

Midnight 631

Chapter 631

Dorothy's face paled in an instant, her features drawn tight with tension.

She couldn't even turn away fast enough to dodge Everett's piercing gaze.

"No need, I'll go alone."

She attempted to leave, but Everett's grip on her wrist was firm, "Give me a reason."

"There is no reason." Dorothy struggled to break free, "I just want to go alone!"

Seeing her struggle, Everett feared she might hurt herself in the tussle and abruptly let go, causing her to stagger backwards. Fortunately, he quickly pulled her back into his arms.

As he tried to understand Dorothy's sudden change of expression, he ventured, "Is it because... your mother never liked me?"

Everett remembered how her mom had been keen on setting her up with Kenneth rather than him.

Dorothy shook her head, "Stop probing."

She couldn't bring herself to visit her mother's grave with the son of her mother's murderer, at least not before justice had been served. It would be a disrespect to her mother's spirit.

Dorothy knew her mother would be furious.

"Alright, I won't pry," Everett said, seeing her downcast eyes and realizing she didn't want to talk about it anymore. "I've prepared everything you need for the memorial. I'll drive you there, but I won't enter the cemetery, okay?"

"Everett, it's been a while since I visited mom. I want to talk to her, just me alone, please!"

Her refusal couldn't have been clearer. Everett could only nod with a wry smile, "Okay, as you wish."

...

Jeffrey drove Karen to the entrance of Kenneth's apartment building. From a distance, they could see Kenneth waiting outside with a sour face.

Sensing Karen's unease, Jeffrey patted her shoulder, "I'm here."

She looked at him, "What if he hits you?"

Karen was a bit troubled, recalling how Jeffrey had gone berserk when he fought with Levi before. She couldn't imagine what she would do if Kenneth and Jeffrey came to blows.

"Well, I won't fight back," Jeffrey said with a laugh, either feigning ease or genuinely unconcerned. "After all, I've swept his dear cousin away. Trust me, I'm tough enough. A few hits won't matter. Just don't beat on my face, or someone might say I've been disfigured, that I've lost my charm and can't keep her heart any longer."

Karen took a moment to realize who he meant by "someone."

She glared at Jeffrey, "You're still in the mood to joke!"

"Of course! We have to face this sooner or later. Dodging isn't my style."

With that, he parked the car at the curb and then playfully slapped his cheeks, "Karen, take a good look at this face – it might not be so handsome in a minute!"

...

Kenneth saw them too and started walking in their direction, his approach fierce and overwhelming. Jeffrey instinctively shielded Karen behind him.

As Kenneth drew closer, Jeffrey greeted him first, "Hi, Kenneth."

"Are we acquainted?" Kenneth's tone was frosty from the get-go. "Karen, come with me."

Hesitating, Karen didn't move, "Kenneth, Jeffrey and I have decided to get married."

"Don't you know who he is?" Kenneth shot back directly. "It was you who told me when Heather tried to slap Dorothy at the hospital, Jeffrey was there kicking Dorothy too when she was down. Have you forgotten?"

That incident had become an indelible stain on Jeffrey's past.

Sure enough, Karen could only lower her head in silence at Kenneth's reminder.

Chapter 632

Jeffrey was the picture of embarrassment, wiping the beads of sweat off his brow. "I swear, I had no idea what kind of person Heather was back then! She nearly got me killed with her schemes, all because I trusted her too much!"

"What made you trust her then?" Kenneth wasn't born yesterday. He knew exactly what was at play here. "You had a crush on Heather, didn't you?"

Jeffery fell silent.

"Karen, think about it, is this the kind of guy you want to be with?" Kenneth didn't mince words, his directness leaving the others speechless.

Jeffrey was now sweating bullets.

He almost wished Kenneth would've just socked him. Maybe then, he'd get off the hook by playing the sympathy card.

"Answer me!" Kenneth raised his voice, repeating the demand.

Startled, Karen murmured like a child caught with her hand in the cookie jar, "Dorothy said she didn't mind..."

"So you think it's okay just because she doesn't mind? He turns to chase you because he can't get Heather. And you just say yes?"

Jeffery quickly interjected, "I never chased Heather, I swear it! Yes, I had a little crush on Heather, but it was mostly just friendship because I knew how much she liked Everett. I never stood a chance."

"What about Karen? When did you start liking her then? And what are your intentions?" Kenneth had always been protective of Karen, like a big brother or even a father. When she moved to Eldorria City, he even bought her a small apartment, showing just how much he liked her.

Getting past him was going to be way tougher than getting past Derek!

"I'm serious about marrying Karen. I'm not kidding."

"Karen, do you believe him?" Both men looked at her expectantly.

She hesitated but eventually nodded.

"Yes, I trust him."

Kenneth clenched his fists, but he didn't swing. Instead, he just twitched his lips, grinding out through clenched teeth, "Fine, then I have nothing more to say. But if you break up with him one day, don't come crying to me about it. And if he ever hurts you, don't expect me to dry your tears!"

"Kenneth!"

"I don't want to hear any promises, Jeffrey. If you're a reliable man, you'll never let Karen down, and I'll believe you. Otherwise, your words mean nothing to me."

With that, Kenneth turned to leave.

Karen dashed forwards, chasing Kenneth down to the stairwell before she could catch him.

"Kenneth! I know what you're upset about. You think I betrayed Dorothy, right? I haven't! I checked with Dorothy over and over, and she's okay with me and Jeffrey. If Dorothy really cared, I never would've said yes to Jeffrey."

It wasn't about how important Jeffrey was. She would never forsake her longtime best friend over a guy she just met.

"Karen, it's your decision. I can't make it for you. I just don't want to see you hurt by a playboy."

"Don't worry, I can take care of my own heart! If he betrays his promises, he won't get a second chance from me." Karen didn't want to upset her brother, who meant the world to her. "Trust me, please. If you don't believe me, you can ask Dorothy yourself when she visits Bella's grave tomorrow."

Kenneth paused, looking at her. "She's going to the cemetery tomorrow?"

"Yeah. I think she's going with Everett."

Chapter 633

Ken remained silent.

Though he knew that Dorothy would never take Everett to the graveyard.

...

The drive back to Bay Residence was charged with a heavy silence.

Apart from Abigail and Langston's playful giggles, Dorothy and Everett hardly exchanged a word.

Everett had not only done thorough preparation for the memorial but had also purchased a prime plot in the cemetery, hoping that if Dorothy agreed, they could relocate her mother's resting place there.

However, it was clear she wasn't even willing to let him go with her.

As the car came to a halt in front of Bay Residence, Everett stepped out first, cradling Abigail in his arms, with Langston and Dorothy trailing behind.

Dorothy wanted to strike up a conversation with Everett, but seeing him not even turning back, she swallowed the words back.

He took the kids to the play castle, leaving her alone in the living room.

Dorothy knew Everett wasn't a man without temper. He was simply holding back, not wanting to lash out at her.

Sitting on the couch, she glanced at the calendar on her phone.

A month had flown by quickly, and now only half of it was left. Dorothy didn't want to squander these last precious moments with him on arguments or hold a grudge until dawn.

So she changed into her loungewear and went to the kitchen to cook a few simple dishes.

When Everett emerged, he found Dorothy sitting at the dining table with a welcoming smile.

In that instant, all the gloom and irritation seemed to dissipate.

He was utterly defenseless against Dorothy.

"It's been a while since I've cooked. Care to taste?" Dorothy offered him a set of cutlery.

Everett pulled out a chair and sat down. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a small cut on her hand, likely from chopping—a sign of her long absence from the kitchen.

"Don't do this again," Everett said gravely and rose to fetch the first-aid kit for her.

Dorothy let him bandage her wound without protest, resting her cheek against his arm. "Can you stop being mad, please?"

"I'm not mad."

"But your face looks sour!" Dorothy blinked at him playfully. "Smile for me. You're not handsome when you don't."

Exasperated, Everett put away the first-aid kit and then came back, scooping her into his arms and carrying her to the bedroom.

He didn't turn on the light but instead gently laid Dorothy down on the bed. The afternoon sun was no longer strong, casting a soft glow through the window onto her delicate features.

They locked eyes, and after a long moment, he sighed.

"I'm not mad. I'm just wondering why."

"Stop wondering. You'll know anyway in half a month."

"Do you resent me for not being there when your mother passed?" Everett had thought of that, and it pained him. "I swear, I had no idea about your mother's death."

If he had known, he would never have left Dorothy!

"I don't blame it on you. It's been so long, don't dwell on it." She had endured those tough days with clenched teeth and now she simply didn't want to bring them up.

"Dorothy, promise me, whatever happens, we'll face it together."

She looked into Everett's eyes for a long time before finally speaking softly, "In your heart, who matters more, me or your mom?"

"That's not something to compare."

"What if one day, there's a deep conflict between her and me? So deep that it can't be resolved, how would you choose?"

Everett's gaze flickered before he parted his lips, "I won't let you be wronged."

Chapter 634

Everett knew his mother all too well—domineering and often unreasonable. So, even when tensions flared between the two women in his life, he was always inclined to side with Dorothy deep down in his heart.

He trusted that Dorothy wasn't the type to stir up trouble.

"Everett, you know it'll put you in quite a bind if we two clash, don't you?" Dorothy said. Everett watched her smooth down his shirt, a playful smile on her lips.

"I don't want to put you in a tough spot, just like you wouldn't want to see me upset."

Everett caught her wandering hand, his eyes piercing with sincerity.

"As long as you don't leave, being in a bind doesn't matter to me."

All he wanted was for Dorothy to stay by his side.

She met his gaze with a smile, tactfully changing the subject. "Are we really going to leave all the food I cooked sitting in the dining room?"

"I'll carry you, and we can eat together."

"Sure."

...

Karen fell silent after leaving Kenneth's place.

Jeffrey could sense her gloominess, so he steered the car towards a shopping mall.

"What are we doing here?"

"Shopping, of course! I promised to make it up to you with new clothes, remember? Isn't it said that a new outfit can lift a woman's spirits?"

Karen raised an eyebrow at him. "You seem pretty experienced at this."

"I swear, I only financed shopping trips before. I've never actually accompanied any women to shop except you."

"You've been swearing to a lot of things lately."

"But I'm telling the truth, really!" Jeffrey moved closer, trying to take her hand.

Karen gripped his hand back, a teasing smile on her face. "I do believe you. If you were this attentive with every girl, you'd be worn out."

"That's the spirit!" Jeffrey breathed a sigh of relief. "Let's go. Get whatever you want, all on me."

"I might just take advantage of that."

"Why not? Just don't buy anything pink. Otherwise, I'll have to clear out the entire mall so you can have your pick."

Karen laughed it off. "I'm just teasing. Don't go making a scene."

She wasn't serious about spending Jeffrey's money!

Hand in hand, they entered the mall. Karen steered clear of the high-end luxury stores. Instead, she browsed the trendier shops on the upper floors.

"You don't have to save money on my account," he reminded her.

"I just don't think luxury brands suit me." Karen could afford them, especially with a cousin like Kenneth who could easily hand her a few grand for pocket money. But she believed in dressing for who you are, not for showing off to high society.

As they shopped, Karen felt parched. Jeffrey went to a nearby café to grab her a drink.

She watched as Jeffrey stepped away, and several female eyes turned his way immediately, some even sneakily snapping photos.

His striking looks always drew attention, but what came next caught Karen off guard.

"Mr. Turner?" a voice called out.

Recognizing the voice, Jeffrey looked over. It was a familiar face, but he couldn't quite recall who she was.

He raised an eyebrow, holding two drinks. "And you are?"

"It's me, Caren! Remember? At Charm Night Bar, you took me to that hotel next door."

Jeffrey's skin crawled at the recollection.

Turning stiffly, he saw Karen's gaze fixed on them, her expression an unreadable mix of emotions.

Caren was oblivious to Karen's presence. She pulled out her phone and smiled at Jeffrey. "You gave me some money last time. I want to pay you back. Luckily we ran into each other today!"

Chapter 635

"No need for that..." Jeffrey's face was frozen in an expression of utter discomfort.

But Caren was dead serious, with an air of earnestness as she added, "I have to give it back to you! I went looking for you at Charm Night Bar several times afterward, but you were never there. I don't

want people to think I only left with you that night for money. If I keep this money, what's the difference between me and those women on the street corners?"

Just as Jeffrey was about to speak up, Karen sidled up to him, resting a hand on his shoulder with a smile as she looked at Caren, "Honey, are you sure it was Mr. Turner who gave you the money? You might be mistaken."

"There's no mistake! I can show you the receipt. Look!"

Jeffrey's instinct was to stop her, but Karen had already snatched it up.

The name on the receipt was undeniably Jeffrey's.

But the timing...

It was a transaction made after his return from Swevia Country.

Jeffrey could feel his heart growing colder than the iced drink in his hand!

He quickly explained to Karen, "Look, I did book a room for her that night, but I didn't touch her! You can ask her!"

Caren glanced at the flustered Jeffrey, then at Karen. She seemed to understand something. "Mr. Turner and I—

"No need to explain, sweetie. I get it! Keep the money. You've earned it." Karen's face was a mask of smiles from beginning to end, never once faltering, "Jeffrey, I'm done with this stroll, let's go."

Jeffrey dared not defy her.

They left with nothing but two cold drinks, heading straight to the underground parking lot.

As soon as Karen got into the car, Jeffrey hastened to explain, "That night, I went to the bar because you had turned me down. I thought maybe my feelings for you were just a passing interest. I figured some drinks and laughs with the guys would help me forget you. But it turns out to be impossible. I couldn't stop thinking about you. I didn't lay a finger on her. I gave her the money and sent her on her way!"

Who would have thought he'd be so unlucky to run into her today!

Jeffrey had spilled his guts, but Karen remained silent, making him even more anxious.

"I'm sorry. I swear I won't ever go to places like that again! Can you trust me? Please, Karen, say something!"

Karen turned to look at him only then, "What do you expect me to say?"

"Just... don't break up with me. You can hit me, yell at me, slap some sense into me."

"Honestly, I'm not feeling great," Karen sighed lightly, her head resting against the car window, her voice subdued. "But I can't really be mad at you. We had slept together back then, sure, but you weren't my boyfriend when you went to book that room with her. It's pretty normal for you to date other women."

That's the life Jeffrey should be leading!

But to say Karen totally understood Jeffrey? Well, that definitely wasn't the case.

Jeffrey remained silent like a deflated ball.

"Do you get it?"

"I do," Jeffrey shrank a little, "But I really didn't touch her."

Karen shook her head, "It doesn't matter. You don't have to explain. I just haven't gotten used to the idea of being with a ladies' man. I guess I should start getting used to meeting your exes around the whole Eldorria City. It's bound to happen more than once, and I should have been prepared."

Chapter 636

Knowing that Jeffrey was a ladies' man was one thing, but meeting a whole parade of his exes was quite another.

All Karen could manage to show was a weary smile, admitting she wasn't quite used to the idea yet.

"Look, I'll make an official announcement about our relationship on Twitter!" Jeffrey offered with a hint of desperation. "Then everyone would know I'm off the market."

"No need, Jeffrey. I'm just tired. Drive me home, will you? I need to crash for a bit."

Jeffrey was on the verge of tears. "Don't go home. Crash at my place, please? I swear I won't bug you. I promise!"

He feared that if Karen went home and took some time to think, she might send him a breakup text. All his efforts would go down the drain!

Karen looked at him with a smile tinged with resignation, "What are you afraid of? If I wanted to end things, I would've said so already."

Jeffrey's unspoken words hung in the air.

"I've got ex-boyfriends just like you have ex-girlfriends. It's no big deal! Maybe it's just my cousin's scolding still ringing in my ears. Upon this, naturally I would feel a bit upset when I came across that girl in the shopping mall."

Jeffrey didn't buy it. Women could be as fickle as the weather. He knew it.

"Anyway, what's the difference between resting at your parents' place and at mine? If you go home like this, your parents will probably think I did something awful to you! Don't go back, okay? Come to my place. When you're up, I'll take you out for something good to eat, whatever you want!"

Karen couldn't help but laugh at his anxious plea.

"Fine, but your parents aren't home, are they?"

"Don't worry! If you want them home, they'll be there. If not, they won't!"

Karen was speechless.

Handing her a cold drink, Jeffrey's voice dropped to a whisper, "I promise, apart from having too many exes, I won't give you any other reason to be upset. If we bump into any girl I know on the street again, I'll run the other way so fast that they won't get a chance to say hi to me!"

"You don't have to do that."

It was just another girl Jeffrey had been with, after all. She had known about his history from the start.

"I can't handle it," Jeffrey was close to sobbing. "Karen, I thought about it. If I met one of your exes and found out you were once with him, I'd probably lose it."

Much like how he felt while seeing Levi hanging out with her!

Jeffrey wished he could travel back in time to Karen's first love and tie her down to a commitment with him and him alone.

"Oh, I doubt you'll run into any. I haven't had many boyfriends."

She took her relationships seriously. Agreeing to date Jeffrey was a leap for her.

"Good. And if by any chance we do run into one, just don't tell me."

What he didn't know wouldn't hurt him.

"Okay."

...

The next morning, Dorothy was out early.

Everett had left the car keys at the front hall. She drove to the cemetery, a place still lush and tranquil.

With a bouquet of flower in hand, Dorothy walked past rows of tombstones toward her mother's.

She noticed a fresh bunch of flowers at Bella's headstone from a distance.

Someone had come earlier?

Her first thought was Everett. Had he come without telling her, despite her asking him to leave her mother in peace?

Furrowing her brows, Dorothy quickened her pace, reaching out to remove the uninvited bouquet, only to hear a man's voice behind her.

"Dorothy?"

Chapter 637

It was Kenneth. Dressed in a crisp white shirt, he was standing not too far away with a white towel in his hand.

"Kenneth?"

Upon seeing her, a hint of surprise washed over Kenneth's face before he walked towards her.

"You're here to pay your respects to Bella, and you didn't even give me a heads up. If I'd known you were coming today, I would've stayed away."

He offered a wry smile, then began to wipe Bella's headstone with the towel in his hand, gently and meticulously.

It was clear that out of all the headstones, Bella's was the cleanest. It was obviously tended to regularly.

"Do you come here often?" Dorothy asked, observing how familiar he was with the routine, as if he were the caretaker of the place.

"When I have nothing else to do, I like to come by and check on her," Kenneth replied after ensuring the headstone was spotless and then casually plucking a few tufts of grass that had sprouted nearby.

Dorothy felt a pang of guilt. She hadn't done as much as Bella's own daughter. It was Kenneth who picked up her slack. "Thank you, Kenneth."

"Thank me for what?" He raised an eyebrow, folded the towel neatly and tucked it into his pocket. "Bella was fond of me, and I admired her indomitable spirit, too. All of this has nothing to do with you. You don't need to thank me."

"Kenneth, I—"

"There's no need to say anything," Kenneth cut her off gently, "Don't shoulder all the responsibility yourself. Since I've already said it's my own will, you don't need to feel obliged. Actually, I should be thanking Bella. Sometimes, I come here and talk to her when I'm feeling down or troubled. It's a way for me to relax."

Dorothy lowered her eyes, "You really don't have to do this, Kenneth. I can't give you anything in return."

"Am I asking for anything? Dorothy, I've long since stopped wanting anything in return." Kenneth stood quietly in front of her, his tone tinged with self-mockery and loneliness, "Don't take away this last bit of solace from me."

He had already retreated to the edge, even restraining himself from calling her too often. What more did she want?

Dorothy kept her head down, knowing that no amount of persuasion would be of any use.

He had persisted for so many years. If he were the type to heed advice, it wouldn't have come to this.

"I won't disturb you any longer. Have a good talk with Bella. I'll drop the towel off at the storage locker and wait for you down below."

"Alright."

Dorothy nodded, watching Kenneth walk away, his figure shrinking with distance until it disappeared.

She placed the flowers in front of the headstone and then sat down beside it.

"Moth, I'm here."

Whenever she called her mother Bella before, she would get a stern look for not calling Mom, yet Bella's hand would always reach out to touch her head.

Bella had always been stubborn in her ways.

Dorothy doubted her mother ever really spoke softly or calmly.

She remembered back in middle school, hiding the fact that she was working part-time. When she got back to the hospital late at night, she thought her mother would be asleep. Until one night, when she was half-asleep, she felt someone stroking her hair with such tenderness and care.

She heard her mother's sigh, and a whispered apology filled with guilt.

Chapter 638

Which mother didn't love her daughter?

Bella was no exception.

But, wounded by her past, Bella's protective instincts for Dorothy had reached an obsessive level- a love so fierce she would rather perish than see her daughter trapped in a loveless marriage, fearing that Dorothy would end up in a situation similar to her own. How could this not be love?

It was just that Bella wasn't one to mince words.

Every time she spoke, it seemed like scolding was the only way to make her daughter learn and truly understand.

"Mom, do you get lonely down there all by yourself?"

Dorothy ran her fingers over the gravestone, tears welling up in her eyes. "Don't worry, I'll ensure the one responsible for your death joins you soon. I've thought it over – if justice prevails, I can forgive myself, move on, and start anew. But if not, I... I have another path to take."

In any case, those who had wronged her mother would not get away with it!

Determination and resolution shone in Dorothy's eyes.

Bella not only gave birth to Dorothy but also raised her. There was no way Dorothy would let the sins be buried and allow the culprits to gloat over their deeds!

Kenneth had been waiting quietly at the cemetery's edge.

The groundskeepers all knew him, waving as they passed, "Mr. Nelson, visiting your mother-in-law again, I see!"

He'd respond with a smile, offering no explanations or denials.

After a long wait, he saw Dorothy descending from the hill.

"Are your legs numb?"

He noticed Dorothy was walking a bit awkwardly.

She nodded, "Yeah, I talked with my mom a bit too long, forgot to shift my stance."

"Let me help you so you don't fall."

The cemetery was atop a hill, and the path down was always a slope.

Dorothy initially waved off the offer, but after a few steps, she twisted her ankle.

"Should I carry you?"

"No, no need," Dorothy shook her head but, for safety's sake, she accepted his arm for support.

As they walked down, they encountered others who recognized Kenneth and waved.

"Do you know everyone here?" Dorothy asked.

"Well, I'm here often. If a storm hits and it pours too hard to leave, they let me wait it out in the cemetery office. Got to know them after a while."

Dorothy was at a loss for words.

"They've all been looking after Bella! If I can't make it, they clean the gravestone on schedule, really kind-hearted folks."

Dorothy looked up at him and smiled, "My mom would be so happy. She liked things clean. I remember when she was in the local hospital, she frequently insisted on having baths. But due to limited facilities, daily showers weren't convenient. Eventually, she just settled for wipes, from morning till night."

"Yes, I noticed that. When I visited her at the hospital, she was always busy with her washcloth."

"Thank you for taking care of her for so long."

"It's nothing! I figured I'd accept your thanks this time, or else you wouldn't know how often to repeat it!"

Dorothy felt helpless, sensing Kenneth treated her like a child, always using that gentle, cajoling tone.

As they approached the road, Dorothy looked up, searching for where her car was parked.

Suddenly!

She caught sight of a black Maybach speeding away from the cemetery.

The car moved too quickly for her to catch the license plate number.

But Everett often rode in a Maybach.

Could he have been here too?

"What are you looking at?" Kenneth asked softly.

"Nothing! I've finished paying my respects to Bella, and I'm preparing to pack up and head to Swevia Country with Everett."

Chapter 639

Kenneth's expression froze for just a moment before he nodded. "Yeah, alright. I'll keep you posted on any updates from Byte 7. And don't worry about the final payment; I've got it all sorted."

Dorothy acknowledged with a quick, "Then I'll be off."

"You drove here yourself?"

"Yeah."

Kenneth waved his hand dismissively, "Drive safe on your way back, and remember to ice that ankle. We don't want it swelling up by morning."

He watched as Dorothy got into her car, his lips curling into a half-smile.

Kenneth knew that Dorothy would never bring Everett to the cemetery. That man had no right to set foot in the sacred grounds, to visit Bella as a son-in-law.

And neither would he, not in that role, ever.

...

Dorothy drove back to the Bay Residence, her gaze instinctively scanning for Everett's car.

Seeing the sleek black Maybach parked steadily in the garage, she let out a small sigh of relief.

It wasn't that she felt guilty for anything—she just didn't want to upset Everett by going to the cemetery without him, especially after ending up there with Kenneth. The situation would be uncomfortable if Everett were to find out.

She punched in the code and walked in, exchanging her shoes for slippers at the foyer.

Dorothy could hear the laughter of the kids upstairs, but there was no hint of Everett.

Was he in the bedroom?

Shuffling in her slippers, Dorothy checked the master bedroom, but it was empty.

She went upstairs, half-expecting to find Everett playing with the kids, but he wasn't there either.

"Where's Dad?" Dorothy asked Langston.

"I dunno, Mom. He was here earlier playing with me and Sis, then he kept checking his watch like he had something important to do. He didn't stay long."

"He didn't say where he was going?"

Langston shook his head.

"Okay, you two keep playing. Mommy's going to look for Daddy."

Dorothy went back downstairs and called Everett's phone.

After a few rings, Kevin picked up.

"Ms. Sanchez, Mr. Lopez is in a meeting. Is there something urgent?"

"He's at the office?"

"Yes, the meeting might take a while longer. If there's anything pressing, feel free to inform me, and I'll update Mr. Lopez."

Upon hearing that he was at the office, Dorothy quickly said, "No, it's nothing! Carry on with your work."

"Alright, Ms. Sanchez."

After hanging up, Dorothy changed into fresh clothes and took a shower. She thought that once Everett returned, they should check the flights back to Swevia Country.

Eager to escape the domestic chaos, she was determined not to waste any more time and looked forward to immersing herself in the tranquility of Swevia Country.

...

Karen should've known better than to take Jeffrey's word for it.

While he initially let her rest upon their return to his place, the remainder of the night turned into an ordeal.

Jeffrey insisted that after a good rest, it was time for some 'activity.'

It was nearly noon before she woke up, her legs trembling and barely able to hold her up.

Jeffrey wasn't in the bedroom. So, Karen took a shower first, then went out to look for him.

Upon opening the door, Karen could hear Jeffrey in the living room, apparently discussing work.

There he was, looking every bit the professional from the waist up, in a suit, fluently conducting project negotiations. However, below the waist, he wore sky-blue boxer shorts.

Karen chose not to disturb him and simply poured herself a glass of water.

Shortly after, Jeffrey ended the video call, grumbling, "I have no idea what got into Everett, suddenly rushing back to work at the office! Now I've got to work overtime too!"

Chapter 640

"Seriously, Jeffrey? You've got the most flexible job on the planet, and you're moaning about a little overtime?" Karen spun around, only to find Jeffrey already closing in on her.

"But it disrupted our cuddle time this morning," he grumbled playfully.

She shot him a glare, remembering the cause of her irritation. "Is that all you think about?"

Holding her close, he quipped, "If I didn't have a few thoughts racing through my mind when I'm holding you, I'd probably have to see a doctor."

He was in the prime of his life, after all!

Karen faced him with a stern look. "Listen, if I end up moving in with you, it'll be a once-in-a-while deal, tops. Otherwise, it's off the table."

The last thing she wanted was to be so spent from their passionate nights that she couldn't function.

"A once-in-a-while deal? Are you kidding me?" he protested.

"Take it or leave it, hotshot."

Jeffrey quickly focused on the heart of the matter. "Fine, once in a while it is. So, when are you moving in?"

He could manage with a little compromise, for her sake.

"Dream on! I still have work, and there's no way my folks will give the green light for us to play house this soon."

"But our folks have already met; marriage is just a nod away from you. How could they say no?"

Jeffrey wanted to keep her close, warding off any potential rivals.

Like that Levi!

He knew how hard it was to win Karen over, and the thought of losing her to someone else was his worst fear.

"We need more time," Karen insisted, her voice filled with reason. "Everything's peachy now because it's all new and exciting. But, give it time, and once the honeymoon phase fades, you'll see our issues surface. If we're not a match, then I'm stuck moving my stuff out of your place. There's no point in rushing."

It's not like she was homeless! Kenneth had even got her a cozy little place of her own.

"Why do you always talk like we're one step away from a breakup?" Jeffrey was tired of hearing that. "We're good together, aren't we? If something bothers you, just tell me. I can change."

"Jeffrey, you can't always be the one bending over backward," she pointed out.

To her, Jeffrey seemed like a kid who'd just got his hands on a coveted toy, cherishing it while it's new. But she knew that true commitment would be tested when the novelty wore off.

Jeffrey felt a surge of frustration.

Love was such a tough negotiation!

Why did he feel like he was begging, and yet she still kept one foot out the door?

"Karen, have I ever given you a reason to doubt me? Yes, I can be hot-headed, but that's only because I was so desperate to be with you. Wait until I actually give you a reason to worry before you start planning an exit strategy. I promise, if that day comes and you want to end things, I won't make a scene."

Seeing his anxious expression, Karen reached out and wrapped her arms around his waist.

She didn't want to go from a night of tenderness to a day of laying down the law.

However, being with Jeffrey, surrounded by his stunning, fit, and youthful exes, she couldn't shake off her insecurities.

She couldn't even compete with the likes of his ex, Karen, in looks. Who was to say she wasn't just a palate cleanser, a simple appetizer before he returned to his usual feast?

"Okay, how about this? I'll stay over for at least two nights a week, okay?"

"Five nights."

"What's the difference then? Might as well move in at this rate," she sighed with a mix of exasperation and affection.