

## Midnight 831

### Chapter 831

"Ouch! Mr. Lopez, where on earth did you pick up those roses?" Dorothy remained silent, but it was Karen who covered her mouth to stifle a laugh, "Feeling a bit jealous that my girl Dorothy got flowers from someone?"

Everett stepped forward, placing the bouquet at Dorothy's feet.

Dorothy thought Everett wouldn't indulge Karen's teasing, but to her surprise, he nodded. "Yeah, a little."

Karen opened her mouth to retort, but Jeffrey swiftly whisked her away.

"Come on, don't be a third wheel!"

With Karen and Jeffrey around, Dorothy hadn't felt too embarrassed. But once they were gone, she was so flustered she couldn't even look Everett in the eye.

"I told you, you didn't have to buy flowers."

"I know, but I couldn't let someone else show me up."

Hopelessly, Dorothy's gaze fell on the lush roses. "You just got to Everglow City. When did you even have time to order flowers?"

"Before boarding the plane."

"That early?"

Back then, he hadn't even discussed the idea of exchanging favors for dating her! So, he must have been certain she would agree all along.

"Dorothy, whatever you want, just let me know."

If it were within his power, he wouldn't hesitate. Not for roses or anything...

"Yeah, I get it."

"You don't get it." Everett raised his hand, gently caressing her cheek. "I mean everything. Anything you want."

He never wanted Dorothy to give him anything; he just wanted her to believe that for her, he would do anything.

...

Jeffrey not only arranged for a barbecue but also set up a bonfire.

Trust a party pro to set the mood!

After the meal, they sat around the fire, and Karen suggested, "How about we play a game?"

"Sure thing!" Jeffrey agreed, then quickly added, "But Karen, no extreme sports for you!"

"Don't worry, I got this!" After saying that, she turned to Dorothy. "Truth or Dare, okay with you?"

Dorothy nodded; she usually wasn't a party pooper. "Fine by me."

"What about Mr. Lopez?"

"I'm game."

Karen flashed an 'OK' sign, stood up, and picked up an empty soda bottle from the ground, placing it in the center.

"Whoever the bottle points to has to choose truth or dare. The person who spun the bottle asks the question or makes a dare. And then, the one who answers spins next! Alright, let's get started!"

Karen rubbed her hands together and gave the bottle a twirl.

After several spins, the bottle pointed straight at Jeffrey!

"Huh? Me first?"

Karen laughed. "Choose, truth or dare?"

"Let's start with truth, test the waters!" Jeffrey assumed Karen would ask something like whether he truly loved someone.

But after a moment's thought, Karen blurted out, "Jeffrey, how old were you when you had sex for the first time?"

Not just Jeffrey but Everett and Dorothy were taken aback, turning their gaze to Jeffrey.

"Come on! Don't tell me you can't handle the question?"

Seeing the amusement in Karen's eyes, Jeffrey felt a pounding in his temples. After what seemed like an eternity, he muttered, "Sixteen."

"Jeffrey, you dog! We've all underestimated you!" Karen punched him playfully, no sign of anger on her face. "Sixteen and already chasing girls!"

Not wanting to dwell on the topic, Jeffrey quickly spun the bottle.

Next up, it pointed to Everett.

"Truth," he said without hesitation.

"Alright! Then tell me, the first time you masturbated, were you thinking of Dorothy?"

Chapter 832

With Karen's query "setting the mood", Jeffrey's question didn't seem so jarring or enigmatic.

It elevated the tone of our game of Truth or Dare into a no-holds-barred confessional for grown-ups.

Karen showed no signs of wanting to stop Jeffrey. Instead, her eyes bulged with excitement, flames of gossip fanned by her eagerness.

Dorothy felt the question was too sensitive to broach and was about to suggest Jeffrey pick another when Everett spoke up beside her—

"Not her."

Silence fell over the group.

The crackling of the campfire's embers was the only sound punctuating the hush.

Everett just smirked, his gaze locking with Dorothy's without a hint of evasion, and said, "Then who?"

He was doing it on purpose. Dorothy knew it. It was so unlike him to joke around at a time like this!

Karen burst into laughter and immediately pressed on, "How old were you back then? A teenager? In your twenties?"

"That's another question. Wait for the bottle to come back to me."

"Deal!"

Karen was keen to keep the spotlight on Everett to satisfy her curiosity.

But the bottle, stubbornly, would either point to Jeffrey or land on Dorothy!

As the night grew denser, with only the flickering firelight dancing around...

"Last round! Time to hit the hay," Jeffrey, concerned about Karen's sleep, suggested we call it a night.

"Alright!"

Finally, after several spins, the bottle pointed straight at Everett.

But it was Dorothy who had spun it!

"Yay! Dorothy, ask him!" Karen was so excited she could hardly keep from leaping forward to ask herself.

But Dorothy just smiled. She wasn't curious about that.

"Everett, truth or dare?" she inquired.

He looked up at her. "Do you want me to choose truth or dare?"

Dorothy thought for a moment. "Dare."

"Alright." Everett agreed without hesitation.

"Can I save this dare for later? You'll owe me one, no questions asked."

Jeffrey and Karen expected him to agree right away.

But Everett just looked at her, his eyes deepening, pondering for a long moment before responding.

"You're planning to have me vanish from your world one day, aren't you?"

His question was rhetorical, but the humility in his voice was unmistakable.

This was Everett, after all! Such humility should never have come from him.

They locked eyes for nearly a minute before Dorothy chuckled. "No, I'd never ask for that."

"Then I agree," he said.

Dorothy extended her pinky. "Pinky swear."

"Yeah, pinky swear." Everett linked his finger with hers.

...

Jeffrey and Karen, hand in hand, headed back to their room.

Behind them, Everett, holding his daughter and leading Langston by the hand, followed Dorothy to her room.

"Dad, Mom, go get some sleep. I've got the baby sister covered!" No sooner had they entered than Langston volunteered himself.

Putting his sister to bed was his forte! Once she was asleep, he could play on the computer to his heart's content!

Everett, without any pretense of politeness, nodded, pulling a still-dazed Dorothy back to his room.

"Everett, isn't it a bit inappropriate to leave them alone?"

"We're the only two rooms on this floor. What could happen?"

Dorothy had no response.

Everett wrapped her in his arms, gently kissing her forehead. "Dorothy, about that question Karen asked, do you want to know the answer?"

Chapter 833

Dorothy tilted her head back to look at Everett, a mix of curiosity and challenge in her eyes.

"Do you... want to tell me?"

Everett's lips curled into a half-smile, but he didn't say a word. Instead, he took her hand in his and, with a deft flick of his wrist, unbuttoned his shirt to reveal a string of tattooed numbers across his chest. Then, he placed her palm over the inked skin.

Dorothy was confused.

"Get the message?"

Dorothy's eyes widened in disbelief. "You actually went and!"

"Good thing you didn't get my letter back then or agree to anything. Otherwise... I doubt I would've made it past twenty without losing my cool."

"Everett, we were just kids back then, and you were already thinking about that sort of thing?"

"It's normal for guys, Dorothy. What's the big deal?"

Her cheeks flushed a deep crimson. "I don't need a biology lesson, thanks."

"Alright, how about we explore a different subject then?"

"Like what?"

Little did Dorothy know that those two words would be the last ones she uttered that day.

Everett was, of course, keen to provide a practical demonstration of some, let's say, advanced positions!

At three in the morning, the bed finally stilled.

Everett got up to shower. When he returned, toweling off, he intended to clean up Dorothy as well, who by this time usually would be sound asleep. But today, he found her eyes glistening in the dark.

"Not tired?"

"Exhausted."

"Then close your eyes and rest. I'll take care of you."

Dorothy quickly reached out. "Hand me the towel. I can do it."

"You're better off pretending to be asleep right now," he suggested.

"Why's that?"

"Because I've still got energy to burn."

He was just worried she wouldn't be able to roll out of bed the next day!

Hearing this, Dorothy promptly shut her eyes. "Fine, then I'm asleep."

Everett chuckled helplessly and began to gently wipe her down.

When he touched a particularly sensitive spot, Dorothy shivered involuntarily...

"Oh!"

"Uncomfortable?"

She shook her head.

"So, it's the opposite, then? Too comfortable?"

"Everett!" Dorothy huffed, trying to kick him in frustration.

But Everett caught her ankle with ease and pulled her closer.

"Why be shy with me?"

"I don't want to hear any of your raunchy talk. I'm tired, and I want to sleep."

Setting aside the towel, Everett scooped Dorothy up with one arm.

The sudden sensation of being airborne made Dorothy wrap her arms tightly around Everett's neck, her heartbeat racing.

"Everett!"

"Just hold on to me, don't let go."

Annoyed and flustered, Dorothy bit down on the spot where his tattoo lay.

He relished the pain. It made him feel that the person in his arms was real, not a figment of his dreams.

"Bite harder!" he encouraged.

"Are you crazy? Doesn't it hurt?"

"It's better when it hurts," Everett smirked. "Pain reminds me I'm alive."

Dorothy pursed her lips, said nothing more, and didn't bite again. But her grip around him tightened.

...

When Dorothy woke up the next day, it was nearly nine o'clock.

Her first thought was that Karen must have blown up their WhatsApp group with messages!

But when she checked her phone, it was eerily quiet. Not a single message.

Sitting up, Dorothy didn't see Everett but heard the sound of typing from the living room. He was probably avoiding conversation to not wake her, opting to work silently instead.

She was about to shuffle over in her slippers to find him when Everett's phone started to ring.

Then, his voice, low and subdued, carried faintly.

"As long as she's not dead and can still talk, that's fine. Everything else is up to you guys."

Chapter 834

Dorothy sensed that Everett was talking about Heather, but the cold fury in his eyes was something unfamiliar to her. Usually, he was either stoic and unapproachable or gentle and patient when dealing with her. This harsh, bone-chilling demeanor was new.

Perhaps alerted by the sound of her footsteps, Everett's gaze lifted to meet hers, and in an instant, all traces of anger vanished. It was as if he had always been this composed gentleman, unflappable in his emotions.

"You're up," he noted.

"Yeah," she replied.

Everett finished transferring a file on his laptop and then stood up. "Do you want the breakfast delivered by the hotel, or should I make something?"

"The hotel's fine," Dorothy said. Her taste wasn't picky; she didn't need him to go through any trouble for her.

"I guessed wrong, then. I thought you'd prefer my cooking."

"Huh?"

Everett wheeled in a breakfast cart from the doorway, clearly the result of his own culinary efforts.

"When did you get up to make all this?"

"Woke at seven. Figured you wouldn't be up that early and I didn't want it to get cold, so I dealt with some company stuff first."

He effortlessly wrapped his arms around her, drawing her close.

Dorothy noticed that Everett was getting more clingy. He wasn't like this before.

"What about the kids..."

"Abigail and Langston had their breakfast and are off to the play castle. I've got someone keeping an eye on them. They'll be fine."

Feeling Everett's gaze turning somewhat less innocent, Dorothy quickly interjected, "I'm hungry. I want to eat breakfast!"

"Alright, I'll serve you some bread."

No sooner had Dorothy finished breakfast than her phone buzzed with activity from her friends' group chat.

Karen was tagging everyone!

Karen: [Where is everybody? You didn't all go out and leave me behind, did you?]

Dorothy: [Nope, waiting for you.]

Karen: [OKOK, let's go hiking today! Get ready. Meet you at the front in a bit~]

Dorothy couldn't help but admire Karen's stamina – bouncing around full of life even during her pregnancy. Dorothy's own experience had been different. She had struggled with morning sickness only to be followed by swollen legs that made it impossible to even walk properly in the later stages, let alone go hiking.

Putting her phone down, Dorothy looked up to see that Everett, ever the neat freak, had already washed and put away the breakfast dishes.

Noticing her gaze, he approached. "What did Karen say?"

"We're going hiking today."

"Worried you won't be able to keep up?" he asked with a smile. "I could carry you."

Dorothy waved off the suggestion. "I'll manage. I'm more concerned about your health. Are you fully recovered?"

"I'm totally fine now. Didn't you notice last night?"

She blushed, unable to utter a word.

Everett's lips curved into a slight grin as he took her hand and led her out of the room.

Dorothy didn't really want to ask, but her curiosity got the better of her.

"Everett..."

"Yeah?"

"When I woke up and you were on a call, was the person on the other end talking about Heather?"

Everett's brow furrowed slightly, his voice deepening, "Don't worry, she won't get away."

"I'm not worried about her escaping. I'm wondering... what happened to her?"

"Better if you don't know."

"Everett, please tell me." She tugged at the hem of his shirt, a playful pout on her lips. "I'm just curious."

He sighed heavily. "It's nothing much. She tried to seduce one of the guards and ended up getting beaten."

Chapter 835

Everett's offhand remark about "getting beaten" was all Dorothy needed to know that it wasn't just a light tap.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have bothered to mention it.

"Heather's lost her marbles. To think she'd stoop to messing around with a guard..."

In Dorothy's mind, Heather had always been too proud to bow down to anyone. In Heather's world, Everett was the only one worthy of her; she never even considered Jeffrey a contender, let alone throwing herself at some lowly guard!

"She's not crazy," Everett said, not even wanting to utter her name anymore, "this is her last shot."

Dorothy paused. "Last shot at what?"

"Death row doesn't apply to pregnant women."

"You mean she wants to..."

Everett raised his hand and tapped her forehead lightly. "Don't worry, whatever tricks she pulls, they won't work on me."

If Heather could "accidentally" get pregnant, he could make sure she "accidentally" miscarried.

His patience and good nature were reserved for Dorothy alone. For everyone else, he wasn't nearly as forgiving.

...

Everglow City was surrounded by many hills. Most of the area was undeveloped, a vast expanse of wilderness.

Only in recent years had innovation brought a more urban look to the place, turning it into a burgeoning tourist spot.

At the entrance of the resort, Jeffrey waited in a minivan.

Leaning casually against the vehicle, he was feeding Karen pineapple chunks with a cocktail fork.

Dorothy couldn't help but laugh from a distance. "Karen's really got Jeffrey wrapped around her little finger."

That was surprising to her. Even now, watching them together felt a bit... off.

"What can he do when he's head over heels?"

Back in the day, Jeffrey loved to rib him about chasing after one girl, leaving the whole 'forest' behind! Once he got the chance, he would have to throw those words right back at him.

"Dorothy! Over here!" Karen spotted them—a family of four—and waved them over excitedly.

"Easy there, you're pregnant!" Dorothy was genuinely worried about her!

"It's all good! Any kid lucky enough to be born to me won't be some delicate flower!"

Dorothy was at a loss for words.

Beside her, Jeffrey spread his hands helplessly. "Now you see why I have to keep a constant eye on her? Look away for a second, and who knows!"

"Complaining to Dorothy won't help! I've read the pregnancy guide, and it says as long as the mom-to-be is happy, it's better than any supplement!" Karen winked and giggled, "C'mon, let's hit the road! Abigail and Langston, follow me!"

"Yay!"

"We love Aunt Karen!"

The title of 'children's favorite' was well deserved by her.

Behind them, Everett held Dorothy's hand softly, murmuring, "Suddenly, I don't want to get that vasectomy anymore."

Dorothy stopped in her tracks. "Huh?"

She had never intended for Everett to go through with it, so why bring it up now?

He smiled. "I want to be there with you, to witness everything from pregnancy to birth."

He regretted missing it with Abigail and Langston. That was Everett's greatest regret.

"Don't let Karen's enthusiasm rub off on you. Get in the car."

They spent a delightful day in the hills—camping on green meadows and catching fish in the streams—until they watched the sunset from the peak and then drove back to the resort, chatting and laughing.

As soon as the car entered the resort, Everett was the first to sense something was amiss.

He spotted a car parked at the entrance.

It belonged to his father Jonathan Lopez.

Chapter 836

"Are you telling me you dropped everything at the office for Dorothy?"

In a gazebo nestled within the resort, Jonathan sat with a ramrod-straight posture, hoping for a candid conversation with his son. However, as he began to speak, an accusatory tone slipped through despite his efforts.

Although Jonathan had stepped back from the day-to-day operations of Lopez Corporation, he was acutely aware of the demands of a CEO's schedule. And yet, his son had abandoned pressing business matters to chase after some woman, returning stateside from Liberty City ahead of schedule, only to traipse around the countryside on some silly hiking expedition!

"You didn't come all this way just for this, did you?" Everett didn't respond to his father's question, standing aloof at the gazebo entrance, clad in a black coat, not even bothering to sit. It was clear he had no intention of staying long.

"You're too smart not to have seen this coming," Jonathan sighed deeply. "Everett, are you really willing to turn your back on your own parents for Dorothy? I know you love her, I can see that, but the people who raised you aren't her!"

With that, Jonathan picked up a thick stack of photo albums he had brought along and flipped it open.

"Here you are, just three days old, wailing nonstop because of jaundice, and your mom stayed up all night by your side. She wouldn't let the maids or even the doctors touch you!"

And this, when you were a month old, your mom captured you smiling in your sleep. She used to say her son was the most beautiful child in the whole world!

Look at this one. When you turned one, your mom was so protective of you, you wouldn't go to anyone else. She had to hold you and soothe you before you'd calm down!"

Everett simply frowned, his body rigid, refusing to look at the photographs. He remained tight-lipped.

"Alas," Jonathan exhaled a weary sigh. "These photos don't just show your mother's love for you; they also reveal how she's aged over the years. She's changed so much in appearance and personality. I'm well aware that she's truly messed up this time, Everett. She crossed a line, and it's right for you to be angry. But she'll always be your mother."

That was an undeniable truth.

"Just as she's my wife. Do you think I'm not angry about what happened? I'm furious at her foolishness, her shortsightedness! But I have to step in and help her navigate this mess because she's married to me, and it's my duty to take responsibility for her. I can't stand by and watch her die in jail."

"The person she hurt is Dorothy's mother. I have no right to forgive on her behalf." Everett maintained his stance, though his voice had lost the edge it held when they first met.

"You don't need her forgiveness. If Dorothy wants to sue, if she wants a verdict to comfort her mother's spirit, I understand. The lawsuit can proceed. I'm just hoping you can step back and not get involved any further," said Jonathan.

Everett regarded him, "What are you suggesting now?"

"Don't get worked up! Look, Dorothy's mother is dead, an eye for an eye, right? If Heather takes on all the blame and pays for her crime, isn't that enough?"

Why should two lives be ruined over this?

Jonathan couldn't believe his son didn't understand that if his mother went to prison, she wouldn't last until her execution date—she would die behind bars.

"You want Heather to take all the blame."

"It was her mess from the start. She should face the consequences! Everett, please, give your mother a chance at life."

Chapter 837

A chance at life?

Did Everett not want that?

The last thing he wanted was his mother's involvement in the whole mess!

If it were just Heather, Dorothy wouldn't need to be so worn out with litigation, draining her energy. Everett could personally dice Heather up and feed her to the dogs!

"The surveillance video clearly shows my mom giving the injection order. She can't deny her involvement."

"I know! But didn't you hack the video? You must have the source code to delete it!" Jonathan stood up abruptly, walking over to his son.

"Just help your mom this one time, okay? I can talk her around and get her to accept Dorothy into the Lopez family as a daughter-in-law! I can even get your mom to testify in court to prove Heather had premeditated murder!"

With that, Heather would be convicted swiftly, her life for a life! Dorothy's aim would be achieved as well!

Seeing his son silent, Jonathan thought he was wavering and quickly added, "Everett, think about it. If both I and your mom agree to Dorothy marrying into the family, we'll be one big happy family! We'll put the past behind us and never speak of it again. Isn't that great? Why push it to the point where everything breaks down?"

"I won't destroy the video." Everett took a step back without once glancing at the photos. "I've said it before: whatever Dorothy wants to do to avenge her mother, I won't interfere."

"Everett!" Jonathan exclaimed in frustration, "Then just wait to bury your mother! For the sake of Dorothy's deceased mom, you're risking the life of your own mother, who is very much alive. Great, you've got some nerve! Let's see how, after your mom dies in jail, as her son, whom she nearly died bringing into this world, you can just forget all this and elope with Dorothy!"

Everett's lips quivered slightly, his gaze dropping. "Of course... I can't."

Dorothy could feel that Everett had been in low spirits ever since he came back.

Even though he was going through his work as usual, taking his regular showers, and engaging in normal conversation, the atmosphere was just off.

After tucking the kids into bed, she returned to their room to find Everett sitting in front of the computer, a contract in hand, his eyes not really seeing it.

"What's wrong?" She couldn't help but ask.

He shook his head. "Nothing."

"Tell me, what is it? Is there some trouble at the company? You should head back if there's urgent business!"

Everett looked into her eyes, wanting to speak, yet unable to utter a word.

How could he ask Dorothy to spare his mother?

"It's not about the company." In the end, Everett couldn't say it.

"What is it then?" Dorothy asked, immediately realizing the gravity of the situation.

Anything that could render Everett silent and at a loss for words must be related to the lawsuit.

"Everett, do you regret helping me get the surveillance video?"

"No." He would do it again without hesitation.

"Do you regret meeting me?"

Everett raised his eyes, first shaking his head, then nodding. "I do. If it weren't for me, your mother wouldn't have died."

Even if he wasn't the instigator, he had triggered the outcome.

"But I don't regret meeting you! You've shown me that I can be treasured and held close to someone's heart." Dorothy gave a small smile and leaned into his embrace. "Everett, stop shouldering the pressure. Let me walk the rest of this path on my own. Whatever the outcome of the trial, good or bad, I've prepared myself. It's time for you to step back."

Chapter 838

Everett watched her silently for a long time before he finally spoke up, his voice slow and deliberate. "But... what if, and I'm just saying what if, the verdict isn't what you're hoping for?"

Like, say, only Heather gets the death sentence.

Dorothy's eyes twinkled briefly before she smiled. "Look, you don't need to worry about it. I've told you I'm prepared for any outcome. You should back out of this."

"I'm not comfortable with leaving you to handle this alone."

"If you keep getting involved, you'll never have peace of mind." She knew all too well how busy he was and the kind of pressure he was under. She didn't want to add to it, and she didn't want to be a part of it.

"So, are you still going to give me an answer once this is all over? Will you still honor that promise?"

"Absolutely!" Dorothy laughed. "I won't go back on my word, rest assured."

"Alright."

Dorothy had no idea that Jonathan had returned from abroad nor that he had met with his son. So, it was a complete surprise when Jonathan suddenly reached out to her!

Jonathan: [Meet me at the entrance of the resort. Don't let Everett find out.]

Dorothy really didn't want to go. But she knew if she kept avoiding Jonathan, he would just make things difficult for Everett! Thus, might as well meet and lay things out clearly.

While Everett was tied up in a video conference, Dorothy threw on a coat and hurried to the resort entrance.

Sure enough, from a distance, she could see Jonathan's car.

Ever since their last encounter in Swevia Country, they hadn't been in touch. Seeing him now, Dorothy was taken aback.

Jonathan had lost a lot of weight since their last meeting. Was it because of the trouble with Everett's mother?

"Ms. Sanchez," Jonathan began, the moment she approached, "you promised me that a month after Swevia Country, you'd hand over the children to the Lopez family and cut all ties with my son."

"Well, you should be talking to your son about that."

She had kept her end of the bargain. It wasn't her fault Everett hadn't.

Jonathan didn't seem angry; he actually smiled. "I can see that you truly love Everett. It's clear to me. That's why it's so hard for you two to sever ties completely."

"So, what's your point?"

He got straight to the point. "If you're willing to drop the charges against Everett's mother, then the Lopez family is ready to welcome you into the fold."

Dorothy didn't reply.

Jonathan crossed his arms, watching her intently, each word heavy with meaning. "I understand the pain of losing a mother, so I figured, since you care so much for Everett, you wouldn't want him to go through that kind of pain, right?"

Once again, he brought out those photos from the car and spread them out before Dorothy.

"Everett has lived a life that's different from yours from the start. He's been the center of attention, loved by his father, and adored by his mother. You can let go of so many things without a second thought; he can't."

Unlike Everett, Dorothy took a moment to look at every photo in the album seriously.

It was evident that he had been pampered from a young age. Every smile, every birthday, and every holiday was captured, preserving his image on each of those days.

Dorothy's fingers gently traced Everett's cheek in the photos. From his youthful innocence to his adolescent charm, his features hadn't changed much. He was consistently handsome and refined.

"Have you shown these photos to Everett?" she asked.

"Yes, but he didn't look at them," Jonathan admitted. "There's a lot he can't face right now, and it's all because of you."

"I've never had a family portrait." Dorothy suddenly spoke up. "You're right. Everett and I, we've always been different from the start."

## Chapter 839

Bella was everything to Dorothy. She was the last of her kin, her rock, the one person she had grown up with and relied on through thick and thin.

In the realm of family, Dorothy had no other choice. She had just this one blood tie.

Even if Bella wasn't the best at expressing herself, with more scolding than soothing, Dorothy knew every harsh word was rooted in love.

As for Maxton Sanchez, as far as Dorothy was concerned, he might as well have been six feet under.

But Everett was different. He was blessed with a father's love, a mother's favor, the support of friends who were like brothers, and the admiration of countless others...

Each of these bonds weighed heavily on him.

Dorothy couldn't bear to think of the pain Everett must feel, forcing his eyes shut and pushing aside the weight of these ties to help her out.

"The case hasn't gone to court yet; there's still a chance to turn things around! If you want revenge, Heather's life is yours for the taking! Even if you don't want it, I won't let her off the hook. As for Everett's mother... you just need to let go of the pursuit, and I'll handle the rest."

Jonathan had thought it through. He couldn't ask his son to say these things to Dorothy; it was something he had to do himself.

"But the one who asked for the injection was her, not Heather."

"That's because Everett's mother was kept in the dark! You know how manipulative Heather can be! She's constantly using favors to trap people, pretending to look out for Everett while convincing his mother to take you out. Meanwhile, she's scheming to drag the whole Lopez family into her mess, thinking they'll be her shield if the truth comes out!"

If only Jonathan had the power to turn back time! He would have dealt with Heather first thing to stop her from causing any more chaos.

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I can't agree," Dorothy said after a few seconds of silence, still unswayed. "I made a promise to my mom that I wouldn't let the person who killed her get away."

"But your mom's gone!"

"Does that mean a promise to the dead doesn't count?"

Jonathan frowned. "Think it over and get back to me; you don't have to decide right now. You know whether you're happy with Everett, whether it's been a good time. Think about him; think about your children. All it takes is for you to agree, and you can spend your life with him. Consider what's truly worthwhile."

He had said all he could.

That was why Jonathan didn't interfere with Dorothy and Everett getting tangled up again after he had come back from abroad.

A promise to the dead versus a lifetime of happiness; Jonathan believed Dorothy would make the right choice.

Of course, this was his last card to play...

Dorothy pulled her clothes around her, staying silent as she watched Jonathan's car drive away until it disappeared from her sight.

She stood there for a long time before slowly making her way back.

As she entered the room, she saw Everett about to rush out in search of her.

"Where have you been?"

"Just needed some fresh air, went for a walk," she lied, concealing her meeting with Jonathan.

"Why didn't you answer your phone? I was worried," Everett said, his expression anxious. His tone held a hint of reprimand, but it was laced with concern.

Suddenly, Dorothy reached out, wrapping her arms around his waist.

"You're too tall. Can you lower your head a bit?"

"Huh?" Everett was puzzled but complied.

Seizing the moment, Dorothy pulled his neck down and planted a kiss on his lips!

Chapter 840

The height difference made Dorothy's attempts at stealing kisses a bit of a challenge; she couldn't pin him against the wall like Everett could, kissing her however he pleased.

Standing on tiptoe until her calves ached, it barely lasted a minute!

Feeling a tad disheartened, Dorothy was about to give up when suddenly a firm hand clasped her waist, pinning her in place.

"Getting bold? You haven't been sneaking off to see Kenneth, have you?" Everett's voice teased.

Dorothy was so flustered by his accusation she couldn't find her words.

"Hit a nerve, did I?" Everett's grip tightened.

She sighed in resignation. "I'm amazed you're bringing him up again! If I saw Kenneth, why would I need to sneak around?"

"Dorothy!"

"It's true! I just went for a walk, came back, and suddenly I really wanted to kiss you! If you don't want to, then fine."

She feigned leaving, but the strong hand on her waist wasn't letting go anytime soon.

"I want to," he murmured into her ear, his voice deep and husky, "I want to kiss only you."

Dorothy's cheeks flushed, and she pushed against him instinctively.

"I don't want to kiss you now, I... I'm going to take a shower!"

"Then I'll kiss you."

Everett bent down, scooped her up sideways, and tossed her onto the bed.

After the world stopped spinning, Dorothy found herself nestled in the comforter, the brief dizziness making her forget to struggle to sit up.

Soon, his kisses descended like rain on her lips, her face, her forehead, and many... unexpected places.

Feeling ticklish, Dorothy squirmed.

"Everett..."

"Today, since you're so forward, why don't we try something different?"

She opened her eyes to meet his intense gaze. "Different, how?"

He smirked, his hands gripping her waist, and with a swift move, Dorothy found herself straddling his lower abdomen. The heat from his body was undeniable.

"Tonight, you're on top."

Dorothy's hands scrambled for something to hold onto, panic rising within her.

"No, I don't want to..."

"Just this once, I'll be quick."

Before she could protest, her voice turned into a soft, fragmented whisper.

After that, Dorothy no longer believed Everett's promise to "be quick."

Fool her once, shame on him; fool her twice, shame on her, but surely not every time!

After a tumultuous night, the room finally quieted down.

Dorothy lay on her side, clutching her belly, her brows furrowed in discomfort.

Everett, realizing he had been a bit too rough, quickly pulled her into his arms to soothe her.

"I'm sorry... I didn't control my strength..."

"Hmph!"

Dorothy didn't want to deal with him, feeling a painful soreness in her abdomen that made it hard to even rise.

"Stop being mad. I'll carry you to the shower."

"No need."

"Then how about I wash a cloth and wipe you down?"

Dorothy buried her head deeper into the pillow. "I said no need. I'll lie here for a bit and then go shower myself."

She dared not join Everett in the shower again!

The memory of their last encounter in the slippery bathroom, with no support to hold onto and completely at his mercy, was still too vivid.

"I swear, I won't do anything."

Hearing this, Dorothy finally peeked out. "Really?"

"Really."

"Alright then." She extended her arms to loop around his neck.

Everett lifted her straight out of the covers, one hand supporting her, the other gently washing her hair under the shower.

Dorothy had no strength left, simply resting against him.

And Everett kept his promise. Even though he was tempted several times, he spared her in the end.