

Midnight 881

Chapter 881

The silence on the other end of the phone hung heavy in the air for what felt like an eternity.

Dorothy was tipsy, her vision blurring as she peered at the screen, half-convinced the call had disconnected.

“Right... we broke up ages ago; he’s not coming.” she slurred to herself.

“Miss, are you drunk-dialing your ex?” The guy noticed her staggering attempt to stand and reached out to steady her.

She shook her head, instinctively recoiling from his touch, “Here, take your phone back! The money is yours.”

“Whoa, you’re giving me all this? I’d feel like a real jerk taking your cash without making sure you get home safe,” he said, his voice dropping playfully as he chuckled, “This bar’s full of guys eyeing you like a slab of prime rib. So, you gonna stroll out with me or take your chances with them?”

The alcohol clouded her mind, and Dorothy struggled to keep up with his banter.

But a sliver of sobriety clung on, reminding her that after the drinks, home was the destination.

Even with her tongue tied in knots, she managed to furrow her brow and say with deliberate clarity, “To my place.”

“Alright! Off to your place we go.”

The rest of the night was a blur to Dorothy. She vaguely remembered stumbling out of the bar, dodging his attempts to guide her more than once, and then hearing him mutter behind her, “Jeez, the call’s still going!”

When consciousness returned, she found herself on her apartment’s couch! Relieved to see her clothes and bag in their proper places, she breathed easier. It seemed she had managed to get herself home, albeit not without some drama.

...

The next day.

Dorothy turned over, only to roll off the couch and onto the floor with a hiss.

“Ouch...” Her elbow had collided with the coffee table, and the pain creased her face.

Inspecting the injury revealed a red mark, but nothing serious.

Pushing herself up, the hangover was kicking in with a vengeance, so she rifled through her bag for some ibuprofen. Not caring if it was a good mix with the residual alcohol, she swallowed a pill with water.

She grabbed her phone and saw missed calls from lawyer Ephraim and Karen, and not much else.

She returned Ephraim's call first. It was nothing serious, just a reminder about a court date to note that she shouldn't be late.

She was washing up in the bathroom when she dialed Karen. While brushing her teeth, she was also listening to her friend's pep talk, "You're gonna nail this, Dorothy! Keep your chin up!"

"Mhm."

Because she was drunk last night, Dorothy slept for a long time. Although she had a headache today, she was still in good spirits.

Karen rambled on until Dorothy was all set, then she finally said, "I won't hold you up. Grab some breakfast, and I'm waiting for good news!"

Dorothy was a bit helpless, "It's not like they're handing down a verdict today."

"But today you finally get to drag those creeps to court! Isn't that what you've been after all these years?"

"That's true," Dorothy conceded, her mood dipping as a hazy memory flickered briefly, "Karen... how's Jeffrey?"

"Huh?" It was rare for Dorothy to bring up Jeffrey, and it threw Karen off, "He's packing for a business trip. His company needs him out of town."

"Oh."

"Is something wrong?"

Quickly, Dorothy forced a laugh, "Nothing, just asking! I gotta go."

As she hung up, her hand lingered over her chest. It seemed the memory was just a figment of her imagination; she hadn't called Everett after all.

Chapter 882

However, the very next second, she unlocked her phone and pulled up the call history, nearly choking on her own spit.

There were many calls made to Everett's number.

"I really can't handle my liquor." She coughed as she mused.

Thankfully, Dorothy remembered that last night, it seemed like Everett had blacklisted her number. Just to be sure, she shakily dialed once more.

"Hello, the number you have dialed has—"

Dorothy didn't even wait to hear the rest from the robotic voice of the customer service before she hung up in a hurry.

Yeah, that's right, blacklisted. Her memory was still on point. That was a close call!

...

Inside the black Maybach.

Kevin sneaked a cautious glance at his boss through the rear-view mirror and spoke up, "Mr. Lopez, Mr. Turner has taken your place at the conference."

"Mhm." Everett's gaze lingered on his laptop screen, his thick eyebrows slightly furrowed, paying no mind to Kevin's words. He dared not say anything further and drove straight to the office.

The Lopez Corporation's recent projects had been largely focused on high-tech electronic products, which meant Everett's attention was mostly there, resulting in a myriad of scattered tasks.

"If TSP Corp. can develop a newer driving energy source, then I'm definitely in, but right now everyone is working on electric energy, and that has already hit the market. In that case, I'm sitting this one out."

Everett stepped out of the car, striding into the building and heading straight for the CEO's private elevator, all the while on the phone with a partner.

The person on the other end sounded desperate to convince him to invest, "Although our TSP is working on electric energy, our cars have many advantages and patented projects! Shall I have my secretary send you the details for review?"

"No need for that, just give me the gist of it now."

"Many customers hesitate to buy electric cars mainly because of the battery issues! We at TSP have conquered this challenge. We guarantee our batteries for over five years, and any problems within this period, our company will recall the vehicles!"

It was indeed a catchy selling point.

But...

Everett smirked faintly, "Kevin, the points you just mentioned would attract people to buy TSP's cars, not investors."

If they were to recall vehicles unconditionally at the sign of trouble as he mentioned, it would be great for customers, but the investment costs and profit margins would certainly take a hit.

The Lopez Corporation was in the business of investing, not charity; profits were still the priority.

"But more people will trust TSP, and that's an advantage in itself!"

"I'll consider it," Everett replied, which was nearly synonymous with a polite refusal.

After hanging up, the elevator reached the executive office floor.

He pushed the door open and entered, finding the place as immaculate as it was when he left Eldorria City months ago.

"Mr. Lopez, the reason for your sudden return to the country is..." Kevin couldn't contain his curiosity any longer.

After all, Jeffrey had been sent to attend the conference, which ordinarily meant Mr. Lopez wouldn't be back so soon. He was utterly baffled when he received Mr. Lopez's call early in the morning asking him to pick him up at the airport!

"It's because today is my mother's court hearing."

"Oh!" So that was it. "Do you need me to arrange a ride to the courthouse for you?"

"No need." Everett raised his hand to massage his temples. "Don't tell anyone about my return, including Jeffrey."

"Understood."

Just as Kevin was about to leave, Everett suddenly spoke up again. "Go buy a second-hand Passat and park it in my garage later."

Chapter 883

It's a quirk of Mr. Lopez that Kevin couldn't quite fathom, yet he knew better than to question it.

"Sure thing, Mr. Lopez."

Leaving the office, Kevin hopped into his car and headed straight for the used car lot.

As a seasoned executive assistant, he had a knack for picking up on Mr. Lopez's subtleties—the emphasis was on "second-hand." The car couldn't be too new, otherwise, Mr. Lopez would've just asked for a brand-spanking-new one. But it couldn't be a clunker either; Mr. Lopez was used to cruising in luxury and wouldn't settle for less.

"Hey there, can this baby be customized?" Kevin asked the used car dealer.

"Absolutely! What's your vision?" The dealer was literally laughing to his ears as he heard that. "As long as the price is right, we can make it happen!"

Kevin nodded, considering, "Fit it out like a Maybach on the inside, would you? And make it snappy. Money's no object."

The dealer was speechless,

If Kevin hadn't slapped down a 20-grand deposit on the spot, the dealer might have punched his face.

...

Dorothy arrived at the Eldorria City Courthouse precisely on time that afternoon. Stepping out of the cab, she spotted Ephraim and his legal team approaching.

"Ms. Sanchez, the day has finally come! Rest assured, we're pulling out all the stops."

She gave a small smile, "I trust you guys."

"We've gone over this case with a fine-tooth comb, and we've got a decent shot at a full victory. At the very least, Heather won't escape the harshest sentence. As the victim, you'll make a powerful statement in court, and we've also filed for civil damages—whatever happens, we're winning something."

Dorothy just nodded along, oddly detached as if she weren't personally involved.

Ephraim, with years under his belt, had seen all sorts of clients and wasn't fazed by Dorothy's demeanor.

"And if we're not satisfied with the verdict, we can always appeal to the State Court. The appeal is where it's really at."

"Ephraim, I don't plan on appealing," Dorothy interjected, pausing, "Whatever the outcome, I won't appeal."

Ephraim was taken aback. "Why not? Don't be scared, if we appeal, our West Legal Services will handle everything. It won't be any trouble for you—"

"I've made up my mind, let's see how the trial goes."

...

Ephraim initially thought Dorothy was a gentle soul, but working with her proved she was stubborn and resolute. She trusted West Legal Services completely in professional matters but was immovable on decisions she could make herself. She never sought counsel for personal decisions, like whether to appeal after the first trial. She simply made her mind up and dismissed any advice offered.

After passing through security, they entered the courtroom together.

As Dorothy settled in, her gaze fixed on the "Defendant" placard across the room.

Mom, can you see this? I've finally made it here and brought them all to justice. She said to herself.

For a moment, her composure began to crumble, and a sourness pricked at her eyes.

But Dorothy didn't cry. She felt she should be happy!

Soon, the judge entered the courtroom with a solemn and dignified air.

Clearing his throat, he sat down and announced, "Bring in the defendant."

Chapter 884

When Dorothy caught sight of Heather, she couldn't help but do a double-take.

The once poised and professional chief attorney of the Lopez Corporation now looked like a shadow of her former self, her figure gaunt and haggard. Had Heather not been seated at the defendant's bench, Dorothy might have struggled to recognize that face... a face that bore some resemblance to her own.

Compared to Heather, Amanda appeared much more dignified, yet she too had noticeably lost weight, perhaps due to the stress of the lawsuit. But her pride was intact. She wouldn't spare Dorothy the slightest glance, as if she were beneath her notice.

Not that Dorothy cared.

The trial dragged on since it was crammed with evidence. And some evidence needed to be verified on the spot, making cross-examination particularly challenging.

The Lopez family, eager to win and disassociate themselves from the scandal, had even summoned the doctors from the hospital to testify.

Throughout, Dorothy remained detached, her attention flitting between Ephraim and the parade of prosecutors and defense attorneys jostling with objections and accusations. Her gaze drifted to the gallery for the umpteenth time.

Everett wasn't there.

That was probably for the best. His presence would have only added to the awkwardness. But a part of her wished he'd come, just so she could catch a glimpse of him. Suddenly, the embarrassment didn't seem all that important.

"Now, the defendant will make a final statement," the judge announced.

This was it—the last part of the hearing.

Dorothy glanced at Ephraim, who nodded reassuringly at her to show that everything went fine. She offered a small, grateful smile in return.

Heather's final statement was tearful and full of remorse. As a lawyer, she knew the power of this moment. The juries held the keys to her freedom, and a moving speech could influence the sentencing.

Amanda's statement, on the other hand, was read verbatim from what her lawyer had prepared. It lacked emotion, lacked expression, as if she had never feared the outcome of this so-called trial. She seemed convinced of her imminent exoneration.

"Court is now adjourned. All rise."

Hearing these words, Dorothy stiffly rose from her chair and offered a formal gesture of thanks.

As they stepped out of the courtroom, Ephraim bombarded her with advice that were mainly regarding the consideration of an appeal. Though it seemed premature, given that the verdict was still pending, Ephraim wanted her to think it over carefully.

"No need to bother yourself any further, Ephraim." Dorothy said.

"It's no trouble! Most criminal cases go to appeal; it's standard practice."

"Not this one." Dorothy smiled and walked out of the courthouse. Descending the grand steps, she looked up at the sky one more time.

It was as blue and boundless as ever. So vast, it seemed to swallow all the inequity and filth of the world, and it made her feel inconsequential in its expanse.

"Dorothy!"

A voice pulled her back to reality.

She turned and saw Karen standing a short distance away, waving at her.

"What are you doing here?"

"How could I miss out on such an important day?" Karen approached and embraced her, handing over a bouquet of flowers. "Dorothy, when I said I'd always be there for you, I wasn't joking."

At last, the tears Dorothy had held back in the courtroom began to fall.

"Thank you, Karen."

"Enough of that! Shall we head to my place for a little celebration?"

Dorothy wiped her tears with the back of her hand and nodded, "Sounds good to me."

Chapter 885

Watching Karen about to slide behind the wheel, Dorothy quickly tugged her away from the driver's side.

"Let me drive. You shouldn't be driving in your condition." She said.

"When you were pregnant with the twins, you still went to meetings and worked with your big belly. And I'm not that delicate as well!"

"It's different. You've got someone to love you."

Karen pouted, "You had someone too. It's just that you didn't want him."

Back then, all it would have taken was a single command and Kenneth would have spoiled her like a real princess, not caring one bit that the baby in her belly belonged to Everett.

"Let's not dredge up the past. Get in the car."

"Okay." Karen settled into the passenger seat, shaking her head wistfully, "If only I wasn't pregnant. We could hit the bar for a nightcap and get blissfully wasted—that'd be the life!"

Dorothy cast a sidelong glance at her but didn't mention her own bar escapade the previous night.

"Jeffrey wouldn't let you near a bar as well if you weren't pregnant."

That place, with men prowling around like hawks, eyeing every woman who walked in as prey—if Karen stepped foot in there, Jeffrey would probably have the bar shut down on the spot.

"I just wouldn't tell him. He's bound to go on business trips now and then, like now." Karen stuck out her tongue. "Honestly, I used to think Jeffrey was so handsome, the perfect catch. But now that I've

seen him day in and day out, he just seems... ordinary. Guess that's what they call getting used to someone."

Dorothy smiled resignedly, her thoughts involuntarily drifting to Everett. She... didn't seem to tire of his image. Everett remained as striking and noble as ever.

"Ah... I could really use a drink! How about we grab one, Dorothy?" Karen quipped.

"No way." If Dorothy agreed to that, she'd be the crazy one.

But inside, she was contemplating whether to hit the bar herself again that night.

After all, she no longer feared making a drunken call to Everett—not since she'd confirmed that he'd blocked her number.

The main thing was getting drunk meant she could sleep soundly. She desperately needed that rest, the kind where you didn't think about anything and where your mind was blissfully empty.

"Hey? Dorothy, it looks like there's a car following us," Karen suddenly said as she pointed to the rear-view mirror.

Dorothy glanced back.

It was a nondescript black car with an obscured license plate, definitely not a luxury model.

"You're probably overthinking it. Why would someone be following us?"

"Maybe it's Jeffrey's goons tracking me! I'm going to call and grill him." Karen whipped out her phone and fiercely interrogated Jeffrey.

Only after she was convinced that he wasn't behind it did she hang up.

"Could be just a coincidence." Dorothy said.

Karen nodded, "Yeah, I just found it suspicious. We were driving so slow and I saw that car didn't overtake us like it was dead set on tailing us."

Dorothy chuckled, "Karen, I remember you used to say you liked clingy, handsome guys. You said they're a rare breed with their love-struck brains, hard to come by. But now it seems like you can't stand Jeffrey's clinginess."

"Him? He's over the top! And I think he's nuts; he's a lunatic."

Jeffrey was a walking contradiction. With Karen, he was the epitome of obedience, like a well-trained Labrador with the occasional temper tantrum that he'd quickly self-soothe.

But with others, he was nothing short of a brute. Getting into fights was like a daily routine for him, as if even the most basic sense of morality had no hold on him.

Chapter 886

"Girl, you're a piece of work, you know that?" Dorothy poked fun at her friend with a sly grin, her eyes narrowing in mock accusation. "Back when you were single, you were all about how great possessive guys are. Now you've snagged one, and you're nitpicking left and right! Karen, you're totally showing off your love life."

Karen chuckled mischievously, "That's not it, I swear! Why would I flaunt my relationship in front of you? If I'm going to show off, it'll be after you've found your Mr. Right. Consider it a preview for you and your future beau."

Dorothy fell silent.

Mr. Right.

Dorothy wasn't even sure what this word meant anymore. Maybe there just wasn't anyone in the world who was right for her.

...

Drinking with Karen was definitely out of the question. But they did have a fabulous time at Jeffrey's villa, where Dorothy threw on an apron and whipped up a hearty meal.

The two friends reminisced about the good old days, about the tough times at the Prosperity Consortium, Mr. Percy's challenges, the office politics, and the subtle jockeying with colleagues.

Karen deliberately steered clear of any talk about romance, changing the subject anytime it veered too close. She had said she wouldn't mention Everett in front of Dorothy, and she kept her word.

It was evening by the time Karen, who was visibly worn out, needed to rest, and Dorothy finally left.

Instead of heading back to her apartment, she hailed a cab to the bar they had visited the night before.

Oddly enough, the bar, which had been bustling yesterday, had a notice slapped on the door announcing it was selling out!

Dorothy had actually enjoyed the bartender's concoctions there – tangy and sweet, not the slightest bit harsh on the throat.

Already out of the taxi, she leaned against the wall outside the bar, pulling out her phone to search for another nearby watering hole.

Going back to her apartment alone was the last thing Dorothy wanted. But she wasn't keen on taking another cab ride, so she looked for a bar within walking distance.

"Miss?"

Dorothy heard the voice but didn't react. After all, she wasn't expecting anyone to call her here and now until the man approached and tapped her on the shoulder, "I thought it was you from a distance, and now that I'm close, I see I was right!" The man squinted his eyes with a youthful grin, "Your face is too beautiful to forget, and not many can be mistaken for you."

"Ugh..." Dorothy looked at him rambling in front of her, utterly bewildered, "Who are you?"

She was certain she didn't know him.

"Forgotten me? That hurts!" The man laughed helplessly, "It was just last night at this bar where we met! I'm the one who walked you out."

Dorothy was a tad embarrassed, her memories post-drinks were fuzzy at best, with only snippets coming back to her. She vaguely remembered someone leaving the bar with her and also tried to help her, but she had avoided that.

"Then, thanks for that."

"Do you really not remember anything? Were you that blackout drunk?"

Dorothy nodded, "Yeah."

The man wasn't upset at all; in fact, he found her amnesia rather endearing, "So, then you don't remember borrowing my phone to call your ex?"

Her ex?

Borrowing his phone?

Dorothy was taken aback, her brows furrowed in confusion, "I borrowed your phone?"

"Yeah! You even gave me money for the call," the man said, pulling out his phone to show her the dialed number from last night, "Here, this one. Your ex's number."

Dorothy blinked.

Chapter 887

Dorothy grabbed the phone with a sense of dread. Her mind seemed to freeze over. The number on the screen belonged to no one but Everett.

"What... what did I say?" she stammered.

"You kinda slurred that you'd had one too many, and asked him to pick you up!" the young man reminded her.

Dorothy's fingertips twitched, "And then?"

"And then?" he paused, looking puzzled. "That's it. He didn't say anything else, and you just handed the phone back to me."

"He... didn't try to contact you again?"

He shook his head, "Nope."

"Okay."

So, he really didn't want anything to do with her anymore.

But that wasn't surprising.

Everett was also a man with pride.

But suddenly, Dorothy found the whole drunken episode rather comical, yet utterly pathetic. She had insisted on reaching out to Everett; she had to use someone else's phone even when her number was blocked! Nevertheless, he had clearly shown enough signs of wanting to keep his distance!

What if Everett had already moved on and found someone new? Was she unintentionally messing up his love life?

"You still hung up on your ex-boyfriend?" the young man inquired, observing the myriad of expressions crossing Dorothy's face and also finding himself somewhat intrigued by this man who had won her heart.

"He's not my ex-boyfriend."

As soon as Dorothy spoke, the young man looked taken aback.

"So you two are..."

"He's my ex-husband," she said with a forced smile. "So, little boy, don't waste your time on me. Go find someone your own age to hang out with!"

The man was left speechless.

Dorothy deleted Everett's number from the phone and handed it back, "Thanks for letting me borrow your phone last night. Goodbye."

With those final words, she turned and walked away without the slightest hesitation.

The man wasn't ready to give up so easily. He felt that bumping into her again today had to mean something. The least he could do was ask for her WhatsApp.

"Hey! Miss—" He started to follow her, but suddenly a sleek black car pulled up, cutting him off and widening the gap between him and Dorothy.

By the time the light turned green, Dorothy had already vanished from sight.

"Hey! Do you even know how to drive?" he snapped, frustrated. "The light was green, and you just sat there?"

His annoyance froze on his face as the window of the black car rolled down, revealing the driver.

"You, you're Ever—"

The man in the car gave him a cold glance, his thin lips barely moving as he said, "She's out of your league."

...

Dorothy decided she wouldn't be going back to that bar again to avoid the temptation of borrowing phones. Harassing people wasn't her style.

But that didn't mean she couldn't pick up some booze to enjoy back at her apartment!

Once she locked the door and turned off her phone—no, actually, even if she left it on, it wouldn't matter since she was already blocked—she wouldn't be able to disturb Everett again.

She was just pushing a shopping cart into the grocery store when her friend Karen called.

"Dorothy, you home yet?"

"Not yet, I'm at the store picking up a few things before I head back."

"Oh! I was wondering why you hadn't checked in."

Dorothy laughed helplessly, "You should be sleeping! You were yawning up a storm when I left. Remember, you're pregnant."

"Don't worry, I'll head to bed as soon as I know you're safe in your apartment! Can't help worrying about you, you know. It's not safe for a beauty like you to walk the streets alone."

"Stop it!" As they bantered, Dorothy tossed a few bottles of beer into her cart.

After a moment's thought, she also grabbed a bottle of vodka. Just in case the beer wasn't enough to drown her sorrows, the vodka would surely give her the extra kick she needed.

Chapter 888

"Alright then, after you're done with your grocery run, try to get some shut-eye early, will you? And if anything's up, give me a ring – don't worry about being a bother, got it?"

"Mmhmm."

"Good, I'm off to bed! Just so you know, I've got my ringer on for your calls only, so don't hesitate to reach out if you miss me!"

"Got it! Sleep tight, mama-to-be. You're the one who really needs to take care."

Dorothy, despite her lecture, felt a warm glow in her heart.

To have someone like Karen in her life, a friend who was like a ray of sunshine, was a stroke of luck amid life's mishaps.

Karen and Everett were both beacons of light for her.

After hanging up the phone, Dorothy was almost done with her liquor shopping and making her way to the checkout line to pay. But when it was her turn, the cashier suddenly said just as she

started placing bottles on the counter, "I'm sorry, miss, but we've got a limit on beer purchases now – two bottles per person."

"What?" Dorothy's surprise was genuine; after all, there wasn't any prohibition going on in her state. Since when were there limits on beer?

"We just got the notice ourselves that you can only take two," the cashier said apologetically with a smile, "So..."

"Alright then, two it is." Dorothy was puzzled, but rules were rules, and there was no point in giving the cashier a hard time.

Besides, there was still whiskey, which was as good as any. A bit harsher on the palate, sure, but nothing a splash of juice or soda couldn't smooth out.

"I'm sorry, miss, but we're not selling any hard liquor today either!"

Dorothy frowned slightly, "Whiskey's limited as well?"

"Not limited – we're not selling it at all."

"What about wine?"

"Wine's off the table today too! Maybe try again tomorrow?"

Dorothy felt like she couldn't catch a break. Even grabbing a drink had turned into an ordeal!

"Just ring up the rest, thanks." Not one to waste words, she paid for her two bottles of beer and a bunch of juice drinks and walked out of the supermarket.

Taking a deep breath, Dorothy scanned the area for any other convenience stores.

The main problem was, what good were two bottles of beer going to do? They certainly weren't going to knock her out!

She was desperately yearning for a long, deep sleep after getting drunk – if she didn't get it soon, she might just drop dead before the verdict was in.

Spotting a tobacco and spirits shop across the street, she hurried over. She hadn't even reached the shop when her phone rang.

Expecting another nudge from Karen to head back to her apartment, she pulled it out to find it was Kevin!

What could he want this late at night?

A heavy feeling sank in Dorothy's chest.

Could it be something about Everett?

"Hey, Kevin!" she answered immediately.

"Ms. Sanchez, have you turned in for the night?" Kevin's voice was steady and not the rush kind, which eased some of Dorothy's anxiety.

"Not yet. What's up?"

"Umm... it's like this. There's an issue with a project you previously led in the fourth project team. The current director can't sort it out, and I was hoping we could meet so you could clarify a few things for me?"

So it was work-related.

"I can explain, but it's late now. How about tomorrow? Or if it's urgent, email me the details, and I'll sort it out when I get back to my apartment."

"It's urgent! It won't do unless we meet in person."

"Alright then, come pick me up."

Dorothy was skeptical that the handover could have been so problematic, but to avoid delaying the project, she agreed.

Chapter 889

When Dorothy left her position at Lopez Corporation, she thought she'd never set foot in there again.

Yet, things didn't over between her and this place.

"Let's chat in my office?"

Following Kevin into the elevator, Dorothy nodded, "Sure."

During her time as Kevin's protégé, she was a frequent visitor to his office and so she found the place easily and felt much easier.

Upon entering, he poured her a glass of coffee and glanced at the bag she was carrying.

"What's in the bag? It looks heavy." He asked.

"Just some drinks from the grocery store."

"Really? What did you get? Is it any good? I've been meaning to pick up some beverages myself!"

Kevin seemed genuinely interested in the contents of her bag.

Embarrassed as though she was being cheap, Dorothy quickly offered him a look, "Take anything you'd like."

She thought he wouldn't be interested in the two bottles of beer amid the mostly fruit juices, seeing as Kevin was usually all about his work.

However, he went straight for the canned beers, "These look tempting!"

"You've got work, Kevin. That's beer."

"I wouldn't have noticed if you didn't say that! Perfect timing. I fancied a small indulgence tonight. Thanks, Ms. Sanchez," he said as he placed the beers on his desk.

The story had unfolded to a point where Dorothy wanted to feign ignorance, but Kevin's act was less than convincing.

The label clearly read 'Wheat Brew,' and he didn't realize it was beer?

Maybe she should have seen it coming. She should have known when the supermarket suddenly put a limit on alcohol sales.

"Kevin, there's no issue with the project, is there?" she asked.

"Of course there is!"

"Then why did you rush me here and only to fixate on those two cans of beer once we arrived?"

A guilty flicker crossed Kevin's face as his mind raced, "Ms. Sanchez, surely you don't think I brought you all the way back to the company just for two cans of beer, right? I definitely needed to consult you on a project matter! Look, these are all questions—"

With that, he picked up some papers from his desk and pointed at a line of text.

Dorothy forced a smile and stared intently at him without blinking, "I might be overthinking it, then. I can answer any project-related questions, but I'd like those beers back. I was looking forward to them tonight, and those were the only ones I could find. If you want, I can pick up some more for you tomorrow."

"Well, that's..."

"So, in the end, you were after the beer, right?" Dorothy's tone became assertive, her voice lower, "Or should I say, the person behind you wanted you to get those two cans from me."

"No, it's really not like that..."

Dorothy's brow furrowed as an indescribable bitterness welled within her.

A stifling pain slowly crept over her mind as she said, "Kevin, I know it's tough being caught in the middle. You have to do what you're told, and it's part of your job, not a reflection of who you are personally. I'm not upset with you."

She took a deep breath, trying to calm her emotions, "Please send my message that I apologize for drunk dialing him. It was my mistake, and I sincerely regret it. I promise it won't happen again."

Chapter 890

The unfolding of events had spiraled way beyond what Kevin had imagined. Even with his quick wit, he found himself flustered in the face of the unexpected.

"Ms. Sanchez, what on earth are you talking about?" Kevin stammered.

"Just tell me, did Everett put you up to this?" she pressed.

"I swear, that's not—"

"Then call him right now and put it on speaker," Dorothy cut him off.

Kevin gasped.

Dorothy's hands clenched into fists, and that was the only way to keep her surging emotions at bay. Tears welled up before she could finish her sentence, threatening to roll down her cheeks.

Especially in front of Kevin, showing red, puffy eyes was just as humiliating as crying in front of Everett himself!

"I admit, it was wrong of me to call him from someone else's phone after a few drinks. I'm not trying to justify it. If he feels harassed, that's fair. I've got nothing to say. I'm truly sorry. But, for him to send you to spy on me, to interfere with my right to buy a bottle of wine—well, that's just overkill."

Kevin finally began to piece things together. He had been utterly baffled when the orders had come down from above, which was why his act had been so unconvincingly overdone.

Licking his cracked lips and coughing a few times, Kevin said, "I'm not spying on you, and I don't think Mr. Lopez meant it that way..."

"Then what did he mean?"

"Uh..."

Before Kevin could respond, Dorothy waved her hand dismissively and made her way to his office door, trying to maintain a calm tone, "Never mind. I don't care what he meant now! I was the one who crossed the line first and disturbed him. It's my fault, and I have no right to blame anyone else. If he feels offended and wants to stop me from drinking to avoid further harassment, that's his prerogative. Tell him not to worry, if I, Dorothy, ever call him again, I'll—"

"Dorothy!"

The office door suddenly burst open from the outside, banging against the wall with a loud 'bang!'

In the next second, a tall and imposing figure filled her entire field of vision.

His interruption was abrupt, the usual stoic and cool features now barely holding itself.

The one lost for words now shifted from Kevin to Dorothy.

He...

Wasn't Everett supposed to be abroad?

"I set you free so you could focus on your lawsuit, on what you wanted to do, not so you could spend your days bar-hopping and flirting! Knowing full well I couldn't make it back from overseas, you still call me drunk in the middle of the night, expecting me to come get you. And now you have the audacity to turn it around on me?"

Dorothy blinked.

"If you want to drink at home, I've already tolerated the grocery store selling you those two cans, but you still had to go elsewhere. Do you have any idea how severe your stomach issues are?!"

Dorothy,

you're really something. Trying to drink yourself to death and make me regret it for the rest of my life, huh?!"

"I didn't mean to."

"I think you damn well did!" Even Everett, always the gentleman, was pushed to swear, "Speak up! You were so eloquent just a moment ago?"

Frustrated, he yanked at his tie so fiercely that the top button of his shirt popped off.

Dorothy's lips parted, but no words came out.

That was mainly because her mind was still in a state of shock.

If she wasn't standing so upright without the need to lean against the wall, Dorothy would have thought she was drunk and hallucinating.

"Dorothy, there's the liquor. Go drink it then," he said.

Dorothy was taken aback.

"Touch it, and I'll shut down that distillery. Try to buy alcohol anywhere, and I'll have that place closed. Go ahead, try me."

For the first time, Dorothy heard the grinding of his teeth as he spoke.