



YourEssence

Chapter 11 - Surprise! You Weren't Expecting Me...

"It finally worked, Diana! I used that technique you taught me about scanning only one line ahead. It worked! I kept to today's schedule! Robert even dropped by and saw how good things were going. Best day ever for sure. Well, best day as you, at your job, ever," David said to Diana, ending with a little chuckle. He had been trying hard to keep things on track for Diana, and it looked like his hard work was finally paying off.

"I even got home and made arepas. I know how much you like them! Well, how much **I** like them, but you know, you have a body that likes them. That's what I'm trying to say. Anyways, come get some while they are still hot and fresh!"

Diana jumped at the opportunity, though she knew she needed to use a little restraint. David could quickly eat a half dozen of her arepas. Her mother had taught her the recipe and told her it was the secret to a man's heart. Diana didn't believe that, but she did know that too many arepas would lead to a bit of belly if she didn't exercise restraint.

"This is so nice of you. I'm surprised you had the time to make these! My mother's recipe isn't the easiest to follow," Diana said, alluding to the poorly written recipe her mother had given her. "I really should write it out more clearly sometime soon."

"Oh, I didn't even think about checking the recipe. I was able to get right to it."

Diana was now worried. Had David just handed her a plateful of substandard arepas? What was in store for her tastebuds and stomach? Diana knew she shouldn't insult David after he had gone through so much effort and additionally done so after riding the high of a successful day at school. Diana took her first bite, and relief washed over her. The arepas tasted as she remembered them, which meant David followed her mother's recipe and technique. "You didn't need to follow Mama's recipe for these? They taste just like her's."

"No, it just came to me when I was thinking about something to celebrate the day

with my **husband.**"

"Babe, that's amazing, but maybe a little worrisome too?"

"Oh, how so?" David asked quizzically. He didn't seem to be following Diana's thoughts.

"Well, first, you called me your husband when it's just us. I think that's the first time you've ever done that. Second, how would you know my mother's recipe? I don't remember ever teaching it to you."

"Well... You've been calling me 'babe' for the last two weeks. That's always been my pet name for you, and you just adopted it like it was no big deal. I figured it was because of YourEssence. Is that not supposed to happen?"

"No, it's not... Well, I guess I don't know. There's not much information on taking someone else's doses for obvious reasons. I didn't even realize I had started calling you 'babe.' Now that you said something, I realize you're right. Do you think the pills could be affecting our minds?"

"I'd say the evidence is pointing towards yes. You're also right that you've never shown me how to make arepas, but I was here rolling, patting, and frying them up like I'd done it a hundred times. I went through all the prep and cooking without thinking twice about it. I was just ***doing*** it. I'm starting to worry. Our minds seem impacted, and that's more problematic than anything else we've experienced."

"Yeah, I agree. We need to do something soon. We're close to closing this deal at your work. I probably only need another day or two, and we can switch back afterward. The YourEssence will wear off overnight, and we will go back to our normal routines. Does that sound like a good plan to you?"

"About as good as any. You are great at this whole manufacturing management gig."

"Yeah, I don't know why, but it just clicks for me."

"And thankfully, I'm finally getting the hang of things at your work, too. Knowing I'll only be leading your lectures for a few more days makes me sad. I guess I've come to like it."

"Not enough to deal with permanent brain damage, though."

"No, of course not. Not worth the risk one bit."

"We may miss our newfound careers, but we're doing the right thing here. We'll be back to our old selves by Wednesday.

"Diana, you need to come home as soon as possible. We've got a problem," David said with a noticeable concern.

"'Diana,' what's wrong? I'm just about to close on this deal. I wouldn't have answered if you hadn't double-dialed me," Diana responded, including her actual name, indicating she was in mixed company.

"Ugh! I'm so sorry. Close the deal but call me back as soon as possible. It's your mom. She's, well, she's here."

"Shit... all right. I'll call you right back."

David was doing his best to deal with Olivia, his mother-in-law, but currently, his body's mother. She had arrived unexpectedly at their door with two large overnight bags. So far, David had only gotten the justification that "I just wanted to see my baby girl for a while. Is that such a crime?" Which was right on brand for Olivia. She liked to make herself out to be a martyr. She had always been a doting wife and mother, but she was restless since her children had all left for school or marriage. David drew on some instinct and some observed recollection to do his best to handle his mother-in-law. While he doubted that Olivia would turn the couple in for committing fraud with YourEssence, he wasn't about to cross that line alone. So David had to pretend to be Diana to a level that had not been necessary so far. He had to fool the woman who would know Diana the best. He had to 'be' Diana.

So, David focused all his attention and thoughts and pondered the right thing to do. It came quickly and sharply. David had a new and foreign idea appear in his mind. His 'mother' liked a cup of herbal tea in the afternoons. She took it straight without any additions. David would get some tea for her and sit her down to better understand what was happening.

"Here you go, Mama, a cup of tea just like you like it."

"Oh, chiquita, you are so sweet. Come sit with me."

"I'm happy to see you, Mama, but why are you here? It's kind of out of the blue..."

"Chiquita, can't we just sit and talk and not worry so much? I just wanted to see

you; you have been so quiet these last few weeks that I haven't heard a peep from you. What's going on with you? Has David finally come around?"

David was surprised that Diana had spoken to her mother about their relationship troubles. *Of course, she had; Mama is my closest confidant.* This confusing but clarifying addendum popped into David's mind to conclude that thought.

"Oh, Mama, yes. David has been so much better these last few weeks. He's like another person. Our therapy sessions have helped."

"Therapy, hmph. You know I don't like therapists. You should just talk like two regular people. That's how tu padre and I handled things," Olivia said as David ruffled some unknown concerns of Olivia's.

"Sorry, Mama, but the therapist has been beneficial. I know you and Papa always work things out. That's why you are my married-couple role models," David said confidently. Previously, he didn't know that Diana felt that way, but now, he could feel it was true.

"Well, we have been married for a long time, and we raised you and all your siblings too. Each of my children was an honor-roll student, and then you all went off to college, one by one. So, I think we have done all right."

"Yes, mama, you've done very well."

"Speaking of niños, will we get any news about this from you and David anytime soon? I don't want to be abuela geriátrica."

"Mama!"

"What? I think it's a reasonable question. You do want kids, don't you?"

The question triggered David's mind to work in overdrive. He tried to bring focus and narrow in on a response that his mother-in-law would believe. His response needed to align with what Diana had said in the past to this line of questioning.

David resigned himself to the response as it came to him. He was not thrilled with how it characterized him, "You know I do, Mama, but David needs more time to grow up before we have any children. That's part of why we're going to therapy. I need to know that David's ready to be responsible enough to be a dad."

"Yes, yes, you've said this before. Still, your father and I didn't make such arrangements. We just knew we loved each other, and we ended up pregnant. The way God intended."

"Well, that's not how I'm going to go about it," David responded, feeling how Diana felt about her mother's choices. Just as David was recovering from this shock, his phone rang.

"'Diana,' is everything okay? You said your mother was here? She's not hurt or anything, right? No one else is hurt?"

"No, everyone is fine, 'David.' She says she just wanted to see me, but she has two overnight bags with her. She keeps avoiding answering me when I ask why she is here."

"That's just like Olivia. She doesn't like telling people what's happening in her life."

"Well, what are we going to do about it? It's clear she intends to stay with us, and we don't exactly have room for 'privacy' given our upcoming plans."

"Shit, you're right. I guess we will have to..."