Does Kenneth know?"

Karen shook her head, "No way, how could I tell him?"

If Kenneth found out that her boyfriend was Everett's close buddy, and that he once had a thing for Heather, she'd probably be thrown out of the house!

"But he'll have to find out sooner or later."

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it." Karen shuddered at the thought, "Jeffrey and I are moving too fast. It might end as quickly as it started. Nothing's certain yet."

She wasn't holding out much hope for their relationship. Keeping her expectations in check seemed the best way forward.

After a moment's thought, Dorothy lowered her voice, "Karen, if things between you and Jeffrey get serious, and you eventually make it to the altar, promise me you won't let my issues affect your relationship."

She feared her own fallout with the Lopez family would drag them into the mess.

Karen raised an eyebrow, "That depends on Jeffrey's stance. If he can't distinguish right from wrong, I won't be with him! Everett's mom is up to no good; if Jeffrey tries to cover for her or speak in her favor, I'll kick him to the curb! I have no room for someone without integrity."

Dorothy's fear was precisely on this issue, "It has nothing to do with you guys."

"Don't overthink it, Dorothy," Karen reassured her, patting her shoulder gently. "Worrying about this all the time must be exhausting. Everyone has their destiny, and love is no different. How it evolves, whether it lasts – it's all random and uncertain. If it ends, it's because it wasn't right. Why lament over something that wasn't meant to be?"

Dorothy had always admired Karen's straight talk.

Up front, Jeffrey was animatedly recounting his encounter with Derek and Serena, completely unabashed and even proud as he concluded, "Anyway, after meeting the parents, I've finally upgraded from being her 'fancy fruit' to the real deal."

Chapter 629

"Fancy fruit?"

Everett was clueless about what the joke meant.

Jeffrey snorted with derision. "Your wife's bestie had regarded me as a fancy fruit for a fun try! You've been too busy mooning over your wife to care about me!"

Everett was speechless.

...

The news didn't escape Kenneth's radar. They had just arrived the city before sitting down for a meal when Kenneth's call came through.

Instead of confronting Karen directly, he phoned Dorothy.

When she saw the caller ID, she stood up and made a beeline for the exit, cautious not to take the call in front of Everett, just in case it was something serious from Byte 7.

Once outside the restaurant, she answered.

"Kenneth."

"Karen's parents called me earlier, said she's got herself a boyfriend, and they've already had the meet-the-parents dinner. Did you know that?"

That was the news of the day.

"Yeah." And they were in the middle of dinner together.

"What's the guy like? They say he looks like a playboy, not the reliable type. Karen's parents are worried she's being blinded and asked me to get the scoop from you."

Dorothy was at a loss for words on how to accurately describe Jeffrey.

Paint him in too good a light, and what if he ends up hurting Karen? It would be like giving her endorsement for their relationship.

But to speak ill of him when Karen was seeing Jeffrey would be like pushing Kenneth to force Karen to break up.

After a few seconds of thought, she finally said, "He's been good to Karen, otherwise she wouldn't have agreed to date him."

"But Karen never mentioned any of this to me before, not a hint of happiness or a word shared. Isn't that strange?" Kenneth paused before adding, "Dorothy, tell me the truth. Who is Karen's new beau? It's someone I know, isn't it?"

Otherwise, Karen wouldn't have kept it a secret from him.

"Well... you could say that." But Kenneth and Jeffrey had never really clashed.

"What's his name?"

"Jeffrey." Dorothy was cornered into revealing it.

There were a few seconds of silence before Kenneth's tone grew noticeably serious.

"The same Jeffrey who once sided with Heather against you?"

Silence fell on Dorothy's end.

"How could Karen do something like this! I'm going to question her."

Kenneth was about to hang up before Dorothy added, "Kenneth, let bygones be bygones. Jeffrey was misled back then, thinking Heather was a friend, and that's why he helped her. I've moved past it."

"Anyone who's backed Heather can't be a good egg! After all they had put you through, and Karen's dating this guy? I will never approve."

With that, he hung up.

His anger was palpable. Otherwise, Kenneth was always a gentleman.

Dorothy knew this secret couldn't be kept under wraps for long and it was bound to cause a stir.

As she turned to give Karen a heads-up, she saw Everett standing by the restaurant's entrance, at a distance that was neither too close nor too far.

The breeze played with the hem of his jacket and his hair, yet he was still, just looking at her with a steady gaze.

Everett seemed on edge now more than ever, almost afraid that a single phone call would chase her away.

He didn't know when Dorothy planned to leave, or on what day. He just felt she was always ready to exit his life at a moment's notice.

"Was it from Kenneth?" Everett asked, advancing with a few long strides as she ended the call.

Chapter 630

Dorothy nodded with a sigh, "Looks like Jeffrey's gonna have a tough time winning over Kenneth."

"That's their business," Everett replied, his chiseled face showing a hint of displeasure. "Why did Kenneth call you anyway? Shouldn't he be talking to Karen directly?"

"Probably he thinks Karen won't spill the beans, and it's her parents who asked him to check in with me. They wanted an inside scoop on the situation." Dorothy snuggled into his arms, her voice soft.

"You think there's something going on between Kenneth and me?"

"Well," Everett scoffed, "You might not be interested, but he sure is."

The last time when he was at Kenneth's place, Everett could feel his hostility from start to finish.

It wasn't just a little bit.

Kenneth had told Dorothy he was over her, that they were just friends, but still he'd be antagonistic towards Everett.

What did that imply?

"Everett." Dorothy pouted playfully. "Do you smell that? A big whiff of jealousy."

Everett didn't bother hiding it. He pinned her between the wall and his chest, kissing her thoroughly before letting her go.

"Yeah, I'm jealous, but not as much as Kenneth. Because when I want a kiss, I can get one."

Dorothy's cheeks were flushed, her breath still tinged with Everett's scent, a reminder of their intimate moment. She liked it.

Back in the dining room, Karen had already stood up from her chair.

Dorothy approached and took her hand. "Heading over to see Kenneth?"

"Yeah." Karen grimaced, exhaling heavily. "I've got to calm him down. If he tells my parents anything bad about Jeffrey, it'll tarnish his image for good."

"I'll come with you," Jeffrey was rising to join her. He couldn't let Karen face this alone.

"No need." Karen waved him off. "I'll talk to him first. You can't rush things with Kenneth."

Kenneth was a tough nut to crack. Seemed gentle enough, but he was stubborn and not easily swayed.

"I'll take you there and wait outside," Jeffrey insisted, his gaze serious. "Whether it's your parents or your cousin, as long as you're not leaving me, nobody can tear us apart."

Karen was moved by his words and nodded in agreement.

Hearing their conversation, Dorothy felt a stir of emotion.

She had wondered whether she and Everett could stay together if she had to face his family head-on, sending his mother to jail.

"What's on your mind?"

Everett drew close, kissing her forehead.

Dorothy smiled. "Nothing... Jeffrey really seems to care about Karen. I hope they make it."

"Care? That guy's way past caring now. I wouldn't believe those words came from him if I hadn't heard them myself."

Who was Jeffrey, after all?

A notorious playboy in Eldorria City - nobody would be ignorant of the name of Mr. Turner.

Now he was tamed by Karen, even considering marriage and kids - he must be serious.

Dorothy was surprised too. But as long as Karen was happy, that's what mattered. Like Karen said, the future was uncertain, and happiness in the moment was key.

She looked up at Everett, "Once you wrap up the company stuff, let's head back to Swevia Country together. I'm worried about your injury."

"It's okay; there's still something I need to do."

"What's that?"

"I want to be with you when you visit your mother's grave."