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164 Palmo

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164 Palmo
Ashley Cozad

The wood chips fell off of his weathered work pants as he began to walk out of the smoky room. He wiped the sweat from the tip of his brow and repositioned his hat to shield his face from the blazing sun. The air was musty and the smell of cutting wooden materials was burned into the walls of The Canfield Lumber Company.

Buena Esperanza was an innovative community filled with prestigious Victorian builders who prided themselves on being hard workers and completely dedicated to their businesses. Heth Canfield, the president of the St. Augustine Improvement Company, walked down Riberia Street towards G. E. Hood's mill. He wore long black pants that were still covered in wood particles from his own lumbar company. His work boots were tarnished and almost worn through and had seen multiple twelve-hour work days. Canfield worked hard to obtain his position of power and his deteriorating straw hat showed more wrinkles than his face did. As he approached Hood's mill, he began to wonder if Hood would entertain the lumbar market with him, something he loved to talk about.

He was a tired man who had seen war and despair during his time and longed for a period of peace in his golden years. He too had worn through his work boots and was too tired and too cheap to replace them. He worked vigorously with Canfield to develop Esperanza and is devoted to seeing it through. Their friendship was built on grit and a little bit of love. Both men had overcome so many adversities and were committed to seeing Esperanza through.

Hood saw him and called out, "Ahh! Well, if it isn't my favorite lumbar boy, what brings you down Riberia?"

Canfield's face lit up as he saw his friend and he retorted, "well I had to stop by and see if the ole man was still slacking off." The two good friends began to banter back and forth reminiscing on how they founded their town.

Hood continued on, "Well if it wasn't for you good old Canfield, representin our folk and creating beautiful ole Esperanza, I'd sure as hell be broke and that's a damn fact."

"Ahh, well it wasn't just my persuasion that brought Esperanza to life, it was hard workin fellas like you Mr. Hood."

They began to walk down Riberia and made a left on Duero and eventually ended up moseying down Palmo. They continued to exchange stories about the wood dealing industry and the impact it had on their lives. They passed 164 Palmo, and little did they know that it would also be the home of proud wood dealing owner, Mr. Eubanks. These determined, hardworking men, is what added culture and flavor to the Buena Esperanza area. Without this, the wood dealing and lumbar industry would not have been as successful as it was.

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A stubby proud young man opened the doors to begin trading wood for the day. He was an innovative business owner who continuously found new techniques to enhance his business. Dealing with wood was no easy feat and Eubanks was determined to survive in an everchanging climate at the foot of 164 Palmo, Lincolville.

He was never afraid to try new things and often became overzealous when it came to promoting his business. From the get go, he knew he had to work harder than everyone else and jump through more hoops than the average Lincolville resident would ever need to. He came from a family where food was scarce and education continued to dissolve. He landed in the wood

making business one day as a young boy when he was offered a job in warehouse. He quickly made his way up the ranks and ultimately opened his own wood dealing franchise.

Leon Eubanks was in the business of dealing wood and nothin else. He was passionate about his work because he knew that if he wasn't, the whites would say he's unmotivated and useless.

Being a black man in Lincolnville had its challenges, but Eubanks was proud of his culture and knew that the men that came before him created opportunities that were not initially present. He was in touch with his past and understood how important men like Canfield and Hood were to his success.

As Eubanks began to open up shop for day, Mrs. Oliva Ford made her way down Palmo commuting to the nearby hospital. Ford was a petite woman whose days serving others was just beginning. She was young nurse with ambition and drive to do right by the members of the Lincolnville community. She was always prepared and enjoyed her profession. It was honest work with scant pay, and little did she know, it would eventually drive her into the ground. But for the time being, her smile stayed, yet to be withered away by years of wear and tear from society's gruesome insults.

She strolled down the street paying little attention to Eubank's admirable stare. Eubanks always had a little crush on Oliva, but could never admit this to her. After all, he was a married man and infidelity could result in extreme punishment.

As she was about to pass 164 Palmo, Eubanks called out, "Ahh, well if it isn't the finest lady nurse in town." Eubanks adored Ford, but she never seemed to reciprocate.

"Good morning Mr. Eubanks, I hope there's a strong market for wood today."

He felt his cheeks flush at this. He knew her attention was scarce and he soaked in every second of it. However, he knew he had to suppress these intrusive thoughts. He had worked too hard to fall to the temptation of a damn nurse and the wood dealers that came before him would look down with shame. Not to mention his wife, Estelle would turn him in for all he was worth.

Estelle was a petite woman with short legs and short hair. She spent very little time down Palmo and her main duties involved tidying the house and making sure that Leon was fed every night. She rarely visited the warehouse, but still, she knew about Leon's advances on the young nurse. Lincolnville was a small town and Esperanza was even smaller. Gossip spread like wildfire and if you needed information all you had to do was ask.

Today was a peculiar day because Estelle decided to surprise Leon with some fresh banana muffins she had made that morning. As she was approaching 164 Palmo, she saw Ms. Oliva walking her usual path. In that instant she knew Leon had to be around somewhere. From the distance, she saw her coy husband continuously making advances on poor Oliva. Estelle was not a naïve woman but chose to keep this secret to herself. Leon was the kind of man that would blame her if he found out she knew. She often journaled to cope with Leon's dance with infidelity and was constantly battling her own thoughts to stay afloat.

As Oliva passed the warehouse and made her way down Palmo, Estelle cautiously entered the warehouse. It was hit or miss with her husband and she was unsure what today would be.

“Well if it isn't my sweet lady. What brings you down here sweetheart”

Pleasantly surprised, Estelle sweetly replied, “I made fresh muffins darling. They're banana, that's your favorite kind.”

“Ahh yes, one of my favorites. I like anything you make but banana muffins are a top contender.”

“I’m glad. Would you like to sit down and have a second breakfast?”

Leon considered, but then realized she was out of line. He quickly retorted, “You know better than to ask that. It was out of line for you to come down here, let alone expect me to eat with you. This is a man’s place and has no room for a lowly woman like you.”

And just like that, Leon was back to his normal self. Estelle knew that Oliva’s charm had worn off and he reverted back to his abusive snappy attitude. She knew better to argue.

“Yes sir, dinner will be served at 6:30 tonight. See you then.” And with that, Estelle returned home yet again defeated by her husband’s inhuman attitude.

Once again, Leon knew that he had won. He refused to allow Estelle have any sort of power over anything. But, little did he know, Estelle had a potent secret of her own. On paper, the warehouse at 164 Palmo was in her name, and she recently discovered that Leon had pushed the envelope with the lady nurse Oliva.

The smell of thick stew began to permeate the house with flavor. This was her finale dinner and she was willing to pull out all of the stops. As Leon began to make his way home, he inhaled the sweet smell of seasoned chicken. He knew tonight was going to be a good one. As he entered through the withered door, he slipped off his musty work boots and followed the scent to the kitchen. Estelle was adding the final touches to her exquisite dinner when she noticed Leon’s familiar presence.

He sat down and hollered, “Will ya hurry up stella, I’m too damn hungry to think!”

“Don’t worry Leon, I’m comin.”

“Yea ya better be!” He angrily slumped into his chair and waited for a plate of food to land in front of his gaping mouth. Estelle glided into the dining room and gracefully set the stew in front of her unfaithful husband.

He began to shovel food into his mouth with zero regard for the woman sitting next to him. As he began to slow down, Estelle served him papers. He read in horror once he realized what her intentions were.

“Stella! Why would you do this to me! You know the business is my life! I’ve done everything to keep it afloatin. How dare you!”

“Well, honey that’s what happens when you sneak Oliva into the back of the warehouse. I guess 164 Palmo is a place for women after all.”