

Midnight 961

Chapter 961

"Are you turning me down then?" Quincy had nothing more to say to him. "You can refuse, sure, but then I won't make that call to Jonathan for you."

"Do you really want to see our family's business crumble to dust?!" Ronin asked.

Quincy let out a scoff, "Family business? Wasn't it always something that never concerned me? Have you ever thought of handing over our family business to me or sharing its profits with me?" Her questioning gaze was sharp, "So, do you think I care?"

Ronin clenched his fists. What options did he have left now? She was clearly having her hand on his throat.

"Are you sure you want to cut ties with the family? Just remember, even if you marry into the Lopez family, with their vast empire, they won't treat you well without your own family's backing!"

"My own family? I don't have one." She said.

Ronin was taken aback.

"So, is it a yes or no?" she continued.

Ronin's teeth were nearly grinding against each other, but in the end, he had no choice but to nod.

"Fine! As long as you help our family get through this crisis, from then on... you and the family will have nothing to do with each other! And I won't come asking you for any more favors."

Quincy smiled, "Wrong! It's not about not asking for favors. It's that from now on, you don't get to acknowledge me if we even cross paths on the street."

She was utterly disheartened. When her father had slapped her earlier, she was still willing to give it one last chance.

But...

He didn't take it.

Truth be told, whether Ronin agreed or not, Quincy would have still helped her family through its troubles. After all, now she could use Dorothy as leverage over Everett, the money was just a word away for her.

Now... well, it's for the best. From now on, she would be free.

...

Dorothy truly felt much better.

Even the irritations that plagued her before seemed to have eased—though insomnia was still an issue.

"Everett, I think... you don't need to have Dr. Quincy treat me anymore! Look, I'm getting better day by day without any medication or injections!"

Everett, who was browsing through some reports in his study, paused his typing and looked up at her.

"Has she been in touch with you these past few days?" he asked.

Dorothy was taken aback by the question, "No!"

She didn't really have any personal connection with Dr. Quincy, and her last text on WhatsApp hadn't even been returned.

"I'll handle it. You don't need to worry about this." He concluded.

Dorothy frowned slightly. Her woman's intuition told her something was off.

"Everett, is there some kind of issue between you and Dr. Quincy?" It didn't seem like it was just about Everett asking Quincy to treat her.

"No."

"Is that the truth?" Dorothy moved closer and straddled Everett's lap, her voice taking on a wheedling and softening tone, "If there's something, just tell me! I hate having to guess! Is it your father... bringing up the idea of you marrying Dr. Quincy again?"

Everett felt a sudden jolt in his heart. But he managed to keep his expression steady.

"No," he said.

"Then what is it?"

"Haven't I said, Dorothy? Just trust me, and let's not delve into this now," Everett couldn't possibly share the real issue with Dorothy. She was born to be the type to overthink.

If she knew Quincy was using her as a bargaining chip to manipulate him, Everett feared Dorothy might do something drastic in despair.

The poison was real, as was Dorothy's depression.

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"Can I just ask you one thing? Is that okay?" she asked.

"Go ahead."

Dorothy chuckled, "Would you ever... leave me behind?"

After all, she had nothing to her name, not a single thing that would deem her worthy of Everett.

She had always guarded her heart, prepared for the moment he would leave her for someone of his own social standing. So, even if he were to abandon her, she wouldn't be shocked; she would be just a bit heartbroken.

But now, she had committed herself to him, so her fear was tagging along for the ride.

This fear of loss was new to Dorothy.

Upon hearing her words, Everett's handsome face stiffened, his expression turning grave.

"Dorothy, I won't allow you to harbor such doubts."

"But I need to hear it from you," she insisted, locking her gaze with his deep eyes. "I trust you that you wouldn't lie to me."

Everett put on a serious look, and his voice resonated with conviction, "I would never leave you behind, Dorothy. You are more precious to me than my own life."

Dorothy smiled, leaning in to kiss his cheek. "Don't be mad. I'm not questioning you or distrust you; I just needed to hear you say it!"

Every time he spoke such earnest, heartfelt words, her heart swelled with sweetness, making any future storms seem less frightening.

After all, she had him. Forever and always.

...

Jeffrey's daughter had her name set in stone, chosen personally by him, her doting father.

It was Felicity Miller.

Felicity meant great happiness, and she also took Karen's last name. Karen had actually hoped the child would carry Jeffrey's surname.

Considering the uncertainty of having the second child, Felicity would be the only daughter they had for now. So she worried her in-laws might disapprove.

"I've changed my mind! No lousy boy is worthy of my daughter. No one's allowed to date her! I'll have Langston keep an eye on his sister for me!" Jeffrey announced.

Karen sighed in resignation, "Did you even discuss this with your parents before going ahead and registering the name?"

Jeffrey sat beside her and wrapped an arm around her shoulder, "Don't worry, my parents had no objections! I was the guy who never planned on marrying, so compared to having no daughter-in-law or descendants, them just having a granddaughter named Miller is something they're totally fine with!"

"That means you didn't consult them, did you?"

"Ah! Your understanding is top-notch, my dear wife!"

Karen rolled her eyes at him, "I knew I shouldn't have let you handle this. What if—"

"There are no what-ifs! I promise." Jeffrey grinned, "Trust me, if my parents cared about the surname, they would've mentioned it long before now. They haven't said anything other than coming over to check on the baby since you had her!"

Though Karen wanted to add more, the name was already officially registered, leaving no room for change.

"Pfff! I did kind of hope she'd end up with Langston... He's so much like Everett—he's handsome, smart, and we know his family well."

Thanks to Jeffrey's meddling, they really did end up like siblings now.

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"It's just because Langston's got those top-notch genes that I'm worried that too many girls will chase after him. In that case, our little girl's gonna get her heart trampled in the stampede!"

"If Langston takes after Everett, and he's got eyes only for our girl, then we won't have to worry about any other girls getting a look in!" Karen rolled her eyes, "Look at Everett, when has he ever given Dorothy a moment's worry over such matters? What you should be fretting over is if our daughter ends up in your nature, becoming a real heartbreaker and letting Langston down."

Jeffrey had no clue how the conversation had veered from deciding on their daughter's name to this. And he was getting a backhanded compliment for his trouble out of the blue.

"Hey, I'm loyal, alright? Once you came into the picture, have I even glanced at another woman?"

It was an injustice for him! Having more exes didn't mean he wasn't devoted! And to think, he hadn't even started on Karen coming into his life so late. Had they met earlier, he could have been just loyal to a fault like Everett.

"We've only been together a short while, so maybe you're just still in the honeymoon phase."

Before Jeffrey could retort, Karen just cut him off, "Don't bother swearing your fidelity now. We'll see. I don't buy into men's sweet nothings, and if things go south, I won't cling or blame you."

That was her stance on love: if it's meant to be, it'll stay; no use crying over spilled milk.

Jeffrey blinked, and then his handsome face scrunched up.

"Sweetheart, can we drop this topic? Let's get back to the name discussion." He said.

"What's there to talk about?" Karen stood up, lifting their daughter from the crib, "I just regret that my darling girl was born under a lucky star for love, only for her dad to jinx it! Right, Felicity?"

Jeffrey got nothing to say.

"Your brother Langston is such a heartthrob! Just you wait till you're old enough, you'll be hanging out with the cool kids too."

Jeffrey pouted, "Praising Langston's looks is just a roundabout way of complimenting Everett. You think he's more handsome than me?"

Karen shot him a look that said, 'Obviously.'

And he was literally left speechless.

...

When Karen was discharged from the hospital, Dorothy came with Abigail and Langston.

The two tykes were thrilled to bits at the sight of someone younger than themselves, crowding around to get a good look.

Watching them, Karen nudged Dorothy, "Looks like they're fond of little ones, Dorothy! So are you and Everett thinking about adding another to the crew?"

Dorothy blushed, her cheeks turning a delicate pink.

"Uh, Everett's keen, and I'm all for it."

"So, when's the big plan?" Karen said, then quickly added, "Not right now, of course. You'll need Quincy to give you the all-clear first."

Dorothy's eyes widened at the mention of Quincy, "You know about that?"

Realizing her slip, Karen quickly squinted and smiled, "Uh... Jeffrey let it slip!"

Dorothy immediately asked, "Did Jeffrey say anything else? Like, is there any beef between Dr. Quincy and Everett?"

"He didn't say! Nothing else came up!"

Karen remembered Jeffrey's words— Everett would never hurt Dorothy, and if he said to keep it under wraps, there was a good reason. It was something that wouldn't sit well with Dorothy if she knew.

"Okay. Truth be told, I've been feeling like Everett's been acting all kinds of strange lately." Dorothy said.

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"Huh? What's so strange about it?"

Dorothy pondered for a moment. Describing her feelings was quite a challenge.

After all, he had addressed all her concerns, and he didn't seem secretive when taking Quincy's calls.

"Gut feeling," Dorothy replied.

Karen chuckled, "Dorothy, it's not that Everett is acting strange. Once you've fallen for him and given yourself to him completely, you start to worry about losing him."

Dorothy paused, "Do other women feel this way too?"

"Most do! Plus, you've always been a bit of an overthinker."

Dorothy nodded, somewhat agreeing with Karen's perspective.

"Maybe I'm just overthinking things." She said.

No sooner had she finished her sentence than her phone rang.

Speak of the devil. It was Quincy calling.

Noticing Felicity was asleep, Dorothy gestured to Karen, showing her the phone before stepping out of the room to answer.

"Dr. Quincy." Dorothy answered the phone.

"Sorry, Ms. Sanchez. I just saw your WhatsApp message! I've been a bit under the weather recently and haven't been checking my phone much," Quincy's voice was as gentle as ever.

There was also no hint of evasion or guilt in his tone when talking to Dorothy.

This actually eased Dorothy's mind somewhat. Otherwise, she would keep wondering why Quincy hadn't replied to her WhatsApp messages. After all, she deserved at least a polite response.

"No worries! Are you feeling better now, Dr. Quincy?"

"It was nothing serious, just exhaustion from working too much," Quincy chuckled. "I'm calling because I need a favor."

"Just say the word," Dorothy responded immediately.

"I can't seem to reach Mr. Lopez. I tried calling his number just now and he didn't pick up!" Quincy explained, then quickly added, "Ms. Sanchez, don't overthink it. I'm contacting him about an investment matter related to my father's company. I'm not sure if he mentioned it to you."

"He hasn't mentioned it. And if Everett didn't pick up, he's probably busy at work. I'll talk to his secretary and see if he can get back to you when he's free."

"Good. I appreciate it, Ms. Sanchez." Quincy replied.

Dorothy felt a bit guilty towards Quincy, so she didn't see it as a bother at all.

"It's no bother! You've saved Everett's life, and now you're forced to go out of your way to treat me. I'm the one who should be thanking you."

After exchanging pleasantries, they hung up.

Dorothy thought for a moment and sent Everett a WhatsApp message: [Dr. Quincy called me, said she couldn't reach you. She wants to talk about her father's company's investment.]

Not knowing the specifics or how's the company's investment going, Dorothy relayed Quincy's message verbatim. Whether Everett chose to call her back was up to him.

Perhaps... Everett wasn't interested in the investment and was just avoiding Quincy.

Within seconds of sending the WhatsApp message, Everett called.

"Quincy contacted you?" he asked.

"Yeah."

Everett's tone sharpened, "Didn't I tell you not to talk to her?"

Dorothy was taken aback by his rebuke, "I... I'm sorry, I just saw she called, and considering we still need Dr. Quincy for my treatment, I answered."

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He rarely spoke to her in such a tone, and that caught her off guard momentarily.

Having said his piece, Everett regretted it as well. He was just too scared that Quincy might hurt Dorothy again, thus he wanted to keep her away from him.

"I'm sorry, I was a bit..." he apologized.

"It's okay! It was work-related anyway so I shouldn't have interfered. If you're feeling stuck, like you deliberately didn't want to return Dr. Quincy's calls, just pretend I never messaged you!" Dorothy might not know the specifics, but she was aware that anything involving the Lopez Corporation likely involved substantial funds. Being the CEO, he had to make his own considerations. She shouldn't have relayed Quincy's message in the first place.

"Are you upset?" Everett's voice carried a hint of caution.

Dorothy chuckled, "Not at all! I was worried about upsetting you."

"I wouldn't be upset with you." Everett paused, "You're at the hospital?"

"Yeah! Karen was being discharged, but the baby fell asleep, so we thought we'd let her wake up on her own. It's a bit chilly today, didn't want the baby catching a cold with the temperature drop."

"I'll come pick you, Abigail, and Langston up once I wrap things up here."

"Great! You can head straight to Jeffrey's place, we're about to leave the hospital too."

"Alright."

After hanging up, she sighed, hoping her WhatsApp message wouldn't cause any trouble for Everett.

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Once Everett ended the call with Dorothy, he dialed Quincy immediately. His tone was fierce right from the start, "Quincy, don't push my boundaries."

"I was merely seeking your help, Mr. Lopez. Since I couldn't reach you, I had no choice but to approach Ms. Sanchez. But rest assured, I mentioned it was about a collaboration, nothing more," Quincy's voice was calm, albeit a bit feeble to him.

Everett clenched his fists tightly. If it weren't for the fact that the antidote hadn't been deciphered yet, and they still needed her to keep Dorothy alive, he'd really want to tear Quincy apart!

"I don't care why, but do not contact her again!" he snapped.

"I understand." Quincy backed off, not looking to clash in the first place, "You must be aware of my family situation by now. Jonathan pulled the funding, and I was hoping you could land my family a hand, Mr. Lopez."

"You'll provide the antidote if I help your family?"

"I can give you an additional month," Quincy offered with a chuckle, "That way, you'd have more time to consider!"

But fully curing Dorothy was definitely impossible. Not just for any other reason, but even if she wanted to survive, she needed to keep Dorothy close. She couldn't even begin to imagine how dire her own fate would be otherwise.

"Saving your family will cost a pretty penny."

Moreover, this sum could very well hold her family's fate in his hands.

"Indeed, but to Mr. Lopez, it's merely pocket change," Quincy might not know everything, but he was well aware of Everett's financial prowess.

Not just saving her family, but even ten would be a breeze.

After a brief pause, Everett spoke gravely, "I can offer you a sum not only to save your family but to ensure you're set for life, provided you hand over the final antidote."

"Mr. Lopez, do you take me for a fool? The day Ms. Sanchez's poison is cured might very well be the day I meet my end."

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So, starving her for three days or even offering her a fortune wouldn't make Quincy give away the antidote. Not even if it meant the downfall of the entire family.

Unless she no longer wished to live.

"Saving your family isn't something that falls within our negotiation. I'm under no obligation." He said.

"True, which is why I propose an additional month of Ms. Sanchez's antidote in exchange," Quincy bargained.

Everett paused, "And if I refuse?"

"What can I do? It's not like I can just take it by force. At most... I just won't supply the antidote anymore." There are very few things in this world that could threaten Everett. Quincy had finally found something that could leverage Everett. She wasn't about to let go; she intended to exploit this threat to its fullest. "Mr. Lopez, are you willing to lose Ms. Sanchez?"

"If anything happens to Dorothy, I'll make sure you experience a living hell."

"Saving my family would barely require any effort on your part, Mr. Lopez. The money is trivial to you, and in return, you get an additional month's supply of the antidote. It's a good deal."

Quincy's logic in her words was clear, signaling her confidence in winning.

After all, the all-powerful and high-flying Everett happened to be an infatuated man. If he could bear to lose Dorothy, then what truly could threaten him?

Sure enough, after a few seconds of silence, Everett spoke, "How much?"

"I'll have my father contact you."

As Quincy finished speaking, Everett was ready to hang up. He didn't want to hear that voice for one more second.

However, Quincy suddenly stopped him and added, "One more thing! You might want to consider hiring some bodyguards for my protection, Mr. Lopez. After all... if an accident were to happen to me, if I were hit by a car, suffered amnesia, or... encountered any life-threatening danger, then it wouldn't just be my loss. My death would be insignificant, but Ms. Sanchez would have no one to save her."

Quincy was mainly worried that her words might have angered her father, leading him to take action against her. Although he had agreed to cut ties over money, she knew her father wouldn't easily let go of a pawn he had nurtured for years.

She couldn't predict his next move, but with Everett's men protecting her, she felt somewhat safer.

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Jeffrey had everything arranged at their place before driving back to pick up his wife and daughter.

Dorothy was in the back of the van with their twins, while Karen sat in the front, holding her daughter.

At a red light, Jeffrey instinctively glanced at the rear-view mirror and saw Langston holding Felicity's little hand!

Alarm bells rang in his head as he coughed lightly, "Well, Langston, remember that Felicity is going to be your little sister from now on. You have to protect her like a real brother, and never let any jerk take advantage of her!"

Dorothy, unaware of their previous conversation, thought it was just a joke and didn't pay much attention.

But Karen knew exactly what was going on. Jeffrey was overreacting again!

Ever since Arthur cursed in the hospital that Jeffrey's daughter would be mistreated and abandoned by men, and Karen indeed gave birth to a daughter, he had become overly protective.

He didn't even trust Langston around her.

"Mr. Turner, don't worry! I'll definitely protect my sister!" Langston said.

"Just remember, you're Felicity's brother for life, her real brother!"

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Just as Langston was about to nod, Karen, having reached her limit, frowned deeply, "Jeffrey, have you had enough?"

Jeffrey quickly shrank his neck and continued driving.

Dorothy, still not quite catching up, blinked in confusion, "Huh? What happened?"

"It's nothing! Just ignore him." Karen freed one hand to caress Langston's head. "Langston, do you think little Felicity is cute?"

Langston nodded eagerly, "She's so tiny! Everything about her is just so small!"

"She'll grow up before you know it!"

Langston turned to his mom, "Mommy, how come I've never seen Abigail when she was that tiny?"

Dorothy blinked.

Even Jeffrey, driving up front, couldn't help but chuckle at that, "Because when your little sister Abigail was that small, you were just as tiny!"

Their conversation filled the car until they finally arrived at the mansion.

As soon as Karen walked in with her daughter, she was greeted by a line of nannies Jeffrey hired, all standing at attention by the door. And it was literally a lineup, no exaggeration - at a glance, there were definitely at least ten of them.

"Jeffrey? What's this...?" she asked.

"Well, isn't it said that women are especially exhausted and prone to postpartum depression after giving birth? So, I personally selected these folks to take care of you and the baby, making sure there's absolutely nothing for you to feel down about! I aim to keep you well-fed and worry-free during this special time!"

Karen rolled her eyes as Jeffrey introduced them one by one.

"This one specializes in preparing postnatal meals, this one's a professional psychologist on standby, and these ones will primarily take care of the baby, switching shifts every four hours to ensure they're well-rested and ready to take care of my daughter! And there's more—"

"That's enough," Karen waved him off. "No need for introductions. Let them get to their duties first. I want to catch up with Dorothy."

"Okay!" Jeffrey nodded. "Didn't you hear? The lady let you get to your duties!"

The lady, huh? Karen thought it was both exasperating and amusing.

Dorothy, standing beside her, couldn't help but giggle, "Jeffrey really has thought of everything. I never expected him to be so attentive."

"Nonsense! He's just fussing over nothing."

"Don't be too hard on him. Jeffrey's doing all this because he cares about you. If you keep dampening his spirits, be careful he might not bother anymore."

Karen pouted, "He wouldn't dare! Dorothy, you have no idea how clingy he can be!"

Dorothy took her complaints as venting about the sweet burdens of love.

It wasn't long before Everett also arrived. He seldom visited Jeffrey's mansion, having only been a handful of times before.

"Everett." Upon seeing his tall figure at the entrance, Dorothy immediately rose from the sofa and walked towards him.

Everett naturally extended his arms to embrace her.

"Daddy! I missed you so much! And brother missed you too!" Abigail, seeing him, insisted on dragging her brother along. Her eagerness was as if they hadn't seen their father for days.

Jeffrey, standing aside, suddenly sighed, "Everett, to think there was a time when neither of us could have imagined this scene. We literally have our own kids."

Everett glanced at him, his voice flat but his words piercing, "I beat you to it. I have two."

"It's a happy day, and you're forcing me to touch your raw nerve." He leaned in, whispering, "At least I managed to marry Karen. What about you?"

Chapter 968

"That didn't count. Have you guys actually tied the knot yet?" Everett asked.

Jeffrey was at a loss for words.

Facing Everett, Jeffrey's usually impeccable eloquence seemed to falter.

It took some doing, but with everyone gathered, Jeffrey managed to keep them all seated for a family dinner.

While Dorothy and the others were lost in conversation, Jeffrey pulled Everett aside.

"Listen, Everett, I've been thinking. Quincy's only got this hold on you because she's sure you care about Dorothy, right? This... might actually be simpler to handle than we thought."

Everett pressed his lips together, "You're suggesting we make Quincy believe I don't care about Dorothy."

Jeffrey clapped his hands together, "Exactly! That way, all of this gets resolved. If Quincy's bold enough to demand money from you now to save her family, who's to say she won't up the ante tomorrow? Today it's a favor, tomorrow she might want the entire Lopez Corporation!"

Greed was human nature. Especially when one realized the leverage they got was becoming increasingly effective, they'd be less likely to let go.

But surely, this was something Everett had already considered.

"So, what do you think Quincy will do to test if I've truly stopped caring about Dorothy?" he asked.

Jeffrey blinked.

"She'll probably cut off Dorothy's antidote supply, then watch to see how I react as Dorothy's life hangs in the balance," Everett's handsome face grew cold, his eyes icy, "If anything goes wrong, and lead to Dorothy's real... I couldn't bear the consequences."

The logic was irrefutable, something Everett had undoubtedly contemplated. But it was an approach fraught with risk.

If Quincy had conceived the idea to poison Dorothy, she'd certainly done her homework.

Jeffrey furrowed his brow, pacing back and forth, "Or, maybe you could gradually give Quincy the impression that things between you and Dorothy are souring! That way, she might start looking for an exit strategy and might even hand over the antidote voluntarily!"

"Dorothy has only just accepted me."

Everett feared that this might be his one and only chance to have Dorothy's acceptance.

"Why not explain everything afterward? Do you really want to be under Quincy's thumb forever?" Jeffrey understood his friend's emotional turmoil but insisted on a resolution, "The more you show you care for Dorothy, the more Quincy will gloat. This won't end the way you want it to."

Everett lowered his gaze, remaining silent. He understood all this. He had already gathered a team of medical experts to work on the antidote.

But then problems followed. Without the original poison, they couldn't conduct necessary clinical trials for the antidote.

Certainly, Everett couldn't subject Dorothy to these trials.

Quincy had mentioned that the sequence of creating the antidote was crucial. One misstep, and the poison's effects could intensify.

Using Dorothy for trials meant only one shot. One mistake, and it's all over.

"I'll think it over." He thus replied.

"Everett, you're letting your concern cloud your judgment! To save Dorothy, we have to make Quincy believe she's no longer of any use in this scheme!" Jeffrey understood Everett's dilemma all too well.

If Karen were in Dorothy's place, he'd be beside himself too. But to obtain the antidote, some sacrifices were necessary.

"Fortunately, Quincy doesn't have feelings for me. She's just looking to secure her own freedom." Everett said.

Not like Heather.

"But... that makes it even less likely she'll let go of Dorothy as her leverage!" Te

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If Quincy had a thing for Everett, maybe... just maybe, Everett could use his face well, play a bit of a seduction game, and promise the moon.

The emotionless one was always the hardest to crack! Because she didn't have a weakness.

And with Dorothy's fate in her grip, she was practically stepping on Everett's Achilles' heel.

"Otherwise, why not take control of Quincy's folks? If she's pleading on behalf of her family, she must feel something for them. You'd have leverage, and she wouldn't dare make a move, at least she wouldn't push her luck any further!"

"Think Quincy's parents are free to do as they please?" Everett's guys had them under control for a while now. But he was aware of the strained relationship between Quincy and her family.

It was clear to see that Quincy's kin hadn't treated her well, and she, in turn, naturally felt little for them.

"Darn it! You two are just a disaster magnet! First it was Heather, now Quincy! One headache after another!"

Nothing seemed to work!

Jeffrey was so frustrated that he almost wished he could just get rid of Quincy then and there.

"Everett, dinner's ready!"

They hadn't wrapped up their chat when Dorothy came over.

Everett quickly masked his frustration with a gentle smile, "Alright."

...

After dining at Jeffrey's, they drove back to the Bay Residence.

On the way, Dorothy wrestled with her thoughts before finally voicing them.

"Everett... did I cause you trouble?" she asked.

"Hmm?" Everett glanced at her while his hand rested on the steering wheel, "No."

"You said you'd never lie to me." Dorothy looked serious, "If I've caused you any trouble, just tell me. It would help me know what I should or shouldn't do!"

Like his current situation with Quincy. Every time she asked, he avoided the topic.

Then Dorothy had nothing better to do than make a wild guess. She always thought she shouldn't have passed messages from Quincy to Everett.

"Dorothy, stop imagining things!" He paused before suggesting, "Maybe... you could help me finish that project I started if you're looking for something to do at home?"

Keeping busy might keep her mind off things, possibly making her less sensitive to these issues.

"The project I handled when I was there is still unfinished?" she asked.

"Yes, I wasn't satisfied with the director who took over, so I switched them out."

Dorothy's eyes lit up as she heard this, "Sure! Hand it over to me again. I'll take care of it."

She's always been passionate about her work. Staying idle for too long would make her feel disconnected from the society.

Dorothy wanted to be Everett's right hand. Even if she couldn't solve big problems, helping out a little would make her happy.

"I'll have Kevin get in touch." He said.

Dorothy nodded, then hesitated, "I have been away from the project for so long, so do you think the team will have any objections?"

"How dare they?"

"This is tyranny!"

"The Lopez Corporation is mine, and appointing directors is my right. Of course, resigning is their right."

Dorothy couldn't help but smile resignedly. His clarity and decisiveness were probably why he was so successful.

Back at the Bay Residence, Dorothy slid into bed and took the initiative to reach for Everett's shoulder.

Just as Everett was about to get up for his shower, she pulled him back.

"Do you want sex today?" she asked.

Everett was confused.

Her cheeks flushed, "I mean if we do, we don't need to take precautions, right?"

He had mentioned wanting another child, after all.

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Everett's mind clearly didn't approach this one. He paused for several seconds before gently patting Dorothy's hand, "Your health isn't the best right now. I do want another child, but not under these circumstances."

He was still unsure about the extent of the poison lingering in her system. Talking about having a child now felt almost like a death sentence to her.

"Oh." She muttered.

Everett had made his stance clear, and knowing Dorothy, she wasn't one to push back.

But that night, she seemed less than cooperative with Everett.

After one attempt, Dorothy claimed she was too tired. She retreated to the bathroom for a shower, and then curled up under the covers to sleep.

Everett had a hunch about what was bothering her, but didn't know what to do.

He could just take a cold shower to cool off.

...

The next morning, by the time Dorothy woke up, Everett had already left for the office.

Still, he had taken the time to prepare oatmeal, keeping it warm, and left her a note.

Their relationship seemed to have momentarily regressed to their early cohabitation days.

[I dropped off Abigail and Langston at school. Have breakfast when you wake up, then get in touch with Kevin. Everett.]

Dorothy carefully preserved the note, and then made her way to the dining room to eat while calling Kevin, "Did Everett tell you about me taking over the project?"

"Mr. Lopez briefed me! I'll send you the documents through the system."

Dorothy paused for a moment, then chuckled, "About that... I deactivated my account when I left Lopez Corporation and haven't applied for it again. I'm not officially back, so you might not be able to send it through. Just email it to me."

Thinking she'd never return to Lopez Corporation, she had cut ties completely.

"Mr. Lopez had your account restored," Kevin said with a hint of amusement in his voice. "You've known Mr. Lopez for years. Aren't you aware of his temperament? He verbally agreed to your resignation but deep down, he didn't want you to leave; he just lacked a reason to make you stay."

Dorothy didn't reply.

"Ms. Sanchez, Mr. Lopez is the most devoted man I've ever met! In his position, temptations abound, yet he's managed to stay true to his principles, which is rare."

Kevin wasn't from high society, but his job exposed him to that circle often! Which among them didn't have a scandal or two out there after their marriage? Not to mention the children brought forth by women from outside their marriages, leaving them questioning their paternity.

In such an environment, for Everett to remain unaffected and unassimilated was truly remarkable.

"Yeah, I know what kind of person he is." She replied.

"So, don't take him for granted! Mr. Lopez is human too; he can be hurt. What if one day he truly walks away?"

"I've made up my mind this time. No matter what, I won't leave him again."

"That's good to hear!"

Dorothy might be unaware of Quincy's machinations, but Kevin was. Mr. Lopez was trapped, threatened, and exploited, all because he couldn't bear to put Dorothy in harm's way.

Kevin genuinely feared any more complications from Dorothy's end. Mr. Lopez was already under immense pressure; he couldn't handle much more.

If it were Kevin, he might have given up long ago, perhaps even during their crisis in Swevia Country, preventing any further incidents. He couldn't begin to imagine how Everett had managed to persevere through it all.