

## Chapter 11 Was She That Desperate To Walk Away..... ..

Caiden let out a low, fleeting chuckle, the sound edged with something he couldn't quite name.

He put the letter on the desk with a clean, deliberate motion, but his hand faltered when the pen met the page.

The tip hovered there, suspended over the signature line, unmoving for several heartbeats.

"Tell her..." he muttered, finally pressing down with enough force to make the paper strain under the pressure. His pen dragged a hard circle around a punctuation mark. "This should be a period, not a comma. She needs to rewrite it."

Waldo could only stare, momentarily at a loss for words.

A prickling wave of irritation crawled beneath Caiden's skin.

He reached instinctively for his cigarettes, only to realize his feet were already carrying him toward the thirty-second floor.

When he reached the familiar hallway, his gaze landed on Noreen's workstation.

The surface was bare, stripped of any trace of her presence. Even the tiny succulent she always kept by the monitor was gone.

He tugged at the knot of his tie, the fabric biting into his throat, the small motion betraying a rare crack in his composure.

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After leaving the office, Noreen headed straight home, the place she shared with Caiden.

She moved through the rooms in silence, slipping her belongings into a suitcase one piece at a time, as if preparing to walk out the door at any moment.

She fully expected Caiden not to come home tonight.

But the sound of the front door opening proved her wrong.

Greta's cheerful voice rang out from downstairs. "Mrs. Evans, Mr. Evans's back. Come down for dinner!"

When Noreen descended the staircase, she found Caiden already seated at the dining table.

His expression was carved into a hard, stormy mask.

There had been a time when she would have softened at that look, asked what was wrong. But that time was gone.

She lowered herself into the chair across from him, picked up her utensils, and began eating in measured, deliberate bites.

Caiden's gaze flicked toward her again and again, his jaw tightening with each glance, until he finally brought his fork and knife down against the table with a sharp, metallic crack.

"Why did you resign?" His voice came out low and clipped.

"I just didn't want to keep doing it," Noreen replied without embellishment.

The corner of Caiden's mouth curved into a scornful smile. "Didn't want to? When you came to the Evans Group, you signed a binding contract. Walking away early means a termination fee of one-point-eight million dollars."

At that, Noreen placed her fork and knife down with quiet precision.

She lifted her head, the soft glow in her eyes edged with unwavering resolve, and met his gaze squarely.

"I know," she stated evenly. "I'll pay the fee in full—every last cent of it."

Caiden's face turned several shades darker, the shadows from the chandelier carving harsher lines across his features. An unfamiliar heat clawed at his chest, growing sharper with every passing second.

His fingers drummed twice against the table, faster and more impatient than usual, each tap a clear warning.

"One-point-eight million," he muttered, the words slicing through the air like ice. "Exactly how are you planning to come up with that?"

Noreen slowly raised her gaze, her calm eyes reflecting the light.

"I've saved enough" she said softly, her voice gentle but unwavering.

Something in that quiet certainty only fanned the flames in Caiden.

He knew she had lost her parents at a young age. She'd told him once she wanted to earn a fortune—not out of greed but to feel safe.

Even after they married, she never leaned on him, never once used his money.

She'd lived carefully, saving every cent.

Yet here she was, ready to hand over 1.8 million without blinking.

Was she that desperate to walk away from the Evans Group? From him?

"Well, aren't you impressive?" Caiden drawled, the words laced with icy contempt.

He pushed back his chair and rose abruptly, the legs scraping the floor with a grating shriek. Crossing the short distance between them, he stopped right in front of her, towering close enough for his shadow to fall over her. The hard edge in his stare pinned her in place, every line of his body radiating quiet menace.

Sensing the shift in the air, Greta silently slipped out of the dining room, leaving the tension to thicken behind her.