

Midnight 711

Chapter 711

Dorothy glanced at Everett, who had already shifted his gaze and was walking ahead, cradling their daughter in his arms.

She let her eyelashes flutter downwards for a brief moment before taking hold of her son's hand and hurrying to catch up.

Despite Everett having spent the majority of the day looking after the kids, Dorothy still found herself exhausted, dozing off on the car ride back home.

She had no recollection of how they got back to their room, but she was certain of one thing—Everett must have carried her.

When she woke up again, it was two in the morning.

As she slowly opened her eyes, she could hear the sound of Everett's steady breathing behind her.

He was sleeping deeply, lying there properly without a hand draped over her waist like before when he seemed to fear she would run away.

Sneaking her phone off the nightstand, Dorothy tiptoed to the couch before noticing an unread text message.

It was a flight confirmation from the airline: first-class seats from Swevia Country to Eldorria City, scheduled for the following afternoon.

It was the deadline she and Jonathan had set.

Instinctively, her eyes returned to Everett, lying on the bed. She knew he was the one who booked the flight.

He had said, "After these three days, I'll let you go."

Everett never lied to her, and this time was no different.

Dorothy bit her lower lip hard, trying to keep her emotions from spilling out.

With Everett handing over the USB stick with the video intact was more than enough; it would be unfair to expect anything more from him.

After all, Everett was facing his own struggles with his birth mother, and Dorothy was well aware of how difficult his situation was.

Fearing she wouldn't be able to hold back her tears, Dorothy decided to leave the room.

But as her hand touched the doorknob, she felt a warm palm grip her arm.

Surprised, she looked up into Everett's eyes.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Dorothy hadn't expected him to wake up; he had seemed so soundly asleep just moments ago.

"I...I was just going to check on the kids."

"Dorothy, you're not very good at lying."

Even in the unlit room, his eyes seemed to accurately pin her under the sparse moonlight.

It wasn't that Dorothy intended to lie; she just couldn't tell him she was planning to go out and cry.

In the end, she stuttered without offering any reasonable explanation.

Suddenly, Everett's arms tightened, pulling her firmly into his embrace.

Before Dorothy could utter a word, his lips had already begun their conquest.

Today's Everett was entirely different from before.

He picked Dorothy up as if possessed, tossing her onto the bed.

"Everett..."

"Shut up, I don't want to hear you talk."

His kisses never ceased, as if intentionally sealing her mouth, regardless of whether she was close to suffocation.

At first, Dorothy struggled instinctively because this version of Everett scared her.

But gradually, her arms wrapped around his waist, silently consenting to his every impulsive action.

Together, they sank into a fervent, drenched mess, her insistent whimpers mingling with his sweat, as if to strip away all his reason and keep her trapped forever.

After what felt like an eternity of tumultuous passion, with Dorothy being manipulated beneath and atop him, she finally felt a gentle nibble on her earlobe and a low growl that signaled release. Then, all was calm, save for their breathing.

"Everett, I want to take a shower."

After a while, she gently pushed against the weight above her.

But Everett tightened his grip on her waist, rolling over and pinning her against his chest.

"Wait."

There was still plenty of time before dawn.

Chapter 712

Jeffrey hadn't set foot in the hospital, so he had no idea if the child was dead or alive. He also didn't know if Paige had tried to call again because his phone lay in pieces.

The grand living room of his villa was a disaster zone - shattered vases and trinkets littered the floor, mingling with splatters of blood. It was a scene straight out of a horror flick.

When Huxley and Paloma arrived, they were greeted by this chaos.

Karen couldn't find Jeffrey the night before and hadn't called them but had shot them a text instead, thinking they'd call back if they saw it upon waking.

But when Paloma tried returning the call in the morning, Karen didn't pick up.

Sensing something was amiss, Paloma quickly grabbed her husband, and they rushed to check on their son.

"Jeffrey, what in the world happened?" Paloma gasped, rushing over to clutch his wounded hand. "Did you and Karen have a fight? This... this is extreme, honey! Turner, call the doctor, now! Jeffrey's hand is still bleeding, and it looks serious!"

Huxley, usually the lecturer, knew this wasn't the time for sermons. He simply nodded and reached for his phone.

"Mom, just leave it," Jeffrey pulled his hand away, acting as if the wound wasn't his own.

The blood, barely clotted, began to seep out once more.

"How can I just leave it, Jeffrey? I'm your mother!" Paloma guessed it had to do with Karen, especially since Karen was nowhere to be seen. It must have been a fight, but this was beyond any normal quarrel. "Tell me what happened. Why didn't you come home last night? Karen's message said she was worried sick about you."

"I didn't know she'd be out all night looking for me..."

"So, she got mad at you?"

Jeffrey shook his head.

Paloma was about to breathe a sigh of relief when he said, "Karen broke up with me."

Paloma was at a loss for words.

"Mom, she said I was disgusting."

Paloma frowned slightly, "What on earth did you do? Sweetheart, people say mean things when they argue. I'll talk to Karen, and everything will be fine. She just lashed out, that's all."

Jeffrey offered a pained smile and, using his battered hand, he pushed himself shakily to his feet.

"But I am disgusting, Mom. She's right."

Truly disgusting!

If the roles were reversed, Jeffrey thought he would be repulsed too.

That's why he couldn't muster the courage to chase after Karen, to beg her to take him back.

"Jeffrey, what exactly happened between you two? At least tell me, so I can help you figure it out. Karen is a good girl, and she's reasonable. She wouldn't really break up with you, it's probably just..."

"Paige had a daughter. My daughter."

Paloma was speechless.

"What!"

"Two years ago, I got wasted. I never expected it would be Paige. Afterward, she got pregnant and didn't tell me. She hid away and gave birth."

Paloma's jaw dropped and stayed that way, frozen in shock.

"The baby has a congenital heart defect, a serious one. Last night, I was at the hospital with her, didn't tell Karen."

"You! You!"

Paloma scrambled for words but couldn't form a single sentence.

Jeffrey looked at her with bloodshot eyes, "Mom, are you out of options too?"

"Does Karen know about the child?"

He shook his head, "I didn't get the chance to tell her. She wanted to break up before I could say anything."

"Then maybe..."

"Mom, I can't lie to her. She trusted me so much, I can't deceive her."

Chapter 713

Jeffrey knew that if he played his cards right, he could've kept the whole mess under wraps—absolute power has its perks. But every time he looked into Karen's eyes, guilt gnawed at him like a hungry rat.

He wanted to come clean to Karen; he really did. But how could he now when everything had fallen apart?

"Jeffrey, are you really going to break it off with Karen? You two were practically engaged!"

Paloma adored Karen and could see that her son had been serious this time.

But the current predicament seemed insurmountable.

Soon after, Huxley returned with the doctor. Upon seeing his wife in tears clutching their son, he was clueless about the upheaval.

As the doctor tended to Jeffrey's hand, Paloma filled in her husband, hoping he might have a solution to salvage the situation.

But Huxley wasn't looking to salvage anything. "Jeffrey, bring that Paige girl over," he commanded without preamble.

"What are you planning?" Paloma was taken aback.

"She's given birth to your child; you have to own up to it! A Turner child cannot be left to fend for themselves out there," Huxley stated firmly, his temper barely in check. "But before that, we're getting a paternity test done."

He wouldn't acknowledge a child without certainty.

"I'm not marrying her," Jeffrey said, his silhouette rigid against the window light, not even flinching as the doctor applied antiseptic to his wounds.

"Then why the hell did you mess around with her? Why give her a chance to get pregnant?" Huxley slammed his hand on the table, no longer caring about the doctor's presence, and scolded, "Jeffrey, I've warned you before about your reckless ways. No one in the Turner family has ever embarrassed us like this! Did you listen? Now look at the mess you've made, throwing tantrums at home. What does that prove?"

"Enough, Huxley," Paloma interjected, worried about her son's fragile state.

Huxley rounded on his wife too. "And you! You were planning to help Jeffrey keep this from that girl. What were you thinking? Is your son the only one who matters? Their daughter doesn't count? I think you're half to blame for this mess! You've spoiled him rotten!"

"It's not my mom's fault, stop it," Jeffrey's voice was hoarse, "I won't marry Paige, and I'll leave Karen alone. Everett's got a new project abroad; I'm leaving Eldorria City."

He had made up his mind. No one else was to blame but him.

Thankfully, he hadn't obtained the marriage certificate with Karen yet, so things weren't too bad for her.

Paloma wasn't ready to give up. "Now hold on, things haven't reached a dead end yet. Jeffrey, I'll go to the Miller family right now and try to smooth things over. Karen's a sweetheart; she might just soften up and forgive you. Besides, the child was from two years ago, and you didn't even know about it!"

She couldn't bear to see her son suffer over a mistake.

"Let him go!" Huxley declared, "Stop babying him!"

"Jeffrey..."

"Mom, leave it. I brought this on myself. I deserve it."

Paloma was about to speak when her cellphone chimed. It was Karen.

"Karen's calling me!" Paloma exclaimed before answering the phone.

Karen's voice was raspy on the other end. "I'm sorry. I thought I should at least tell you, Mrs. Turner. Jeffrey and I... we've broken up."

Chapter 714

"Karen, honey, listen to me. Could you pop over and see Jeffrey? He's in a bad way- covered in cuts and bruises, with blood all over the house. I'm scared he won't be able to handle the breakup!"

Karen fell silent on the other end of the phone.

"He mentioned he might follow the new company project and leave Eldorria City. He said that without you, he can't bear to stay in the country!" Paloma's voice cracked with emotion, tears streaming down her face. "I'm begging you, think it over, okay? Don't be so hasty, both of you think it over!"

Jeffrey frowned, tempted to snatch the phone away. "Mom! Don't pressure her!"

"I'll think it over. Thanks for your care these past days."

With that, Karen hung up.

Huxley sprung up from the couch. "First things first, give me Paige's number. I need to make sure her kid is part of the Turner bloodline!"

"Ah, right! Jeffrey, have you done a paternity test?" Paloma, suddenly hopeful, clung to her son's arm. "We should get that done, you never know..."

"I haven't, but I'm pretty sure the child is mine."

When he was with Paige, she was just nineteen, and it was her first time.

"Nonsense! We have to get that test done. You might be sure, but I'm not settling for just your word."

Jeffrey, seeing his father about to leave, called out firmly.

"At least don't go after her for it now."

"And why's that?"

"Her daughter's in the hospital, and they've issued several critical condition notices." It would be cruel to demand a paternity test from Paige at such a time.

Huxley understood his son's point, and that only fueled his anger!

His wayward son, stubborn as a mule when chastised, yet not completely heartless. The boy was just too frivolous and irresponsible.

"I feel like I've utterly failed at parenting! Let's go."

"Ah?" Paloma was stunned. "But his hand..."

"Let's go! Maybe this lesson will give him some time to reflect on what he should and shouldn't do in the future!"

...

The intense passion of the night left Dorothy feeling as though her spine might shatter when she woke the next morning.

Blinking her eyes open, she propped herself up to find Everett already sitting cross-legged on the sofa, waiting for her.

He still wore his usual icy demeanor, a single lift of his gaze exuding an air of haughty arrogance, utterly incongruous with the wild man of the previous night.

"You're awake."

"Yeah."

Dorothy instinctively straightened her clothes, puzzled by Everett's intentions.

"Freshen up and come with me."

"Where to?"

"To sell you."

Dorothy was dumbfounded.

When she saw Everett stand and walk away, Dorothy guessed he must be off to spend time with the kids.

As for where he was taking her, she had no clue.

Still, she obediently got ready and dressed, waiting for Everett.

Feeling it was about time, Everett returned, gave her a glance, and led the way with long strides.

Dorothy was curious about their destination but decided not to ask.

She would find out soon enough.

The moment she laid eyes on Heather, Dorothy instantly grasped Everett's plan.

"Dorothy! What are you doing here?" Heather was visibly shocked.

She had thought Everett wouldn't dare to bring Dorothy along, especially since Heather could spill the beans about his mother being the mastermind behind their troubles.

She had figured Everett would keep Dorothy hidden away.

The next second, Heather's shock turned to astonishment as her gaze shifted to Everett. "You told her!"

Chapter 715

"Everett, have you lost your mind?" Heather's voice thundered through the air, her disbelief palpable.

Everett, however, simply stepped back, an unreadable calm washing over his features.

"Dorothy, I kept my promise to you. I did everything I said I would."

His hopes hadn't been met, but he was letting go.

Without another word, Everett turned on his heel and climbed back into his car, driving away without a moment's hesitation.

Dorothy watched the car until Heather's loud, mocking laughter echoed from within.

"Oh Everett, my whole life's been wrecked because of you, and to think you too have someone you can't have! How perfect, how just, what sweet karma! I thought I was the only one going mad, but you- you're even crazier than I am!"

A dark shadow of hatred flickered in Dorothy's eyes as she turned her face away.

"Heather, Everett left you in my hands, along with all the video evidence. This time, you're not escaping the consequences!"

Heather sneered. "What can you do with some videos? I might as well tell you, I gave them to you on purpose! Let's see if they help you overturn that old lady's case, if you can use them to topple the might of the Lopez Corporation!"

"So, your plan was to make the videos disappear, right?"

Heather's expression faltered. "How did you..."

"Everett gave me a copy, one that he had secured."

Her legs went weak, and she had to clutch the wrought iron railing to keep upright. "Impossible, Everett would never do that! The mastermind is his mother, his own flesh and blood! He must know this is murder, a capital offense!"

This could bring the whole Lopez Corporation down- an impact immeasurable!

Everett's actions were akin to self-destruction.

"Who else but him would have the means?"

Heather was left speechless.

Dorothy closed her eyes, steadying her emotions before speaking in a hoarse whisper, "When you all thought power could trample life, you never foresaw this day. So why should I care about the consequences you face? My mother has been bedridden for years, never even met Everett's mother, and yet she was murdered by you two!"

She couldn't bear to imagine her mother's despair and helplessness in her final moments- dying without a loved one by her side, her daughter not even there to say goodbye.

"I don't believe you. You're bluffing, lying!" Heather refused to accept this truth.

Heather had thought Everett would go to any length to protect his mother, which meant he would also keep her safe, minimizing the scandal.

It was just a matter of not being able to have Everett, but she could still ensure her own survival, no matter what happened.

"That's what you think. The truth will come out in court," Dorothy said, turning to leave.

But Heather called out, "Dorothy, I really want to know, do you even love Everett?"

Dorothy stiffened, her lips sealed in silence.

"If he knew about your mental illness, that you're incapable of loving anyone, would he have ever cared for you in the first place?"

"Even if he didn't care for me, he wouldn't care for you," Dorothy retorted.

"He would! Everett just loved the wrong person! You'll never understand what he wants, Dorothy. He wants your complete trust, your unconditional love - something you can't give, something you'll never be able to give. The only person who truly gets him is me!"

Chapter 716

Dorothy's mind raced back to the look in Everett's eyes that day.

His gaze, red and raw, bore into her as he asked whether she had ever considered him, even just a little.

At the time, Dorothy thought he was pleading for her to forgive his mother for his sake, to spare him from being stuck in the middle. But now, it struck her that he was actually questioning the trust she had never given him.

Yes.

Dorothy was at a loss for words.

She truly hadn't trusted Everett. Right from the start, she was wary of letting him get involved, fearing he might show favoritism or shield his mother.

There was no excuse she could make for that.

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After returning home, Karen locked herself in her room, refusing to come out.

This had Derek and Serena beside themselves with worry.

But they didn't dare push too hard, pacing anxiously outside her door like a sentinel.

Suddenly, her bedroom door swung open.

Serena leapt from her chair, "Karen, are you..."

"Mom, I'm fine! I want to visit the hospital to check on Kenneth, to see if he's been eating well, and find out if he can be discharged today."

"Oh, yes! Kenneth might be discharged today. It's good for you to go see him!" Serena had been fretting over her daughter stewing in her room, so Karen wanting to step out was a welcome relief. "I'll have your dad drive you!"

"No need, I'll just grab a taxi," Karen said with a smile, taking her mother's hand. "Mom, it's just a breakup. It's not my first rodeo with boyfriends. You don't have to fear I'll do anything rash! Sure, it hurts, but life can't stop for Jeffrey, can it?"

"It's good to hear you're dealing with it. That eases my mind!" Serena sighed in relief. "Go ahead. Do you have money? Let me give you some."

Karen waved her off, "No need, I've got some. I've made a bit from a recent job."

"Good, good! Text me when you get to the hospital."

"Will do."

Karen descended the stairs and hailed a cab.

"Hi, to City Hospital, please."

As she sat in her bedroom earlier, her anxiety had mounted.

She and Jeffrey had been reckless for a few days, and in the heat of the moment, he'd insisted she not immediately shower afterward.

Back then, she had thought that if she got pregnant, she'd keep the baby, given how much he loved kids. But she hadn't anticipated the breakup happening so suddenly.

Karen counted the days; her period was indeed a day late, though it wasn't unusual for her cycle to be irregular.

Still, it was best to get checked at the hospital, just to be safe.

On the way, her mind churned with possibilities.

What if she was pregnant?

Despite wracking her brain, she couldn't find an answer by the time the taxi arrived at the hospital entrance.

After paying the fare, Karen got out, her mask and hat in place, and made her way to the obstetrics and gynecology department.

The area was lively with expectant mothers, some in the early stages, while others appeared visibly ready to deliver. Typically, they were accompanied by their husbands, or sometimes their own mothers or mothers-in-law- all faces alight with the anticipation of new life.

Influenced by the atmosphere, Karen suddenly felt the urge to touch her still-flat belly.

The answer that had eluded her in the taxi suddenly became clear.

If she was indeed carrying a child.

Perhaps she should give Jeffrey another chance?

He had assured her so earnestly that nothing had happened between him and Paige that night, that he had only accompanied her to the hospital. He even offered to review the security footage with her. That had to mean something, right?

Chapter 717

But what Karen couldn't shake was why he had deliberately turned off his phone!

Truth be told, if he had just been upfront about Paige being in a bind and needing his help, Karen would've nodded her approval for him to go openly. But some things, once done on the sly, take on a different nature.

Even if nothing untoward had happened, she found it hard to understand him.

Forget it, for all she knew, she might not even be pregnant. Why bother with these thoughts?

"Karen, please proceed to Exam Room Three."

The automated announcement echoed through the maternity ward's waiting area.

Karen quickly stood up, adjusting her beanie, and made her way to Exam Room Three.

Most expectant mothers came to the hospital with their partners or family members, but there she was, alone and heavily cloaked, a sight so unusual it drew curious glances from passersby.

She quickened her pace and entered the exam room, even the doctor pausing at her appearance.

"Is it chilly outside?"

"No."

"Did you come alone?" The doctor quickly masked her surprise, looking down to inquire about Karen's basic information.

"Yes."

"If the test comes back positive for pregnancy, do you plan on keeping it?"

The doctor's tone was neutral, devoid of inflection—a question she must have asked hundreds of times a day.

Karen, a newcomer to these proceedings, was momentarily bewildered, "Do I have to decide now?"

She had thought she would find out first and then have some time to think!

The doctor pursed her lips, looking up at her. "That's how it works. If you decide to keep it, there are certain tests we can't perform. If you decide against it, we can do a sonogram to confirm whether or not you're pregnant, determine how far along you are, the size of the embryo, and discuss your options."

Karen didn't know what to say.

There was so much more to consider than she had thought!

"If you can't decide, we'll start with the tests for keeping the baby."

"Okay," Karen nodded.

"Go and pay the fees, and come back here after you're done with all the tests."

"Alright."

Karen rose and left the exam room, her heart racing with an indescribable unease.

It felt as if something was perpetually hanging over her, a constant source of anxiety.

Hesitating for a moment, she suddenly had the urge to call someone - anyone who could come and keep her company, or at least lend her a listening ear.

But scrolling through her contacts, involving her parents was not an option, Kenneth was out of the question, and Jeffrey... it wasn't the right time to call him. That only left Dorothy.

And she was still abroad.

After a moment of hesitation, Karen dialed Dorothy's number anyway.

"Dorothy..."

"What's up?"

"Jeffrey and I broke up." Karen's lips trembled, but she held back from sharing her current situation at the maternity clinic, "Just wanted to let you know."

"Why?" Dorothy sounded just as shocked on the other end.

"I'll tell you when you get back. When will you be here?"

"I should land in Eldorria City tomorrow."

Karen fell silent for a moment before responding, "Alright, I'll pick you up."

After hanging up, she glanced once more at her phone, confirming there was no one else to talk to, before heading off to undergo the tests with the form in hand.

Several hours passed with blood drawn, lab work, and an ultrasound.

Derek had called in the meantime, wondering why she hadn't arrived at Kenneth's yet. Karen told him she was grabbing a bite to eat and would be there shortly.

Returning to the vicinity of the exam room, she waited for the announcement.

After about five minutes, it came again, "Karen, please proceed to Exam Room Three."

Chapter 718

Karen pushed herself up from the chair, her legs trembling beneath her like overcooked spaghetti.

She thought, this must be what a convict feels like, walking to their own execution.

She carefully nudged the door open to find the same doctor inside.

"Karen, right?"

"Uh-huh." She nodded rapidly, a bashful schoolgirl in that instant.

The doctor glanced at the computer screen, pulling up Karen's test results and scrutinizing them for what felt to Karen like an eternity, though it was really only seconds.

Then the doctor spoke, "You might be pregnant."

Karen froze in place.

"At the moment, it's quite early. Your HCG levels aren't high, but they're increasing." The doctor looked up at her. "Go home, talk it over with your partner, and then decide what you'll do next."

Karen was too shocked to speak.

"Karen?" Noticing her silence, the doctor called out her name again.

Snapped out of her trance, Karen hurriedly responded, "Sorry, just spaced out for a second there. Did you say I'm pregnant?"

"Yes, according to your blood test, you are. The ultrasound doesn't show much yet, which means it's early days. Take some time to think it over."

"Okay, I got it."

As Karen stood up, she was so nervous that she banged her shin against the edge of the table.

A sharp pain made her wince.

"Are you alright?" The doctor stood up, concerned.

Karen waved it off, "I'm fine! Thanks, doc."

She quickly left the examination room, only to find herself rooted to the spot outside, legs like jelly.

What kind of soap opera was this?

Broken up and now pregnant? It was just too melodramatic!

Karen had never imagined she'd star in such a scenario. Despite having considered the possibility on her way over, thoughts remained just thoughts. When reality hits, it's a whole different game.

Suddenly, her phone buzzed in her bag.

Looking down, she saw it was Jeffrey calling.

His timing was impeccable.

Karen took a deep breath, but before she could decide, the ringing stopped.

Jeffrey was probably just as conflicted, thinking she didn't want to answer his call.

Hesitant, she was about to redial when Jeffrey called again.

This time, she answered immediately.

Jeffrey seemed taken aback by her swift response, momentarily speechless.

"Well? You call and don't speak up?"

"Um, Karen, I need to talk to you. Can we meet one last time?"

Jeffrey felt there were things he needed to clear up.

Even if they were no longer a couple, he wanted to be transparent, especially since she was still friends with Dorothy. There was a chance they'd bump into each other in the future, and he just couldn't stand the feeling of lying and running away, the weight heavy on his conscience.

"Sure." Karen's response was quick, "I actually have something to tell you too."

"On what?" Jeffrey asked instinctively.

"Let's talk face to face. Where are you?"

"I'm at the City Hospital."

Karen pursed her lips, her gaze catching the City Hospital logo on the door. "I'm here too. Let's meet at the outpatient department."

"Okay."

After hanging up, Karen slapped her forehead in frustration.

She wondered, if she just forgave Jeffrey like that, would he even learn to appreciate her? Despite her firm resolve during their breakup, now she was...

Chapter 719

Karen truly detested flip-flopping on decisions.

Besides, bringing up the matter with her dad...

Well, if it ever came to that, initiating such a tough conversation would be challenging.

She found herself second-guessing. Agreeing to meet up with Jeffrey had been too hasty, lacking the deep thought it deserved. Perhaps the best course of action was to discreetly schedule an appointment for abortion, and then let bygones be bygones.

However, now that she had promised to see him, backing out wasn't an option! Might as well hear him out and see what Jeffrey had on his mind. Then, she'd decide.

As Karen walked toward the clinic, a nagging thought kept prodding her. Jeffrey had set their meeting at the hospital—was it to show her some security footage, to prove his innocence?

Considering his attitude towards Paige before, it didn't seem like he was keen on rekindling anything with her. Maybe it was just his buddy asking for a favor to check on her? And Jeffrey, probably not wanting to say no and anxious about upsetting her, simply turned off his phone?

Endless possibilities swirled in her head, leaving her in a chaotic mess. No matter what, it seemed none of the options were what she desired.

A few short hours later, when they met, Jeffrey seemed to have aged prematurely, the vitality that was once present in his eyes now diminished. His tall frame slouched slightly against the car, a cigarette dangling from his fingers, adding a touch of defeat to his posture.

Despite this, he still managed to catch the eye of a few passing girls.

Karen had to hand it to him; his charm was something the women around him cultivated—a steady stream of them, never-ending, so no wonder he took it all for granted.

Paloma hadn't lied; Jeffrey's hands were bandaged with traces of blood seeping through, likely from his post-breakup rampage.

The man was a walking emotional roller coaster!

Spotting Karen, Jeffrey straightened up and tossed his cigarette to the ground, crushing it beneath his shoe.

The awkwardness of breaking up in the morning and meeting again in the afternoon wasn't lost on Karen.

"You... you're here to see Kenneth?" he asked, trying to cut through the tension.

"How did you know?"

"I called Dad...I mean, your dad. He told me." Jeffrey's eyes flickered away, unable to meet hers.

Karen frowned slightly but didn't respond, tacitly acknowledging his statement.

They stood in silence, each lost in their own thoughts.

Impatient with his muteness, Karen eventually prodded, "Didn't you want to talk about something? Why so quiet now?"

Jeffrey's head hung lower. "I don't know how to start..."

"If it's that hard to say, maybe you shouldn't say it at all." Until now, she still believed he wanted to reconcile, which explained his hesitance.

His struggle irritated her for no clear reason.

Why seek her out if he hadn't made up his mind?

Karen turned to leave, but Jeffrey, quick on his feet, caught her wrist. "Karen, wait! Just give me a moment to find the right words!"

"You don't need to. If you can't even be honest, I don't think we should even be friends, let alone see each other again."

"I came here to be honest!" Jeffrey was clearly anxious, his words catching in his throat, "Look, didn't you say you had something to tell me too? You go first."

"It was you who wanted to meet. You go first." Karen couldn't possibly reveal her pregnancy first!

She wanted to gauge Jeffrey's attitude.

"Alright, I'll say it," he said, his voice dry and tense, his whole demeanor restless. "Uh, it's about Paige."

Paige again!

Karen had assumed he was going to talk about reconciliation!

"Why does she always have to be a wedge between us!" Karen's brows knitted in frustration, "Are you sure she's your ex-girlfriend?"

Chapter 720

"Seriously, we haven't been in touch for over two years!" Jeffrey couldn't help but subconsciously start to explain.

Even though he knew that once he spoke his piece, none of it would matter anymore.

"So what, old flame rekindled?"

"No."

Karen lifted a hand to massage her temples, "Alright, spit it out then. What's this bombshell about Paige?"

"I..."

"Yeah?"

Jeffrey's lips parted, but no words came out. His hand reached into his pocket for his cigarettes.

Only to have Karen slap them away, "Don't you dare smoke in front of me!"

Jeffrey was at a loss for words.

"Just say it, I can't stand the smell of smoke."

Jeffrey clenched his jaw, lowering his voice to a barely audible whisper. "I...I have a daughter with Paige."

Karen frowned, her impatience clear, "You speaking for the mosquitoes?"

His voice was so soft that she felt like handing him a megaphone. Who was he trying to challenge with that whisper?

Having said it once, it seemed less difficult to say it again.

Jeffrey cleared his throat and raised his voice a notch. "I said, Paige and I have a daughter, she's over a year old now."

This time Karen was genuinely stunned.

"Paige kept it a secret, I only found out recently! The child has a congenital heart defect, and she begged me to stay with the child in the hospital for one night. I...I couldn't bring myself to refuse, but I was afraid to face you, so I turned off my phone."

Jeffrey had his eyes closed as he confessed, feeling like he was throwing caution to the wind.

He forced himself to face it, as a sign of respect for his relationship with Karen. He knew he had to speak up!

After all, their breakup was a foregone conclusion. After all, he was leaving.

Karen stood rigid for a full three to five minutes, almost forgetting to breathe.

In her wildest dreams, she didn't imagine Jeffrey had this to tell her!

He had a child with Paige!

They had a child!

No wonder Paige had said in the restaurant that she couldn't possibly marry Jeffrey. So that was the confidence she had.

"Karen?" Jeffrey opened his eyes when he didn't hear her voice.

The person before him stood still as a statue, completely motionless.

Jeffrey's heart sank to the pit of his stomach, "I'm sorry. I really didn't know!"

Karen finally spoke, her tone eerily calm. "You said you always took precautions. How could she get pregnant?"

"I was drunk that time, and I thought I took precautions, but..."

"The truth is you couldn't be certain you used protection with every woman. Paige's child was an accident. And who knows how many more 'accidents' there could be."

Jeffrey panicked and quickly gestured with his hands, "I swear, this is the only one, just this once! Definitely not a second!"

"Stop swearing." Karen's voice dropped as she took a step back. "My ears are practically calloused from it."

Jeffrey didn't know how to respond.

"Thanks for your honesty today. At least I can die knowing the truth." Karen could even thank him for the grace of not marrying her. "Done? Then I'm leaving."

She took a few steps back and turned to leave, but Jeffrey couldn't control his urge to follow her.

"Karen! I'm sorry..."

"Yeah, great, I accept your apology."

She was too composed, which made Jeffrey even more nervous. He wished Karen would hit him, anything but this indifferent demeanor.

"Karen, just wait a second!" He ran in front of her, forcibly turning her to face him, "You said you had something to tell me too, right?"