

## Midnight 761

Chapter 761

"But I don't want to marry you!"

Jeffrey was clearly holding back a storm of anger.

If he hadn't thought she was taking too long in the restroom and barged in without considering the men's and women's signs, Karen's call would have gone through!

God help him if Dorothy found out he had essentially put Karen under house arrest—it'd be worse than if his own parents knew!

Dorothy was the apple of Everett's eye; she was untouchable.

Everett would definitely give him hell for this.

"Knock it off. You've had your bathroom break. Now let's go get our marriage license."

Jeffrey's hand landed on her shoulder, pressing gently but firmly.

But Karen wasn't budging.

"Can't you be reasonable for once? Jeffrey, the more you push, the less I want to marry you!"

"Then who do you want to marry?"

"That's not the point! Don't twist my words!"

Jeffrey clenched his jaw, his towering presence casting a shadow that enveloped Karen.

"You were worried about playing stepmom, so I proved that Paige's child isn't mine! You were scared of the drama from exes. My handling of Paige and Arthur's situation has sent a clear message to the scene—if they value their lives, they won't mess with me. You can rest easy."

Rest easy? What was there to rest easy about? Karen thought.

"Jeffrey, what you did to Paige was heartless; I'm scared you'd do the same to me one day!"

"I won't!"

Karen peered into his eyes and said, "Then let me go. I don't want to marry you, and as for the child, I might reconsider."

"No negotiations on that."

"Well, I'm not going!"

In a flash, Jeffrey hoisted Karen up in his arms. "I'm getting that marriage license today."

...

Dorothy had gathered everything Ephraim had requested and made a special trip to hand it over to him personally.

He was enthusiastic, eager to hash out the details.

"Looking at it, the court might peg Heather as the mastermind."

After all, it was Heather who had started the trouble; Amanda and Dorothy's mother had no direct beef.

"But it wasn't Heather giving the orders."

"Ms. Sanchez, with this evidence, their conviction is a sure thing. It's just a matter of sentencing and the nature of the conviction. I'll fight for your best interests, whether that's monetary compensation or severe punishment."

Lawyers instinctively prioritize their clients' rights and interests.

But Dorothy was different.

"I won't agree to a settlement, nor will I sign any agreement."

"But... even if both defendants get the death penalty, you won't get anything! Your mother won't come back to life." Ephraim knew such a statement was hard for most clients to swallow, but he had to say it.

"I'm adamant about an eye for an eye, Ephraim. My greatest hope is that they both get the death penalty."

Ephraim paused, choosing his words carefully, "That might be difficult... The final verdict might disappoint you. One might get death, the other—"

"I'll appeal for a second trial. And if the final verdict remains the same, I'll accept it."

She was seeking justice, not a vendetta.

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"Alright, keep that balance in your mindset, and trust us at West Legal Services. We'll go all out for you."

"Much appreciated."

Dorothy stood up and gave Ephraim a very formal nod. "I'm truly grateful that West Legal Services is willing to take on this case without fearing the backlash from the Lopez Corporation. Of course, I have absolute trust in you."

"No need to thank me! Going the extra mile for our clients is what we're all about."

Ephraim could hardly stand the formality, feeling a chill run down his spine!

After Dorothy left, Ephraim's assistant sidled up, whispering, "Boss, are we really taking on this case? You do realize this involves the Lopez Corporation..."

With a glance, Ephraim replied, "If nobody had given the green light, I wouldn't dare touch it."

"In Eldorria City, who would be bold enough to back you against the Lopez Corporation?" The assistant was all ears, "Can you let me in on it?"

"Curious?"

"Yeah!"

Ephraim flicked him on the forehead, "Idiot! If you know that nobody in Eldorria City would dare cross the Lopez Corporation, then you should be able to guess who's pulling strings behind the scenes."

Rubbing his sore head, the assistant grumbled, "So, who is it? It can't possibly be someone from the Lopez Corporation themselves, backing Ms. Sanchez to sue their own company, can it? Are they testing their legal department or what?"

"Looks like you're destined to be an assistant a while longer. I've got to head to court."

...

After leaving West Legal Services, Dorothy went straight to the supermarket to pick up some veggies and fruits before heading back to her apartment.

She had been house-hunting earlier, planning to check out some places once she had all her evidence lined up and her lawsuit filed. She needed to move out of Karen's place.

Speaking of Karen, Dorothy realized she hadn't gotten a response from her all day!

It couldn't be that she was still asleep, could it?

As Dorothy booted up her computer to organize the data on the Lopez Corporation for Kevin, she dialed Karen's number.

No answer after several rings.

Just as she was about to try again, a message from Karen popped up on WhatsApp.

[It's Jeffrey. She's in the shower. What's up?]

Dorothy frowned slightly and texted back: [Why do you always have her phone?]

Jeffrey quickly sent a photo.

She opened it to see Karen fresh out of the shower, her hair still dripping wet.

[She said her hands were wet and it's hard to use the phone. Plus, she's carrying my child, what could I possibly do? You got something to worry about?]

After thinking it over, Dorothy figured it made sense.

The couple was probably enjoying their honeymoon phase, making up after a spat. It was normal for them not to reply right away. Besides, it wasn't like she and Karen were constantly in touch, only messaging when needed.

[Just take good care of her! And remind Karen to call Kenneth. He's pretty upset and needs some smoothing over.]

The reply that came back seemed to be from Karen herself, given the way it started with Dorothy's name.

[Dorothy, got it! I'm a bit scared Kenneth will chew me out. Better let him cool down before tackling it head-on! Don't worry about me. I'm doing great here with Jeffrey. He's treating me well.]

Chapter 763

Dorothy heaved a sigh of relief and set her phone down on the kitchen counter next to a half-eaten apple pie.

Jeffrey and Karen getting back together was a small comfort, a tiny slice of good news in what had been a roller coaster of a month.

She booted up her laptop and logged into the backend of Lopez Corporation's network. Her role as a supervisor was still listed there.

When her old gig at East Star Enterprises got absorbed into the parent company, her contract mandated she couldn't leave for at least six months. But with one thing and another, her planned resignation had been put on the back burner.

Chewing on her lip, Dorothy opened a new document and typed out the words "Resignation Letter". The six-month mark was just around the corner. She figured she could still lend a hand to Everett when needed. The lawsuit certainly wasn't going to wrap up quickly; having a verdict after just the first hearing within six months would be nothing short of miraculous. By the time the dust settled, she'd be ready to cut ties with Lopez Corporation for good.

It took Dorothy an hour to write her resignation letter, which she promptly emailed to HR.

Not long after, a notification popped up on her screen. It was a message from Kevin.

[Ms. Sanchez, are you there?]

[Right here! What's up, Kevin?]

[Um... I just got word from HR. Did you hand in your resignation?]

Dorothy had expected word of her departure to reach Everett eventually, but she hadn't anticipated it being quite so swift. No matter.

The decision to quit was genuine.

[Yep, I'm aware of the six-month clause. I won't jump ship immediately. You can assign me tasks as usual until then.]

[You're really set on leaving, huh? Mr. Lopez is in a meeting right now, clueless about this. If you retract now, I won't breathe a word to him.]

Dorothy cracked a wry smile, appreciating Kevin's concern. But once the court's decision came down, if she was still at Lopez Corporation, the media frenzy would be unpredictable, to say the least. She had to make a clean break.

[No turning back, Kevin. As of tomorrow, the countdown begins.]

Kevin didn't reply, and his status soon turned to offline.

Dorothy's mind wandered back to Kevin's mention of Everett being in a meeting. If it was an internal Lopez Corporation meeting, she might have access to listen in. Sure enough, when she navigated to the meeting channel, she saw the "Presidential New Project Brainstorm Session" scheduled in Conference Room One.

Curiosity piqued, she attempted to join, only to be halted by a prompt for a password or an invite.

On a hunch, she typed in "0825", not really expecting entry—after all, the meeting might have been initiated by Kevin, and the password set by him too. But to her surprise, the channel opened up, and a message appeared:

[Project Team Four Supervisor—Dorothy Sanchez, has joined Conference Room One.]

Dorothy instinctively clicked to leave, but another message blocked her attempt.

[Exit unavailable under five minutes of joining.]

Fantastic. Who had programmed this feature?

On the video feed, she noticed Everett squinting at his screen—no doubt spotting her unexpected presence.

She clicked the exit button repeatedly, only to be reminded she hadn't been in the meeting long enough.

Resigned to her fate, Dorothy took a deep breath. It was just a video conference; she might as well treat it as an educational experience.

As Everett returned his focus to the documents in his hands, Dorothy kept a close eye on the time. Just short of the five-minute mark, Everett's voice unexpectedly filled the room.

"Ms. Sanchez, did you need something?"

Chapter 764

Caught off-guard when she was called, Dorothy quickly typed a response on her keyboard.

The Fourth Project Team Director Dorothy: [Nothing, carry on!]

This was totally unexpected. She had never used the listen-in feature during previous meetings; it was always a direct link to the online conference room or an invitation to join. Now, she found herself eavesdropping for the first time without an invite!

Had she known it would turn out like this, she would have steered clear at all costs!

But now that Everett had mentioned her by name during the conference, she feared that if she left the room within five minutes, it would be announced!

Crashing the meeting was already conspicuous enough; leaving now would surely turn her into the talk of the town among her colleagues.

Left with no other choice, Dorothy leaned back in her chair and decided to brazenly watch Everett leading the meeting, detailing the new project's direction.

Everett truly had a knack for business. Many projects, often seen as risky or unfavorable, never lost money under his watch!

This resulted in numerous companies secretly taking cues from the Lopez Corporation. Any sign of movement from Everett, and they would swiftly follow suit, investing in similar ventures.

"In the domestic market, for at least the next five years, growth will revolve around renewable energy. So, that direction is a safe bet. The main thing is the details. Due diligence must be thorough, especially in confirming the other party's financial stability. We don't want to end up having to bail them out halfway through the project."

His voice was quite appealing—deep with a gravelly texture, rich yet not overly mature.

Still, Dorothy preferred the sound of his voice first thing in the morning. Raspy, with a youthful timbre, like dual tracks running in harmony.

An hour later, the meeting finally ended. Dorothy was automatically booted from the conference room.

She had just breathed a sigh of relief when her phone began to ring.

Recognizing the number on the screen instantly, she answered, "Hello..."

"You needed me?"

"No, just clicked in by accident."

As soon as she said it, she wanted to bite off her tongue!

Conference room channels were password-protected! Accidental entry was impossible!

Fortunately, Everett didn't expose her lie and didn't say much else.

Dorothy could hear the sound of Everett's dress shoes, indicating he was probably walking out.

The call should have ended there, but neither of them hung up.

Eventually, Everett broke the silence.

"Want to see the kids?"

"Yes!"

"In twenty minutes, I'll video call you from the hotel."

"Okay, great!"

After she replied, Everett hung up first.

Dorothy stared at her phone for a long while before focusing on the time.

Twenty minutes!

She took a deep breath, stood up, poured herself a glass of warm water, took a stroll around her apartment's living room, and checked the time again.

Only five minutes had passed.

She frowned slightly, returned the glass, changed into a different outfit, freshened up in the bathroom, and then came back to check the time again.

Twelve minutes had gone by.

She never realized how endless twenty minutes could feel.

As she pondered this, the video call invitation from Everett popped up.

Dorothy hurriedly accepted, and the first thing she saw was a close-up of Everett's handsome face.

"I'm at the hotel lobby, about to head up."

Chapter 765

"Okay!"

Dorothy half expected Everett to just say a quick hello and then hang up, but his face stayed on the screen.

She propped her phone on a stand, adjusted the angle, and kept her eyes glued to the display.

Soon, Everett used his key card to enter the hotel room, and the playful sounds of Abigail and Langston followed.

"Mommy wants to FaceTime with you guys."

On the other side of the call, Everett propped his phone on a table and then stepped out of the frame.

Abigail's face squeezed into view, waving at Dorothy. "Mommy! I miss you!"

Dorothy quickly responded. "Mommy misses you too!"

"Do you miss Langston?"

"Of course! I miss both of you!"

Abigail's big eyes blinked, and she continued, "Do you miss Daddy too?"

Dorothy paused for a moment before answering, "I miss him too."

Abigail giggled. "You gotta finish your work fast, Mommy, and come pick us up!"

"Okay, dear."

Dorothy nodded, her gaze falling on Langston, who was silent.

"Langston, why aren't you talking to Mommy?"

"I feel like something's off between you and Dad."

Langston raised an eyebrow, then seemed to look up at Everett. "You guys used to be so lovey-dovey, always sneaking kisses. Why's Daddy so far away during the call now?"

"Daddy's busy with work."

Dorothy didn't want to burden the kids with the news of their parents' separation. It wasn't good for their growth.

Besides, whatever beef she had with Everett's mother, she didn't want it to spill over to Everett.

"But Daddy's just sitting there, not working."

Everett, apparently hearing his son's comment, got up and walked into the frame.

"Daddy's thinking."

"Oh!"

Langston's confusion seemed to clear up. Kids bounce back quick, and a smile spread across his face.

Dorothy chatted with them for a while until Abigail started to nod off, and then she ended the call.

Putting her phone away, she settled back in front of her computer, and a small smile played on her lips.

Crashing that meeting might have been a bit reckless, but today was a good day. Everything went smoothly; she got to chat with her kids, and she could look at Everett's face openly without having to hide. It was a fulfilling day indeed.

...

On Everett's end, he tucked the kids into bed in the outer room before returning to his suite.

Just as he sat down, he saw a message from Kevin.

A resignation letter from Dorothy.

[Mr. Lopez, this... do we approve it? Should we try to stall a bit longer?] As the CEO's secretary, Kevin had plenty of ways to keep Dorothy from leaving if that was what Mr. Lopez wanted.

It all hinged on Everett's decision.

Everett's fingers hesitated on the keyboard, then he typed a few words and sent them.

[No need. Approve her resignation.]

[Right away?]

If Everett gave the go-ahead, Dorothy wouldn't even have to wait the typical six months; she could sever ties with the Lopez Corporation the very next day.

[Yeah.]

Everett sent the word.

Kevin's side showed "typing..." several times, but in the end, no further message came.

And then Everett retracted the "Yeah" and sent a new message.

[Put her on a six-month notice period starting tomorrow.]

Chapter 766

[Okay, I got it, Mr. Lopez.] Kevin replied.

Everett could almost sense the relief that washed over Kevin from the other side of the screen.

He tried to twist his lips into a smile, but it just wouldn't come.

...

Jeffrey had been obsessing over that marriage license, and now he finally had it in his hands.

On the ride back, he kept pulling it out of his pocket, looking at it multiple times, putting it back, then taking it out again, and back in it went.

At that point, Karen couldn't help but think he was acting like a three-year-old. But when he got serious, he was like a crime boss.

She couldn't shake the memory of being in the restroom, having her phone snatched away, and when she looked up at him, those cold, piercing eyes staring back at her!

Karen half expected him to smash the phone right then and there.

"You're finally mine!" Jeffrey declared, pulling Karen close and waving the marriage license in front of her.

"Give me mine," she said, reaching out for it.

But Jeffrey tucked the certificate away.

"Nope, it's safer with me."

"Jeffrey, you know I can always go to the city hall and get a copy if I want a divorce."

As if withholding the certificate could actually stop anything.

"If you want a divorce, you'd still need my consent!"

He had worked too hard to bring her back into his life; he wasn't about to let go.

Karen sighed, not wanting to argue with him.

"Now that we're married, you can let me go back home, right? My parents are going to be worried sick if they don't see me for a few days. You can't keep me locked away forever."

"Don't worry, I've already messaged them on your WhatsApp. All is good."

"Jeffrey! That's a violation of my privacy! Give me my phone back."

She couldn't believe he had gone to such lengths, actually using her WhatsApp without permission!

"Six months, just six months! I talked to the doctor; after that, you can't have an abortion. Then you can punish me however you want."

Jeffrey had only one goal in mind—to protect their unborn child. Everything else could wait.

After all, once the marriage license was signed and the baby was born, her parents would have to accept him, whether they liked it or not.

Karen was at a loss for words.

"Come on, give me a smile!" Jeffrey grasped her hand, suddenly conspiratorial. "Wait till we get to the villa. I've got a surprise for you."

Karen frowned. "There's no surprise you could give me that I would want."

All she expected from him were shocks.

"Trust me, it's gonna be an amazing surprise!"

The car took a turn and, after a long drive, finally stopped in front of the villa.

Karen had never expected any kind of pleasant surprise, but when she saw Paige, she was genuinely taken aback.

The Paige she knew was always haughty, a high-and-mighty heiress who acted as if she was above everyone else. But now, there she was, with swollen, red eyes, kneeling at the doorstep of the villa.

"Jeffrey, what is this?" Karen turned to look at Jeffrey.

"Paige was disrespectful to you before, right? How could I let her get away with it? I made her kneel here to apologize to you!"

Paige saw Karen too, but now there was no arrogance, only a pleading look in her eyes.

"Ms. Miller, I was wrong before! I overstepped. I shouldn't have spoken to you that way! Please, ask Jeffrey to spare my parents."

Karen's brows furrowed as a chill ran through her.

"Paige, get up. I'm not angry."

"No! Let me stay like this. Jeffrey said if I kneel for ten hours, he'll consider forgiving me!"

Chapter 767

Jeffrey stepped forward, taking Karen's hand with an ease that suggested he was blissfully unaware of the kneeling figure beside them.

"She messed up, and punishment's fair game. Let's head back. I can see you're not keen on this surprise; I'll get you another one."

"I don't want another surprise. Just... let her stand up," Karen said, her voice tinged with sympathy for Paige.

Despite Paige's previously haughty demeanor, she truly loved Jeffrey and had given him her all. It wasn't fair for her to end like this.

"Today, we got hitched. I don't want her sobbing away here. Do a good deed, for once," Karen said.

Jeffrey peered into her eyes, gauging her sincerity.

With a smile, he nodded. "Alright, then. She doesn't have to kneel."

He turned his head, casting a cold glance at Paige. "You can go now."

Paige blinked, stunned. "But... my parents..."

Jeffrey's arm tightened around Karen's waist. "My wife said it's a special day; we got our marriage license. I'm in a good mood, so I'll let your family off the hook."

Hand in hand, Jeffrey and Karen moved towards the mansion.

Behind them, Paige, who should have risen, crumpled to the ground instead.

"Jeffrey!"

Karen looked back instinctively.

The emotion in Paige's eyes was a complex tapestry, too intricate for mere adjectives.

"Did you really... get married?"

Karen pursed her lips, about to speak, but Jeffrey's grip on her waist tightened.

"Let's not worry about her. It's chilly outside."

"Right."

...

Dorothy thought that with her impending resignation, the Lopez Corporation wouldn't saddle her with any major projects. After all, if she left before a project's completion, her sudden departure as a director could disrupt the workflow.

But then she saw the project files Kevin had sent her. She was gobsmacked. Not only was she still at the core of the project, but she was also continuing as director!

That meant she would have to return to the office! After all, too many details couldn't be clarified through online meetings alone.

Dorothy quickly messaged Kevin: [Is this Everett's doing?]

Kevin's reply took a while. [It's a task for the fourth project team, assigned as usual.]

So, it wasn't a special instruction from Everett, huh?

[I'm about to resign, and this project won't be done in half a year. Can we switch to something more feasible? Kevin, I appreciate you wanting me to gain more experience, but I don't want to be the team's dead weight.]

[As long as you're with Lopez Corporation, you're part of the team. The higher-ups have their reasons. Ms. Sanchez, don't overthink—just focus on your job.]

Dorothy grimaced, pondering her response before deleting it.

The task was assigned, and Kevin seemed reluctant to change anything. Insisting further would just seem petulant.

[Understood.]

Kevin didn't linger for small talk but sent over a schedule for the first project meeting instead.

Dorothy couldn't help but ask: [Will Everett be there?]

[Mr. Lopez is abroad at a tech symposium.]

In other words, the CEO wouldn't attend such a minor kickoff meeting.

Dorothy felt her question had been superfluous.

[Sorry, just asking on a whim.]

She quickly exited the chat and forced herself to focus on the documents.

In the corporate world, Everett was the renowned CEO of the Lopez Corporation, and she was just a project director. It was crucial not to let personal feelings blur professional lines.

Chapter 768

Suddenly finding herself diving back into the corporate world, Dorothy had to admit, the transition felt a bit awkward. But it wasn't fear holding her back, nor reluctance.

After all, to live is to work, right?

She spent the entire night poring over the documents and project brief Kevin had sent her, highlighting key sections, scribbling notes, and cross-referencing information until the sky hinted at

dawn. Only a few hours remained before her meeting at Lopez Corporation, and Dorothy finally allowed herself to collapse into bed, setting the alarm for a short nap.

It felt like her eyes had only just closed when the alarm blared to life.

Quickly, she slipped into a sleek business suit, added a touch of makeup to freshen up her look, grabbed her laptop, and bolted for the towering Lopez Corporation building.

Having only spent a brief stint there before, familiar faces were scarce. Scanning the project team, the sight of Austin still at his desk was an unexpected comfort.

"Ms. Sanchez?" Austin's surprise was evident, though not overwhelming—he had seen the project roster yesterday, after all.

He figured, given Dorothy's history with Mr. Lopez, she might not be here to actually work—perhaps just a nominal position.

Dorothy caught the speculative, somewhat gossipy look in his eyes and quickly pulled him aside.

"I don't know many people here, just you. Please, keep my past to yourself, okay?" she implored.

"Don't worry about it! Why would I say anything?" he chuckled. After all, this was the woman with a complex history with Everett Lopez himself. Even with liquid courage, he wouldn't dare to gossip.

"You're misunderstanding me. My relationship with Everett isn't..."

"I get it, I get it! Honestly, Ms. Sanchez, I always thought you were drop-dead gorgeous and super capable at your job. Just a bit aloof, you know? When Lane was chasing after you, I couldn't figure out why you weren't interested. He's a catch—handsome and wealthy! But then I saw you with Mr. Lopez, and it all clicked. I mean, who wouldn't choose him over Lane?"

Dorothy was speechless.

"Mr. Lopez is like a Greek god! I get weak-kneed just seeing him from a distance, and you are dating him..."

Dorothy quickly clamped her hand over his mouth.

"Stop, just stop. Everett and I are over."

"What?"

"So, let's not tie his name to mine anymore, okay? People might get the wrong idea. We're here to work, and the project comes first."

Austin stood there, dumbstruck, before finally managing to stammer out, "Ms. Sanchez, is there someone even better than Mr. Lopez pursuing you?"

She looked at him, torn between amusement and exasperation.

"No, I'm just not focusing on relationships right now."

"Got it! Is it because Mr. Lopez was too busy for you? You're upset?" Austin's eyes practically sparkled at the mention of Everett.

"Ms. Sanchez, I'm so lucky to work in the same department as you. If I've ever been disrespectful, I didn't mean it—please don't take it to heart!"

Dorothy forced a smile, feeling the irony of the situation. Austin was completely oblivious to the seriousness of her words.

"Let's just get back to work," she sighed.

"OK, boss lady!"

"Austin!"

Chapter 769

Austin squinted his eyes and let out a chuckle. "Don't worry. I've been around the block in this business world, and I know the ropes. It'll just be our little secret, okay?"

Dorothy could not be bothered to explain further.

Following Austin into the boardroom, she found her seat and settled down, coughing a few times to clear her throat.

The meeting was an internal team huddle, so the atmosphere was far from formal.

Everyone spoke their minds freely, sharing their thoughts and ideas about the project.

Dorothy had been feeling in sync with her colleagues, which eased her nerves considerably. Having been mentored by the renowned Everett, her analysis and insights were particularly sharp, earning her numerous nods of approval from the manager. This, however, didn't sit well with some of the female staff on her team.

They had put forth many suggestions, all of which were dismissed, whereas Dorothy's were unanimously accepted.

The men in the group didn't shy away from casting admiring glances her way, and how could that not stir up a bit of jealousy?

As the meeting adjourned and Dorothy returned to her office, there came a knock on her door.

"Come in."

"Ms. Sanchez, hello, I'm Ophelia, the project assistant. I have a question I'd like to ask you."

Her words were polite, but her smile was anything but genuine.

Dorothy didn't pay much attention to her expression and gestured towards a chair, saying warmly, "Please, take a seat. I'll send you the documents right away."

Ophelia took a seat and slapped the folder she was carrying onto the desk. That crisp sound couldn't have been made without a bit of force.

Dorothy paused and looked over. "What can I help you with? Was there something from the meeting you didn't understand?"

"It's nothing major. It's just that your analysis was so unique. It's different from my team's usual style. It's understandable if I didn't follow, right?"

The implication of "my team" was subtle.

Dorothy wasn't naive. She could detect the challenge in Ophelia's tone. "Maybe that's why the fourth project team has never been at the forefront of winning projects. Poor adaptability and comprehension skills."

Ophelia clenched her fists in fury. "Aren't you part of the fourth project team as well?"

"From what I gathered, you don't seem to fully embrace the idea of me being the team's director," Dorothy said with a smile, holding Ophelia's gaze.

"I know that to be an assistant at Lopez Corporation, you have to be bright, likely with a master's degree. But when those are a dime a dozen, it's not that impressive. What you should focus on is honing your skills, not stirring up trouble."

"Ms. Sanchez, you have such a way with words. What did I say? I just mentioned I didn't grasp your analysis and hoped you could go over it again. Why do you have to be so harsh? I was actually looking forward to the director parachuted into the fourth project team to be someone gentle and patient, but instead..."

Dorothy had finished sending the documents and stood up to pour herself a glass of water before returning to Ophelia's side, patting her shoulder.

"If you're looking for gentle and patient, you might want to try a kindergarten. There, both principals and teachers are nothing but kind. But this, this is the corporate world."

Being willing to explain things a second time was a courtesy on Dorothy's part.

If she wasn't willing, then it was time for some self-reflection on whether it was a lack of comprehension.

"You! Ms. Sanchez, with your sharp tongue, I bet you wouldn't dare let the other men in our group see you like this, would you? Only showing it to the women staff! Too bad, they're all fools, fools who only judge by looks!"

Dorothy's hand stilled, the amusement in her eyes deepening.

She grabbed Ophelia's arm, yanked open the office door, and raised her voice.

"Everyone, this assistant here just said that all the men on the fourth project team are fools. I'm new here, so I'm not up to speed—is that so?"

Chapter 770

The fourth project team's office suddenly came alive as heads swiveled towards the commotion, the mix of men and women all craning their necks to get a better view.

Even Austin, who rarely left the sanctuary of his private corner office, felt the disturbance and emerged with a look of concern.

Stepping out, he witnessed Dorothy yanking Ophelia's arm, his brow furrowing in alarm at the scene. Without missing a beat, he commanded, "Ophelia, my office. Now."

Ophelia, her pride wounded, shrugged off Dorothy's grip and stormed off to Austin's office.

Dorothy, not one to make a mountain out of a molehill, simply returned to her desk. With years of experience in the corporate jungle, she had climbed the ranks from an assistant to a director at East

Star Enterprises, navigating a labyrinth of obstacles. She wasn't about to be rattled by the likes of Ophelia.

As lunchtime approached, Dorothy finalized the day's schedule and distributed the printouts. She was about to head to the employee cafeteria for a bite to eat when Austin appeared at her door, a smile playing on his lips.

"Ms. Sanchez, how about I treat you to lunch?" he offered.

"For what?" Dorothy was always wary of unexpected invitations, especially considering her and Austin's casual acquaintance. It wasn't like them to share a meal on her first day at work.

Austin chuckled awkwardly. "Consider it an apology on behalf of Ophelia. She's a bit reckless and young, you know how it is. Don't take it to heart, please."

Dorothy waved him off. "Really, it's fine. I'm not upset with her."

She had too many other things going on in her life to be upset over such a trivial matter.

Austin continued, "She's new to the team, and erm... a relative of mine."

Even he was embarrassed by his own words. He was aware that Ophelia had been rather disrespectful and bloated because she was his relative, and he never bothered to knock her down a peg. To think she had the audacity to offend the boss' lady was unimaginable!

"It's really fine," Dorothy smiled and said, "I better head to the cafeteria now. This afternoon, I'll need a few sharp individuals for the due diligence team. I'm still new to the fourth project team, so I'm relying on you to choose wisely."

Austin breathed a sigh of relief, having feared Dorothy might insist on firing Ophelia. After all, he had no authority to protest. "Of course, of course!"

"Oh, and one more thing," Dorothy added, "I have to swing by West Legal Services after work, so I won't be able to stay late. Email me the documents, and I'll get to them after my meeting. I'll make sure there are no delays."

She had always taken her work seriously.

With a nod from Austin, Dorothy locked up her office and headed towards the bustling cafeteria of the Lopez Corporation.

Truth be told, the culinary spread at the Lopez Corporation's cafeteria was something to behold, a rarity even in the entire nation, let alone Eldorria City. Everett insisted that well-fed employees could perform their best work.

Having skipped breakfast, Dorothy was now feeling the pangs of hunger and forced herself to eat despite her lack of appetite. After all, there was still a full afternoon of work ahead.

But the light lunch did more harm than good. Returning to her desk, Dorothy felt the nagging pain of indigestion. A search through her bag yielded no relief; she had forgotten her antacids.

Taking deep breaths, she decided to power through until the end of the day when she could pick up some medicine. But just then, a knock at her door interrupted her thoughts.

She looked up to see Everett's assistant, a familiar face, holding out a small box.

"Ms. Sanchez, Mr. Lopez wanted you to have this," he said a bit sheepishly.

"He told me not to tell you it was from him, but I couldn't come up with a good excuse. So, I just went for the truth. You would've guessed it anyway once I handed you this, right?"

Dorothy glanced down to find a box of antacids in his hand.