

## Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1601

Yuri attempted to hurl the baby to the ground in response, but Caspian was faster and spun around to the other side to catch the baby in mid-air. Having secured the baby in his arms, he then sent Yuri tumbling over with a kick to his back. Caspian was so fast that he had accomplished that amazing feat within the blink of an eye.

With the danger being averted, Larry held Joan steady as they walked up to Caspian.

"My baby... My baby... Oh, you scared the hell out of me..." Joan mumbled as she examined her baby from head to toe for any injuries before holding him tightly in her arms. I don't know how I would go on if I were to lose my baby...

The baby had been completely silent when Yuri was holding him earlier but started crying when he felt Joan's gentle embrace and familiar scent.

Joan felt her heart melt when she heard his cries and quickly brought him back to her ward with Nancy's help.

The doctors and nurses at the hospital went on high alert after witnessing everything that had happened, so Joan and her baby were safe from any further harm. Larry waited till Joan had disappeared from sight before shifting his gaze back towards Yuri who was still wailing in pain as he lay on the ground.

With a swift motion, he ripped the face mask off Yuri's face and was finally able to see how he looked like.

Yuri had fear written all over his face as he saw the murderous look in Larry's eyes and realized how dangerous his mission truly was.

Given who this guy is and what he's capable of, I wouldn't make it back to J Nation alive even if the mission was a success!

Regretting his decisions, Yuri had no choice but to apologize and blame it all on Carl. "I'm sorry, Mr. Norton! I was just following orders! I didn't have a choice!"

“Did you seriously think I’d still believe you? How about you stop coming up with these  
bullsh\*t excuses and just admit to what you’ve done? At the very least, I  
won’t think of you  
men from J Nation as useless cowards!” Larry said with a sneer.  
Yuri was an extremely prideful man, so he was unable to accept being  
insulted and  
humiliated like that.

Since he had no way out of it, Yuri figured he might as well come clean  
about everything.

“I may have a part in this, but Carl is the one behind everything! I’m  
from the Jovovich gang.

If you spare me, we may have opportunities for partnerships in the  
future!” Yuri said with a  
friendly smile.

Given how powerful the Jovovich gang is, there’s no way he wouldn’t  
find it at least a little  
tempting! Who knows, he might even suck up to me just so he could  
partner up with us!

Larry saw right through his thoughts when he noticed the gleeful grin on  
his face. He’s

daydreaming at a time like this? My goodness, does his pride and  
shamelessness know no  
bounds? He really is something else!

“Forget it! I couldn’t care less even if the head of the Jovovich gang  
were to beg me for  
mercy, let alone a nobody like you!” he said scornfully, much to Yuri’s  
chagrin.

“You arrogant Chanaean... You’d better let me go right now, or the  
Jovovich gang will  
definitely come after you!”

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“Oh, you don’t have to worry about that because you won’t be  
returning to J Nation!” Larry

had a devilish smile on his face as he continued, “Caspian, bring him  
back and show him the

warmest hospitality we have to offer. You can hand him over to the  
police once you’re done.

It’s the least we can do to help reduce crime in Marsingfill, after all!”

“Understood!”

Caspian nodded and began dragging Yuri towards the car parked near the entrance.

“The Jovovich gang won’t forgive you for this, Larry! You’ll die a horrible death!” Yuri cursed

at him in despair when he realized how doomed he was.

As he was drawing a lot of attention with his screams, Caspian gave him a hard punch in the

gut which had him reeling in pain, shutting him up instantly.

The other guy that was with Yuri tried to sneak away, but Caspian had his men grab him and

drag him into the car as well.

Just like that, both of their fates were sealed.

After taking care of things, Larry returned to check on Joan in her ward.

The baby had stopped crying and was sleeping soundly in her arms while she watched him

affectionately.

It was her way of comforting herself as she didn’t want to experience that feeling of despair

and fear of losing her loved ones ever again.

Still a little shaken up by the incident from earlier, Joan flinched when she heard the door

open, and only relaxed when she saw that it was Larry.

“Is everything taken care of?” Joan tried her best to force a smile despite feeling extremely

terrible.

“Yeah, Caspian has taken the two of them away and will hand them over to the police soon.”

Larry reassured her and gave her a hug when he saw how anxious she was.

“Those men won’t be coming after us again, right, Dear? Our baby won’t be in any more

danger, right?”

Joan felt herself tearing up as she hugged him back, feeling safe and secure in his embrace.

“Don’t worry, everything is all right now. No one will hurt our baby ever again!” Despite how

confident he sounded, Larry was actually just as afraid when he saw his son being

kidnapped and held hostage earlier.

However, he had no choice but to stay calm so he could make the right decisions and save his son from danger.

“Those who tried to take our baby from us must pay dearly, Larry! Each and every one of them!”

Joan had had enough after being attacked countless times and spat those words out angrily.

I can forgive the horrible things they’ve done to me in the past, but things are different now that I have a child! Anyone who tries to hurt my son shall suffer the consequences!

Joan’s thoughts matched that of Larry’s perfectly, and he gave her a gentle pat on the back

as he whispered into her ear, “Don’t worry, I’ll make sure they pay for what they’ve done.

You must be tired, right? Why don’t you lay down and get some sleep? I’ll stay here with you and our baby.”

Feeling a little tired, Joan nodded and lay down, falling asleep shortly after.

Apart from Joan, I now have to protect my son as well. Not that I mind, though. In fact, I feel

kind of happy having a sweet burden like this! Nothing else matters as long as I have them

by my side! Larry thought to himself as he looked at Joan and his baby who were sleeping soundly.

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Caspian returned to the hospital later on and gently knocked on the door. Larry gave him a

nod and adjusted Joan’s blanket before quietly leaving the ward.

“What did you manage to find out?” Larry asked as the two of them sat down on the benches in the corridor.

“Everything. The name of the man leading the operation is Yuri Jovovich. You can think of him as a captain or something. He almost got killed while carrying out a mission in

Marsingfill, and Carl was the one who saved him, so he owes Carl a favor, and the attempted abduction of your son earlier was his way of repaying that favor," Caspian explained.

"All that just to repay a favor? I doubt the people of J Nation are that grateful. There's no way Yuri would've agreed to do this for free," Larry said in a stern voice. Caspian was impressed with his sound analysis. "You're right. Carl promised him a reward of five million if he could get the job done successfully, which would allow him to live the high life back in J Nation."

That explains everything, then. Even I would be powerless against him if he were in J Nation, and Yuri knows it. That's why he was willing to take such a huge risk! "Boss, there's something I'd like to ask you..." Caspian said with a confused look on his face.

"You're curious as to how I knew Carl was behind all this?"

Larry knew Caspian all too well.

"Yeah, how did you know? We didn't receive any information on that beforehand!"

"It was just a guess, actually. Carl and Gabriella are the ones responsible for most of the problems we've had lately. Gabriella no longer has the resources to do us any harm, but Carl does. He must have a burning hatred for us after we broke his legs, and Gabriella divorcing him would only fuel that hatred even further. Therefore, it's most likely that he would be hell-bent on getting his revenge on us," Larry replied calmly.

"That's it?" Caspian asked in disbelief.

"Yup! I didn't have a better idea at the time, so I figured I might as well give it a shot. If I get it right, Yuri is sure to freak out, and that will give us a perfect opportunity to strike."

"How did you know that Yuri belongs to the Jovovich gang from J Nation?" Caspian asked curiously.

"That part was easy. Did you not see the tattoo on his arm? That's the insignia of the

Jovovich gang. This is why I keep telling you to be more observant and rational in your approach, but you never listen.” Larry waved at him as he said that. Caspian felt dejected as he thought Larry had arrived at that deduction through some ingenious method, only to find out that all he did was look at Yuri’s arm. “I’ve taken great „care“ of those two as per your instructions, Boss. They’re in so much pain and suffering that death would actually be considered merciful for them. When shall we hand them over to the police?”

Caspian had a gleeful smile on his face when he said that, which showed just how much he hated them as well.

“We’ll drop them off at the police station tomorrow. Make sure they’re barely breathing by then. The Chanaean justice system will take care of the rest.”

Although Larry was tempted to have them both killed, he was able to suppress that urge in the end.

“Okay, I’ll bring them over tomorrow, then... Oh, what about Carl? What should we do about him? We can’t keep him alive, can we?”

Caspian wanted nothing more than to kill Carl as brutally as possible. Larry had assumed he wouldn’t dare try anything after he had become disabled, but Carl proved him wrong by attempting to harm his son. Naturally, that didn’t sit very well with Larry.

“This man no longer has a reason to exist. Get rid of him for good whenever you see fit.”

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“Got it, Boss! I’ll have someone kill him right away!” Caspian replied enthusiastically.

“Why would you kill him? That’s illegal, you know? We don’t do illegal stuff here,” Larry said seriously.

“But... I thought you said to get rid of him for good? Isn’t killing him the best way to do so?”

Caspian asked in confusion. Why is Boss speaking in riddles today?

“Accidents happen all the time, Caspian. Carl could have a flower pot fall on his head while passing by a building, or get run over by a car while crossing a road. Nobody could possibly be held responsible for such accidents, right? Besides, don’t you think it’s a lot better to have him spend the rest of his life in a vegetative state?” Larry said with a sadistic grin on his face.

Realizing what Larry meant, Caspian nodded in acknowledgment and left after excusing himself.

Joan returned home a few days later after recovering from her obstructed labor, and her wedding with Larry was officially on track.

When the two of them got engaged, both their families had initially planned on having Joan give birth to her child before picking a date for the wedding. However, Joan’s child was born over a month in advance, which wasn’t exactly part of their plans.

As such, the two families had another discussion and decided to have their wedding a week after her return from the hospital instead.

With that, both their families got down to business and began their preparations for the wedding.

Joan had it a little easier as all she had to do was look after her baby. Larry, on the other hand, had to decide on the wedding’s theme, handle the decoration, plan the photoshoots, and hire the emcee as well as photographers for the event.

Of course, Larry could’ve just let someone else take care of all that for him, but he chose to do it all by himself. The reason for that was because it would be his first and final wedding in life, and he wanted to give it his best so he would have no regrets. Despite things being extremely hectic, the plan was proceeding in an orderly manner.

On the day of the photoshoot, Larry and Joan had gotten out of bed very early in the morning. After feeding and putting the baby back to sleep, the two of them handed him over to Vivian and left for the studio.

"That excited, huh?" Larry asked with a chuckle when he saw Joan smiling the whole time.

"Of course! We're getting married in a few days, and I get to put on a wedding gown just for

you today! Just the thought of it makes me really happy!"

Joan was as happy as a child that had been given candy.

They soon arrived at the studio and were greeted by the staff upon entry.

"Good morning, Mr. Norton and Ms. Watts! Please wait a moment while we prepare for your photoshoot!" the lady at the counter said in a sweet voice.

Larry nodded. "Sure."

The photographer arrived shortly after, and they were ready to begin the photoshoot.

Larry was tall and handsome, while Joan looked beautiful and elegant.

The two of them

looked amazing in practically every outfit they put on, much to the envy of those around them.

With some guidance and suggestions from the photographer, Larry and Joan took plenty of amazing photos in all sorts of romantic poses.

After completing the photoshoot in the studio, they headed out to take some outdoor photos as well.

Larry wasn't really feeling anything, but Joan was extremely exhausted from all the posing

and changing. Even so, she was more happy than tired.

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Fortunately for her, they had no other plans for the day and went home right after the photoshoot.

Upon arriving home, they found out that Caspian and Nancy had been waiting quite a while for them.



Nancy visited Joan very often ever since the two of them became close friends, and had

been dropping by once a day due to the wedding.

According to her, the reason behind her visits was to capture every sweet moment between

Larry and Joan.

“Boss! Joan! You’re back!” Caspian and Nancy both stood up and greeted them upon their return.

“Yeah, we were out for our photoshoot!” Joan replied with a sweet smile on her face.

Nancy’s eyes lit up with admiration. “Oh, my god! I envy you so much, Joan! I want to put on a wedding gown too!”

“That’s easy! You two just need to get married, and you can put on any wedding gown you like!” Joan said teasingly.

Caspian looked a little shy as he said, “Yeah, we’re getting married in two months.”

“Whoa, that soon?”

Joan and Larry were surprised when they heard that. They had hoped for Caspian and Nancy to take things a step further after seeing how much they loved each other.

“I wanted it to be sooner, though! Imagine how great it would be if we could all have our weddings on the same day! But... My family said I shouldn’t get married so quickly after the engagement.”

Nancy pouted as if not being able to have their weddings together was something regrettable, much to the amusement of Larry and Joan.

“That’s okay, we can attend each other’s wedding, then!” Joan tried to comfort her.

“You’re right! That’s a great idea!” Nancy got happy again after hearing what Joan said.

The next couple of days went by with Larry busy preparing for the wedding while Joan stayed home to look after the baby.

She had Nancy around to keep her company, so it wasn't all that boring for her.

Every day, Joan fantasized about how happy her life would be after marrying Larry.

It was finally the big day.

A huge crowd of journalists had gathered outside the venue very early in the morning, long

before any of the guests had even arrived.

The Norton Corporation had made a public announcement in the media about their

wedding, and the news spread like wildfire in Marsingfill. A lot of people have been looking

forward to their wedding ever since Larry proposed to Joan, and now, the long-anticipated

event was finally here.

As per Chanaean tradition, Joan had returned to her parents' home the night before the

wedding so Larry could come to pick her up on the next day.

It would take over an hour to get from her parents' home to Marsingfill, so Larry and his

men headed out at 8 a.m. to minimize the risk of delays.

Fifty Lamborghinis parked in a straight line was quite a spectacular sight and gained them a

lot of attention from passersby.

Larry's limited edition Lamborghini soon pulled up slowly at the front.

With his command,

the driver began the drive, leading all fifty of them towards Joan's location.

Meanwhile, Joan was feeling both nervous and excited as she sat by her dressing table and

waited for their arrival.

Fortunately, there were no mishaps along the way, and Larry marched straight into Joan's

room upon arriving at her place.

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Larry found himself feeling a little nervous when he saw his beloved woman dressed in a

white wedding gown with an elegant accessory on her head and exquisite makeup on her

face.

After a brief pause, Larry regained his composure and gently took her hand before walking out of the house with her. Her parents were smiling brightly as they watched from the side, feeling glad to see their precious daughter finally getting married. After getting into the car, the group made their way towards the venue of the wedding. The huge convoy pulled up outside the venue with practically the entire city watching in anticipation, and the crowd cheered excitedly when they saw Larry and Joan show up hand-in-hand. It was the grandest wedding to have ever taken place in Marsingfill. After repeated discussions, both their families agreed upon having a traditional Chanaean-style wedding. With all the guests finally present at the scene, the emcee began making his announcement, "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! I would like to begin my speech by expressing my gratitude for being granted the great honor to host this amazing wedding by the Norton family and the Watts family! This event signifies the marriage between Joan Watts and Larry Norton as well as the unity of both their families. Once again, I would like to thank the couple and all of you for taking the time to join us on this joyous occasion! And now, ladies and gentlemen, for the moment you've been waiting for! Let us all rise and put our hands together to welcome the newlyweds, Joan Watts and Larry Norton!" After the opening speech had been made, it was time for the bride and the groom to enter the scene. Joan appeared on stage dressed in her white wedding gown with a veil over her face. Larry too, came onto the stage on the other side dressed in a matching white suit that fitted him perfectly. The emcee then said, "Now, we shall have the couple perform the cake cutting ceremony."

May their marriage be filled with sweet moments as they begin this new chapter of their lives together!”

With that, Larry and Joan made their way to the center of the stage and cut the wedding cake as directed by the emcee.

“And now, the groom shall lift the veil!”

Larry then gently lifted the veil from Joan’s face, revealing her stunningly elegant tiara and exquisite facial features which were complemented by a shy blush on her cheeks.

All of that in combination with her gorgeous wedding dress had the entire crowd captivated in an instant.

“Without further ado, let us all welcome the best man to say a few words!”

Needless to say, Larry had chosen Caspian to be his best man for the wedding.

Caspian then came up on stage and gave a short speech as instructed while making funny faces at Larry, causing the guests to roar with laughter at how funny his story was.

Larry shot him a stern glare in response as if to say, “When we get back, I’m going to whoop your a\*s!”

Caspian knew Larry wasn’t joking and quickly ended his speech in a more serious manner before getting off the stage.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we shall have the newlywed couple give a toast to their parents and receive their blessings!”

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Holding glasses in their hands, Larry and Joan both toasted their parents. Finnick and Vivian, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Watts, clinked glasses with them while beaming from ear to ear.

Then, they all tossed back the champagne in their glasses, giving their blessings upon the marriage.

“And now, we shall invite the newlywed’s parents to say a few words!”

Finnick was the first to go on stage. He first congratulated Larry and Joan before promising to treat Joan well in the future.

Subsequently, it was Mr. Watts. His speech was more emotional since Joan was his only daughter, and she would no longer be a member of the Watts family after joining the Norton family. While he was happy, he was also a touch reluctant at the same time.

When he came to a poignant part, tears shimmered in his eyes.

Of course, they were tears of joy.

“Ladies and gentlemen, let’s put our hands together once more for the touching speech

from both the newlyweds’ parents.” The wedding emcee then continued to declare in a

voice filled with passion and delight, “May the newlyweds have an everlasting flow of love

and joy in their abiding marriage! And with the blessings of us all, may they have a fruitful union!”

Subsequently, Larry and Joan gazed at each other lovingly as strains of music started playing in the background.

“Having received the blessings of both parents, let’s proceed to the first dance by the newlyweds.”

As Joan and Larry faced the person they loved, a feeling of bliss enveloped them at the

thought that they would be the most intimate person to the other, never to be separated again henceforth.

With their gazes fixed on each other, they then started swaying slowly.

When the dance had finally ended, the emcee proclaimed, “With that, let’s all wish this

newly wedded couple all the best in their married life!”

The biggest difference between a traditional wedding and a modern one was the elaborate

conventions observed in the former.

A modern wedding merely required a recital of marriage vows before the priest and an

exchange of rings, but a traditional-style wedding involved multiple segments.

Next, Larry and Joan did the garter belt toss and the bouquet toss as directed by the wedding emcee. With that, the wedding ceremony gradually drew to an end.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Larry Norton and Joan Watts are now married in binding matrimony. Let’s wish the newlyweds an eternal love until death do them part. With this, I hereby announce the closing of the curtain to the wedding ceremony of Larry Norton and Joan Watts! Again, thank you for taking the time to come and celebrate this joyful union with us! Thank you!”

Following the wedding emcee’s concluding remarks, Joan and Larry’s grand wedding ceremony came to an end.

The entire hall burst into overwhelming cheers and applause. As the guests gazed at Larry and Joan who made a perfect match on stage, they all wished them well. At the same time, they all harbored a yearning within them—to have such a resplendent wedding and unwavering love. Even if the cost was death, it would be well worth the price.

Due to the astounding number of reporters who attended the wedding, it was tantamount to a live broadcast of the wedding.

As such, many people in Marsingfill witnessed the romantic wedding. Of course, Gabriella was also one of them.

The Gabriella of the present had lost all her sharp edges. While she was dejected after being kicked out of the Ward family, Landon gave her a huge sum of money. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have rented a villa.

However, after her divorce from Carl, she couldn’t even afford to live in an ordinary house, much less a villa.

Having rented a basement for a few hundred, she lived a destitute life. Most importantly, she was even pregnant with Carl’s child.

Although the child's father was Carl, she was determined to have the child. No matter how much she hated him, the child was innocent. Furthermore, he or she was part of her.

Her only motivation in life then was the child in her stomach. The child had also given her warmth, chasing away her loneliness and despair while giving her a ray of hope.

As she looked at Larry and Joan who was all sweet and loving on the screen, tears of sorrow streamed down her cheeks.

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Once upon a time, Gabriella was high and mighty, living a carefree life. She was also a beautiful girl who was pursued by many at one point, and like all girls, she dreamed of having such a resplendent wedding.

Originally, she could have had all that, but it was too late now. She had committed too

many mistakes, so she could only bear the consequences herself.

She no longer harbored any hatred toward Larry and Joan, for she knew that she was merely

reaping what she sowed. At present, her greatest hope was to be able to give the child in

her stomach a good life.

Although the curtain had come down on Larry and Joan's wedding ceremony, other aspects of the wedding were still in full swing.

At this time, the guests at the wedding reception had already started enjoying the

scrumptious wedding banquet. Precisely then, Larry and Joan made their appearance hand

in hand. They began toasting the guests in turn while receiving the blessings bestowed upon them.

On the whole, everything proceeded in an orderly manner.

After the wedding banquet had ended, Larry and Joan finally returned to their house.

As Joan gazed at Larry in front of her, a blissful smile adorned her face.

Everything appeared

so wonderful that it felt as though it was all a dream.

After having experienced so much, they were then a legally wedded couple at long last. In retrospect, all the trials and tribulations, as well as sacrifices, were in preparation for their love to come to fruition.

“Mrs. Norton, I’ve waited for this day for a very long time.”

Larry flipped over and pinned Joan underneath him, his loving gaze threaded with a hint of desire.

Ever since college itself, this wedding of his with Joan had already been part of his plan.

However, too many things had happened between then and now. He once thought that he

would never get to marry this woman who was the love of his life.

But fortune smiled on him, and he met her once again.

And now, his wish had even come true—he had married her.

Staring at the adoration on Larry’s face and sensing his warm breath caressing her face, Joan started panting slightly.

Likewise, she had also waited for this moment for a very long time. The luckiest thing that

had ever happened to her was making his acquaintance, falling in love with him, and dating

him during college. Even after they had parted ways, she still found him amidst the sea of people in the end.

Looking back, it has always been you. Ah, this feels truly wonderful! I know you’re my

destiny, the person who’ll be with me forever, for better or worse.

“I love you, Larry Norton.”

Her eyes were slightly glazed as she mumbled in a dreamlike manner, only to condense

everything into a single utterance of “I love you.”

Upon hearing those three passionate words from her, Larry could no longer bank the fire

blazing within him. He captured her cherry lips that belonged to him alone.

Joan responded to him zealously, finding his lips so hot that it almost had her melting into a puddle.



Meanwhile, Larry had never been intimate with her since she was pregnant, so the desire that had been suppressed within him for the past few months finally burst free of its restraints at that moment. Thus, the room that was initially filled with a joyous atmosphere was then blanketed by a haze of carnal passion. The wedding had ended, but Larry and Joan's blissful life was only beginning. After wrapping up everything at the office, Larry started his honeymoon with Joan. Ever since the previous time she had gone on a vacation with Larry, Joan fell head over heels in love with traveling. She kept clamoring that she wanted to go on vacation despite knowing that it wasn't that easy. First and foremost, long trips weren't feasible for her pregnant self, and she had to ensure that she didn't overtax herself. Secondly, it was a matter of Larry's identity. As the president of Norton Corporation, he needed to handle all the major and minor matters of the company, so he had no time to accompany Joan on a vacation. Thus, it had been put on the back burner until then. At this time, they could finally put down all their commitments and have fun out there, doing something they yearned to do. After simply packing their luggage, they set out with their child. And so, the family of three went on a spontaneous trip.

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Previously, Larry promised Joan that he would travel the world with her and visit all the places she wanted to go if he had time. Thus, their first stop was none other than the romantic capital of Pillere. After disembarking from the plane, Joan spread out her arms. Feeling as though even the air in Pillere was infused with romance, she giggled happily. Then, she skipped along the streets, finding everything a novelty.

At the sight of the romantic city, the unique customs, and having the person she loved most by her side, she felt as though she was walking on air. Meanwhile, Larry was currently staring at her intently with a smile on his face. When he saw her exhilarated expression, his mood brightened significantly. They gorged themselves on the unique snacks in Pillere, enjoyed the stunning scenery, strolled around romantically with hands interlinked, went to the plaza to release pigeons, and watched the beautiful sunset side by side. They did everything a romantic couple aspired to do or perhaps was even doing right then, enjoying their romantic moments together.

“You’re moving like a tortoise, Larry! Hurry up, quick!”  
“Let’s go to the mall to buy some things, Larry!”  
“Dear, that looks delicious! Let’s go and try it!”  
“Look, it’s incredibly beautiful over there!”

Joan unleashed her adorable and lively nature, confident in Larry’s presence. She knew that with him there, she didn’t need to worry about a single thing. Similarly, Larry wasn’t as cool and collected as usual either. Instead, he let loose and enjoyed himself with her, enjoying their happiest moments together. A honeymoon was supposed to be filled with sweetness and romance, after all. If one had too many burdens or a myriad of things weighing on one’s mind, the true meaning of a vacation would be lost.

In the following days, they went to Irushea, A Nation, Malarnor, Koandria, and many other countries as well as cities. After traveling across half the globe, they returned to Marsingfill.

As soon as Vivian caught sight of Larry and Joan returning to Norton Residence, she promptly strode out from the living room. Taking the child from Joan’s arms, she asked Joan, “Did you have fun, Joan? Are you tired?”  
“We had a lot of fun, Vivian. Plus, we’re not at all tired,” Joan answered sweetly.

"It's great that you had fun. Go in and rest. Just leave Leslie to me!"

Vivian said to her thoughtfully.

Then, she pressed a kiss to the child in her arms.

"Let me have a look at you, Leslie. I missed you so much!"

Without paying Joan and Larry any more mind, she left with Leslie in her arms while keeping up a steady stream of chatter.

Despite being accustomed to the fact that he was always ignored while his family showed concern for Joan and the child, Larry was still a tad disgruntled every time he encountered such a situation.

Hence, he cast Joan a bitter glance as though chagrined that she had stolen the concern that initially belonged to him.

Coincidentally, Joan met his gaze at that precise moment. When she glimpsed at his expression, she burst into laughter.

"Aw, how pitiful, my poor dear! Did your mother ignore you again?" she teased him while gloating.

Throwing her a petulant look, Larry huffed, "Mom used to greet and inquire after me every time I came home. But now? She finds it a bother to even spare me a glance!"

"Oh yes, I've just discovered something, Dear. And I think I should tell you about it."

Joan was still wearing an expression of schadenfreude before that, but in the next second, she suddenly turned solemn.

"What is it?"

Bafflement inexplicably engulfed Larry, and he had no inkling what she wanted to tell him.

"But you can't be angry after I tell you, okay?"

"I won't be angry, so just be frank with me."

"The thing I discovered is..." Joan paused for a moment before continuing, "Well, you might not be your parents' biological child! A stork might have delivered you to them! Haha..."

Joan started laughing uproariously, appearing very much gleeful. Both annoyed and amused by her idiotic antics, Larry chided in feigned anger, "Hey, how dare you make me the butt of your joke? Just wait and see whether I'll make you pay!"

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As Larry said that, he stalked toward Joan.

"Haha... Stop tickling me! It's ticklish! I'm ticklish! Haha... I'm sorry!"

Joan hastily pleaded for

mercy as she dodged Larry's retaliation.

The entire Norton Residence turned lively thanks to the visit from the family of three.

After resting for a few days and keeping his parents company at home, Larry started getting

busy with his work.

Ever since he left, he had entrusted everything to Caspian. Thus, Caspian had been

exhausted lately.

Upon learning that Larry and Joan were back, he called Larry at once.

"I heard that you're back, Boss?" Caspian hastily asked the moment the call was connected.

"I'm not back yet. Who told you that I'm back?"

Wanting to pull his leg, Larry didn't tell him the truth.

"Stop trying to dupe me, Boss. My subordinates had already told me about your return."

"Haha, you're aware of it, huh?" Chuckling, Larry admitted, "I just came back a while ago."

"Then, hurry up and come to the office, Boss! There are too many things to handle here, and

my brain simply can't take it!" Caspian griped.

Indeed, he was meant to be a general and not a commander. He had no problems

executing something, but it was exceedingly difficult for him when he had to make

decisions.

"Well, just hold the fort for a few more days. I've just come back and am not feeling all that

well, so I need to rest for a couple of days."

After learning that there weren't any major problems at the office, Larry decided to slack off

for a few more days since Caspian was more than capable of handling things.

“No! Boss, I really can’t take it anymore, so please come and save me!” Caspian didn’t believe Larry at all. Considering Boss’s constitution, if he’s feeling unwell just

because he’d gone on a vacation, pigs might fly!

“Okay, okay, I got it. Alright, let’s wrap this up here. I’m hanging up.”

Not wanting to continue bickering with him, Larry hung up resolutely.

“But Boss... Hello? Boss? Damn it!”

Hearing the disconnect tone on the other end of the phone, Caspian was seized by the urge

to hit someone.

Argh! Boss is simply trying to shirk his responsibilities! No, I can’t allow that to happen!

However, no matter how many times he called Larry, Larry ignored his calls. Ugh! I feel as

though I’m going to lose my mind!

After leaving the donkey work to Caspian for a few days, Larry finally raised a white flag at

his fervent begging and came to the office.

That had Caspian so touched that he was on the verge of tears. Thank God, Boss has finally

grown a conscience!

Afraid that Larry would renege on his word, he beat a hasty retreat after greeting him. Yes!

At long last, I don’t have to handle this mess anymore!

Seeing that, Larry shook his head in exasperation. Goodness, he’s so gutless that he’s

doesn’t at all fit the mold of a bodyguard!

The moment he stepped into his office and spotted the documents piled on his table, he

suddenly understood why Caspian had taken off.

Flipping open a document randomly, he saw that the date indicated was actually two weeks

ago. Then, he opened another document, only to see that it was three weeks ago!

Larry was instantly stunned. What the hell? He wasn’t helping me handle things at all! It’s

glaringly obvious that he didn’t do anything!

“Caspian!” Larry roared, his voice echoing in the entire building.

He initially wanted to take advantage of Caspian for a bit and push some work to him, but

unexpectedly, the joke was on him.

On the verge of tears, he inwardly swore that he would definitely get back at him the next

time he saw him.

Hearing his furious bellow as well, Caspian couldn't help shuddering.

Phew! Thank God I

hightailed it out of there fast enough! Otherwise, I would've been severely reprimanded

again if he had caught me!

While he had been handling business matters on Larry's behalf, he had been adopting the

attitude of just getting by without having any high ambitions.

If it wasn't anything crucial or something that could be deferred, he would simply place it

aside and leave it for him to resolve himself when he came back.

That was truly a pain for Larry, and he had no choice but to work overtime for several days

in a row to clean up the mess Caspian left him.

At long last, he was finally done settling everything and planned to have a good rest at

home.

After having breakfast, he wanted to return to bed to catch up on his sleep, but little did he

expect Joan to pull him out of bed.

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Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1611

"Dear, Leslie had just gone to sleep, so why don't you accompany me shopping? I want to

buy a few things," Joan implored coquettishly.

"Let me sleep for a bit more. I'll go with you when I wake up," Larry mumbled groggily.

Then, he rolled over and continued sleeping.

When Joan saw that he was ignoring her, she decided to resort to her ultimate means.

"Ouch, please let go of my ear! Darling, please have mercy on me! I'll go, okay?"

Larry hurriedly pleaded for mercy when he abruptly sensed a bolt of agonizing pain

assaulting his ear while still sleeping soundly.

"Hmph! I called you to get up, but you just wouldn't listen! Serves you right!" Joan declared

smugly, looking all proud of herself.

Ugh! What bad luck! Larry groused with a long sigh as he rubbed his red ear. Then, he

grudgingly allowed her to drag him out the door.

Shopping was in a woman's nature, and that saying was spot-on.

Despite her usually weak and fragile appearance, Joan became an entirely different person

when she shopped. It had been three hours, but she showed no signs of fatigue, looking

very much energetic instead.

"Darling, I don't remember you being so fond of shopping before we got married," Larry

remarked on a sigh.

"That's because I had no time back then. After having experienced so much, I really wasn't in

any mood to shop at that time. Besides, you didn't have time to accompany me either. Later,

I got pregnant, so it was out of the question to shop with a protruding belly. But now, we

can come and shop often!"

Joan's eyes darted around enthusiastically, seemingly just not having enough of it.

Upon hearing that, Larry almost broke down. Once or twice is fine, but to go shopping often

simply won't do!

However, Joan was enjoying herself, so he couldn't bring himself to burst her bubble. Thus,

he said nothing but continued to accompany her shopping in silence.

When Joan was feeling a tad tired, she sat on a bench by the roadside with Larry to rest for

a bit.

At that precise moment, she suddenly glimpsed a familiar yet foreign figure by the roadside.

The sense of familiarity stemmed from the fact that she was once acquainted with her, but

at the same time, it was foreign because she no longer bore any semblance to the person

she once knew.

It was Gabriella.

After such a long time, she again spotted her among the crowd.

Presently, Gabriella was no longer dressed in the beautiful and dazzling clothes of the past,

nor did she have a domineering air anymore.

She was merely an ordinary woman, and time had smoothened all her sharp edges. Dressed

plainly, she was actually selling fruits by the roadside.

With a huge belly proceeding her, Gabriella promoted her wares relentlessly even as she

chose fruits for her customers.

She was all alone, rendering her lonely and pitiful.

In truth, selling fruits was something she was forced to do. To secure a better life for her

child when he or she was born, she wanted to find a lucrative job quickly.

Alas, she was pregnant, so even if she was willing to do menial and backbreaking work, no

one would employ her. Having no other choice, she bought a bunch of fruits with the little

money she had left and set up a roadside stall at a crowded place.

The issue of dignity and pride no longer mattered, for survival was the greatest problem

staring her in the face.

Unfortunately, even when she was at the stage where she had to sell fruits by the roadside,

she couldn't make a living properly because an officer from the city council came over

shortly.

"Who allowed you to sell fruits here? I've told you countless times that setting up a roadside

stall here is strictly prohibited!" the officer asserted sternly while glowering at her.

"I got it! I'll leave. I'll leave right away!" Gabriella blurted in panic.

She once feared no one and nothing, but now, she was starkly afraid of the city council.

"Hah! You say that every single time, but I don't think you'll learn unless I teach you a

lesson!"



Despite Gabriella's huge belly and her downcast expression, the officer didn't sympathize with her the slightest bit. As a trace of disdain flashed across his eyes, he overturned her fruit stall.

"You simply don't learn, huh? Have you finally learned your lesson now? If I see you setting up a stall by the roadside again, I'll overturn it without a single word!" The officer wore a cocky look.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1612

"No, please don't!"

All at once, Gabriella got onto her knees and hastily picked up the fruits that were scattered all over the place.

The officer from the city council, on the other hand, ignored her pleas. After shooting her a glare, he then stalked away.

Kneeling on the ground, Gabriella burst into tears as helplessness swamped her.

Why? Just why are there still people who want to pick trouble with me when I'm already in such dire straits? I just want to survive and take good care of the child in my belly! It's such a simple wish, so why can't I even have that?

Desperation engulfed her. If it weren't for the baby, she truly wanted to jump off a building right then and there.

However, she couldn't do that, for life still had to go on.

She promptly calmed down and resumed picking up the fruits from the ground with anguish written all over her face.

All that was witnessed by Joan, and a mix of emotions overwhelmed her at the sight.

Indeed, she deserves such retribution after having committed so many evil deeds. In that, she didn't pity Gabriella in the slightest, but she was currently with a child.

This is a fitting end for her, but the child is innocent. There's no reason the child should

suffer alongside his or her mother.

At that thought, an idea occurred to her, and she was increasingly resolved to put it into action.

Meanwhile, Larry had no idea about everything that had happened. At that time, he was focused on something on his cell phone, so he didn't notice the commotion that had transpired a near distance away.

But even if he did witness it, he probably wouldn't have had any sympathy for Gabriella.

After all, she shouldn't have done all that if she hadn't wanted to pay the price.

If she hadn't schemed and plotted, hatching conspiracy after conspiracy, she would still be

the high and mighty daughter of the Ward family.

When one's motives weren't right, it would only bring calamity upon oneself. After all,

curses, like chickens, came home to roost.

"Larry, I'm a bit tired, so let's go home," Joan said to Larry beside her as she stretched wearily.

By then, Larry had also put his cell phone away. Smiling, he replied, "Since you're tired, let's go home quickly. Leslie might have woken up, and he might even be giving his grandmother trouble."

"True, true. Let's go, then."

As Joan held his arm intimately, euphoria flooded her.

Contrary to the saying that one would only appreciate something after having lost it, she

was particularly appreciative of everything she had right then.

The more trials and tribulations one experienced, the greater one's cognizance of the preciousness of life.

As they held hands, both vowed to cherish each other until death do them part.

The moment they arrived home, Joan swiftly went to the bedroom to look in on her child.

Before leaving, she had specially informed Vivian that she was going out. Presently, Leslie

was already awake, and Vivian was conscientiously feeding him milk.  
“I’m back, Vivian. When did Leslie wake up?” Joan greeted respectfully.  
“Just a while ago. He cried when he woke up, so I fed him milk. Now, he’s all docile.”

Vivian’s eyes brimmed with love as she looked down at her grandchild in her arms.

“I’m sorry for having troubled you, Vivian. I’ll take over.”

Joan was a tad embarrassed at having gone out shopping and leaving the child to her.

“Hey, why are you saying that? It’s my pleasure to take care of my own grandchild, so don’t always be a stranger with me!”

Vivian feigned disgruntlement.

“I got it, Vivian.”

Joan nodded obediently. Gosh, I’ve indeed been a touch too formal with her! I’ve got to

remember not to do it anymore, lest it affects my relationship with her.

A while later, Vivian handed the child back to Joan and went about her own business.

After Joan had finished feeding the child and cradled him intimately for some time, he

dozed off again.

Only a handful of days had passed since he was finally a month old, so his life was basically

eating and sleeping. Rinse, repeat.

Placing him on the crib, she then quietly left the room.

“Where are you going, Joan?” Larry asked in concern when he saw her leaving the bedroom.

At that time, he was working in the study.

“Nowhere. I’m just going to the living room to watch television, so you don’t have to bother

about me. Just concentrate on your work.”

After flashing him a sweet smile, Joan then went to the living room.

As she sat there, she took out her passbook and bank card from under the table in the living

room. They contained the money she earned herself and the stipend Larry gave her

regularly.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1613

Ever since Joan became Larry's fiancée, he was afraid that she would be reluctant to spend, so he would transfer a hefty sum into her bank card monthly. And now, she was a rich woman who had a stipend of a few million.

After thinking for a long time, she transferred three hundred thousand from her bank card to her backup card. Pocketing the card, she then changed before going to the study and saying to Larry, "Dear, keep an eye on our baby, okay? I'm going out for a while."

"Why are you going out again when we'd just come home? And where are you going this time?"

Although Larry trusted her completely, he still wanted to know where exactly she was going.

"I'll tell you when I return, okay? Let me keep it a secret first, Dear," Joan murmured mischievously as she kissed him on the cheek.

"I don't mind letting it slide, but there's a condition," Larry drawled solemnly as he stared at her.

"Well? What's your condition?" Joan inquired.

"Kiss me again." Larry acted very much like a child who was throwing a tantrum.

"Alright, then."

Giggling in exasperation, Joan kissed him lightly on the mouth once more.

In a flash, Larry hooked his arms around her neck and kissed her passionately.

After a sizzling kiss, Joan hastily pushed him away. Panting slightly, she then rolled her eyes at him. "You're happy now, yes? I'm leaving, then. Take good care of our baby, okay?"

"Don't worry. But come home earlier!" Larry urged in contentment.

"Will do."

Having answered him, Joan then left.

When she reached the place where they took a break after shopping earlier, she started looking for Gabriella.

However, she didn't find any signs of her even after circling the spot where she had set up a stall just now.

At a loss, she could only inquire about her whereabouts from the proprietress of a grocery store by the roadside.

"Madam, I'd like to ask about the pregnant lady who was selling fruits by the roadside here earlier. Do you know where she went?" she asked the middle-aged woman who ran the grocery store politely.

"She was driven away by the city council just now, so she's most likely selling fruits in the alley ahead. Ah, she's quite pitiful! Her husband is really lousy to have her sell fruits alone while pregnant. Say, she has truly been dealt a bad hand in life!" the middle-aged woman lamented sympathetically.

"Thank you, Madam."

After thanking the proprietress of the grocery store, Joan headed in the direction she had pointed earlier.

Finally, she caught sight of Gabriella in the alley by the intersection. At that moment, Gabriella was doing her best to promote her wares. Unfortunately, there wasn't much traffic here, so few were willing to buy fruits. She then sat there dejectedly with her head hung low, seemingly contemplating something or other.

Joan silently walked over to her, but she didn't realize that someone was approaching and kept her head lowered.

Joan was in no hurry either, merely standing there wordlessly.

Seemingly sensing a presence beside her, Gabriella then swiftly lifted her head and blurted,

"Would you like to buy some fruits..."

When she made out who it was, she abruptly gaped in surprise. A moment later, something seemingly occurred to her, and she hurriedly dipped her head.

"Would you like to buy some fruits, miss?"

She wanted to pretend that she didn't know Joan, but the obvious tremor in her voice betrayed her.

"Gabriella Ward, aren't you going to look up at me when we were once best friends?" Joan

murmured in a calm and unruffled voice as she looked at her.

"You've got the wrong person, miss. I'm not the Gabriella Ward you spoke of. I'm just a fruit vendor."

"You're Gabriella Ward, so stop pretending. There's no point in doing so."

At that, a bitter smile bloomed on Gabriella's face. Knowing that there was no escaping the

inevitable, she raised her head in a self-deprecating manner and remarked, "So what if you

recognized me, Mrs. Norton? Are you here to mock me?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1614

"I don't have any intention of mocking you, nor do I want to hit you now that you're down.

However, I'll still say all that's needed to be said."

Subsequently, Joan didn't hold back her punches as she spoke. "You can't blame anyone for

your predicament now because you're merely reaping what you sowed. You wouldn't have

been reduced to such a sorry state if you hadn't had harbored tons of malicious thoughts

and concocted so many evil plans. Therefore, I have no sympathy for you."

Upon hearing this, the bitter smile on Gabriella's face deepened.

"I know. All this is retribution for all that I've done, so I don't blame anyone for my

predicament now. I no longer harbor a single hint of hatred even toward you—Joan Watts—

and Larry Norton, the two people whom I once detested to the marrow and whose

relationship I tried my very best to fragment.

"Now, the only thing I want is to survive and have my baby, then give him or her a good life.

So, if there's nothing else, please leave so that I can continue with my business."

Gabriella's words came from the depths of her heart without any pretense, nor were they meant to garner her sympathy. Presently, she was only the mother of a child. No matter how heinous she was, a mother was the noblest and most selfless individual. Joan nodded in acknowledgment as Gabriella's words diminished her enmity against her. Indeed, she once committed a grievous offense, but she has now admitted to her wrongdoing. Should I not give such a dauntless woman an opportunity to turn over a new leaf? After a long moment of hesitation, she made up her mind. "Gabriella Ward, let me clarify that I'm not here because of you, much less because I pity you. I've seen your predicament, and while I think it's what you deserve, your child is innocent. He or she shouldn't be suffering with you. You weren't a good person, but I hope you can be a good mother." Staring at Gabriella, she continued with a serious expression, "There's three hundred thousand in this bank card, and I've removed the PIN. This money isn't for you. Rather, it's for a good mother. Take good care of the child in your stomach and continue living. Don't deprive your child of his or her mother." Then, she took out a bank card and handed it to her. All at once, Gabriella froze. Never in her wildest dreams had she ever imagined that the woman whom she hated most would actually give her such a large sum when she was at her lowest and most vulnerable. Oh my God, is she for real? It's three hundred thousand! To my past self, it would've been a pittance, but now, it's a king's ransom that can save my life and that of my child's! With this money, I won't have to starve anymore. At the very least, I can give birth with peace of mind

and find a better job in the future. I'll no longer have to worry about food and shelter.

"A-Are you seriously giving me this money?"

Gabriella's voice trembled slightly, for she didn't dare believe the truth that was right before her eyes.

"To your past self, perhaps this amount is negligible, but I now hope that you'll put it to

good use and be a good mother," Joan emphasized once more.

Taking her hand, she then gave her the bank card.

As Gabriella clutched the bank card that was still warm, she was overwhelmed by gratitude

and regret. Recalling everything she did to Joan back then, tears streamed down her face.

"I'm sorry! I'm really sorry! I shouldn't have done all those things in the past. I shouldn't have

been blinded by my desires and given in to greed, let alone hurt you with a myriad of

ruthless ploys. I was wrong, so I'm really sorry. I don't dare hope that you'll forgive me, but I

hope you'll accept my apology."

She wept bitterly, for she was truly regretful. She regretted having wasted her most precious

youth on plotting and scheming, the wrongdoings she shouldn't have committed that led to

her current predicament, and most of all, the trouble and hurt she had caused others.

Out of the blue, she thought of her father. As his only daughter, not only did I not take

good care of him, but I even did so many things that put our family in jeopardy!

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1615

Having a child of her own and becoming a mother gave her the emotional dimension to

deeply grasp the anguish and despair of her father, having been forced into doing what he

didn't want to.

I'm so sorry! But it's too late.

There was no more chance for her to redeem herself, nor could she make up for the



damage she had caused to everyone.

Looking at Gabriella, Joan knew that she had finally realized her mistakes.

Without saying

anything else, Joan turned around and left.

“Look after yourself and take good care of your child. Don’t repeat your mistakes.”

With that, Joan disappeared at the corner of the street.

Listening to the words Joan left for her and watching Joan’s figure getting smaller and

smaller as she left, Gabriella nodded solemnly.

There was no turning back to what happened in the past. The only thing she could do was

to live the rest of her life well and look after her child, just like what Joan said to her—be a

good mother.

After settling the matter which had been bothering her, Joan returned home in a bubbly

mood. The way Gabriella looked when Joan left assured her that her painstaking efforts

didn’t go to waste, after all.

When she reached home, she tiptoed back, trying to avoid catching Larry’s attention.

Nevertheless, Larry noticed her right from the minute she entered the door. Just when Joan

was about to walk into the bedroom, Larry started, “You’re back.”

Joan was notably astounded. She thought she could go back to the room without being

discovered, but she was still uncovered in the end.

“That’s right, Dear, I’m back,” with a smile, Joan replied.

“Where did you go? Didn’t you promise to tell me about that when you reach home?”

Larry put aside the things he had been occupied with and looked at Joan with an

ambiguous half-smile.

“Hey, you were the one who told me you’ll let me know what you were doing outside when

you come home, and now you’re trying to slip past me without telling me what you were up

to. How guileful. If you don’t give me a proper explanation, I’ll teach you a lesson.”

Larry rubbed his palms together as though he was going to tan Joan's hide.

"Alright, alright, I'll tell you, okay? But you have to promise not to be angry after I tell you about it," Joan answered helplessly.

She was going to conceal it from Larry lest he disagreed. However, seeing as such, there was no way she could shy away from it anymore.

Hence, she gave an honest and exhaustive account of what she encountered when she went shopping that day, particularly that she saw Gabriella selling fruits at the roadside and that she gave her three hundred thousand.

Listening to Joan's description, Larry broke into a smile and brushed his finger softly down

her nose as he said, both amused and annoyed, "Silly girl, why would I be angry over such a

matter? Since Gabriella regretted her actions and was pregnant now, lending her a helping

hand is understandable. Nevertheless, with her temperament, are you sure it was genuine

repentance?" Larry uttered rather sternly as he was afraid that Joan might have been fooled.

"Probably." Joan was a little uncertain as well. "Because the way she looked convinced me

that she was indeed remorseful about her past misdeeds. Even if she was deceiving me,

we're only losing three hundred thousand. Just think of it as I've slipped up helping an ingrate."

Laughing, Larry held Joan in his arms and let her sit on his leg.

"Nonetheless, we have to discuss the money you've stacked away without my knowledge."

Larry grinned wickedly at Joan. "Well, if you can't provide a reasonable clarification, you'll

have to get prepared for some bodily torture."

Brushing his palm against Joan's haunch, Larry was a little turned on.

"That's not some money I've stacked away from you. That's the allowance you give me every

month,” Joan countered discontentedly with her face flushed red as she felt Larry’s palm on her.

“I don’t care. The money I give you is for you to spend. Any residual is considered a secret stash.”

Larry had made it clear that he wanted to take advantage manifestly, so it was impossible that he would compromise.

Joan got up hurriedly from Larry’s embrace and straightened out her clothes which had been mussed up by Larry.

“Hmph, how could you say that I have a secret stash? Hasn’t that always been men’s privilege? All your money should be kept and managed by me. I don’t care. Hand over all your possession to me now!”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1616

Complacently, Joan threatened Larry, “From now on, I’ll be in charge of the real finances of this family. You should have no objections, am I right?”

Looking at how snobbish Joan was behaving, Larry’s eyes were filled with affection and tenderness. “Well, of course, I do have an objection to it. Why don’t you reconsider that?”

“Objection overruled, and motion dismissed. My decision is final.”

Joan returned to Larry’s embrace and rested on his chest kittenishly.

“That depends on how well you behave then.”

Seeing that Joan willingly yielded to him, Larry waited no more.

Wrapping his arm around

her waist, he carried her and paced toward the study.

“Hey, hey, what are you doing? Aren’t you going in the wrong direction? That’s the study!”

Joan quickly reminded Larry.

“Our baby is sleeping in the bedroom. Let’s not wake him up. Besides,” with a sly smile, Larry

continued, “we haven’t tried it in the study before. Let’s try that today.”

“You’re such a pervert and a total jerk!”

After finding out Larry's real intentions, Joan struggled for a bit, but it was all a show and to no avail. Putting her down on the desk which had been cleared, Larry closed the door behind him...

After their love-making session, Larry carried Joan back to the bedroom thoughtfully.

"Darling, you take a good rest. I shall continue working," pecking softly on Joan's forehead,

Larry muttered mischievously.

Still with a dash of faint blush on her face, Joan rolled her eyes at Larry.

"Run along now, pervert!"

Larry did not say anything else and with a gentle smile, he got up and prepared to leave for the study.

Out of the blue, Larry heard the ringing doorbell, so he went to open the door with a rather puzzled look on his face.

"Who would be here at this hour?" Hesitantly, Larry mumbled.

"Who else? That couple of lovebirds, of course!" As though she had already known who was

at the door outside, Joan chuckled as she said.

Larry nodded mindfully and opened the door. There standing at the door were none other than Caspian and Nancy.

Seeing Caspian, a sharp glint flashed across Larry's eyes instantly.

"How dare you come over to my house? I swear I'll tan your hide!"

Larry was still holding grudges about the previous incident where Caspian schemed against

him. How could such a scathing brainiac accept the fact that he had been tricked? He would

never feel satisfied if he didn't get even with Caspian.

"Boss, forgive me. I had valid reasons and difficulties at that time! My dear wife, quick, put in

some good words for me," as he pleaded, Caspian also retreated and hid behind Nancy.

"Who's your wife? We're not married yet!"

Nancy was rendered speechless. Nevertheless, she still interceded.

"Larry, let's not bother him for today. You can clobber him when I'm not around next time,"

smiling, Nancy said to Larry.

Larry had to do Nancy a favor since she had asked him to. Hence, Larry didn't make life

difficult for Caspian, but he was still glaring at him.

Caspian acted as though he didn't see that and spoke very naturally,

"Let us go in and sit down."

As they entered the living room, Joan was already sitting in the sofa waiting for them. As

soon as she saw them come in, Joan stood up and greeted them politely,

"I knew it was the two of you. Come on in and have a seat."

Joan then turned to Larry and instructed, "Larry, make them some drinks!"

Larry was flabbergasted for a moment. This woman is getting bolder by the day. She's

actually instructing me now.

Crossing his arms, Larry just stood there and looked at Joan without the slightest willingness

to do what she said. That gave Joan a fright and she quickly added, "Alright, let me do it.

What a dummy. He can't do anything."

Larry facepalmed and was rendered utterly speechless by Joan.

Looking at the impish duo, Caspian and Nancy broke into a hearty laugh.

Especially Caspian who was gloating at what happened.

Intimidate me all you want as you'll still have to succumb to Joan in the end. Such is the

circle of life. Caspian was contentedly immersed in his thoughts.

Very soon, Joan came back with some tea. Looking at Caspian, Joan gasped in surprise,

"Caspian, what happened to your face? There are bruises all over. Were you beaten up by someone?"

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Hearing that, Larry turned around quickly and took a closer look at Caspian. He didn't even

notice that despite staring at Caspian the whole time. Eventually, it was owing to Joan's

attentiveness that Caspian's injury was pointed out.

"Hehehe."

Caspian scratched his head embarrassedly and turned to Nancy. He looked like he had something to say, but he was hesitant to speak. Eventually, it was Nancy who broke the silence. "It's me." Nancy smiled rather bashfully. "What? It was you who beat him?" Larry and Joan asked in unison. "What happened? Did you two have a fight?" Joan was a little puzzled. "No, no. It's not that." Nancy waved her hand in denial and continued, "We wanted to spar with one another. But I didn't expect him to be so dumb..." Scratching her head in an abashed manner, Nancy gave a clear account of what happened. It was a couple of days ago that Caspian found out his fiancée was a black-belt Taekwondo fighter. Caspian was clearly dumbfounded by the discovery. He just couldn't relate his adorable and gentle fiancée with a black-belt female fighter. With the thought of testing Nancy's skills, Caspian was ready to have a simple duel with her. Being a former member of the special forces, Caspian didn't really pay attention to Nancy's black-belt capabilities, and he kept assuring Nancy to go all out. Seeing that she was looked down upon by Caspian, Nancy was a little piqued and eager to prove herself. As a result, Nancy leaped in the air and gave him a sidekick right in his face. Caspian parried her boot confidently but failed to ward it off, and so he was sent flying to the ground by his fiancée. Listening to Nancy's narrative, Larry burst out laughing, while Joan bore a faint smile on her face. Evidently, none of them expected that it would turn out in such a way. Seeing the smile on their faces, Caspian was mortified and couldn't hold it any longer. "You're way over the line, the both of you. Can't you laugh afterward when we leave? It's so embarrassing!" Caspian protested. Caspian's resentful tone prompted Larry to laugh even harder.

Larry who laughed so hard until his stomach hurt, asked, "What about the result? Who won in the end?"

At that point, Caspian pulled an even longer face and replied in a helpless manner, "It was a tie, I think. I did my best after that, but I still couldn't gain an advantage over Nancy."

Now, even Larry was astonished. He knew Caspian's abilities, and that just went on to show how terrific Nancy was as Caspian still couldn't get the better of her even as he had given his best shot.

Looking at the zestful and lovely girl in front of him, Larry couldn't really believe it.

Seeing that Larry and Joan were both stunned looking at her, especially Joan with her mouth wide open, Nancy's face turned scarlet. Bashfully, she said, "It's all because Caspian pulled punches, otherwise, there was no reason he couldn't beat me... Oh, no, I mean it was a tie!"

At the side, Caspian was getting even more upset at that. "Boss, Joan, I really didn't pull punches!"

"Shut up. You're asking for a knuckle sandwich!"

Waggling her fist with a grimace, Nancy threatened Caspian as she saw that he wasn't going to stop his grumble.

Caspian was so frightened that he held his tongue and looked at Nancy meekly.

Larry knew very well that although Caspian wasn't able to defeat Nancy in a casual brawl, he would triumph if it were a deadly battle.

Caspian's fighting skills derived mostly from actual combat, hence, his moves were steady, unerring, and lethal. However, in occasional dust-ups where he couldn't really land heavy blows, he would definitely lose the upper hand.

"Serves you right. Finally, there's someone who can contain you."

Larry was very smug to see Caspian outgunned. There was an indescribable pleasure within his heart.

“Oh, come on, Boss, you yourself are so submissive to Joan, and yet you have the cheek to

laugh at me!” Caspian responded with a disdainful look.

“I...” For a moment, Larry was tongue-tied listening to what Caspian said. As he turned to Caspian, he felt that they were both equally miserable all of a sudden.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1618

As with Joan and Nancy, they were both laughing heartily.

After chatting for a while, Nancy announced, “Larry, Joan, we have good news for you—

Caspian and I are getting married!” With a contented smile on her face, Nancy shared her

joy with the other two persons in the room.

Seeing as such, Joan laughed as well. “Silly girl, do you really think we don’t know when

you’re getting married? Rest assured, Larry and I have already prepared the cash gift for you.”

“Really? How much are you preparing, Joan?” As soon as he heard the word „cash“, Caspian’s

eyes lit up with anticipation as he turned to Joan, drooling.

Cash gift from Boss! That must be a formidable sum! Caspian was gleeful.

“Look at you!”

Nancy gave Caspian a forehead flick. “We should be glad that Joan and Larry can be there at

our wedding. The cash gift isn’t as important.”

It was so painful that tears almost streamed down Caspian’s face.

Seeing that, he quickly

declared his true feelings, “That’s right. We don’t need any cash gifts, but if you insist on

that, we can’t turn it down either.”

Ignoring Caspian who was obsessed with money, Nancy asked Joan,

“Joan, I heard that both

of you graduated from Bainewich College. Is that true?”

All of a sudden, Joan was startled. College years, that’s such a long time ago.



During her first days in college, she was full of anticipation for a wonderful student life. And just as she had wished, she met the love of her life in college. However, regrettably, she dropped out of college during her second year when she fell sick.

Not finishing college was Joan's greatest regret in life.

Joan's heart sank at the thought of that. Smiling wistfully, she replied, "Yes, we were in

Bainewich College then, but sadly I dropped out due to some personal reasons during my

second year over there, and I've never returned ever since."

"That's such a coincidence. I graduated from Bainewich College as well.

I can't believe we

went to the same college. It's really a pity that you didn't finish college, Joan. That's an

important stage in our life!" Nancy bemoaned Joan's missed college life, and regrets were

written all over her face.

Caspian, on the contrary, was cool about that. "What's wrong with not attending college? I

didn't even finish high school, and yet, here I am, living so well. If you ask me, I'd say that

going to college is just a waste of time. There's not much of use."

"What do you know about that? You haven't even attended one, of course you won't

understand the pleasure from it."

Caspian and Nancy were soon at loggerheads again.

Looking at the couple engaging in intense dispute, Larry ruffled his hair wearily while Joan

was deeply absorbed in her memory of the past.

Larry knew that Joan didn't get over the fact that she didn't complete her studies in college.

After giving it some thought, Larry made a decision on his own.

After spending some time at the Norton Residence, Caspian and Nancy left.

After seeing the two of them off, Larry looked at Joan who still appeared absent-minded,

and asked, "Joan, I have something to ask you."

"Yes? Ask away," Joan replied with a smile.

“Are you very bothered about not finishing your studies at college?”

Looking deeply into

Joan’s eyes, Larry asked in a solemn manner.

“Well, not really, but I do feel a little uncomfortable about it.”

Joan was trying to avoid having eye contact with Larry, but seeing the

way he stared at her,

she gritted her teeth and spoke the truth.

“I didn’t think I was worthy of you, and I didn’t even finish college.

That’s as good as not

receiving higher education. How would other people perceive me when

I’m standing next to

you? They’ll certainly think that I’m not good enough to be the wife of

the president of

Norton Corporation.”

Joan’s tone was filled with desolation. It appeared that her dropping out

of college

contributed to an even more self-abased Joan.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1619

The story of Cinderella and Prince Charming was indeed romantic, but

no one knew how

true to life it was exactly.

Seeing the way that Joan behaved, Larry knew that she was overthinking.

This silly girl is

beating herself up again.

Taking Joan into his arms, Larry said with his heart aching, “Joan, you’re

overthinking again,

aren’t you? How many times have I told you? I love you for who you are

and not your

identity or your educational background. Besides, does it really matter

to us how people will

look at it? As long as we’re genuinely in love with one another, we’ll

only be showered with

blessings and envy. There won’t be so much prejudice.” Larry’s voice

was gentle.

Listening to his words, the bee in Joan’s bonnet quieted down, and she

regained her

composure by degrees.

When a woman overthought, the way her lover dealt with it and the

words from him would

often play the most critical and effective role.

"I know what you mean, but I'm still very regretful for not completing my tertiary education.

Background and identity were given by parents; education level, however, is something I

could have achieved on my own. Yet, I lost the opportunity."

At that point, Joan lamented how impartial destiny was to everyone, as the more she got, the more she lost.

"There's nothing to wallow about dropping out of college."

Larry spoke his mind as he saw how dispirited Joan was, "Since you want to finish your

studies, then let's go back and finish college."

"What did you say?"

Joan was at a loss for a moment as she heard what Larry said. "Going back and finish

college? Is that really possible?"

"Why not? We can go back and let you finish your studies anytime as long as you want it,"

Larry told Joan firmly.

During college years, there were a lot of students who had to defer their studies or drop out

for some reason, and there were many among them who went back to complete their

studies after getting their problems solved. Hence, to Larry, something like that was very

common.

"Why didn't you tell me earlier if you knew that it's possible?"

Joan felt much better in an instant, but she was a little displeased with the fact that Larry

didn't tell her earlier about it.

"I didn't know you still had regrets over it," Larry protested. "If I had known about it, I would

have sent you back to college long ago. Well, even if I had told you earlier, you couldn't

really go back to college then. Too many things have happened."

Visualizing the dream she once had and thinking about her chance of fulfilling it, even the

smile on Joan's face turned brighter.

Larry was right. Too many things happened in the past, and Joan herself was pregnant as

well. Now that everything was resolved, Joan could finally set her mind at ease and enjoy

the college life she didn't get to enjoy fully.

"Since you've been longing to go back to college, then we should start preparing early and go there in a couple of days."

It was easy for them to decide on going back to college and let Joan complete her studies, but there were still a lot of formalities Larry had to go through to help Joan get back to college.

Nevertheless, Larry didn't think much about it. Money talks. That's applicable regardless of whether it was in the past or now.

Larry graduated from Bainewich College himself, and he had contributed a lot to the development of the college ever since. Therefore, he was already an important figure at Bainewich College.

Soon, Larry managed to contact the president of Bainewich College over the phone.

"Hello, who's there?" The voice of a mature and stable man came over the other end of the phone as the call was picked up.

"Jesson, I'm Larry. Do you remember me?" Larry spoke in a courteous manner.

"Ah, it's you, Larry! How can I not remember you?" Jesson's tone turned more amiable as he figured out who it was.

"Larry, is there anything?" After exchanging pleasantries, Jesson inquired directly.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1620

"As a matter of fact, I do have a favor to ask you," Larry laughed lightly as he continued.

"Well, you can just tell me directly if there's anything I can help with. You've contributed so much to the college; it's our pleasure if we can return some favor."

Jesson laughed as he was glad to be able to help Larry as well.

"My wife, Joan used to study in Bainewich College as well, but she was severely ill back then

and had no choice but to drop out of college to treat her illness. She also didn't manage to complete her studies. Now, she's hoping to return to college to complete her education. I wonder if you can help fulfill this dream of hers?" Larry spoke very tactfully in a pleading tone. In fact, he knew very well that Jesson would definitely help in this matter.

"Ha, and I thought what a big deal it was. You can just be frank with me if that's what you want—allowing your wife to continue her studies. That's nothing to be embarrassed about.

Don't worry, I'll arrange for that, and your wife would be able to come back to college soon," Cordially, Jesson answered. For him, it wasn't a bad thing to make Larry indebted to him at all.

"Oh, right, Larry, when did your wife withdraw from college? I can talk to the relevant professor right away," Jesson added.

"Thank you, Jesson." Larry replied appreciatively, "My wife dropped out of college during her second year."

"Alright, let me get to it immediately. Anyway, Larry, there's something you overlooked in this matter. How can you not inform me of your wedding? Are you looking down on me?"

Jesson pretended to be displeased.

"Jesson, that's simply not true. I was worried that you'd be occupied. That's the reason I didn't trouble you with it. Well, why don't we have a meal together someday? Let Joan and I take you to dinner to make up to it."

Larry had met all kinds of people, so as he heard that from Jesson, he knew exactly what Jesson was thinking.

"Haha, sure. It's settled, then!"

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A few days later, they received news from Bainewich College that asked Joan to return to

the college before the new term started.

Joan had also been looking forward to receiving updates from Bainewich College lately.

Hence, when Larry got the information, he relayed it to Joan right away.

“Joan, I was informed by Jesson that you should return to the college before the new term

starts and prepare to resume your studies.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful! I can finally complete my studies!”

Having heard the great news, Joan hopped all around the room with joy.

“I’ll pack up and

get prepared immediately!”

“Don’t worry about that. Wait for me to come home, and let’s go together,” Larry said as he

was worried that Joan would be forgetting and leaving things behind.

“Alright, Leslie is about to wake up soon, so I need to look after him as well. I’ll wait for you

to come home, then.”

Giving him a sweet kiss over the phone, Joan hung up the call.

When Larry reached home, he helped Joan pack all sorts of necessities to be brought to the

college.

Packing was easy. Their only problem was what they should do with their child.

I can’t possibly bring him to attend classes with me. What if he cries?

Judging from their current situation, it wasn’t possible for Joan to stay in the dorm.

Therefore, Larry bought a house near Bainewich College where they would be staying and

also hired a housemaid to help look after their child and manage the household chores.

As with Larry, he would be Joan’s chauffeur to send her to and pick her up from college.

After arranging for all these matters, Larry and Joan were ready to bid Finnick and Vivian

goodbye.

Bainewich College was located in Wildefield which was a long way away from Marsingfill.

They would have to wait till weekends or during the holidays when Joan had no classes if

they wanted to meet in the future.

Finnick was fine about them leaving and expressed his wholehearted support for Joan's decision to go back to college and complete her studies. As for Vivian, her eyes brimmed with tears upon their departure.

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Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1620

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decision to go back to college and complete her studies. As for Vivian, her eyes brimmed with tears upon their departure.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1621

The reason was that she simply couldn't stop worrying about that small family of three leaving for a city so far away.

Plus, she was used to seeing her grandchild every day. Hence, she was bothered by the thought of not being able to see him anymore for a long time and didn't know what to do if she missed him next time.

It was only after much persuasion by Larry and Joan that Vivian finally accepted the fact without crying.

After saying farewell to both Finnick and Vivian, the couple got in the car and headed straight for Wildefield.

Nancy and Caspian were already in the car. They just had to accompany Larry and Joan for such a major event as Joan resumed her studies in Wildefield.

Apart from that, due to the long journey to Wildefield, Caspian had another task— to take turns driving with Larry. The trip was a merry one with all of them enjoying themselves, talking and laughing along the way. A new life was about to begin as they waved their previous life goodbye. Throughout the way, Joan was exceedingly gleeful at the thought that she would be experiencing student life again very soon. She was even a little nervous. “Larry, all my course mates would be younger than me by five to six years. Would they ridicule me because of that?” Joan asked Larry a little anxiously. She was no longer the naive young girl she once was, and not only was she married, but she also had her own child already. What if my new course mates are judgmental about me? What should I do? “Rest assured. You look just like before, and you won’t look older than the other young girls even if you stand together with them. Plus, it’s really common nowadays to have college students who were married and had kids. I’m sure they won’t judge you differently just because of that. Don’t you worry.” Joan had to admit that what Larry said did make sense. The college culture had become very open. Not only dating and being in a relationship was usual in college, but even getting married and having children were commonplace. Even though Joan had left college for five to six years, but her skin was even younger-looking than the other girls. Coupled with her remarkably charming looks, she would definitely be the prettiest among them all. Regardless of where and when, Larry’s words could always comfort Joan and give her peace of mind. Listening to Larry’s words helped Joan ease her nerves, and all that was left within her mind was her anticipation for college life.

“That’s right, Joan. I can guarantee that those boys in college would lose their minds when they saw you. If it weren’t because you were holding a baby with such a good-looking husband beside you, even I would be jealous!” Looking particularly envious, Nancy gave Joan a soft pinch on her porcelain skin and couldn’t stop praising her. “You’re such a sweet talker. What can you get by complimenting me? You yourself are a beauty,” Joan returned the compliment as she was even elated after hearing what Nancy said.

Both Larry and Caspian took a look at each other and immediately, they understood the look in the other’s eyes. Together, they couldn’t help but chuckled dryly as they listened to the women exchanging flatteries among themselves.

Women are indeed complex beings.

The ten-hour-long journey gradually came to an end amidst the chit-chat of the four people. Finally, they reached Wildefield, and as soon as they hopped off the car, they immediately went for dinner. During their ten-hour journey, they only had some snacks.

Hence, all of them had been starving.

After dinner, they sat for a while before heading to the house that Larry bought in Wildefield.

“Whoa, the well-offs are surely on a different level. You’re only staying here for a while, but you bought such a nice house,” looking at the small bungalow in front of him, Caspian said in a rather jealous tone.

“That’s right, Larry. You’re insanely wealthy and extravagant. If only Caspian were half as rich as you are, I’d thank god for his benevolence!”

Nancy turned to Larry with a face full of admiration.

“Hey hey hey, that’s too much. When have I ever got stingy with you?”

Caspian protested as he was disgruntled at what Nancy said.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1622

“Yes, I’m saying that you’re stingy. What can you do about that?” Nancy stuck out her tongue smugly.

“Y-you... If it weren’t because Boss and Joan are here, I’d definitely beat the daylights out of you...”

Caspian and Nancy were at it again, and Larry and Joan were already used to it and didn’t bother about them. Larry carried the baby who was soundly sleeping in Joan’s arms over.

Traveling for ten hours in a bumpy journey was somehow a burden to such a young child.

After putting the baby to sleep in the bedroom, Larry and Joan came to the sofa and sat down.

“Take a good rest tonight. It’s late already. Joan and I will be going to the college tomorrow for registration, so I won’t bother about your itinerary tomorrow.”

“Go ahead and do what you need to. Don’t worry about us. Nancy and I will be having fun, going around and getting acquainted with the place and the people around here in Wildefield.”

Caspian held Nancy in his arms and said with a bright smile on his face. As for Nancy who was cozily lying in his embrace, a dazzling grin also crept up her face. The four of them chatted for a while and then went back to rest in their respective bedrooms.

It was a tranquil night. The next morning, Larry who was still deep asleep was awakened by

Joan. “Larry, come on, wake up. It’s time for registration at the college.” Joan was so thrilled she didn’t really sleep much the previous night.

Nevertheless, up till then, she was still very energetic.

She was too excited. It had been a long wait that lasted for a few years, her heart was already full of yearning for resuming her studies.

Larry struggled to open his eyes as he asked, “What time is it?”

"It's seven o'clock already. Wake up!"

"The registration doesn't start until ten o'clock. Why are you so anxious?"

Larry rolled over and wanted to continue his sleep, but Joan gave him no chance at all.

"It's been so long since I left college. Why don't you accompany me to take a stroll around the campus?"

Joan grabbed Larry by his shoulder fawningly.

Larry had no choice but to get up from bed and freshen up. After having a simple breakfast,

they drove to Bainewich College.

Excitement was written all over Joan's face upon reaching Bainewich College.

There wasn't much change to the campus, but the people there were no longer whom she used to know.

Her course mates back then were either working or looking after their children at that point in time.

Joan was a little agitated. Coming back to college after five years is just like a dream.

Looking at the zestful and young faces around her, Joan had a mixed feeling apart from being nervous.

"Isn't it good to be young, Larry?"

"Silly girl, you sound like an old lady. You're still young yourself," patting on her head

dotingly, Larry replied with a gentle tone.

It brought back the memories of his college years as well.

Of course, among them, the ones where he was with Joan were the most vivid ones. He

recalled how she used to watch him play basketball, the way she looked when she had a

meal together with him for the first time, and how shyly she behaved as she accepted him

after he confessed his love for her. His heart was filled with infinite tenderness as those

memories flashed across his mind.

Those were their youthful and romantic days to which they held so dearly that nothing in the world could ever replace, not anything or anyone. It was unique and precious to them.

“Joan, let’s take a walk around the basketball court,” Larry suggested as he held Joan’s hand in his.

“Sure, let’s go,” it so happened that Joan was thinking the same thing so she agreed without even thinking about it.

Strolling down the pavement on the campus, both of them were so deeply engulfed in nostalgia and appreciation for their past glory days that none of them realized that, with

their appearance, the campus was abuzz and lively all of a sudden.

“Look at that, quick. That man is so handsome; he looks just like a prince in a fairy tale!”

“I know, right? What a domineering aura. He might be a president of some company, who knows?”

“He’s too young to be a president. Maybe he’s the heir of some prominent family. No matter what, I just like him so much!”

A group of girls was staring at Larry with so much longing in their eyes that they were almost drooling.

“What a pretty girl. She’s totally my type!”

“Damn, so long as it’s a beautiful girl, it’s your type, eh? She’s my cup of tea!”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1623

“What are you talking about? The one beside her is clearly her boyfriend. Give up!”

When the group of boys saw Joan, they saw the friendly side of the goddess of their hearts.

The two chatted merrily as they walked toward the basketball court.

Joan did not realize that

more people were gathering around them, but Larry did. However, he did not mind the

crowd; he was used to a scene like that.

After reaching the court, the two found a spot to sit down. As they looked at the moving figures on the court, various memories washed across their minds. Yet, the blissful session was short-lived as someone who could not read the situation arrived.

“Hey, the one sitting over there. Do you have the guts to win against me, one-to-one? If you lose, I want to take the girl beside you out for a meal,” a tall boy provoked after walking toward them.

Clearly, the boy was interested in Joan. Despite the fact that Joan already had Larry beside her, the boy refused to give up. He still wanted to try his luck in this way. In the past, Larry would not have bothered himself with such provocations. After all, the capable ones would never provoke him in this way, and he looked down on such actions.

However, he was in his old college and reminiscing his youthful days. Thus, he found himself feeling impulsive.

He did not blame the boy for provoking him. To Larry, the boy was just inexperienced in life.

Impulsively, Larry agreed to it.

“Sure, I can go up against you one-to-one, but the girl beside me is mine. You won’t win against me, nor will you take her away,” Larry enunciated, feeling ardent about the situation.

“Who knows what will happen?” the boy huffed. “I like the girl beside you. I hope we can have a fair fight, so even if I lose, I won’t be reluctant to admit defeat.” The boy was bold, and Larry fancied his character. There was nothing wrong with being daring, and Larry was more than willing to fulfill his request.

“Quit babbling. Come, you’ll be the one to set the rules,” Larry uttered solemnly.

Now, he had the opportunity to relive his youthful days in college.

“The rules are simple. We’ll be going up against each other. Whoever gets ten balls into the hoop first will be the winner.”

As he spoke, the boy proudly lifted his head. Although the man in front of him seemed

intimidating, he was confident about playing basketball.

The boy was the best player in the school's basketball team and had various achievements

in the game. Therefore, he was also confident of winning the man in front of him.

Unfortunately, the boy's confidence was bound to be crushed. Even when he was in college,

Larry was already more than skillful in playing basketball.

Furthermore, after joining the special forces, Larry had become even fitter.

With the combination of a fit body and his basketball skills, Larry felt that he could even go

up against a professional basketball player.

"Come."

Like the boy, Larry was full of confidence. He then stood up and handed Joan his jacket.

"Dear, hold on to this for me. I'll be right back," Larry whispered before pressing a kiss on

Joan's face.

Larry's actions infuriated the boy, but there was nothing he could do; he could only grit his

teeth, swearing in his mind that he would destroy Larry in the match.

"Okay. Hurry up, then. I'll be waiting for you here."

It seemed like Joan understood what he was trying to do, for she smiled at him with a loving

look.

"Cut the crap and come over," the boy yelled when he saw the two being intimate with each

other.

Without waiting for Larry, the boy then strode toward the court.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1624

"Let me show you what humility means," Larry calmly muttered to the boy.

"Don't be so full of yourself."

Ignoring Larry, the boy then took his first shot.

The boy's shot from behind the three-point line landed right in the hoop.

Upon seeing that,

Larry then took a shot from behind the line as well.



However, it seemed like it had been too long since Larry played basketball, for his ball did not enter the hoop. Instantly, the boy scoffed; he was certain that he was going to win. "You lost, so I'm going first," the boy huffed proudly. With that said, the boy walked to the top of the circle. At that, a faint smile grew on Larry's face as he moved to a defensive position. Right as the boy was about to make a breakthrough and while he was dribbling the ball, Larry swiftly stole the ball from him. When he saw the smile on Larry's face, the boy cried out, "Hmph! You were just lucky. Again."

Larry said nothing to that. Quietly, he began dribbling the ball as he stared at the boy. With a quick turn, he managed to move past the boy and tossed the ball in. The boy was silent as he focused harder on the game instead. Once again, Larry turned and changed direction. Before the boy could react, Larry had gone past him and took a shot. Larry took the ball from the boy in the third round and took another shot from behind the three-point line. Like before, the ball entered the hoop. Finally, the boy tucked away the proud look of his face. It seemed like he now knew the difference in skills between Larry and him, but still, he continued to stay in the defensive position.

In the fourth round, Larry sped past the boy and dunked the ball. The surrounding people instantly cheered. Only a few minutes had passed, but Larry already had ten successful shots. In the end, he won the boy with a score of ten to zero. When he stared at the boy, the latter fell silent. After a beat, the boy declared, "I lost, but I'll do my best to train myself. I'll work hard to win you one day, so I'll definitely keep challenging you."

Realizing the boy had good sportsmanship, Larry nodded. "I look forward to future challenges from you."

With that said, Larry turned around and returned to Joan's side. With Joan's hand in his, they then left the court.

The surrounding boys and girls were reluctant to see the two leave, but there was nothing they could do. The two were like a match made in heaven, and they could never compare to them.

Without hesitating, the two headed to the registration desk for freshmen.

Although Joan was in her second year, she still had to go through the procedures that were necessary for all freshmen."

"Larry, he's just a boy. Why didn't you just go easy on him? You were embarrassing him."

Joan could not help but feel pity for the boy earlier. She was sure that the boy would be depressed for a while after the major shock to his confidence.

"I don't care. He only has himself to blame for the humiliation and shock for trying to lay a finger on you."

Then, with a smile, Larry continued, "But the boy seems like a nice kid. At the very least, he's a bold boy who has good sportsmanship. I'm sure he'll get better with more training."

Although the people around them were still whispering to each other about them, none came forward to talk to them anymore. Thus, both Joan and Larry finally had a moment to themselves.

As they walked down the campus roads, they soon found the spot for freshmen to report their attendance and the person in charge.

"You must be Mr. Norton and Ms. Watts. Jesson has sent me to help you with the

procedures. You can call me Lee," the man said with a smile.

When the man saw Joan and Larry walking over, he stood up.

“Jesson is too kind. I’m sorry to trouble you, Mr. Lee,” Larry politely responded with a nod and a smile.

“Mr. Norton, it’s no trouble. Follow me.”

Then, Lee led them to their destination.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1625

As they followed Lee, Larry soon helped Joan complete her registration.

As Joan could not stay on campus, they managed to complete the relevant procedures with

Lee’s help.

After bidding farewell to the lecturer, Joan then went to look for the school counselor, who

was supposed to be in Joan’s class.

With the help of various students on the campus, the two found their way to Joan’s class.

There was barely anyone in the class. That day was the day was freshmen orientation; the

students had left after reporting their attendance.

By the stage was a woman who looked like a lecturer, and she was reading some

documents.

After knocking on the door, Joan said, “Hello, may I know if you’re Ms. Callow?”

“Yes, that’s me. You’re...”

The woman raised her head when she heard Joan’s voice. Then, a look of surprise flashed

across her face when she saw Joan. The next look that crept onto her face was a joyous one.

“Joan, it’s really you! Are you back to study again?” the woman asked.

“I’m a freshman. You’re... Jaylene Callow?” Joan guessed as she stared at the familiar face.

“Yes, that’s me! I was just thinking of you when I saw the name Joan Watts. I thought

someone had the same name as you, but it turns out that it’s really you.

What a

coincidence!”

Jaylene then hurried toward Joan, wanting to see her old friend.

Jaylene used to be Joan’s classmate. Both Gabriella and Jaylene had been her best friends

back then. When Jaylene found out that Joan was leaving at that time, she cried buckets.

"It's been a few years, and now, you're a teacher," Joan said wistfully. Time went by in a blink of an eye. The innocent young girl was now a teacher of many.

"Yes, after graduating, I chose to stay at Bainewich College and become a lecturer. After all, this has always been my dream. This is my first year as a school counselor. I never thought I'd meet you."

Jaylene sighed. "What a small world for us to meet in this way."

After a moment of silence, she continued, "By the way, Joan, why did you think of coming

back to study? I recalled sobbing miserably when you left."

As Joan was her old friend, Jaylene looked nothing like a lecturer at that very second. Once

again, she was the energetic, bubbly girl she used to be.

"I had to drop out due to some matters back then. I've always felt regretful about not

completing my studies. To alleviate the regret, I did everything to improve myself. That's

why I'm back here at Bainewich. Jaylene, you've got to take good care of me here," Joan

cheekily said as she stuck out her tongue at Jaylene.

"Don't worry. I'll do my best as the counselor," Jaylene responded proudly.

The two then chuckled.

"By the way, Joan, how were your past few years? Who came with you this time? Do you

have a boyfriend? Quick, tell me everything!"

Jaylene's rapid question was an obvious sign that she was close to Joan.

"Jaylene, I'm married. You know my husband too."

Joan did not plan to hide anything from her old friend.

"Larry, come in quickly. She's our old friend."

Joan had been the only one to step into the room earlier while Larry stood outside, looking

at the scenery.

When he heard Joan calling out for him, he strode into the room.

"Wow, Joan, this is your husband? Isn't he the popular man among the girls, Larry?" Jaylene

exclaimed when she saw Larry.

“So the two of you are the college sweethearts that others are jealous about. I didn’t know the two of you are married. It’s just great news! I’m happy for the two of you,” Jaylene sincerely told them.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1626

With similar enthusiasm, Larry uttered, “The tomboy that laughed so loudly back then is now a beautiful woman. Jaylene, I’m sure you have someone now, don’t you?”

She was Joan’s friend, so naturally, Larry would be friendly to her. Larry’s praise made Jaylene feel shy. She quickly lowered her head to hide her blush from the two.

It was true that she was quite the tomboy back in college. For her, college was like a beauty salon. Once upon a time, she cared not about her appearance, but now, things were different.

In a way, she should thank Larry for her change. Back then, Jaylene was one of Larry’s fangirls. As she had a crush on him, she started caring about how she dressed, hoping that Larry would notice her one day.

Nevertheless, Larry ended up as her best friend’s boyfriend later on. Although Jaylene was upset back then, she never directed those feelings toward Joan.

Instead, she was happy for her friend.

“No way am I part of a couple like the two of you. I’m still single. Why don’t you introduce me to someone?”

Although Jaylene’s heart still skipped a beat when she saw Larry, she quickly dismissed her thoughts for him.

While it was fine for her to love someone, it would be immoral of her to intervene in someone else’s relationship. As a lecturer, Jaylene was exceptionally mindful of her behavior.

“Joan, Larry, it’s been a long time since you’ve been in a school. Give me a moment, and I’ll

take you two on a tour around the campus soon,” Jaylene offered.

“Sure. I’ve always wanted to look around the school. Moreover, Larry keeps telling me to get close to the counselors. Why don’t we have a meal together later?” Joan suggested as she winked.

“Of course! I didn’t get to attend your wedding, but it’ll be great if you can treat me to a meal.”

Clearly, Jaylene loved to eat, as her eyes had lit up upon hearing the mention of food.

“Ms. Callow, we aren’t bribing you; we’re just inviting you to a meal,” Larry joked.

“Hahaha!”

The trio then laughed. Once Jaylene had completed her work, they then headed out of the room.

The housemaid that Larry hired had arrived the previous night. With the housemaid around,

Joan would not need to worry about her baby. Thus, Joan spent a long while chatting with

Jaylene before they reluctantly parted.

She still had plenty of opportunities to meet her, after all.

When Jaylene had heard that Larry and Joan now had a child, she was surprised again. She

then teased that the two were advancing in their relationship a little too quickly.

After returning home, the first thing Joan did was to check on her child.

When she saw the

boy sleeping, Joan felt her worries melt away. After watching her son for a while, she then

went to the living room.

Nancy and Caspian had reached home earlier than them. When they saw Joan, Nancy

chuckled and asked, “Joan, how was your day?”

“It’s great. I even met my good friend from my college days. She’s now my school

counselor,” Joan responded.

Nancy gasped in surprise. "Wow! That's such a coincidence. What a small world."

Nodding, Joan then asked, "How was yours? Did you have fun?"

"Ugh," came Nancy's response. "I can't believe a certain someone's from the special forces."

He was too tired to walk after three hours of shopping, so we had to find a place to eat.

After food, that idiot then wanted to go home to sleep. I managed to drag him around for

two more hours before we came back."

Caspian shrugged. "What can I do? You women shop like maniacs. I'm truly tired."

Beside them, Larry nodded. Evidently, he was in full agreement with Caspian's words.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1627

After a while, Caspian continued, "Boss, Joan, you've done everything you needed to do, and

Nancy and I have enjoyed ourselves. We'll be going to Marsingfill tomorrow to prepare for

the wedding. I don't want to be in such a rush so that we can avoid missing out on certain

things."

Back then, Larry had been hectic when he was preparing for his wedding.

To avoid

becoming like Larry, Caspian had to make preparations earlier.

"Sure. You should be meticulous in your preparations. You can call me if you have any

problems. After all, I'm married," Larry reminded with a somber expression.

"Don't worry, Boss. I'll definitely come to you first if I have any issues,"

Caspian answered as

he chuckled.

Caspian placed all of his trust in Larry. It was a result of having been around Larry for a long

time.

On the following day, Caspian and Nancy then bid Joan and Larry farewell and left for

Marsingfill.

Slowly, Joan had a routine of going to Bainewich College to study. While she was in her

classes, she would have the housemaid take care of her child for her. When there were no classes, she would then take care of the boy herself. In the meantime, Larry was responsible for sending Joan to and from work. When he was less busy, he would then stay at home and work remotely. Time ticked away.

One day, Joan requested a week's leave, planning to return to Marsingfill with Larry.

It was time for Caspian and Nancy's wedding.

While the two were going to attend Caspian and Nancy's wedding, they were planning to visit their parents for several days as well.

Thus, early in the morning after breakfast, they left for Marsingfill with their child.

In the afternoon, the family of three arrived outside Norton Residence.

By then, Finnick and Vivian were already waiting outside.

When they saw Larry's car come to a stop, Vivian was the first to greet them.

"You're finally back. You must be tired from the trip. Quick, come inside and rest. Let me see my dear grandson."

Excitedly taking the boy from Joan's arms, Vivian then stared lovingly at the grandson she had not met for ages.

Finnick was silent, but he was all smiles as he walked toward them.

They barely exchanged any words, but it was a tender moment.

On the next day, Joan and Larry attended Caspian and Nancy's wedding. Although the wedding was not as grand as Larry's, it was still a lively one.

After all, Caspian was Larry's right-hand man in Norton Corporation, and Nancy used to be a socialite who was even more eye-catching than Gabriella.

When a suited Caspian appeared while holding onto Nancy, who was in a white dress, everyone cheered.

Larry and Joan both smiled. Both felt satisfied and delighted to see Caspian and Nancy finally marrying.



“Mr. Cassander Piers Angrave, do you take Ms. Nancy Barrymore to be your lawfully wedded wife? To have and to hold, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, for as long as you both shall live?”

“Yes, I do.”

Caspian’s voice was powerful and determined as he made his vow.

“Ms. Nancy Barrymore, do you take Mr. Cassander Piers Angrave to be your lawfully wedded husband? To have and to hold, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, for as long as you both shall live?”

“I do.”

Nancy’s voice was tinged with adoration as she made her vow.

“You may now kiss the bride.”

As Joan and Larry watched the scene, they held each others’ hands. We will be like them. We will love each other until the end of our lives.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1628

A white airplane, destined for Marsingfill, glided across the sky. The milky trail left behind was like a brushstroke from an artist. In the first-class cabin was a man in a black coat, reading the headlines of the newspaper with a frown on his face.

“Would you like to have something?” the pretty stewardess queried.

“Just a cup of hot tea, please.”

Soon, a cup of steaming tea was served. The man put down the newspaper, looking as gentle as he always was.

The marriage of Norton Corporation’s president with a mysterious woman in Marsingfill.

After a brief moment, the man sent a text on his phone. Joan, I’m back in the country. You’re the only one I know in Marsingfill. I’ll be reaching around three in the afternoon. I hope I’ll see you around when I get off the plane.

In seconds, his screen lit up again. Okay. I’ll be waiting for you at the first exit.

Joan did not tell Larry about her meeting with Dustin. She knew that if she were to tell him,

Larry would suggest that he went along with her.  
It would have been fine if she was in the past. However, Joan still remembered the words  
Dustin told her before he left a year ago.  
The airport was crowded, and it did not help that holidays were soon.  
Many were rushing  
home to spend time with their families. It took Joan a long while before she could squeeze  
her way to a place where Dustin could easily spot her.  
Right as he went past the security check with his luggage, Dustin noticed the slender figure.  
She was like a small flower blooming in a bush, blending into the crowd yet not at the same  
time.  
Joan's eyes were still searching through the crowd. Abruptly, Dustin felt like teasing her, so  
he moved away from the crowd to gently pat her shoulders while she was not paying  
attention to her surroundings.  
As she had not turned around immediately, Dustin mumbled, "I'm here."  
His voice startled her instead. When she came back to her senses, she could not help but  
punch his shoulder. She used little force, but it struck right into his heart, nonetheless.  
"You're done with your work in A Nation?" Joan asked with a smile. "I thought you were  
going to stay there for at least three years. When you texted me, I was wondering if you'd  
come back with some pretty blonde hair girl."  
Instead, Dustin asked, "Did you... wish that I'm not back?"  
Joan stiffened. That was not what she wanted to convey to him, but it seemed like he was  
right anyway. A few beats later, she mumbled, "No way. I'm just saying that your research is  
progressing so swiftly. What a role model for the medical students."  
"Although it's progressing quickly, it hasn't ended yet. I've only handed in a report to the  
director and applied to continue my research back here. I..."  
I missed you so much. That's why I did that.

However, Dustin did not utter those words out loud. He had been hesitating about his decision when he was overseas, but now, after reading the newspaper, he chose to let those words die in his throat. He knew she was now married. Nevertheless, it was too difficult to give her his blessings. The only thing he could say was, "Can I... ask if things are going well with you and Larry?" The moment those words left his lips, he felt like smacking himself. She's now married to Larry; how can she possibly not be on good terms with him? When Joan heard Dustin mentioning Larry, she was thrilled; she thought he had let go of his past. Thus, she beamed and replied, "Of course. Let's have a meal together when you're free. You're also welcomed to come to our place to eat." Dustin's heart sank further. Everyone had a chance to court the one they loved, but not him. He thought time would let her grow feelings for him. He wanted to take her away with him, but that hope of his was crushed when she left back then.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1629

Still, he muttered, "I've asked my coworker to reserve a table for us at a nearby restaurant. If we don't go, his efforts will go to waste. Are you free tonight? It's been a while since we had a meal together." Joan was someone loyal and too kind. That was why Dustin was sure she would not reject him. Thus, it was unsurprising when Joan nodded after a second. "Sure, but I'll have to tell Larry about it." While they were on their way to the restaurant, Larry did not pick up Joan's call. It was only when they arrived at the restaurant then did Larry finally accepted the call. On Joan's face was a sweet smile. It was not like the polite and reserved smile she had for everyone else. Dustin could see that it was a genuine smile.

“Larry? I won’t be coming home for dinner. I have a friend who just came back from overseas.”

“A guy or a girl?” It seemed like Larry was busy, for he spoke quickly. Instead of asking who it was, he asked for the gender of her friend.

Right then, a girl behind Joan loudly made her order, and her voice traveled into Larry’s ears.

“Okay, got it. Come back earlier. By the way, if you need Caspian to pick you up tonight, tell him earlier. I’ll try to go home as early as I can,” Larry reminded. He sounds like he’s really busy.

If Joan knew that the minor misunderstanding would have blown up in the future, she would have promptly clarified that the friend she was having dinner with was a guy back then.

“He’s nice to you,” Dustin mumbled, the comment seemingly for Joan and himself. Then, he sipped on his wine.

The smile on Joan’s face grew wider. “He’s always worried about everything. He’s forgotten that I’m no longer a kid. Oh my, we keep talking about me. What about you? Do you have anyone overseas?”

Dustin quietly averted her gaze. “Me? I’m always in the lab. Where would I get a girlfriend?”

“Are you going to be working in the best lab in Marsingfill now that you’re back?”

“No. My higher-ups have arranged for me to be a lecturer of the Department of Medicine at Nirhaven College. That way, I’ll have more time to research instead of working all day,”

Dustin told her.

However, Joan widened her eyes as they sparkled, and there was a tinge of disbelief in her

voice. “Really? You’re working at Nirhaven College?”

Dustin put down his glass. “What’s the matter?”

“When we were overseas, didn’t I tell you that I have something I regret? You might not believe what I say next, but I now have an opportunity to fix that. I’ve returned to my studies, and I get to stay in Nirhaven College. Two years later, I’ll be getting my certificate from the college!”

Dustin could barely believe what he just heard. Is this fate? For a moment, he was transfixed.

The confident Dustin in the conference a few days earlier was now nowhere to be found.

“Please take good care of me, Dr. Silverman.” As she spoke, she lifted her glass toward him.

At the same time, Dustin lifted his, the smile on his face bright. “Of course.”

What Joan did not notice were two pairs of eyes watching her from a distance away.

“Don’t stop me! I have to tell Boss about this!”

Caspian’s brows were knitted tightly as he took out his phone from his pocket. However,

Nancy was quicker than he is. She stole his phone away.

“No way!” Nancy’s face was red. “Didn’t you see that Joan called Larry earlier? Larry didn’t

seem to have reacted to it. If you do this, Larry might think there really is something

between you. Are you going to be the one to ruin their relationship?”

Nancy was not one who was good with her words, but still, Caspian saw sense in them.

Caspian did everything for Larry, but that did not mean he would think of the consequences

at all times.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1630

When she saw the way Caspian was hesitating, she tugged his arm.

“Trust me. Nothing will

happen. If we really intervene in Joan’s private matters, we’ll be lucky if we get to clear our

name.”

Then, she huffed at Caspian.

Sometimes, Nancy was aggressive. Most of the time, she was independent; she rarely relied

on him. Hence, when her hand was on his arm, Caspian could not think of anything else.

He used to be a soldier, so following orders was part of his nature.

However, that did not

mean he had the right to intervene in someone else's private life, especially Joan's.

When Joan raised her arm to look at her watch, she realized it was already eight at night.

They were almost done with their food by then. The entire time, Dustin was the one who did

the most talking while she listened to him.

She listened to him talk about the interesting matters in research, about his work progress,

about the culture of other countries, and sometimes, about their past.

"It's getting late. I should be going back."

Hearing that, Dustin subconsciously responded, "Hm? Let me send you home then."

His words amused Joan. "Dr. Silverman, have you forgotten that you just arrived today?"

Dustin blushed. The next thing he heard her say was, "I'll hail a cab home. It's fine."

Knowing that his insistence would make anyone frustrated with him, he fell silent. All he did

after sending her off was stare at her cab until it disappeared into the night.

He knew his feelings for her that had lay dormant for the past year were waking despite himself.

On the way back, the cab was met with some troubles. Feeling guilty, the cab driver kept

apologizing to Joan and even wanted to refund her money.

Naturally, Joan rejected him. She knew how tough it was for cab drivers to earn a living.

After failing to hail for another cab, she decided to walk home.

She walked past the busy city and down the vibrant roads. At night, Marsingill felt more

mysterious than in the early morning. Quietly, Joan ambled her way back as she took in the

night scenery.

After unlocking the door, she stepped into a dark house. When Leslie was born, Larry's parents were worried that they would neglect their child due to their busy work. Hence, they offered to take care of him for them.

Both Larry and Joan did not reject them. Instead, they would visit the child when they had free time.

"He's probably not back yet," she mumbled under her breath. When she flipped the switch for the lights, it temporarily blinded her.

After rubbing her eyes and opening them again, she could not believe the sight that greeted her.

Larry was sprawled on the table, the laptop beside him still turned on. She could even see that he had opened several windows on his laptop.

The man was still in his suit. Under his arm was a stack of notes. His hair was curled at the ends, and he looked exhausted.

Joan then quietly tiptoed further into the house. She knew that Larry was a light sleeper, and the softest of noises could easily wake him.

Right as she returned with a thin blanket and was about to put it on him, a powerful hand hugged her from behind. Joan lost her balance, and she fell forward onto Larry.

"When did you wake up?" When Joan looked into his sleepy eyes, Larry smiled. "I woke when you came in the front door."

"Then why were you pretending to be asleep?" Joan whined as she frowned.

For a moment, she was like a complaining kitten, and his heart softened. A second later, Joan placed her hand on the table, about to stand.

However, Larry tightened his hold on her, and she could feel his breath on the top of her head. In a deep voice, he muttered, "Let me hold you for a little longer."

"You have to remember to turn on the lights when you work. Don't you know that it's bad

for your eyes to work in the dark? Also, remember to rest. Do you really think I don't know

you woke up to work while I was sleeping"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1631

"Work is important, but your health is too. Stop eating the deliveries that the company

ordered in. Call me. I'll bring you food instead. Also..."

The smile on Larry's face was only growing wider over time. He pressed her head on his

chest and breathed in the scent of her shampoo. "Got it, my dear bossy wife."

He then cupped her cheek and tapped his nose on hers. However, the expected kiss never

came. Instead, Larry had a solemn look on his face. "You were drinking?"

Feeling embarrassed, Joan stuttered, "J-Just a little bit of red wine."

"You can't drink when I'm not with you the next time. Not red wine and not even a cocktail.

Not even with girls!"

When she heard that, Joan felt the urge to tell him that she had dinner with Dustin. Things

would have been fine if Larry did not know Dustin, but he did.

To avoid any misunderstandings, Joan swallowed the words at the tip of her tongue.

She buried her head in the crook of his neck. The cologne on him made her feel at ease, and

she rubbed her face on his shirt.

The world was so big, but his shoulders were the safest spot she found.

The more one feared a misunderstanding, the more it would happen.

That was how cruel

fate was.

On the third week of returning to Nirhaven College, Joan felt no difference in her routine.

She went to classes and did her revisions. When she was free, she would return to her work

at Opulent Designs. However, her workload was much lesser than before due to the little

time she had.

A solemn-looking Dustin in glasses was a common sight she saw on campus. Every time he

saw her, he would smile at her as he touched his glasses.



College students had an abundance of free time. Although the two were only greeting each other normally, the scene became a topic for the college students to gossip about.

“Isn’t Joan the wife of Norton Corporation’s president?”

“What? I thought she’s studying here after studying abroad?”

“She wasn’t studying abroad. She dropped out early on, so she’s just back to study.”

Even in a prestigious college like Nirhaven College, gossips were the norm. At the start, Joan

did not mind the words, but soon, many joined in the gossips. In days, the rumors were like

thunderclaps, deafening in her ears.

She never forgot Dustin’s confession before he left. He was the one to cure her, and that

was something that made her feel guilty until now.

It was not that she did not know what Dustin’s feelings were. Hence, to avoid the rumors

from spreading, she decided to keep a distance from him. From then on, every time she saw

Dustin, she would lower her head and walk away. In fact, Joan was even wearing darker

clothes to keep a lower profile.

Dustin was quick to figure out what was going on. However, he did nothing about it.

Instead, he went to the design department’s classroom and left a note at Joan’s place. I’ll be

waiting for you in the library until you come. From Dustin.

After reading it, a myriad of emotions surged into Joan’s heart, and she kept the note away.

She wanted to pretend as if she did not see it, but the thought of how Dustin was the only

one to keep her company when she was deathly ill overseas plagued her mind.

When she was trapped in a tight spot, Dustin was the one who said he would stay by her

side. Joan could not choose to avoid him. Eventually, she had to find a way to resolve it.

Facing it was the best way to resolve it.

The dusk was as beautiful as a watercolor painting. Before the sun fully set, Joan reached the library.

By then, Dustin had been there for a while. When he saw her, he softly said, "I knew you'd come."

"I was thinking that I have to eventually resolve some things." Joan pulled the chair out.

"Dustin, I'm immensely grateful for how you've cured my illness back then, but let's keep a distance on campus. We'll avoid seeing each other whenever we can." Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1632

Dustin turned away and dropped the smile. "You really don't want to see me."

Joan blurted out, "It's not that I don't want. I just can't."

"So you know. You've never forgotten about what I've said to you."

"I'm married to Larry now."

Abruptly, Dustin burst into laughter. "You must have misunderstood me. Am I not your friend?"

"Of course we're friends," Joan hastily uttered. "But those rumors are killing me."

"If that's why you're ignoring me, I can stop those rumors by tomorrow. Will that make me a good friend?"

Finally, a genuine smile grew on Joan's lips. She nodded fervently. The reflection of her

figure in the mirror behind her was seared into Dustin's mind.

Joan never expected the news to travel into Larry's ears so quickly.

It happened when Larry was at his peak period. The moment he heard about it, a rush of

frustration took over his heart. However, he chose to believe in Joan.

As he could not stop his work, he made a call to a familiar number. In minutes, Caspian

barged into the room and shouted, "Boss, what's the matter?"

"Find out the recent interaction between Joan and a man named Dustin.

Also, find out who's

the one spreading the rumors."

Caspian's heart skipped a beat. When Larry noticed the other man was silent for a long time,

he asked, "Is there anything wrong with that?"

"No... Of course not. I-I'll take my leave now," Caspian stuttered, not daring to even look at

Larry.

Larry was perplexed by Caspian's actions, but before he could ask him about it, the latter

had fled the scene.

"What? Are you serious?" Nancy could not believe what she was hearing.

"Did you hear him

wrong? How can this be?"

"There's no way I could have heard him wrongly. The man we saw that day? Boss is asking

me to check his recent interaction with Joan." Caspian then hugged his arms. "If only we told

him that day. What do we do now?"

Nancy patted Caspian's shoulders. "I'm sure Joan won't do anything to hurt Larry."

"I know the two of them are close, but how is she going to explain the rumor? It takes two

to tango!" Caspian scratched his head, looking stumped. "Argh! How could I have betrayed

Boss' trust?"

"No. We can't add fuel to fire. Larry's already beyond busy recently. If he finds out about

these unexplainable events, he'll only get more frustrated." Nancy sighed.

At that very moment, Caspian felt that there was no harder decision than the one he was

facing. Firstly, he could not tell Larry about what he had seen. Secondly, he was supposed to

be the one to help Larry with his troubles and worries and not the one to add fuel to fire.

This time, Larry did not receive any news from Caspian about the incident. He knew Caspian

was an honest individual; he was truthful to him about everything. Larry kept telling himself

that he had to believe in Joan, but the longer the rumor spread and the quieter Caspian was,

and the more anxious he became.

Thus, he spent his free time visiting his parents to find out about how Leslie was now. The boy was growing fast. When he was born, he was completely red. Now, he was plump and fair. In other words, he was adorable.

“Leslie, can you call me Daddy?” Larry was hunching over by the cradle, coaxing his child.

Meanwhile, the baby was making noises as he looked at the hanging elephant.

Right then, Larry’s mother came over with some soup. “How can a baby so young call you?

Come here. You must be tired from work. Come and have some soup.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1633

Before Larry could reach out for the soup, the happy baby abruptly burst into tears.

Instantly, the baby’s wail made Larry’s heart leap to his throat. He hurriedly leaned closer

and uttered, “Mom, what’s going on? He was just fine a moment ago.”

Vivian then lifted the baby into her arms. After a while of coaxing, the baby finally fell silent.

Beside them, Larry thought, Raising a kid is really the most difficult thing in the world. If I

hear the baby crying while I’m working, I don’t think I can be that patient.

“The baby misses his mother. Kids these ages are usually very close to their mothers. If he

can’t see his mother and can’t sense her around, he’ll get agitated.”

Vivian frowned. “It’s been more than half a month since she came to visit the kid. You

should tell her to come more often. How can the kid stand not seeing his mother?”

Joan... hasn’t come to visit Leslie in half a month?

Somehow, Larry felt that there was a connection between the rumors he heard and how

Joan had not come to visit Leslie for half a month.

A conclusion appeared in his head—Joan and Dustin are back together.

She has forgotten

to visit our child.

If that was not what things were, then Caspian would have swiftly returned with good news

after he instructed him to investigate the matter. However, Caspian did not.

Staring at Leslie's innocent wide eyes, Larry shook his head vigorously, hoping to get rid of those thoughts.

He told himself, What a husband and wife need most is mutual trust and understanding.

By the time Larry reached home, it was seven in the evening. The moment he stepped into

the house, he heard the sounds of running water from the bathroom.

Thus, he knew Joan

was home earlier than him. As Larry ruminated over the events, he accidentally dropped the jacket Joan had placed on the chair.

When he crouched down to pick it up, a folded piece of note fell out of the pocket.

After unfolding it, a line of unfamiliar handwriting entered his vision.

Larry's eyes widened,

and the last word made the hairs behind his neck stand as his fingers trembled.

At the same time, the bathroom door behind Joan slowly closed. She was drying her hair with a white towel.

Larry had not said a word to her after coming home, and she did not know why he was

crouching on the floor. Right as she was about to tap on his back, he abruptly jumped to his

feet. When he spun around, the gaze he had on her was a furious one.

"Larry? What's the matter?" Joan asked.

Instead of answering her immediately, Larry raised his right hand. The note between his

index and middle fingers made Joan's heart rise to her throat.

"Joan, tell me. What's this?" Larry gritted out.

"A note that my friend gave me. What's wrong? Is there a problem with it?" Joan calmly

asked.

After all, it was true that Dustin was her friend. She was not lying to him.

However, her reply only infuriated him even more. "A friend? What a friend he is! You would

rather not see Leslie for half a month for this overseas friend of yours. I see. So this friend is more important than your kid. Why don't you introduce me to your friend?"

Every word from Larry was coated with mockery. The word "friend" had become a trigger for his angry outburst.

If he had not been betrayed a few years ago, if Dustin had not taken Joan away a year ago, and if Caspian had not been silent, he would have believed every word of Joan's.

"What do you mean, Larry? Are you saying that I'm lying to you? I've only been to two places—the college and the office. I have no excuses to give if you think that I've been

neglecting Leslie. However, how can you suspect that my friend and I..."  
Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1634

For some inexplicable reason, Joan didn't dare look Larry in the eye.

"Dustin?" Larry scoffed with his eyes filled with contempt. He continued to pressure Joan

until she had her back against the wall. "He really hasn't given up, has he."

Joan looked at Larry fearfully, his anger visibly reaching its limit. His voice carried with it a

hellish tone. "Do you know how preposterous it sounds when Dustin uses the word 'friends'?"

"Why must you insist on seeing him in such a negative light?" Joan retorted as she gently shoved him away.

When Larry saw that she pushed him on account of Dustin instead of apologizing, he fell

into a jealous rage and blocked her escape with his arms.

"Are you defending him? Are you regretting that you didn't leave with him one year ago?

And now that he is back, you can't help but want to leave with him?"

Larry crumpled the

note in his hand and hurled it forcefully against the wall, causing it to ricochet away.

Joan couldn't believe what Larry had accused her of. She assumed after what they had been through, both of them would become more mature and trusting of each other. However, she didn't expect their trust to have broken down so easily. Briefly stunned, she asked him, "Larry, don't you trust me? Does this mean you're doubting me?"

"Yes!" Larry was never one to hide his words. "Don't think that I'm not aware of the rumors swirling around. Putting aside the fact I don't believe in you, what about you? What have you done for me?"

Larry's thundering voice shook Joan to her core. Despite the innumerable things she wanted to say, she calmed herself down when she saw how hysterical Larry had become.

"There's nothing for me to explain. If you don't believe me, just forget it. Larry, let go of me.

Both of us need to calm down."

When Larry retracted his arms that were in her way, Joan stormed into the study without even looking back. When he saw her dispassionate silhouette, he was overwhelmed with disappointment.

Calm down? Joan, how do you expect me to calm down?

Leaning her back against the closed doors, tears streamed down Joan's cheeks.

The disappointment she felt was no different from the time when she saw him making out with Gabriella while delivering a contract to his office.

"Why, Larry? Am I a shameless traitor not worthy of your trust to you?" Despite trying desperately to hold back her tears, they pitter-pattered continuously onto the floor.

"Mr. Norton, here is this quarter's financial report. Please see if there are any changes that need to be made..."

"Get out! Just get out!" With a shove of his hand, the documents the secretary brought were

swept onto the ground, causing a bunch of papers to be strewn all over. With sweat breaking out on her forehead, the secretary quickly gathered the documents from the floor. Although Larry had a bad temper, he had never vented on his subordinates to such an extent. Having been on the receiving end of his outburst, his secretary was so fearful that she didn't dare look up. Ignoring the order of the papers, she quickly grabbed all of them and stuffed them back into the file. Given how angry he was, everything Larry saw seemed to irritate him. Filled with rage, he was further annoyed by the pile of reports on his table that required his approval. Grabbing a cup from the corner of his desk, he then smashed it onto the ground forcefully. Upon impact, the drink splattered all over, just like a turbulent wave on a calm ocean surface. Kneeling by the ground to pick up the report, the secretary was shaken by what had happened. Immediately, she stood up and rushed for the door. Just when she was about to exit, she bumped right into someone coming in. When she saw who it was, she nodded respectfully in acknowledgment. The person didn't say a word and just motioned for her to leave quickly. Given how light the footsteps were, Larry knew who it was without looking. Nevertheless, his mood was equally foul while the room was still filled with tension

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1635

"You too, get out!"

Caspian kicked aside the reports on the ground. As the secretary had left hastily just now, there were footprints all over them. When he saw Larry bury himself in work, Caspian's guilt intensified as he struggled with his own emotions.

"Boss, why are you making things difficult for yourself?" Feeling guilty, Caspian lowered his voice.



“After going through so much in recent years, why are you letting something trivial bother you to the extent you’re hardly recognizable?”

Larry cleared his throat. “Trivial?” He sounded as if he was deeply hurt. “If you have been lied to twice by the one you love, Caspian, do you think you can still stand here and calmly tell me this is just a trivial matter?”

When Caspian remained silent, Larry continued asking, “Have you known about this for a while now?”

He continuously fiddled with the cover of his fountain pen. “Previously, whenever I asked you to investigate something, you would always inform me of the result right away. But this time, you didn’t.”

“After cycling through all the possibilities, Caspian, and the fact that we are comrades that have faced death together, I realized there is only one reason that can put you in such a dilemma. And that reason is Joan.”

Caspian gulped as if something had grabbed him by the throat. Evidently, Larry was someone who easily saw through him. There was no need for him to even explain himself.

By then, Larry had calmed down as he placed his fountain pen back on his desk. Stepping over the documents that he swept away earlier, he walked up to Caspian. Staring at the old scar Caspian received during training years ago, he remarked, “I won’t make things difficult for you. Just tell me yes or no.”

The atmosphere in the office continued to be tense. Caspian’s silence caused Larry to feel as if his world had collapsed.

Shifting his gaze away from Caspian’s old scar, Larry stepped around him, brushed past his shoulder before walking away.

Both men, one in a suit while the other in track attire, had conflicted expressions on their

faces.

It was as if they were so near that they could return to the time when they celebrated their victories on the battlefield together and yet, they were also so far apart that the word “brotherhood” no longer meant anything.

The moment Larry placed his hand on the doorknob, Caspian’s throaty voice rang out.

“Joan dined with the man in the restaurant.” As if Larry wasn’t going to believe him, Caspian

added the next second, “I saw them with my own eyes.”

This time, it was Larry that fell silent. He couldn’t imagine how difficult it was to express his feelings when he was struck by sadness, heartbreak, doubt, and anger all at the same time.

Hence, the only emotion he could show was a frightening sense of calmness.

As for Joan, she was in an equally bad place emotionally. Locking herself in her room, she

took leave from school before throwing her phone aside.

She blamed herself for not being careful and letting Larry see the note she carried.

Shaking her head vehemently, she tried to put that irrelevant idea out of her mind. Instead,

she told herself to be focused on why Larry reacted so violently when he saw the note. After all, there was hardly anything written on it.

During the incident with Carl where they even appeared on the news headline, Larry had

only instructed Caspian to find out who the culprit was. Unlike today, he didn’t flare his temper at her then.

Larry always looks for Caspian whenever he needs counsel...

That’s right! Caspian! This time, I’m sure he will talk to Caspian too.

Joan’s eyes sparkled as she found Caspian’s number. After giving it some thought, she

ended up calling Nancy instead.

She figured that it would be easier to talk to another woman about this.

After all, Caspian

and Larry were friends that were willing to die for each other. If she had approached Caspian directly, it might seem awkward for both of them. Furthermore, she wasn't sure if he was willing to tell her what she wanted to know.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1636

In contrast to Caspian, Nancy was different. She was about Joan's age and had sincerely wished them happiness during the wedding. With that thought in mind, Joan gave Nancy a call.

"Hello, Joan?"

Before she could say a word, Nancy's voice rang out over the line. As if she was grasping desperately for a lifeline, Joan responded in anticipation, "Yes, it's me!" "Joan, I know why you're calling me. But I don't know how to explain this to you. I can only tell you that when you and Mr. Silverman were dining at the restaurant, Caspian and I happened to be there. However, he didn't tell Larry about it."

"But yesterday, when Larry came to see Caspian, asking him to investigate the matter, I noticed how conflicted Caspian looked. Hence, he would likely have told Larry about it."

After Nancy finished her long explanation, both of them fell silent. While Joan was trying her best to dissect Nancy's words, the occasional honk from the busy traffic disrupted her thoughts.

"Joan, who is... Dustin?" Nancy asked bluntly as she wasn't a sensitive person.

Despite her best efforts at trying to sound calm, Joan replied with a trembling voice, "Nancy, wh-what do you mean?"

When Nancy heard the anxiety in Joan's voice, she began to panic and desperately explain herself, "No... It's not that, Joan, I don't mean it that way. I... I was just asking. I have faith in you, but..."

"He is just a friend. When you saw me that day, I was on the phone with Larry. I wanted to

tell him who I was dining with. However, he was just too busy and assumed I was meeting another female friend. Before I had the opportunity to explain, he ended the call. I didn't lie to him!"

The moment she finished, Joan ended the call, worried that Nancy would raise another question which showed her suspicions. She rather leave things that way. Meanwhile, when she heard the sound of a key unlocking the door, Joan knew that it was

none other than Larry given the time.

As Larry sprinted up the stairs, he banged on her room door the moment he arrived. He

roared, "Open up! Joan! I know you're in there!"

Joan was cognizant that running away wouldn't solve anything. Given how Larry was almost going to tear down the door with his bloodshot eyes, Joan finally opened it before he

resorted to further violence.

"It was Dustin who dined with you that day," Larry asserted. It wasn't even a question where

he would give her a chance to explain. Has he concluded that I lied to him over something

as trivial as dinner?

His words only served to intensify the dejection Joan felt. The only reason both of them

ended up in such circumstances was that they were too young.

"Are you going to be with him now?" Larry's voice was hoarse while his eyes filled with

despair.

Joan's expression had lost her usual vibrance.

"How can you even think that..."

Suddenly, her voice turned raspy and her eyes widened in rage, "Larry, after being together

for so many years and even having a son together, how could you think of me that way?

You don't trust me at all!"

It takes more information to make you believe something you don't want to believe than

something you do. Joan was someone stubborn to the marrow. She would never explain herself to someone that didn't believe in her. As for Larry, his mind was bombarded by all the information he received over the past few days. Ever since he knew Joan, he could never think rationally about any matter that involved her. Because of that, Caspian's final sentence "I saw it with my own eyes" kept repeating in his head.

As if he was possessed by a demon, he reached out his hand and pushed Joan forcefully toward the ground. Staggering backward, she finally lost her balance and collapsed onto the floor.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1637

"How am I supposed to trust you? Caspian saw you going out with him in secret with his own eyes! Just to avoid things going awkward between us, he chose not to tell me the truth."

Larry added, "I now know why you wanted to go back to Nirhaven College. That's where you can spend time with him. Why didn't you tell me you were dining with him that day? Why didn't you tell me that he was at Nirhaven College too? If there's really nothing going on, why are so many people talking behind your back? Joan, tell me! Explain yourself to me!"

Just when she thought she had the world, the pain in her knees reminded her otherwise. It seemed to be mocking her choice of the man that she sacrificed everything to love. It also served as a warning, that everything that had happened wasn't a nightmare, and was real.

Clenching her own sleeve, Joan sought solace within her own heart. With an expressionless face, she replied, "Since you already have an answer, why do you bother asking me."

Larry let out a gut-wrenching laugh. It was so sharp that it seemed to pierce both their hearts. With his bloodshot eyes, he declared, "You admitted it, Joan! You admitted it!"

"Larry, ever since we got back together, I never expected both of us to fall apart like that. In my mind, I thought that we had been through everything. But I was wrong. We don't seem to be on the same ground. You trust yourself more than you trust me." Gritting her teeth, Joan pulled herself up with the support of a chair. As tears rolled down her cheeks despite her best efforts to stop them, she pursed her lips. "Let us calm down. We should... take a break."

In the end, she didn't even remember how she left the house that day. Her pain slowly emanated from her heart and quickly tore through every fiber of her body, to the extent she was numb.

Before the matter reached the ears of Finnick and Vivian, she decided to drop by first.

Coincidentally, both of them were not at home. Only the nanny was there, watching over Leslie.

When the nanny saw her, she warmly greeted Joan and invited her to see Leslie. Hence, Joan approached carefully.

Leslie who was quietly laying in the nanny's arms, suddenly cried non-stop the moment

Joan took over. Panicking in response, Joan realized that she had not seen Leslie in a long while.

Despite being his mother, her presence caused Leslie to feel fearful and unsettled. Joan was heartbroken upon realizing the fact.

Under the nanny's guidance, Joan carried Leslie the same way the nanny did. After crying for a while, Leslie finally calmed down. It may have been due to a special connection between mother and son. After all, Leslie did spend ten months inside Joan's body.

Leslie had grown really fast. The last time she carried him, he was a lot lighter than he was now. Looking at his chubby face, she saw him smiling without a care in the world.

It was this smile that triggered Joan's resolve to raise Leslie herself. Therefore, she had to take him away.

If Larry continued to misunderstand her, their marriage would likely end prematurely. Hence, she also would also try her best to get custody of him.

"I'm taking Leslie out to get some sun," Joan remarked.

The nanny didn't dare protest. After all, Joan was his mother and had every right to take her

son wherever she wanted. Therefore, she could only remind Joan, "In that case Mrs. Norton,

please remember to come back early. Or else, old Mrs. Norton would be worried."

After bundling up Leslie's blanket, Joan carefully put her arm around his neck and lay him gently on her arms.

She didn't understand why she was feeling that way. Also, she was relieved that Larry's

parents were not at home, providing her the opportunity to take Leslie away. As if she

hadn't come here today, she would never be able to see Leslie ever again.

Meanwhile, Larry and Caspian were oblivious to the fact that while they were arguing in the

office, someone was eavesdropping by the door, and had heard the whole exchange. This

person was currently sitting on a leather sofa, leisurely lighting up a cigarette.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1638

As smoke puffed out of his mouth into the air, he crossed his legs languidly. Beside him, a

gramophone was playing a piece of classical music from Remdik.

"Dustin, why must you spread the rumor?" He gently tapped the ash off his cigarette. "My

friend, not that I'm flattering you but you have outdone yourself this time, to the extent of

having Larry and Caspian running in circles.”

Smirking, Dustin took a sip of the coffee as he continued to listen.

“Dustin, why are you going through all this trouble? Don’t tell me that you still have feelings for her after so many years?”

“What do you mean by that? She means everything to me. If not for her, I wouldn’t have returned to this country on purpose.”

The man threw away the cigarette butt. “Let me give you some friendly advice. That woman is not only married but is also a mother. You’re a rich and young college professor who is well known in the medical fraternity. Why must you insist on tormenting yourself over her?”

Dustin finished his coffee in one gulp.

“You are still too young. In this life, it’s really hard to find someone you truly love. What’s

even harder is to have the opportunity to pursue her.”

“What? Are you planning on breaking them up?” The man raised his eyebrows. “Putting all that aside, even if you managed to do so, what are you going to do about the child? Are you really that magnanimous to stay by her side and raise someone else’s kid?”

Instead of replying, Dustin burst into laughter.

“Caspian, drink some water. Don’t just sit there and sulk.” Nancy was holding a glass of water as she stood meekly behind him.

Caspian’s hair was in a mess. Ever since she knew him, she had never seen him so distraught before.

“Caspian, please say something, alright? You’re making me worry...”

Realizing Caspian was ignoring her, Nancy approached him and patted him on his shoulder.

“Nancy, we shouldn’t have hidden the matter from Boss. Despite knowing that it would be impossible to hide anyway, we still proceeded with the foolish choice. Do you know that



how disappointed he was when he looked at me this morning? Ever since we survived our time in the army, Boss has always trusted me. But this time, he was really disillusioned.”

Nancy too was filled with guilt. If it wasn't for her hesitation, Larry and Caspian's relationship wouldn't have been strained to this extent.

She just couldn't figure out one thing. Given Joan's character, it was unlike her to do

something that would cause Larry to misunderstand and fly into a jealous rage.

When Nancy put her arms around Caspian, she noticed the vibe he was emitting was very

solemn in contrast to when she first met him. As for Caspian, he felt really bad on her behalf.

As both of them had just gotten married, they didn't expect to encounter problems in such

a short time even though it was their friends who were going through a relationship crisis.

However, their relationship was even closer than that of normal siblings.

“I'm sorry, Mr. Norton, Mrs. Norton, it was Ms. Joan that demanded to take Leslie out. As

she is Mr. Larry's wife, I didn't see a problem with her doing so...” The nanny stood in front of them meekly.

Filled with anxiety, Vivian was sweating profusely. “She is not answering her phone. Taking

Leslie out isn't the problem. But why isn't she bringing him back?”

With a phone in hand, Finnick tried calling Larry's office but the line was always busy.

Despite his usually calm temperament, Finnick was enraged.

Rolling up his sleeves, he threw the phone onto the sofa. “What is it that is keeping him so

busy? To the extent, he no longer cares about his son!”

“Can it be that both of them are in a fight? In her anger, Joan might have taken Leslie along

with her?” Furrowing her eyebrows, Vivian tugged at his shirt worriedly.

“What are we going

to do if Joan has left with Leslie and doesn't allow us to see him again?

He is our grandson,

for goodness sake!”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1639

“Alright, I know. Stop whining. You’re giving me a headache. Did you get through to Joan yet?”

Vivian was so anxious that she was on the brink of tears. “Not yet. Just before this, no one answered. But now, her phone has been switched off!”

Finnick’s eyebrows knitted intensely before he suddenly had an idea.

“Caspian! Quick, call him!”

Nancy patted Caspian on his shoulder. “Don’t worry. As long as they love each other, I’m

sure their relationship will survive whatever obstacles they may face.”

Suddenly, their quiet moment together was shattered by a ringing tone.

Caspian took out

his phone, and both of them exchanged glances before he answered,

“Hello, Mr. Norton?”

“Caspian, are you together with Larry now? Do you know where both of them have taken the child?”

The moment he heard Finnick, Caspian’s heart sank. “I’m not with him. What happened?”

Vivian snatched the phone over. “For some reason, Joan has taken Leslie somewhere. Did

she have a fight with Larry? Why would she take the child and not bring him back? Can it be

that something has happened to them?”

When Caspian suddenly thought of the perpetrators from before that had threatened Joan,

he was reminded of the innumerable rivals Larry had. Many of them would stop at nothing

to break them up. However, he didn’t dare voice out his fears while Nancy gulped anxiously

by his side.

“Don’t fret. I will do everything in my power to bring the child back safely.”

Caspian was a man of his word. He contacted the local police station and enlisted every

available man they had to check the residential area's security feeds. In the end, they did see Joan carrying the child out of the area. Tracking the direction Joan had traveled, he checked all the surveillance cameras along the way and pinpointed the location of where she was staying at. Just when he prepared to head out together with Nancy to persuade Joan to return home, he suddenly received a call from Larry. Larry told him that Joan was back and wanted him to stop tracking her. Consequently, Caspian and Nancy were both puzzled by the instructions. If he is asking us to stop our investigations, does it mean that both of them have made up? If they have both cleared the air, why didn't Joan return with Leslie? During the time when she was alone, Joan thought a lot about her situation. She wondered if her relationship with Larry had hit the point of no return. But then, she recalled that they had survived many trials and tribulations together. She had assumed that their life would only get better. But, Larry's actions had repeatedly hurt her. And now, a single word from Caspian was enough to overturn the relationship that they shared. She was cognizant that Caspian and he were friends who were willing to die defending each other. Putting that aside, she wondered how the trust between herself and Larry became so fragile. Sitting by the window in her room, she gazed out the window listlessly and didn't even realize that Larry had returned. The night view of Marsingfill was filled with lights as usual, but it wasn't enough to illuminate their large house. The quiet atmosphere caused Larry to assume Joan wasn't at home, causing him to be outraged. When he was about to give her a call, he noticed her spacing out in the room. When he saw her pale face and slender figure, his heart began to waver.

Over the last few days, he kept thinking about her late at night and wondered if he had really misunderstood her. It was obvious to him how depressed and exhausted she looked.

Her gloomy expression had overwhelmed the zest she used to have. Recently bogged down by work, he figured that he should have kept his temper in check.

He realized he shouldn't have been swayed by rumors and make judgments based on them.

Thinking back, he recalled a time when he quietly swore to treat her like a queen. But ever

since she had Leslie, he hardly spent any quality time with both of them. Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1640

Larry approached Joan from behind. She regained her senses only after he put his hand on

her shoulders. After pondering for a long while, she finally uttered, "Do you still trust me?"

Before Larry could answer, she added, "Within the next few days, I plan to move out with

Larry. He is still young and needs me by his side. Hence, I want to raise him myself."

The moment she finished, he tightened his grip on her shoulders, digging his nails into her

flawless, pale skin. Despite the pain she felt, she didn't flinch at all.

Larry roared, "Leslie needs you? Are you saying that he doesn't need me, his father? Have

you been planning this all along? Why do you need to make yourself sound noble? I think

you must have already decided to return to Dustin's side and take Leslie with you. Let me

tell you straight up. Don't even think about it!"

Joan was sick of the repeated quarrels they had and wasn't bothered to explain herself

anymore. Since he didn't believe in her, there was no point in doing so anyway.

"Since that's what you think, so be it. Let's stop arguing. I'm already fed up."

Deep down in his heart, Larry hoped that Joan would protest and tell him he was wrong,

asserting that there was nothing going on between her and Dustin. Instead, the calmness and indifference she displayed simply caused him to lose his mind. The next moment, he pushed her forcefully onto the bed. With his sanity lost, he felt the need to show his dominance over her. He could only feel secure with her underneath him.

“Argh! No! Larry, you b\*stard! Get off me!” Joan struggled vehemently as if she was about to be raped. She didn’t expect to have said something like that while attempting to resist.

“You have finally said it out loud. Are you really that desperate to leave me?” Larry scoffed,

“Isn’t this normal for us?”

Joan’s resistance was visibly too weak to fend Larry off. By denying him, she had only served to fan the flames of his lust instead, strengthening his urge to dominate her.

“You are my wife. What’s wrong with us making love?” He restrained both her hands with one hand and pinned her leg with his own. When she was unable to struggle anymore, he used his free hand to untie the knot of her bare-shoulder top.

Joan had no choice but to let him have his way. This was the first time she found him frightening.

As the moonlight shone through the window, he could clearly see her porcelain white figure. Brushing his fingertips over her breasts, he felt as if they had grown perkier ever since Leslie was born. As he let out a muffled moan, he allowed himself to sink into madness and ravage her.

Joan had no choice but to give him free rein. She felt that he was both familiar and distant at the same time. When she was suddenly seized by sudden sharp pain below, as if she had been pierced raw, she cried out in agony. However, her cries only served to excite Larry further.

Suddenly, she opened her eyes. "Larry, I hate you." As tears streamed down her cheeks, she wasn't sure if they were caused by the pain or something else altogether.

It wasn't until the morning light shone through the full-length windows onto her bedsheet did Joan awake from her dreams. She vaguely felt Larry's fingers run along her cheeks together with his love and affection.

Unfortunately, there was no one beside her. Shoving the blanket aside, the pain she felt below served as a reminder of everything that had happened the night before. She didn't expect him to take her like a beast.

Deep down, despite how rough he was, she knew that he had submitted to her will.

However, there was no time to think about Larry now. Feeling fearful, she tidied herself, grabbed her bag, and ran right out.

Leslie!

When she left her rented place, she had intended to have a proper discussion with Larry. If negotiations failed, she would then leave with Leslie and raise him alone. However, she didn't expect Larry to act with such insanity, causing her to leave Leslie alone in her place.

"Leslie?" Ignoring the pain she felt, Joan rushed toward Leslie's bed. His face was red everywhere. As she gently patted his cheeks, she called out his name repeatedly. However, he was still in deep sleep.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1641

As Joan put her hand on his forehead, she could feel it burning. Seized by panic, she picked him up and darted outside.

While running, her heel was accidentally caught between a gap of a manhole. Despite her struggles, she was unable to dislodge it still. However, with Leslie's eyes still closed, she decided to leave the shoe and rushed toward the hospital.

Soon, the doctor had taken over Leslie while Joan went to the registration counter to register. She had begun to hobble her way around awkwardly. At that moment, she had the urge to slap herself as punishment. Given how careless I am, how am I able to raise Leslie properly? Or even give him a good life? That was nothing but a fantasy.

I hope that Leslie will be fine. Or else, there's no way I can face Larry's parents. I wouldn't be able to face Larry either.

Just when she was deep in thought, someone pulled her arm, causing her to regain her senses. She widened her eyes in surprise when she saw who it was. He was wearing a white coat. When he took his hand out of his pocket and removed his facemask, a handsome face emerged before her.

Gaping, she murmured, "Dustin?"

"Joan? What happened?" when he saw how listless she looked, he grabbed her shoulders and asked. However, Joan maintained her silence.

When Dustin noticed that she was ignoring him, he looked around and saw the surrounding crowd. After which he pulled her to a corner.

"Joan, what happened to you? When I saw you walking around alone looking lost, I called

out to you but you didn't respond. What's going on? Where's Larry? What happened

between the two of you?" Dustin's concern was written all over his face. Joan laughed wryly.

What happened to me? I can't possibly tell you that you caused my marriage to break down

to the extent that it has now affected my son, can I?

Nevertheless, Joan managed to maintain her rationality. Despite her anger, she was

cognizant that she shouldn't vent her frustrations on someone who had saved her life before.

After racking her brains for a long while, she couldn't think of anything good to say. Hence,

she chose to respond with silence. However, Dustin began to talk about himself.

“The research I was doing overseas has yet to yield any results. Therefore, the research committee requested data from the neurology departments of various hospitals, so that we can investigate the prevalence of neurological disease in recent years. Look, I was coming out from the neurology department with these documents before I coincidentally saw you.”

Just as he spoke, he raised his hand to show her the file he was holding. Joan shook her head as she looked into his eyes. They were filled with the same concern he used to comfort her many years ago when he was treating her overseas. When she thought about the innumerable fights she recently had with Larry and how she was violated the night before, the tenacity within her collapsed, causing her to bawl. Just like a string of broken pearls, tears fell repeatedly from her eyes.

After knowing her for such a long time, Dustin had never seen her this way. Feeling lost for a moment, he took out a tissue from his coat and clumsily comforted her. “Joan, please don’t cry. Someone else might be thinking that I have bullied you. Tell me what happened? We can definitely solve it together.”

“I made a mistake last night when I left him alone at home with a fever. I only managed to bring him to the hospital just a moment ago. Hence, I am utterly devastated. Given how careless I am, how am I able to raise my son properly or even give him a good life?”

Dustin didn’t help her wipe her tears. Instead, he handed her the tissue and remarked softly, “Everyone makes mistakes so don’t get too caught up by it. What’s done is done. There will definitely be a solution. As a researcher, I enjoy a good relationship with the doctors here.

Come, let’s find your son a specialist. He will advise the best course of treatment based on your son’s situation. So, stop worrying.”



As Joan sobbed softly, she apologized, "I'm sorry to have lost my composure in front of you.

Anyway, I appreciate what you're doing for me."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1642

Smiling at her, Dustin stroked her head. "There's no need to be sorry among friends. After

all, your troubles are as good as mine."

Having comforted Joan, Dustin made a call to a doctor he knew. He explained to Joan that

his contact was an excellent pediatrician.

When the pediatrician heard that Joan was raising Leslie alone, he gave her a generous

discount for Leslie's treatment, for which Joan was extremely grateful.

Fortunately, Leslie's condition wasn't serious. Although his fever hadn't subsided, they had

managed to stop it from escalating in the nick of time.

Sitting by Leslie's bed, Joan ensured that he didn't move indiscriminately.

She had to ensure

the needle that was attached to his forehead stayed in place.

As Dustin entered with a peeled apple in hand, Joan quickly pulled out a chair for him.

When he offered her the apple, she shook her head to decline.

Dustin remarked with a smile, "Usually, visitors bring fruit baskets.

Hence, I hope you won't

think of me as a miser for just bringing you this apple."

Joan was shaking her head vehemently when she heard Dustin continue,

"After staying up

the whole night, you have yet to eat a thing. At least have an apple to replenish your

energy. At this rate, I'm worried that your body might suffer. If you collapse, there will be no

one to care for your son."

Seeing his point, Joan no longer refused. When she reached out to accept the apple, Dustin

asked her, "By the way, does Larry know that the child is sick?"

Briefly stunned, Joan shook her head, "I neglected my son because we were having a fight."

While he held Leslie's hand, Dustin advised Joan, "It's common for couples to fight. After

being together for such a long time, conflicts are bound to happen."

When Joan didn't respond, Dustin sighed. "Larry has a stressful job and it's understandable for him to be bad-tempered. Even if he has said anything harsh in anger, you shouldn't take it to heart. After all, both of you are still young and have a long way to go still."

A long way? After their endless quarrels recently, Joan felt as if her marriage with Larry had reached its limit.

Just within the last few days, she had felt bitterness, humiliation, anger, pain, and a plethora of depressing emotions. Never in her life did she imagine marriage to be so complicated.

Just as he spoke, Dustin began to watch over Leslie while Joan ate the apple with her head lowered. Despite how sweet the fruit was, it tasted equally bitter in her mouth.

As Caspian couldn't refuse the pleas of both Larry's parents, he checked the surveillance footage and pinned down Joan's location to Mercy Hospital, which he informed Finnick and Vivian.

When they heard the hospital being mentioned, both of them became worried. Regardless of whether it was Joan or Leslie that was sick, they would be equally worried for either.

The moment they received the information from Caspian, they hurried to Mercy Hospital at once. Furthermore, they sent Larry a message to inform him that Joan was in the hospital.

After all, they couldn't care less whether both of them were still fighting. At the same time, Nancy bought some flowers and fruits as she planned to head toward

Mercy Hospital together with Caspian.

As for Larry, he had just finished a meeting when he received a call from his parents, informing him that Joan was in the hospital. Falling into a panic, he almost dropped his phone at the news.

Feeling as if his heart was suspended in an abyss, he kept reassuring himself along the way that Joan and Leslie would both be fine. Despite his attempts, there was no way he could calm his worried self down. Speeding all the way to the hospital, he ran a few red lights without even realizing it. The incessant honks that resulted from his actions only served to intensify his worries further.

“Joan! Joan!” Vivian cried as she barged into the ward. As she approached the bed, she saw Leslie’s eyes shut tightly. He wasn’t as boisterous as he used to be. Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1643

“Leslie, oh my poor Leslie, how did you end up this sick? It breaks my heart to see you this way.”

Standing by the side, Finnick was equally heartbroken. Suddenly, he raised his voice at Joan.

“What’s wrong with you? How can you take the child away just because you are angry with Larry? We know you are his mother and it’s not within our right to stop you. But, how can you not tell me and Vivian? This is unbecoming of you!”

Vivian added, “Ever since Leslie was born, both of us took good care of him and he was seldom sick. How did he end up like this as it has been less than two days since you took him away?”

Ever since she was married to Larry, his parents doted upon her. Hence, today was the first time they admonished her. With nothing to defend herself with, Joan could only listen in silence.

Vivian turned to Dustin, “Doctor, how is my grandson? Will he be alright?”

Dustin replied gently, “Don’t worry, the child is fine. The reason he recovered so quickly was that Ms. Watts watched over him throughout the night. If you are still worried, I can prescribe some harmless medication to help the child heal faster.”

“Alright, alright. Thank you doctor for your time. May I know how am I to address you?

When I’m back later, I’ll definitely send you a reward,” Finnick replied.

“I’m Mr. Silverman. There’s no need for a reward as Ms. Watts is my friend. I’m just happy to

be of help to her in times of trouble.”

Dustin then left with Leslie’s report in hand. Before he did, he gave Joan a look of

encouragement. Only when Joan no longer hung her head in dejection did he leave with his

mind put at ease.

Meanwhile, Larry was in the corridor asking repeatedly where Leslie’s ward was. As there

was no time to wait for the elevator, he sprinted right up to the third floor and ran toward

Leslie’s ward after receiving directions.

Coincidentally, Dustin was just leaving the room. Raising his gaze, his eyes met with Larry

who was dashing over.

Larry was stunned to see him and it took him a long while to regain his senses. Instead, it

was Dustin that greeted him first, “Mr. Norton, your wife is inside.”

He would have been better off if he didn’t say those words. The moment they left his

mouth, Larry’s lost all rationality. Stepping forward, he grabbed Dustin by his collar and

threw a punch right in his face.

“You b\*stard! I don’t need you to tell me whether she is inside. I am warning you to wipe

that smirk off your face!”

A bruise began to form on Dustin’s face as blood trickled down the corner of his mouth. The

medical report he was holding fell onto the ground. When Larry glanced at it, he saw Leslie’s

name written on top. The very next moment, he pounded Dustin’s face in with all his might.

The loud commotion outside caught the three of them inside the room by surprise. Joan

was the first to hear it and quickly opened the door, only to be greeted by the frightening

sight.

“Larry! Stop! Stop right now!”

Joan jumped right in, hoping to pull Larry away from Dustin. However, he was simply too

strong for her and there was no way she could control him.

Instead, her attempt to stop him only angered him further. Filled with rage, he forcefully

shoved Joan who was grabbing onto his arm aside.

After Joan was pushed away by a massive force, the hospital staff gradually stepped in to

break both of them apart. One of the young nurses began to gossip about what had

happened.

By the time Dustin was helped up from the ground, his face was covered in bruises while he

could no longer lift his arm.

Standing in front of Dustin, Joan screamed at Larry, “Why did you start beating him up

without any reason? You have no idea how much Dustin helped me this time!”

Larry’s eyes were filled with contempt. “Help? All I see is a hypocrite with a scheme. What

did he say to you for you to be so protective of him?”

Joan no longer held back. “Don’t think that everyone is as shameless as you. I may not be an

angel, but I’m not as despicable as you think I am!”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1644

“Where do you think you are? This is the hospital. If you want to quarrel, you should go

home and do it.” As this was the pediatric department, the entire floor was filled with

children. Given the ruckus that they had caused, many of the children began to cry. The

hospital staff that had gathered began to feel exasperated with some of them even

threatening to call the police.

Vivian quickly stepped forward and apologized, “I’m so sorry, everyone.

My son and

daughter-in-law are having some trouble. I will definitely reprimand them when we’re home.

So please don't be mad. Now that it's over you can move along now." Finnick quickly helped Dustin up and softly censured Larry. "What are you doing? Why do you need to beat up a doctor? Can't you just talk calmly over whatever it is?"

"This man is a wolf in sheep's clothing. He is a scheming hypocrite with no good intentions at all," Larry retorted.

Bending down to pick up the medical report, he glared at Joan, "I have not fallen to such

depths where I need someone else to raise my son."

At that moment, Joan couldn't tell what Larry was thinking from the look in his eyes. All she

felt was his disappointment and sadness.

As Larry took the medical report to get Leslie's medication, Joan whispered to Dustin, "I'm sorry."

Although it wasn't enough to compensate for the harm Larry did to Dustin, she still felt the need to say it.

"It's not your fault." Dustin replied plainly.

When Caspian and Nancy arrived at the hospital to visit Joan and Leslie, they saw Larry at

the pharmacy paying for medication. Nancy immediately motioned for Caspian to approach

him.

Right away, Caspian noticed Larry's rolled-up sleeves and the torn calluses on his fists.

Based on his experience, he knew at once that Larry had gotten into a fight.

"Boss, what happened to your hands? Who did you beat up?"

Ever since they were in the army, he knew that Larry was a really good fighter. Now that his

hands were hurt to that extent, it meant the victim had suffered much worse.

Nancy's lips twitched. "It can't... can't be Joan, can it?"

Caspian shot her a glance while Larry looked at his own hands and sneered, "He can still

walk."

“Caspian, take this medication to Ward 16 on the third floor. I’m not going back.”

Caspian took over the medication. “What’s wrong, Boss? Aren’t you going to visit Leslie?”

Of course I want to! It’s just that it hurts so much when I see Joan, as if my heart has been pierced by a knife.

After giving it some thought, he felt that Joan had started it all. Unwilling to back down,

Larry turned and left.

“Wait!” Joan’s voice rang out from the back. “How can you leave right after beating

someone up and turning the hospital into a wrestling ring? Furthermore, you even treated

someone else as your punching bag! Therefore, aren’t you being irresponsible by leaving just like that?”

Larry sneered, “Joan oh Joan, don’t you know who is the one that started all this? Instead of reflecting on your actions, you now choose to blame me?”

Joan snapped, “No matter who is the one at fault, you still can’t beat up someone and

disrupt the peace at the hospital. Your ridiculous reasoning is simply your attempt at desperately justifying your own actions.”

Both Finnick and Vivian quickly approached to pacify both of them.

“That’s enough. You’re both adults. Even if you don’t mind embarrassing yourselves in the hospital, at least think about your child...”

“Your child needs a quiet environment to recuperate. Why don’t you leave him in the

hospital first and arrange for two persons to stay with him?” a doctor by their side suggested.

Finnick shook his head helplessly. “Both of you don’t deserve to be parents. You can’t even handle your own emotions, let alone raise a child.”

He reached out to hug his crying wife. “Larry, go home now! Come back only after you have calmed down.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1645

“Joan, you too. You should resolve whatever it is you need to before coming back to watch over Leslie.”

In the luxurious ward, Leslie was sleeping soundly in his bed, covered by a soft and fluffy blanket. By the bed, there was a bouquet of roses that filled the room with its fragrance.

Joan was greeted by the tender scene the moment she returned to the ward.

Her adorable son was an angel to her and the biggest source of happiness in her life. She was willing to do whatever it takes to give him the life that he wanted. After what had just happened, she wondered how long her so-called happiness could still last and whether the love in her was still strong enough to hold.

Leslie was largely fine. After a few days of rest, he was back to his usual self.

Sitting by the bed, Dustin let out a faint smile. Despite the scars on his face, they didn't diminish his style in any way.

As he placed Leslie's hand in his, his large, weathered hands contrasted against the child's which were small and tender. If someone had barged in and didn't know better, he would have assumed that Dustin was the child's father.

“Recently, our hospital has built a child care center in the east of the city, and it is extremely well equipped. If you are satisfied with it, you can consider leaving Leslie there. It's more convenient if there are professionals looking after him. This way, you can focus on your school work and continue working at Opulent Designs.

Joan hesitated at the suggestion. “Can't I leave them with his grandparents? Wouldn't that do? To a certain extent, he is part of their family. By letting him stay with them, he would also grow up to be close to them.”



Dustin sighed. "Joan, don't be naive. Given what has happened, do you think it's going to be easy for you to see your son next time?"

Joan agreed with him in her silence. Soon, she headed to Finnick's home and admitted to them that she and Larry's relationship was getting worse. Before they made up, she hoped to negotiate with Larry's parents so that they could each take a step back.

Joan promised to not take Leslie away for no reason. But as the child's mom, they had to respect her desire to place Leslie at the child care center. After all, there would be professionals there to watch over and educate him.

"I know from today onwards, if Leslie continues to stay with you, it will become increasingly difficult for me to see him. Therefore, I am proposing this not only to provide him a better learning environment but to also ensure that I can see him whenever I want."

Joan had her point. Therefore, Finnick and Vivian had no choice but to agree to the somewhat cruel arrangement for Leslie.

At the Sunny Child Care Center.

A baby was curled up in the midst of his soft and fluffy bundle. He then stretched his limbs just like a newborn cat while his eyes glistened like the reflection of clean spring water.

As the gentle breeze blew past the window, the wind chime rang along with it.

Crack.

As the door gently opened, a man dressed in a suit with matching leather shoes entered the room. His arrival was greeted by the crisp ring of the doorbell, as if it was playing a song along with the wind.

Sitting beside the baby, he watched it wave its hands and grunt excitedly. The tender sight simply caused his heart to melt.

Placing both his arms underneath the child's armpits, his face was filled with joy. When the child saw him smiling, it instinctively smiled in return. After being lifted into the air, it seemed to enjoy the feeling as its legs kicked around in excitement. "Leslie, it's Daddy. Can you call Daddy?"

Knock... Knock...

"Come in."

"Joan? It's a surprise to see you here."

Holding a first aid kit, Joan replied with an apologetic tone. "With regards to what happened at the hospital the last time, I would like to apologize on behalf of Larry. I hope you won't take it to heart."

"What are you talking about, Joan. Both of you are two different individuals. Hence, there's no need to apologize on his behalf. To be honest, I understand entirely what he is going through. Therefore, I can empathize with his impulsive actions and won't hold it against him."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1646

When Joan seemed to be limping, Dustin couldn't help but take a closer look. Only then did he realized she was wearing a pair of slippers with her leg wrapped in a thick bandage.

"What happened to your leg?" Dustin stood up from his chair.

"It's nothing. When I brought Leslie to the hospital yesterday, I lost my shoe along the way.

After that... I accidentally cut myself," Joan explained.

Dustin's expression grew anxious. "What? Is that all that happened?"

He came over to support Joan and led her to the sofa by the door.

Rolling up her pant leg,

he examined her wound. Realizing the awkwardness, Joan subconsciously retracted her feet.

"This isn't the first time I'm treating you." Dustin ignored her resistance as he took the first aid kit from her.

"I brought the first aid kit because I wanted to help you treat your wounds. Look at the

bruises on your face...”

“It doesn’t matter as I’m a man after all. No man cares that much about his face.”

After unwrapping the bandage of Joan’s leg, Dustin brought out some cotton buds and alcohol to help her disinfect her wound.

As the alcohol burned, Joan retracted her leg by reflex. Raising his gaze at her, Dustin’s eyes felt as if they were giving her the warmth of the sun.

“Does it hurt? I’ll be gentler so just bear with it a little longer. If it’s not cleaned properly, you will be at risk of infection.”

Dustin applied some white powder evenly over the wound. After that, he tore off some gauze and carefully bandaged her leg.

His actions were gentle as he was worried about causing her pain. However, Joan’s heart was flooded with a mix of emotions.

Many years ago, when she fell on the basketball court, it was Larry who anxiously carried her to the school clinic. Also, it was Larry who treated her wound for her. All this while, she hated clichés but she couldn’t deny the saying that “the ones you love the most are usually the ones that hurt you the most”.

“Why don’t I help you with the wounds on your face?” Joan suggested meekly. Dustin wanted to decline but Joan preempted, “Just treat it as my way of thanking you. Or else, I feel that I can never repay my debt to you...”

As Dustin stared right into her eyes, she could feel his gaze pierce through her heart as he peered deep into her soul.

When her hand came into contact with Dustin’s face, he could feel his heart flutter.

However, he tried his best to suppress his urges.

When Larry beat him up, he felt as if his body was about to split open. But when she sat by his side, treating all his bruises, he suddenly felt the beating was well worth the pain.

As Joan's warm breath blew across the surface of his neck, it set his heart ablaze. After all, he was ever ready to welcome her into it. Reaching out his hand to hold her wrist, he placed his thumb in the middle of her palm. As the warmth of her hands permeated into his body, he immersed himself in the comfort that it brought. Greedy for her breath, he stared longingly at the reflection in her eyes.

As Joan's lips parted slightly, a faint pinkish hue began to appear on her cheeks, making her look like a Barbie doll. As for Dustin, he felt like he was a child admiring her through a glass barrier from afar.

Despite the vastness of the world, you are all I that I want.

As Dustin's hand curled around her porcelain white neck, Joan was suddenly jolted by his unfamiliar breath. Regaining her senses, she struggled free from his hand and stood up at once.

Despite his intimate gesture, Joan was cognizant that she was still married and knew where to draw the line with him.

As she left the room in haste with the first aid kit she brought, her heart pounding furiously.

After an intense struggle in her mind, the rational part of her finally beat back her emotions.

After that, Joan reminded herself to be more prudent and level-headed.

At that moment, a girl holding a big bunch of flowers was calling out on the streets to sell

her wares. She was about seventeen to eighteen years of age and her features were both

youthful and exquisite. With her hair tied into a simple ponytail, she looked as if she was a

student who had a retro sense of fashion. With a vibrant smile, she held up the flowers

toward Joan.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1647

"Miss, would you like to buy one?"

Glancing at her, Joan received the rose and gave the girl a fiver.

“After buying this, I don’t know who I should give it to.” Despite thinking it, Joan

inadvertently blurted it out.

“You should give it to the one you love, of course,” the girl replied casually. Her words

suddenly illuminated what Joan truly felt in her heart.

Ever since the beginning, she had only loved one man.

No matter how he misunderstood her or hurt her, she still loved him from the bottom of her

heart. It was precisely because she loved him so much that her heart was shattered when

she realized he didn’t trust nor understand her.

Joan smiled at the girl. “Thank you.” The striking color of the rose seemed to have set her

heart alight.

Meanwhile, Dustin was slumped in his chair, staring at the ceiling.

With his eyes closed, his eyelashes seemed to be jittering rapidly. His mind was filled with

images of her while his ears reverberated with the sound of her voice.

When he heard a knock on the door, he swiveled his chair away from it and massaged his

temples. “Come in.”

“Yo, what are you doing? What’s wrong? Did your plan fail?” The man poured himself a cup

of coffee before taking a seat on the leather sofa.

With his back toward him, Dustin sounded tired. “So what if it did? She still can’t forget

Larry.”

The man lit himself a cigarette. Squinting his eyes, he seemed to be relishing the moment.

“By the way, I heard Larry gave you a beating. Do you want me to get someone to exact revenge for you?”

Dustin turned around. “No. Speaking of him, I would actually like to thank him for the beating.”

“Dustin, has he knocked you out of your senses? Thank him? If I were you, I would have

stabbed him with a knife before anything else!”

Dustin frowned. "Jory, you have to think before you act. There are always two sides to a coin. Sometimes, your choices might be detrimental to your interests or even bring about unintended consequences."

Jory inhaled the cigarette smoke deeply. "Suit yourself. But, their relationship doesn't seem to be strong. A few tricks from me and it is already on the rocks. And yet they claim love trumps everything. I can't wait to see how long more they can still hang on."

"Next time don't smoke in here. Put it out now." Dustin waved away the smoke in displeasure.

Jory smirked. "Yo, you seem different ever since you returned and met that woman. When you were overseas, you never behaved like that."

Dustin flipped open one of his documents and began reading. "Enough. If there's nothing else, please let yourself out. I have some research to do."

"Hahaha, I do have something, of course. Did you think I was here for idle chit-chat?" Jory added, "I am running out of funds. So, you have to pay me as soon as possible."

"Alright. Now leave, I want to..."

Jory interrupted, "Do some research? You can drop that act in front of me. Research my ass..."

When Dustin shot him a glare, Jory shrugged. "Alright, I'm leaving. Our revolution has yet to succeed. So, you still need to work hard."

Meanwhile, Nancy was sitting on the bed while giving Caspian a massage. "Poor Leslie. He isn't even one year old yet and his parents already have irreconcilable differences."

"It's all my fault. If only I had told Boss earlier, he wouldn't have treated Dustin with such animosity."

"Don't blame yourself. Love is always unpredictable. Don't tell me you really think this is just

between the both of them?”

Caspian sat up on the bed at once. “What do you mean?”

Nancy kept him in suspense. “I’m surprised that you even need to ask.

Aren’t you Caspian,

the great detective, where nothing escapes your eye?”

“Hey, my princess. Please tell me, alright?” Caspian quickly switched roles and began to

massage Nancy’s shoulders.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1648

Nancy replied, “I don’t think Larry’s animosity toward Dustin was started by the recent

incidents.”

“Just think about it. Given how rational he usually is, he wouldn’t have hurt the person he

loves the most without any evidence. Those incidents were likely the straw that broke the

camel’s back, causing him to break down mentally.”

“The straw that broke the camel’s back...” Caspian mumbled to himself.

“Perhaps, Boss’ bias

toward Dustin was seeded a long time ago. This time, he lost control because I didn’t find

any evidence to show that they were innocent.”

Nancy gave him a thumbs up. “Very good, you have potential.”

“Do you have any ideas on how to reunite them then?” Caspian

increased the intensity of

the massage.

“You fool. The simplest solution is also the most difficult one, that is to find evidence to

demonstrate that there is nothing going on between them.” Nancy

stopped before turning

around and giving Caspian a dejected look. “It’s just that... it’s not going to be easy to find

such evidence at all.”

At Opulent Designs.

Joan was holding up two different pieces of clothing to compare. After that, she picked up a

pencil and started drawing. Just when she was engrossed in her work, her phone rang for a

while before she answered.

“Hello? Who is it? Sunny Child Care Center? Yes, I’m Leslie’s mom. Go ahead...” Joan continued drawing. “What? He has been suffering from diarrhea? Alright, I’ll head over at once and get him some medicine along the way. Thanks, and sorry for the trouble.”

Having ended the call, Joan continued to complete her drawing. After a long while, when she compared both drawings and finally nodded with satisfaction, she slapped her forehead upon a sudden realization. Oh no, I need to get to Sunny Child Care Center at once.

Joan hurried to a nearby pharmacy and picked up some probiotics before heading there.

As the sun shone brightly in her eyes, her vision suddenly turned dark. She tried shaking her head vehemently to keep the shadows away. Panting heavily, she supported herself by holding onto the doorframe of the child care center.

Meanwhile, one of the teachers at the center, who was wearing a pink dress, admonished Joan, “Are you Leslie’s mother? Look, do you know what time it is already?”

“I... I’m sorry. I was caught up with work...”

The teacher became angrier. “Can business people like you put aside your work for once?

It’s always about the money, and that’s all you can think of. Is money more important than

your son?” When she saw Joan remaining silent, the teacher’s tone softened. “Don’t assume

keeping your child here solves everything. If not for the child’s father arriving earlier, he would likely still be having diarrhea...”

When Joan looked up, she saw the tall figure leaning by the bedroom door. Larry was still in

his suit. Obviously, he had dropped his work and came from the office.

“If they hadn’t called me at the same time, were you planning to let Leslie suffer till now?”

Larry questioned her with a scowl.



Joan replied, "It's my fault for coming late. I will apologize to him."  
Sweat began to break  
out on her forehead as darkness crept into her vision.  
"I really don't know what you're thinking. Do you intend to chase your  
dreams at Leslie's  
expense? If that's what you want, you shouldn't have had him in the first  
place." Larry  
straightened his posture. "Since we have decided to be parents, we have  
to prioritize him in  
everything we do. Your attitude gives me the impression that you're not  
fit to be his  
mother."

Gritting her teeth, Joan retorted, "Larry, must we always fi  
Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1649

Just as she spoke, she collapsed onto the ground. The pain in her head  
intensified while her  
vision faded to a blur. All she could feel was the jarring light from the  
sun and a shadow  
rushing toward her.

"Joan!"

That was the last thing she heard before falling unconscious. It felt  
exactly like when he  
dived over to protect her head from an oncoming basketball a long time  
ago. The  
concerned look he had now was the same as then.

Larry's mind drew a blank. Joan, are you going to torment me with this  
tactic just because

you can't win the argument? That's really despicable of you. As he  
dashed over and pulled  
her into his embrace, he hugged her so tightly as if he was about to  
crush her.

"What's wrong, Joan? Wake up! Don't sleep!" Larry saw that her lips  
were pale and forehead  
covered in sweat. Her wet fringes had stuck messily over her face. Every  
time she appears in  
front of me, she would always be in some sort of trouble.

Picking her up, Larry carefully placed her in the front passenger seat.

After that, he floored

the accelerator and sped toward the hospital. With his left hand on the  
steering wheel, he

held her hand tightly with his right.  
Thinking back, he was also holding her hand in the bright white hall when he vowed to grow old with her and to never abandon her. But ever since their misunderstanding, they always argued when they saw each other. He admitted that the stress from work and the blurry lines between her relationship with Dustin caused his frustration to mount. But after giving the matter some thought, he realized that he never gave her an opportunity to explain.  
“Joan, please be alright. When you wake up, I will patiently listen to whatever you have to say. I promise I won’t be angry or argue with you. Also, I won’t blame you anymore. So let’s just reconcile.”  
Joan’s furrowed eyebrows suddenly eased, as if she had heard Larry’s words. At that moment, she felt like she was in an empty tunnel that stretched beyond where her eyes could see. No matter how hard she tried, she could never reach the end. In her dream, she was surrounded by a thick fog. Despite her desperate attempts at clearing it with her hands, it simply grew thicker. Before she knew it, she couldn’t even see the path ahead of her. Suddenly, she felt someone holding her hand. The hand felt like a source of energy that continuously fed her feeble body with the warmth she needed. She wanted to respond to it but was simply too weak to do so. After that, she felt as if the hand was slowly drifting away and she had no way of hanging on to it. Before she knew it, she was all alone again, pitiful and helpless.  
As Larry got down, he ignored the stares of passersby as he carried her into the emergency room. After that, he saw the white stretcher moving further and further away from him. As

the giant red doors gradually closed in front of him, he kept praying in his heart, hoping that everything could return to the way it was, giving them a new start.

“Are you Joan’s husband?”

“Yes, I am. Doctor, how is she?”

“It’s nothing serious. She just suffers from anemia. Stress and irregular meals have likely caused her fainting spell. I have prescribed some medicine for her which she needs to take

after meals. Anyway, all she needs is to just take more supplements and maintain a healthier

lifestyle.” The doctor wrote a note. “Take this to the pharmacy to collect her prescription and you will be done after paying.”

Extending his hand to receive the note, Larry’s knitted eyebrows finally relaxed. “Alright.

Thank you, doctor.”

The doctor laughed instead. “As for you, don’t worry too much. Most women will more or less suffer from a little bit of anemia. Once you are home, remind her to get some rest and don’t tire herself out.”

After being put on the drip, Joan’s condition improved. Sitting beside her, Larry held her hand tightly, as if time had turned back to when they first met.

At that time, he was the star of the basketball team. As he was preparing for an important

match, he had to be constantly at practice. Hence, they agreed that he would head to the

basketball court first while she would get some drinks. Usually, people would go dating at

the cinema, the park, or even the library. But for them, it would always be at the basketball court.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1650

Joan would always be seated at the fifth seat within the third row. When Larry asked her to

move further in front, she told him that was the best seat in the house. She wouldn’t be

blocked by the cheerleaders in front and would be able to see all the players clearly.

At that time, Larry pretended to be angry at her for ogling at the other players instead of only focusing on him. Joan laughed when he teased her. She replied that she would bring a magnifying glass as to watch him play. That way, he would encompass her whole field of vision.

Larry then kissed her on her cheeks, causing her to blush all over. After that, she urged him to go back to practice. At the huge basketball court, only both of them were there. They used the opportunity to relish in the fact that they were everything to each other. It didn't matter where they dated. All they cared about was how deeply they were in love with each other.

However, love was different from marriage. In a marriage, it connected two families where a lot of other people were involved. If he knew then that marriage was so much more complicated and would cause them so much hurt, he figured that he wouldn't have proposed to her so early.

Although Joan was soft-hearted, she was still someone with a strong character. She couldn't tolerate knowing that he didn't trust her. Also, she couldn't accept that her weakness had become a burden to him. Her temperament had caused her to break up with him after she decided to fly overseas for her treatment. She rather he hated her. After all, hate was easier to let go of than love.

After everything that had happened, she ended up marrying him still. But, she didn't expect their relationship to be shattered by his distrust of her.

Given how insecure Larry was, his insecurities were further amplified after Joan broke up

with him and lied to him that she had fallen for someone else. Furthermore, during his time as a soldier, the feeling of being under fire on the battlefield had long decimated whatever sense of security he had left. It was also exacerbated by his comrades being killed in action one by one. Since then, he was always shrouded with insecurity. Under such circumstances, Larry had no way of ever lowering his guard down toward anyone. If he couldn't do it for Joan, he would definitely not be able to do it for anyone else. His stubbornness and naivety all boiled down to the feelings he had deep down. The more exposure he had, the more he realized how fast the world was progressing, leaving him behind. To him, the world was sad and cruel. He naively thought that he could change it. But once the results were not what he expected, a sense of helplessness would overwhelm him. If Larry had really understood Joan, he wouldn't have demanded her explanation. While Joan was still in the long tunnel looking for an exit, she suddenly noticed the fog gradually forming into a line, guiding her forward. As she followed where the line led her, the view in front of her began to clear up. Soon, the exit appeared right before her eyes. The light in front seemed to be blocked by someone's figure. When she turned to see who it was, she couldn't make out the person's face. The figure pointed at the exit in front of her as if to remind her that she needed to walk forward. As Joan's gaze trailed where his finger was pointing, she saw a field of beautiful flowers and fluttering butterflies at the exit. When she wanted to take another look at the figure beside her, she noticed that he had already disappeared. The moment she opened her eyes, she felt something heavy pressing on her hand, causing

it to feel numb. Regaining her senses, she saw Larry laying his head on her arm, sound asleep.

Despite carefully adjusting her hand, she didn't retract it from underneath him. The last memory she had before she lost consciousness was him calling out her name while rushing

toward her. They had been quarreling a moment earlier.

She gently moved the hand that Larry was sleeping over. "Larry..."

When he woke up in a daze, Joan couldn't help but be amused by the look on his face.

Finally, she understood why Leslie always woke up looking stunned and grouchy. He had

inherited the trait from his father.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1651

"My hand is numb..."

Larry moved his body and allowed Joan to pull her hand out. "You're awake."

"Mmm-hmm."

"How long have you not had regular meals? Are you trying to kill yourself by pulling late

nights constantly? Do you think you're a phone that can always be on standby twenty-four

hours a day?" Larry began to lecture her in rapid-fire.

Joan pouted helplessly. "Why are you admonishing me now?"

"I'm not reprimanding you, Joan. I'm reprimanding the mother of my son," Larry replied.

"Alright, alright, I thought my dizziness was caused by not having enough sleep. I didn't

expect for it to be so serious that it would cause me to faint..." Despite her feeble voice,

Joan tried to vehemently defend herself.

Larry thought that she still hadn't realized her mistake. "What? Why are you still making

excuses? Despite being an adult, you don't even know how to take care of yourself. So who

gave you the courage to steal Larry away from my parent's house?"

Despite his lectures, Joan knew that he was obviously worried about her, causing her to

burst into laughter.

Larry's anger turned into a smile. And just like that both of them gazed into each other eyes and laughed heartily without care. At that moment, Larry was shocked as he didn't know why he was suddenly laughing aloud. "Let's not talk about that anymore. Joan... you... do you really not want to explain... about what happened with Dustin?" Larry smiled faintly. He had wanted to ask her about the matter calmly but ended up stuttering instead. Meanwhile, the cicadas outside continue to chirp incessantly, singing their song without a care of what was going on inside. Joan shook her head but still managed to gather her courage to explain. "I... Dustin and I, actually..." Ring... Ring... The jarring sound of the phone interrupted them. Larry apologized to Joan, "I'm sorry. I'll need to take this call outside." Joan's heart suddenly sank as her heart was filled with mixed emotions. It felt as if she had channeled all her energy into a punch but she had thrown it at empty space instead. In less than a minute, Larry ended the call as he came back in. He looked like he was visiting an old friend instead of taking care of his lover. As he approached Joan, he helped tucked her in properly, as if he wasn't going to bring up what they were just talking about. "Joan, I need to return to the office for an urgent meeting. Don't worry, once I have dealt with work. I'll come back to accompany you." "Go ahead..." She was never one to quibble. Despite how reluctant she was to see him go, she would never allow herself to express it. Larry leaned forward and gently kissed her on the forehead. With his body right next to her, a refreshing fragrance enveloped her senses while his warm breath suddenly gave her the impulse to burst into tears.

“In that case, I’m leaving now,” Larry remarked.

‘Mmm-hmm.’ She nodded slightly.

The moment he turned away, she had the urge to grab onto his sleeve and say, “Larry, don’t go. Stay with me.” As her hand reached forward, all she could grasp was air.

When her right hand fell helplessly back onto the bed, her heart seemed to have sunk along

with it. Tears followed the very next moment. Despite how they seemed to have made up,

Joan still felt that something was missing; she was unsettled.

She could feel that something had changed and it was no longer the same as it used to be.

Suddenly she could feel a sense of disappointment well up within her.

As she tried her best to stop her imagination from running wild, the feeling had taken root

in her. She had no way of untangling herself from it other than helplessly casting it aside

and ignoring it.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1652

Joan called a female team member in the design department to ask her to bring the

unfinished design drawings to the hospital. She thought she could force herself not to think

about Larry by being occupied with work. The team member agreed to her request right

away.

However, her final year project was left in Nirhaven College. She

couldn’t think of any of her

classmates who would be willing to bring it here. Am I really an

ill-mannered girl who has no

friends?

As she pondered over it, she felt even more out of sorts. Then, she

covered her head with

the blanket and forced herself to take a nap. Suddenly, someone arrived and knocked on

the door. Since she thought that it was her team member, she said while still hiding in the

blanket, “Please come in.”



“Is that Lyla? You can put the design drawings on the cupboard on the side. Thank you for bringing it here.”

Nevertheless, that person didn't reply but came up to Joan and put his hands on the blanket

near her head. Joan knew that they weren't a woman's hands.

“You can leave it there. Thank you.” Joan felt bewildered and pulled the blanket tighter.

“Ahem...”

Joan shivered as soon as she heard him coughing.

Dustin was amused as Joan sprang up from the bed. On the other hand, Joan heaved a sigh

of relief when she realized that it was Dustin.

“It's you... I thought.. it's my colleague.”

“Do you feel better because it's me?” Dustin's smile was still as warm.

Upon hearing it, Joan felt uncomfortable and recalled that he grabbed her hand when she

tended to his bruises in the past. It became extremely awkward as both of them fell silent.

After a while, Dustin took the initiative to break the silence. He took out something from his

back and presented it to Joan like a treasure.

“Look!”

Joan saw a pile of papers before her. Apart from her design drawings, Dustin had also

brought along her final year project.

Joan's eyes beamed as though she saw some precious treasure. She immediately took the

papers and said surprisingly, “My god! I never expected that you would bring these to me.

Dustin, you can really read my mind! How did you know that I wanted to get my final year

project from campus? Besides, you even brought the design drawings from my company!

This is incredible!”

“Initially, I went to your company to visit you but bumped into your colleague who wanted

to bring the documents to you. Since I thought you would need the final year project, I

decided to bring everything here. I hope... you won't be mad at me for doing it."

As Joan flipped through the page, she replied smilingly, "I won't. In fact, I'm grateful for your help."

Dustin shook his head helplessly and replied, "Well, it looks like I'm not as attractive as the documents."

Joan was amused and said, "Alright, why don't you take a seat?"

Dustin grabbed a chair and sat next to her bed. "By the way, you haven't told me why you're admitted to the hospital? Are you sick? How serious is it?"

"Er... I'll be embarrassed whenever I explain it. When I visited Leslie, I fainted at the doorstep because of anemia."

Dustin picked up an apple on the cupboard and began paring it. "Since you're a workaholic, I guess you must be exhausted due to stress at work."

Meanwhile, Joan had taken the pen that was clipped on the documents and began sketching. "It's not a big deal, actually. I can be discharged anytime."

Dustin replied as he threw away the skin of the apple, "If you really can be discharged anytime, why are you doing your work here?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1653

"Well, I'll be alone if I'm at home. Also, I won't have time to do my work and the report if I have to rest at home. So, I might as well stay here and get some IV drips."

Dustin handed over the apple to her and asked, "IV drips? Is this how you take care of yourself by getting this at such a young age?"

Joan took the apple from him and replied, "Dustin, thank you for visiting me when I'm sick.

Besides, you've even brought along the things I need the most. To be frank, I owe you a lot

all these years. However, you don't have to do this to me again because I don't want to owe you more."

Dustin pretended to be upset. "Who do you think I am to you?"

“My good friend,” she replied.

“Other than that?”

“Hmm... You’re also my savior who saved my life,” she answered seriously.

Dustin heaved a sigh. “Well, in that case... am I a nobody to you?”

“Of course not!” she immediately denied.

“I’m relieved. Joan, you can owe me forever because I allow you to do so.” He flashed her a smile.

“Dustin, I’ really don’t know what I should say now. By the way, I would like to treat you to

dinner two days later to repay you...” Before she could finish, Dustin waved his hand to

interrupt, “Treat me to dinner? No way, that’s too simple. Well, I have an idea. We’ve known

each other for many years, yet you probably haven’t tried any food that I cook. Why don’t

you show me some support? I mean, this is way better than treating me to dinner outside.”

Joan was a little hesitant. “Well...”

Dustin began to tidy up the drafts and papers on the bed. “Don’t think too much. Besides,

you said that you want to repay me. You can’t renege on your promise all of a sudden.”

“Alright then...” Joan agreed to it. When she took a bite of the apple, she felt that it wasn’t

ripe yet. Besides, tears nearly dropped from her face as the apple tasted bad.

Dustin was aware of the limits. As such, he didn’t bring Joan to his house but chose to go to

Joan’s rented house instead. As soon as Joan heard it, she scratched her head and said

embarrassedly, “I’m sorry, Dustin. Since I rarely cook, there are no food ingredients or even

rice for that matter at my house.”

Nonetheless, Dustin didn’t look surprised as she expected. Instead, he chuckled heartily and

said, “No problem. However, you’ve to come with me to the market as compensation.”

“Ah?” The next moment, Dustin dragged her to leave the ward before she could react.

As soon as they arrived at the market, Joan could feel that the smell of vegetables and meat permeated the air. Most of the customers here were elders who came with their grandchildren or middle-aged couples. Due to their young age, Joan and Dustin became rather eye-catching when they were in the market.

“Mister, how much are the oysters?”

“Nine per kilogram.”

“No way, that’s too expensive. I can buy more for seven per kilogram.”

“Alright, seven it is.”

Joan elbowed Dustin and said, “I didn’t expect you would bargain with the hawker. I mean, you didn’t save a lot of money anyway.”

Dustin handed over a bag of oysters to her and replied, “Thriftiness is a way of life that even wealthy people should practice.”

Then, Dustin brought her to buy some fresh fruits and vegetables and bargained along the way. Joan saw that all of the hawkers who refused to give discounts submitted to his way in the end.

“Dustin, do you always come here to buy some food?” Joan asked.

“Hmm... not really. Since I’ve to work on my research at Nirhaven College, I usually have lunch and dinner at the canteen. So, I rarely have time to cook.”

Joan grasped the bag in her hand tighter and said, “I can cook but usually prepare roughly the same dishes. Before I fell out with Larry, I used to eat the food prepared by the housemaid. Since you’ve bought so much food today, I’m a bit worried we can’t finish them.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1654

Dustin chuckled and replied, “It’s fine. I bought a lot of food so that you can learn to cook for yourself. I mean, you can’t ignore your health due to work. Good health is the most

important thing for all of us. Without good health, everything we possess worth nothing in the end.”

Later, Joan tried to bargain with the hawkers like how Dustin did. However, she didn't realize that someone was observing them some distance away. As soon as Joan turned around, Dustin met the person in the eyes. Suddenly, a sense of cunningness flashed across Dustin's piercingly sharp eyes.

When they arrived at Joan's house, she opened the door and invited Dustin to come in. It was a little dusty as she hadn't cleaned up the house for quite some time.

Even Dustin, who was courteous, couldn't help but wave his hands about to get rid of the musty smell.

Joan immediately said to divert his attention, “I'll clean the stove now.”  
Buzz!

The phone in Dustin's pocket vibrated. He took it out and unlocked the screen only after Joan left.

It was a short and concise message from S.

The photos are sent.

“Mr. Norton, this is the partnership proposal couriered by Hilbert Group. Please take a look.”

“Okay.” As Larry took the pile of documents in a paper bag from his assistant, he couldn't

help but feel curious. Why did he say that the documents were couriered? Which company would courier the documents to us?

He opened the paper bag and took out the documents carefully. Apart from the word

“Partnership” on the cover page, an email address was written on every paper.

In the past, Larry would think that it was a prank made by one of his disgruntled employees.

This time around, the email address appeared to have some magical power that enticed him to open it.

He quickly typed the email address on his laptop. The next moment, several emails popped out, of which the first one showed the word “Welcome”. He clicked on the arrow with his slightly shivering hand. The next word that came into sight was “Search”. Although it seemed like a boring prank, Larry somehow felt that he would discover more information soon. As he opened the next email and saw the word “Truth”, his heart skipped a beat. It was the last word that he saw. The subsequent emails contained pictures depicting the ordinary life of a man and a woman. In some of the pictures, they chatted and took care of each other. The man also pared an apple to the woman lovingly. Besides, some photos also showed that they seemed to be rather intimate. They looked indeed like a husband and a wife who visited the market, bought food, and bargained with the hawkers. Larry’s heart went cold as he looked at the pictures one by one. At this moment, he didn’t feel sad, devastated, nor angry. After all, he had felt totally drained whenever he read the news about Joan every day. As he felt exhausted, he didn’t want to think about or be mad at her anymore. Nonetheless, there was one thing that he had to do—he had to go to the hospital. He wished to find out if she was still there and waiting for him. Once Larry made up his mind, he rushed out of his office without shutting down the laptop. To avoid the heavy traffic, he even made a detour to the hospital where she was admitted. He felt that everything on the streets moved swiftly because he ran as fast as he could. After a while, he finally arrived at the hospital, panting and covered in sweat. However, she had moved out of the ward, and nothing was left in it. “She’s gone.”

He couldn't help but laugh at himself. Larry, you already have the answer before this. Why do you still waste time taking a look in person? Will you be satisfied only after witnessing everything that you loathe? Is this how you're finally willing to give up on her?

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1655

It was the first time in his life to enter a bar. He used to tell Joan that he looked down upon those who came to such places. When Joan asked him why, he said, "It's because they are lazy and selfish. They don't work hard but choose to numb themselves with alcohol in such places. So, they're merely losers left out by society... they're the pest to society."

Gazing at several bottles of vodkas in front of him, Larry laughed at himself again. How could I look down on them? Well, I became an idiot who has fallen for the tricks, just like all of them. I became someone whom I loathed the most. If the blue vodkas resembled the vast sea, he was the traveler drowning in the deep sea who couldn't clutch at any straws.

Larry somehow saw the reflection of a beautiful lady's face in his wine glass. After staring at the face in silence for quite some time, he gulped down the wine and murmured, "Joan, you made me into what I am now."

Meanwhile, Caspian came to the company to visit Larry as he felt guilty. Nancy told him that the misunderstanding between men remained unsolved often because they either felt embarrassed or dared not speak first. Besides, since Caspian trusted their friendship and brotherhood that had lasted for years, he mustered up his courage to be here.

"I'm sorry, sir. Mr. Norton has left for quite some time."

"Do you know where he went?"

The assistant put on an apologetic smile and said, "I'm sorry. Mr. Norton didn't disclose it. If

you really have important matters, you may wait for him in the president's office for a while."

Caspian waved his hands and said, "It's okay. I can come again next time as it's not an urgent matter."

The assistant still smiled at him politely. "Sure. I'm sorry, but would you excuse me? I've to get back to work."

Larry nodded in response while thinking to himself. Larry is a workaholic who keeps

immersing himself in piles of documents. Since when has he learned to get some rest? The

night had fallen when he wanted to leave Larry's office. Suddenly, he saw that something in

the office was not turned off, thus giving out a faint glow.

As the door was partially closed, he entered the room and saw a white laptop that wasn't

shut down. He realized the glow came from it and was reflected on the wall.

"Since when did Boss become so careless? Why did he forget to shut down the laptop

before leaving?" Caspian murmured.

When Caspian grabbed the mouse, he saw a photo on the laptop of a man and a woman.

Apparently, they visited a market together.

"Is that Joan? And Dustin?"

After investigating Dustin thoroughly and obtaining his personal information, Caspian

always saw Dustin as his archenemy. Caspian believed that Dustin definitely had a poor

character since he had the cheek to ruin the relationship of others.

A moment later, Caspian mustered up the courage to look at the next photos. There were

more than twenty photos of Joan and Dustin, which were taken from various angles.

Click, click! He immediately took out his phone to snap pictures of everything, including the

photos, email address, and the sender. After saving all of the pictures, he sent one of them



to Nancy and a voice message to briefly explain the situation. Also, he asked Nancy to think about where Larry would have gone. Now I understand why Boss left without shutting down his laptop. If I were him, I would smash my laptop and punish the jerk myself. Caspian felt restless as he walked out of Larry's office. Will he take things too hard and harm himself? No, he's not that vulnerable. He only needs some time to calm himself down. Caspian said to himself as though he wanted to have peace of mind. After that, he quickly hailed a cab and told the taxi a few locations. He went to different places in the same cab to save time. First, Caspian went to Larry's house. However, he couldn't enter it because the gate was locked. Although he could enter the house of Larry's parents, Finnick and his wife told him that Larry had not visited them for a few days. They even asked if Caspian knew what Larry was up to recently. Caspian came up with a story as he dared not tell them what had actually happened.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1656

Caspian went to many places, including their favorite restaurant, gardens, and so on, yet there was still no sight of Larry. Given that he nearly went to all places in Marsingfill, even the cab driver couldn't help but ask if something happened. After searching Larry for two hours, he almost wanted to burst into tears. He felt that it was way more tiring than the military training that he went through. After all, mental exhaustion was more devastating than physical tiredness. Leaning against the headrest in the passenger's seat, he covered his eyes with a hand while massaging his temples with the other.

“Young man, where should we go now? I’ve been to all of the places you told me.”

Caspian replied in a weary voice, “I don’t know. Just go straight.”

After going straight for less than two minutes, Caspian’s phone in his pocket suddenly rang.

Thinking that it could be Larry’s call, he hastily picked it up.

“Hello, are you Caspian? Where are you? I’ve been looking for you for almost the entire night!”

Since it was a stranger’s voice, Caspian immediately felt that something wasn’t right. He

glanced at the phone screen and confirmed that it was Larry’s number.

Why does he have Boss’s phone? Holding on to his curiosity, he calmed himself down and

continued answering the phone, “Who are you? Why do you have my friend’s phone?”

“Your friend is dead drunk in my bar. When I asked him some questions, he didn’t answer

me at all. Instead, he handed his phone to me and fell asleep right away. I don’t mind if he’s

drunk, but he hasn’t paid me yet. After all, these few bottles of vodkas are quite expensive.

Since you were the last one he called, I thought I should call you. Are you free to pick him

up? Otherwise, I’m going to call the police.”

Upon hearing it, Caspian immediately asked the driver to make a U-turn.

“May I know where

your bar is? I’ll be there right away. You don’t have to worry about the bill. Please don’t call

the police.”

The stranger gave Caspian the address. It was a place where even Caspian, who knew the ins

and outs of Marsingfill, wasn’t familiar with. Shortly afterward, the cab arrived at the bar.

After paying for the ride, Caspian realized that he only had two hundred left. Nevertheless,

he didn’t think too much about it as the only thing in his mind now was to pick Larry up.

As soon as he entered the bar, he was overwhelmed by the deafening music. Since he didn’t

hear any noise outside, he couldn't help but feel impressed with the soundproof quality of the door.

Although the bar wasn't cramped, it was crowded with many rich decadents, disheveled men, and women in revealing clothes and excessive makeup. It instantly gave him goosebumps.

After all, it was the first time that Caspian visited such a place. He was dazzled by the lights that kept changing colors. Eventually, he was lost in such a dimly lit and chaotic environment. When he felt increasingly uncomfortable, a few bartenders noticed him.

Soon, one of them asked if he was looking for someone and led him to Larry.

Finally, Caspian saw Larry lying on the brown bar counter listlessly.

Caspian was certain that

Larry wasn't asleep as he was still shaking a wine bottle with one hand while holding a glass with the other. As Caspian came closer, Larry gulped down the wine in his glass.

Caspian rushed toward Larry to grab the wine bottle. It was only now that he saw a row of empty vodka bottles next to Larry.

"Put it down!" As far as Caspian remembered, Larry wasn't good at drinking. He would only

drink a little when he had to meet his clients. As such, Caspian was shocked to see that he drank so much, as though vodka was water.

As soon as Caspian sat next to Larry, he could feel an overpowering smell of alcohol.

On the other hand, Larry flashed Caspian a grin when their eyes met.

However, he basically

stuttered as he had too much vodka. Caspian couldn't understand a single word but could

tell that Larry was probably inviting him to drink together.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1657

Caspian was furious to see that his good friend-cum-boss became decadent. Unable to hold

on to his anger, he grabbed the bottle from Larry and gulped down the remaining vodka.

“Ahem...” As he was choked, he coughed vigorously as though blood would spurt out from his mouth anytime. I really don’t understand how a bitter drink can drown our sorrows.

Meanwhile, Larry seemed to be gloating over it when Caspian was coughing. However, his body was shaking as though he would fall to the floor the next second.

After Caspian put down the bottle, Larry realized that it was empty. The next moment, he stammered loudly,

“Get me another bottle!”

This time, Caspian finally understood what Larry said. He immediately grabbed Larry’s hand and berated, “Do you want to drink more and die due to alcohol overdose? Do you think alcohol is just like water?”

Larry tilted his head and stared at Caspian like a drunkard. A few seconds later, he put on a wry smile and replied, “Yes, I want it!”

What do you want? Do you want to die? However, Caspian held his tongue. As they were even closer than blood brothers, Caspian couldn’t say such nasty things to Larry when he was drunk. As such, Caspian only stared at Larry silently. Even though Larry was drunk, he still remembered the things that troubled him.

Caspian was in a daze for quite some time before he recalled that there were many bottles of vodkas on the table. Since he couldn’t pay the bill with only two hundred in his pocket, he called Nancy and asked her to bring a debit card to the bar.

“Boss, do you know you look exactly like a drunk who has no home?”

Although Caspian was talking to Larry, he seemed to be saying this to himself.

Meanwhile, Larry had sat straight when Caspian was calling Nancy. After Caspian finished,

Larry gazed at him and said, “There’s no home. My home is gone long ago.”

Caspian felt a little heartbroken upon hearing it. Since Caspian couldn't comfort Larry, he only patted Larry's back to give him some insignificant moral support. Larry had always been an overbearing figure both in business and on the battlefield.

However, he seemed to have turned into a totally different man in the bar. In this world, only Joan could destroy this invincible man.

Caspian seldom talked behind someone's back, particularly Larry, who was like his family member. Nevertheless, Caspian cursed Joan deep in his heart numerous times. He couldn't understand why Larry kept giving Joan chances. Even more so, he had no idea why he was willing to be dead drunk for a woman like her.

As Nancy arrived, a bartender stood before Caspian, urging him to pay the bill. She rushed

toward them and showed them the debit card. "Let me get the bill."

The bartender took her card and left. Before Nancy asked what happened, she saw Larry lying on the table next to Caspian.

Meanwhile, Larry probably felt a lot better than before. At the very least, he stopped

whining sobbingly and was lying silently.

As Larry was dead drunk, Caspian said to Nancy, "I think Boss can't go back by himself.

Besides, we can't drive him to his parent's house because they'll be worried about him.

"Nancy, I think we should bring him back to our house. Look at him. He certainly can't take care of himself now."

Nonetheless, as soon as Larry heard that they were going back, he started struggling on the chair and murmured, "I can still drink. I'm not going back!"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1658

Given Caspian's strength, it would be no problem for him to bear Larry's weight. However, he was already getting a headache the minute he entered the rowdy bar with blasting

music. Coupled with how much Larry was squirming, Caspian almost fell to the ground while helping him up.

Meanwhile, Nancy had noticed how much trouble Caspian was having, so she stepped forward and hooked one of Larry's arms around her neck. Needless to say, it was a lot easier for Caspian with help from someone with a Taekwondo black belt. As he naturally took the other arm, they managed to drag the drunk man out.

It did not take long for them to help Larry into the car. But since Nancy drove here with a navigator, she had already forgotten the way back. Therefore, Caspian took the driver seat instead.

"Why did Larry drink so much? How did even you find out that he was here?" Nancy questioned the moment they were seated in the car.

"Who knew that Joan turned out to be someone like that? I can't believe that we tried to keep her secret and even hid it from Larry. If only we revealed it to him sooner, he would not have assumed that we all lied to him and betrayed him. He probably wouldn't have downed this much alcohol either," she continued to grumble.

At that time, it was already past midnight, and there were lesser cars on the road. As though

taking the opportunity to vent his anger, Caspian began to speed. He slammed the steering

wheel with his left hand and growled, "This can't do. I must take revenge for Boss."

"Please slow down..." Nancy anxiously yelled as she felt the car accelerating. Then, she noticed the hand beside her twitching, so she snapped her head in its direction. Larry was mumbling something repeatedly while changing his sitting posture restlessly.

"Don't do anything funny behind our backs, and don't you dare lay a finger on Joan. I still have faith in her," Nancy turned back to Caspian and defended Joan.

By then, Caspian had slowed down, but he was unconvinced. He reasoned, "Didn't you see those photos? It may simply be a coincidence if we only had one photo. The second may be accidental too. Unfortunately, there are more than twenty pictures of her. Do you still think that she did nothing wrong?"

Firmly standing her ground, Nancy insisted, "Aren't you curious about where these photos came from? Who and why do you think took them?"

"Seeing is believing, and we have already seen it twice. Don't you think that's enough

evidence? I will be sure to investigate the source of those photos," the man at the wheel

replied after taking a moment to ponder over it.

Nancy kept quiet. Even though she believed Joan, she could not refute that 'seeing is

believing'. Glancing at the intoxicated man beside her and the driver who was releasing his

anger behind the wheel, she decided that silence was the best choice in that situation.

As they drove, the scenery outside the window flew by in a blur. The ground reflected the dull moonlight, and it looked like the Earth was covered in a translucent veil that dyed the night sky into a mysterious color.

Miles away, Joan was holding onto her fork as she stared at the dishes prepared by Dustin.

For some reason, she felt uneasy. She repeatedly poked her cheek with the back of her fork,

and for a long time, she did not touch any of the food.

"Are you not hungry?" Dustin propped his hands on the table and asked with concern,

"What's wrong?"

Immediately, Joan scooped a bunch of vegetables and shoved it into her mouth. She forced

a smile and mumbled with her mouth filled with food, "It's delicious!"

The dishes were tasty, but she could not comprehend why she was feeling this troubled.

There was a dull throbbing in her heart, and she felt an inexplicably bad premonition.

Although this was the first meal Dustin had ever cooked for Joan, she did not enjoy it as

much as she expected. Like they were strangers at a college canteen eating together, they

barely exchanged words across the dinner table. Clearly, it was an awkward situation, but

they seemed unbothered as they mulled over the worries of their own.

On the other hand, Nancy was assisting Caspian to bring Larry into the house. After they

moved him to the guest room, she hurriedly went to fill up a pail of warm water for Caspian

to help Larry wash up. Following that, she picked out a shirt Caspian rarely wore and passed

it to him.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1659

Thankfully, Larry stopped fidgeting ever since he got into the car. Even so, they still met

some difficulty before they finally managed to tuck him into bed. As he heard the

incoherent strings of words that Larry occasionally blurted, Caspian thought his boss had a

bad dream in his sleep.

The next morning, Larry woke up as usual, yet he felt that something was off. His last

memory was drinking at a bar, so how did he end up here?

The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes was the sky blue ceiling above him.

Naturally, he started to scan his surroundings. He felt fine initially.

However, as soon as he

tilted his head, it felt as though his soul had left his body. All he felt was a nasty headache

and a heartache now.

I felt fine last night while drinking and did not feel intoxicated then. Why am I having such a

bad hangover?

The unfamiliar furnishing around him only confirmed his suspicions that he was not in his



own house. Instantly, he tried to stand up while using the bed as his support. To his surprise, he realized he was in a different set of clothes from last night. Did someone bring me here and help me change yesterday? By chance, he also noticed his mobile phone placed on the bedside table. Alas, the screen was black, like it was turned off or out of battery. Frustrated, he ruffled his fingers through his hair, desperately trying to piece together the fragmented memories he had of the previous night. Squeak. Suddenly, someone pushed open the door, and it turned out to be Nancy, who was holding onto a bowl of soup. "Oh Larry, you are awake." "What... am I doing here?" Larry stammered. "You had a little too much to drink yesterday, so Caspian and I spent some time before we found you at a bar. Following that, we took you here, and Caspian helped you to change out of your dirty clothes." Putting on a tough act, Larry got out of bed and muttered, "I'm fine. Both of you don't have to worry about me." Nancy sighed and held the bowl up to the man in front of her. "Larry, you were dead drunk last night. Have some of this hangover soup. Otherwise, your headache will persist throughout the entire day." Before he could respond, Nancy forced him to take the bowl and went out to look for Caspian. Left alone in the room, Larry stared blankly at his reflection in the soup. He could still remember the photos he saw the previous afternoon and the details of everything that happened at that time. The memories made him feel suffocated, and his throat felt hot as though it was on fire. In the heat of the moment, he slammed the soup

onto the table, and its contents splashed everywhere. A few drops even scalded his hand.

Unknown to him, a few drops also landed on the table, looking like raindrops that were falling on the surface of a river.

“Boss, you’re awake.” Caspian warily poked his head from behind the door like a spy who was checking the situation out.

Hearing no response, he let himself into the room and quietly closed the door behind him.

He sat on a chair facing Larry, and they sat there in silence for a long time.

Time went by, and the hangover soup that Nancy prepared had already turned cold.

Caspian finally mustered up the courage to speak. “Boss, I’m sorry for hiding things from you previously. Actually, I...”

Larry raised his head and looked at Caspian with disappointment. He interrupted his bodyguard, “Is there any point to talk about this now?” At this stage, he felt helpless, like he was at the bottom of the sea with no one who could save him.

Unsure of what to do, Caspian stammered, “What are you planning to do then?”

“I have no clue.”

It was four simple words, yet this was the first time Caspian had ever heard Larry say something along these lines. From his memory, his boss was a fearless individual who had countermeasures for every situation, and Caspian did not expect to see a day where Larry would be as helpless as he was now.

For most men out there, it would be hard to forgive someone who betrayed you. In particular, if the traitor were to be someone you were close to, as it would be a fatal blow.

Trembling, Caspian cautiously probed, “Then...should I continue to look into this matter?”

He was afraid that he might touch the wrong nerve if he said something wrong.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1660

In response, Larry shook his head and said nothing. Every time Larry remained silent, Caspian only felt more resentful towards Joan. Did he drink a potion instead of the alcohol yesterday? He was hysterical the previous day, but he seems calm and reserved today.

“Boss, you are abusing your health like that. From as far as I can remember, you have never had this much alcohol before. Here, let me reheat the hangover soup while you lay down and get some rest in the meantime,” Caspian suggested.

Despite what Caspian had said, Larry did not move an inch. He was looking out in the distance and watching the greenery outside the window. Seemingly deep in thought, it was difficult for anyone to get through to him.

Caspian could only sigh and leave the room with the half-filled bowl of soup. To his surprise, he saw Nancy hiding behind the door when he went out. Grabbing her arm, he quietly dragged her away.

“How did it go? Did he open up to you? How about his state of emotions?” Nancy shot him with a flurry of questions.

With a bitter smile, Caspian stated, “He’s doing more than okay, and there are no traces of the heartbreak he had last night. However, he seemed to have lost his spirit. Earlier, he barely responded to whatever I said.”

This made Nancy worried. “Oh? Is it that serious? I guess he is really devastated by what Joan has done.”

“He is not just devastated... it broke him. I think he has lost his willpower to even live on.”

Abruptly, Caspian thought of the photos taken, and he hurriedly ran to the study to enter his email address and search for the sender ‘S’ on his laptop. Curious about what was going on, Nancy followed him into the room and read the email

sent by 'S'. Sure enough, the person left nothing but his nickname in it. Caspian was baffled by who it might be and what to do next, but Nancy stepped in to take the lead. She smacked her forehead and exclaimed, "I know what to do, the IP! Search for this IP address right now, and we can trace it back to him!" "Oh yes, why did I not think of that?" At the speed of light, Caspian's fingers began dancing across the keyboard. It did not take him long before he found the IP address of the sender. However, how could it be this easy for them to track the anonymous sender down? Even though Caspian dug out the IP address, he realized it was different for every photo sent. How could the person exist in more than twenty over places? Nancy and Caspian exchanged glances. Was this how they were going to end their investigation? Messaging his temples, Caspian closed his laptop. "Why would someone use these photos to blackmail others? Caspian, do you think that the perpetrator is doing this for money?" Nancy thought out loud. Glancing at her, Caspian calmly explained, "No, that's highly unlikely. If he is after money, he will take these photos to Joan instead because she would likely buy them to protect her marriage with Boss. Besides, the mastermind can only maximize his self-interest by going to Joan, and not Boss." "So he is not motivated by money..." Nancy pinched her chin and continued, "Is he trying to break up their relationship?" Rather than replying to her hypothesis directly, Caspian threw her another question, "Nancy, have you ever considered the possibility that Joan might have really done something to let Boss down? As you know, his company has been closely monitored by various media outlets, and all its stocks and related products are heavily affected by Boss' every move. In

the case where they expose the couple's emotional discord, do you know how much impact it would have on the company's stock prices?"

It was one of the rare moments where Nancy did not argue with him. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Caspian finally revealed the things he had been keeping mum. "Nancy, you insisted that you are certain about Joan's character and her love for Boss. However, in the face of so many photos and evidence, have you ever asked yourself if you truly believe in Joan's story? Has it never crossed your mind that she was only doing it to please Boss?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1661

Nancy gave it some thought. Indeed, she had thought about all the things he had said. When she saw him helping Larry out, the words she repeated a thousand times to support Joan suddenly meant nothing, and her confidence had morphed into resentment and incomprehension towards the latter. From a darker perspective, one could not deny the existence of those photos regardless of the mastermind's motive behind these photos. If Joan did not visit Dustin, how did such photos appear? If she was clean and had self-respect, why would she meet with him so many times even though she was already a married woman with a family?

Besides, based on Larry's abnormal behavior over the past few days, she clearly had not visited him in a long while. No matter how much Nancy thought about it, she would never indecisively linger between two men if she already decided that she had lost feelings for one of them. By doing otherwise, she would only end up hurting everyone's feelings. Currently, Caspian has lost all trust in Joan, so do I still trust her?" Should she believe in the conclusive evidence gathered, or should she count on her friendship with Joan?

“A lot of the soup has been spilt, and it has turned cold. Could you prepare another bowl?”  
Caspian requested before he twisted the doorknob to exit the study. Nancy followed behind him.  
As soon as they stepped out, they noticed that the house was eerily silent. Feeling uneasy, Caspian exchanged anxious looks with Nancy. He was about to rush over and tear down the bedroom door, but Nancy stopped him.  
As such, Caspian tried to calm himself down and gently pushed the bedroom door open instead. From the crack, he could not see Larry’s figure. Bang! As expected, the man was nowhere in sight when they pushed open the door.  
He stood rooted to the ground in a daze. Meanwhile, Nancy pushed past him and spotted a letter that Larry left behind on the table.  
With her gaze, she beckoned Caspian over. Then, she held the letter out with both hands and read the contents in a small voice.  
“I’m sorry that I left. Don’t bother looking for me. Thank you for everything, and goodbye.”  
Stunned, Nancy’s first instinct was to run out to stop him. When she turned to chase after Larry, Caspian caught hold of her wrist. He grabbed it so tightly that it hurt her.  
Using the gentlest and most helpless tone, he pleaded, “Nancy, don’t go after him. He doesn’t want to see us, nor does he want us to find him.”  
“What else should we do? Are we going to let him wander around the streets alone, without a friend and without the thought of visiting his kin?” Nancy choked. Tears were forming in Caspian’s eyes, but he held them back in front of Nancy. Pretending to be calm, he assured her, “Let’s give him some space outside to think through everything that had happened. When he thinks of us and wishes to return, we can look for him then.”

In fact, Larry did not completely blackout when he was drunk and still had some vague memories of that night. For instance, he remembered floundering while Caspian and Nancy tried to help him out of the bar. As a result, they had to change how they supported him several times, earning many glares from passersby. He felt guilty for everything, and although he was not fully conscious at that time, the fragmented memory still weighed heavily in his mind when he woke up. Feeling apologetic, he apologized in the letter he wrote for them.

As for the 'thank you' he wrote, it was out of gratitude for the trouble they took to travel to the bar and back to this house for him. At least now he knew he still had friends who cared for him dearly by his side, though he might have lost his beloved. Knock! The rapping on the door snapped Nancy out of her thoughts. Retracting her hand from Caspian's grip, she quickly headed to the door.

Who knows, Larry might have changed his mind. Maybe he no longer feels conflicted and has overcome his struggles. Maybe he wants to come back to talk to someone about it?

With that thought, Nancy's expression softened. But as soon as she opened the door and saw who it was, she froze.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1662

The visitor's hand stopped mid-air as though she did not expect anyone to answer the door.

After all, she had knocked for such a long time and might have assumed that no one to be

home. Slightly surprised, she still beamed brightly when the door opened. Her soft voice

rang in Nancy's ears. "Nancy, is Larry here?"

Before the woman in the house could reply or even think of what to say, a strong hand

reached out from behind her to slam the door shut.

While Nancy jumped in surprise, the woman standing outside was confused. Puzzled, Joan knocked on the door again. As it happened too quickly, she did not catch sight of the person who shut the door. For a split second, she thought it was a robber who closed the door to protect his identity when he saw that she had a visitor. "Nancy, what's wrong? Who was that? Hey, you better not lay a finger on her! Please calm down," Joan's voice grew louder, to the point where she was almost yelling. At the same time, she banged on the door without a care. "It's me," Caspian declared. His hand was still in the same position where he slammed the door shut. Meanwhile, Nancy was trapped between the door and him. As she was unsure what he was going to do, she did not even dare to breathe. The situation made the visitor bewildered. "Caspian? Why don't you open the door? Did you mistake me for someone else? I'm Joan." Unforgivingly, the man asserted, "I know that you're Joan. Don't you dare come here anymore because you are not welcome!" Nancy could feel his voice reverberating through her scalp as he spoke. "Caspian, Nancy, what's wrong with both of you? Can't you open the door and talk to me about it?" Joan desperately pleaded. She had no clue why the two was treating her this way. Regardless of how much she thought about it, she could not recall any conflicts with them. Furthermore, they got along fine over the last few years, and they never had any disputes. In addition, they would usually discuss things in the open, but why are they refusing to meet her now?" "Joan, you'd better leave now, and please don't return to look for Boss in future too. If you make another visit here, I will throw you out myself. After all, we have been good friends for



many years, and I believe we should not destroy our friendship this way. You should have known better before you came.”

Nevertheless, Joan was persistent, and she shouted louder than before, “Caspian, what is going on with you? Are you trying to break your ties with me? Otherwise, can you let me speak with Nancy? Even if there is a misunderstanding between us, we should at least lay it out in the open!”

Hearing her name being called out, Nancy wanted to break free from Caspian and open the door for Joan. However, despite having a black belt in Taekwondo herself, she was no match against a man who had been a soldier. Additionally, she subconsciously did not want to let the person outside in either. She thought the visitor was filthy and would dirty the house if she came in.

At the same time, Caspian had noticed how Nancy wanted to open the door, so he shot her a threatening glare that she had never witnessed before. It made her feel like she was prey, while he was a hunter with a gun in his hands.

Consequently, she gave up on the thought of allowing the visitor in but pressed her ear against the door to hear what was going on the other side.

By the time Joan’s voice was hoarse from all that shouting, and her hand became sore from banging on the door, the door was still glued shut. In a feeble voice, she muttered, “What... on earth happened?”

Those were words meant for the people in the house, but it sounded like she was talking to herself. Initially, she only came here to visit Larry. Yet, to her wildest imagination, she was rejected by the two friends she trusted most.

She stayed outside the door for a long duration while Caspian and Nancy continued to

ignore her the whole time, without even responding to her anymore. All she felt was despair, as she had no idea what resulted in such a huge reaction from the two parties.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1663

She phoned Nancy repeatedly, and the latter felt her phone vibrating in her pocket. While

her heart started to be swayed, Caspian snatched her phone and turned it off. By doing so,

Joan could no longer call to 'harass' them anymore.

Being unable to get a hold of Larry either, Nancy panicked, and she felt fear spreading

through her limbs. Usually, she was a person who would put all her energy into work, no

matter what she encountered. Unfortunately, she now realized that was only possible

because everything she had was built upon the foundation of having a lover, friends and a

beautiful family.

With their backing, she had the capacity to fulfil her dreams. If they were gradually taken

away from her, she would not have the strength and drive to chase those dreams of hers, as

the people she treasured were more important than her ambitions.

Relative to her loved ones, her aspirations did not hold a candle to them.

Is it too late for

her to grasp this concept at this point?

Somehow, she stumbled onto the streets that were busy with traffic and filled with

pedestrians as usual.

By the road, there was a woman who had set up a fruit stall. Her business seemed to be

flourishing, and her line of customers did not seem to dwindle. Joan stepped forward to

take a closer look. Unfortunately, from the perspective of others, she was blocking their way.

"Miss, can move away? It doesn't matter if you are not buying anything, but please don't get

in our way," a plump man chided her.

Startled, Joan took a few steps back obediently. At the same time, an older lady spotted her curious expression and asked her in amusement, "Are you trying to figure out why the business here is so good when there are plenty of other fruit stalls?" Joan nodded. Seeing how she was willing to listen to her, the older lady grinned wider. "It's because of how kind the owner of this fruit stall is. Her fruits are cheaper than her competitors, and they are delicious. Rumor has it that she is bringing up a child on her own. Yet, every time she makes a sale to us, she only earns a small profit. Since she is kind and pretty, we call her the 'Fruit Goddess'." How can she live well on her own even though she has to raise a child by herself? The moment that thought popped out in her head, Joan felt taken aback. Regardless of how strained her relationship with Larry was, she never thought of breaking up with him. Besides, even if they went their separate ways, she could never leave with Leslie, given how influential the Norton family was. She stood by the fruit stall for a long time and curiously wanted to take a peek at who this strong woman was. So far, she always thought that such powerful females only existed in books that featured famous people. When the crowd slowly thinned, she managed to catch a glimpse of half of the owner's body. That lady had a good figure, and her wavy hair was tied back into a ponytail with a black hair tie. She wore a white apron held together by a belt tied into a beautiful bow. After serving the last few orders, the owner could finally take a seat to rest her feet. Given her tall height, it looked rather uncomfortable for her to rest on her small wooden bench. While she raised her head to take a swing from her bottle of mineral water, Joan

immediately recognized the woman's dazzling facial features, perfect figure and iconic wavy hair.

Isn't that Gabriella? I haven't seen her in a while.

Without hesitation, Joan walked up to Gabriella, who was focused on downing the water in her bottle. She seemed parched as she did not even notice a person standing in front of her in such proximity.

"I would like to buy some apples," Joan said.

"Sure. Please give me a moment miss, I'll..."

Miss? Since when did Gabriella greet people so politely? Her attitude has changed three hundred and sixty degrees, from the unruly temperament she used to have to a gentle and polite one now.

That moment did not last long as Gabriella stopped midway through her sentence when she saw Joan.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1664

"Are you here to chase me away or to mock me?" she said harshly, though she still bagged the fruits for Joan.

Despite having a thousand words to say when she first recognized the fruit stall owner, Joan could only utter one word, "Neither."

Gabriella smiled and passed the packed apples to her. It was unlike the look she gave to her other customers. Her lips curled into an arrogant smile, and she demanded, "That's a hundred."

That is clearly daylight robbery. How can she ask for so much money when she only gave me six apples? I can't believe one of the customers earlier actually praised Gabriella for setting low prices. How did she become a completely different person out of the blue?

Begrudgingly, Joan pulled out a banknote from her wallet and paid Gabriella with it. True

enough, the latter did not bother to give her any change, as though it was normal for apples to cost that much.

The moment Joan took the bag of apples from Gabriella, she heard the other party say,

“Since my best friend is here, I should treat you to a cup of coffee.”

Joan did not respond to the offer, and Gabriella took her silence as consent. After the lady

boss closed her shop, she waved to a granny not far away. Without forgetting about Joan’s

presence, Gabriella announced, “Granny, I am heading out with my best friend and won’t be

selling anymore for today. If any customer comes by to ask, you can tell them that!”

She emphasized the words ‘best friend’. If this happened in the past, it would irk Joan.

However, she did not have any opinions after hearing that today, and it made it seem like

they always had a close friendship.

“Joan, where do you think we should go? Let me treat you to something. Should we head to

‘Sweet Time’ or ‘Color House’?” The two places suggested by her were high-end cafes,

patronized most by the upper echelon of Marsingfill.

Joan rarely visited those places, but she was somewhat fascinated by them. She glanced at

the other lady. Those places... are only suitable for the ‘Gabriella’, who belongs to the

upper-class, instead of this ‘Gabriella,’ who owns a fruit stall.

“No, I’ll treat you instead.” Joan offered, feeling a sense of superiority from nowhere. In her

opinion, since she had a higher salary than Gabriella, she should take care of the bill.

Little did she know that her considerate gesture was perceived to be a diss to Gabriella. It

made the other lady feel like she was being ridiculed and looked down on.

To Gabriella, Joan’s words sounded this way instead, “Gabriella, do you think you have the

same status as before? How can you act like the spoiled and willful young mistress of the Wards anymore? Just take a look at yourself! You are just a pitiful single mother whose only means of survival is via a small fruit stall”

In contrast, those were not the true meaning behind Joan’s words. All she intended was to help Gabriella save on her expenses, especially since the latter had worked so hard to get by.

Given the misunderstanding, Gabriella scoffed, “What’s wrong? Are you looking down on

me? Do you think I can’t even afford to buy you a cup of coffee?”

Joan instantly managed to pick up on how Gabriella had misinterpreted her intentions. She

quickly clarified, “I only thought that those were places we don’t necessarily have to visit

because they are too expensive. After all, we should all save as much as we can. “

“Don’t worry about that!” Gabriella pulled out her rubber band to let her gorgeous black

silky hair cascade down her back. It so happens that she was in a dress that matched her

well too. With her milky-white complexion and red lips, she stood out among the crowd like

a pearl in a desert, dazzling and exuding beauty.

Her tone was curt and was similar to the one she used when she revealed that she liked

Larry to Joan. While she may have changed how she behaved around others, she would

always treat Joan with disdain.

After they walked around for some time, they finally arrived at a high-end clubhouse. The

server brought the menu to them and politely asked Joan, “Miss, what will you like to

order?”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1665

He casually ignored Gabriella and directed his attention to Joan.

Sometimes people could

act like snobs. Those who felt inferior tend to suck up to the high-ranking officials or famous individuals, hoping to gain their favor and find an easy way up the ladder. Although it did not apply to everyone, the courteous server in front of them seemed to fit the description.

Gabriella might be beautiful and glamorous, especially in a dress that made her stand out more than Joan did. But the server could immediately tell that the latter was wearing a coat from Opulent Designs. Although it was available on the market for some time, he knew that not everyone could afford to buy it. On the other hand, while Gabriella's dress was pretty, as someone who served wealthy bosses and mistresses all day, he could tell that it cost peanuts. Such dresses could easily be purchased online for around fifty and might even come with a buy two get one free deal.

Scanning the prices on the menu, Joan got shocked. Ultimately, it was not her idea to come here for coffee. If she stripped her title as Mrs. Norton, she was simply an individual from the working class and a lowly employee working in any company. Without bothering to remember the names of the coffee on the menu, she ordered the cheapest one and sent the server away.

Meanwhile, Gabriella tried to suppress the frustration she felt. She was aware that given her state, she meant nothing compared to Joan. After all, the lady sitting opposite her could buy the entire shop if she wanted to, let alone a cup of expensive coffee. Resentment grew in Gabriella's heart, especially after she witnessed how the server had disregarded her.

In an obnoxious voice, she ordered several things off the menu while pointing at them as though she had returned to the way she used to be. Nodding, the server smiled and asked

them to wait for their orders to come.

After he finally left, the two ladies fell into an awkward silence before Gabriella broke it, "You look troubled. Are you that unwilling to sit with me? Can't you show me some respect, considering how we used to be best friends in college?"

Joan could not be bothered to explain her circumstances. "You can think however you want, but since I've agreed to come out with you, I am not here to despise you of sorts."

It was heartbreaking to hear that. In the past, Gabriella was the rose among the thorns. She was wealthy, beautiful, smart, and Landon Ward's beloved daughter. There were even people fighting to be in line to hang out with her. As such, every time the two of them went out, Joan would be the one feeling inferior.

Gabriella would never have predicted that the tables would turn, where Joan would say something like that to her. At that moment, she gave up on her plan to diss Joan. Adjusting her sitting posture, she continued with a smile, "Since you aren't here to mock me, your troubled expression only means that you have a problem..."

She purposely kept the suspense before she moved closer to Joan and whispered, "You are having a hard time..."

Hearing those words, Joan shuddered slightly, and that reaction did not escape Gabriella's eyes. As someone who could pick up on such cues, Gabriella could guess why Joan was unhappy immediately.

At times, the broken ones would pretend that nothing was wrong. They would conceal their true feelings and put up a brave front. "Nothing is wrong. I'm doing fine," Joan replied.

To her dismay, Gabriella was not fooled. She scorned with disdain, "You know it best. While you may think that you can deceive others, you can never lie to yourself. Well, I have to let



you know that you can't even trick me into thinking otherwise." Guilty as charged, Joan wanted to rebut, but she could not find the right words to say. Who knew that she would be so nervous? Moreover, it was in front of Gabriella.

"Why? Did Larry throw you to the curb?" Gabriella was clearly enjoying the moment. She added, "Weren't the both of you acting like lovebirds before me previously? Not much time has passed, and the both of you have already fallen out?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1666

If I told her that there's nothing wrong between Larry and me, will she be stunned? Joan was contemplating over what she should do. Even so, she did not let it show on her face.

"Of course not. Recently, Larry has been returning home quite late, and I feel uneasy being alone. That's why I've been feeling down..."

Haha, Joan, do you take me as a three-year-old child? Do you think I'll take the bait so easily when your lies are clumsily put together? Accommodating Joan's reasoning, Gabriella pretended to be surprised. "Oh, I see. Regardless, you should be wary. Who knows, he might be seeing another woman as charming as you behind your back."

A chill ran down Joan's spine. They had not seen each other in ages, yet she tried to sell her the idea of an affair so nicely.

"Don't worry. Even if such a woman does appear, I will haunt her down as I did to you in the past!" Joan taunted.

Right away, Gabriella's expression hardened, but she quickly tried to cover it up. She stammered, "Actually...I have a question for you..."

"Since when did you learn to ask questions this way?" Joan took the chance to poke fun at her.

"Forget about it if you don't want to entertain me. You don't need to put up a show with

me,” Gabriella returned to her original tone. This made Joan feel more at ease since she was used to this side of Gabriella.

Joan chuckled, “Go ahead and tell me then.”

“Has Landon ever mentioned... me?” Her last word was laced with uncertainty. From Joan’s memory, Gabriella used to call him ‘Dad’ all the time. Yet, she was calling him by his first name now.

Only now did it click in her head. Gabriella’s sudden change in character was not

unfounded. After all, she was a young mistress from a reputable family before her doting

father threw her out of the house. He even announced that he had disowned her in an

interview in order to protect his company.

Of course, there was a reason for her demise. If she did not carry out such nasty schemes,

she would not have to see a day like this. That said, her personality would not have changed

either.

Joan shook her head. However, it was not because Landon did not mention Gabriella, but

because she did not have the chance to meet with him since Larry had rejected the

partnership with the Ward Group even before her dispute with him.

Meanwhile, the patrons at the table beside them were monitoring the stock market for their

profits and losses.

“The stocks that I recently purchased are a good investment! It’s been doing really well.”

“Recently, stocks have been in a bull market. However, why aren’t the Ward Group’s stocks

rising? I bought it while they were rising, yet it has stopped moving since.”

Coincidentally, they mentioned the Ward Group, and Gabriella picked up on every word

they had said.

Raising the cup of coffee from the table, she stirred the drink with a spoon, creating a circle

on the foam.

“So he hasn’t mentioned anything about me? Hmph.” She snorted, “I think he must be barely getting by...”

“Is this why you wanted to come out with me?” Joan sipped on her coffee, exuding the aura of a socialite.

Covering it up, Gabriella slyly smiled, “Of course not. I’m also here to mock at your troubled life.”

Joan thought there was no way to communicate with the other woman. Noticing that her coffee was had cooled down, she gulped it down before using a tissue to wipe her mouth.

Then, she stood up and announced, “I’m going off. Since you wanted to treat me, you can foot the bill.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1667

At first, she wanted to leave coolly, but she knocked into a man, dressed in black from head to toe, by the glass door.

How rude! He did not even bother to apologize to me. The man glanced at her before casting a confused look at her.

What’s his problem? Hurriedly, she dusted her clothes and left. The man continued to stare at her while in deep thought and only entered the restaurant after her figure disappeared from his sight.

Jory did not do it on purpose, but it happened by chance. It was Joan who bumped into him, and he did not plan for it to happen. At once, he sent a message to Dustin. It said: I am waiting for you at our old meeting place. Also, I just bumped into Joan at the entrance.

He was also someone with class and would hold himself in high regard as he sipped on his coffee. While he patiently waited for Dustin, he read the newspapers and enjoyed his beverage.

Moments later, Dustin, who was usually calm and collected, burst through the door angrily.

He headed straight to Jory's table like a mad man.

If not because they were in a public setting, he would have grabbed Jory by the collar and lifted him from his seat. He growled, "I thought you promised me never to bother Joan again. Why did you let her spot you?"

In response, Jory looked like he was being slandered. "You were the one who said that she would never come to such places and chose to meet here. How is it my fault for bumping into her by chance?"

"Did you really not plan it?" Dustin frowned.

Raising his palm in the air, Jory swore, "I swear I didn't."

This made Dustin confused. The Joan that he knew was a spendthrift and would never patronize such places. Besides being a student from Nirhaven College, she was only an employee of a fashion company.

Did Larry bring her here? Unknowingly, he said his thoughts aloud. "How is that possible? We have already sent the photos, and Larry must hate her by now. Why would they still be together?" Jory immediately shot down his idea. Rolling his eyes, he added, "I think she came with another woman, but I can't remember how she looks like except for her exquisite figure."

Exquisite figure? Names of various women ran through Dustin's mind. It seemed like he knew someone who would match Jory's description, but he could not recall who it was at the top of his head. It would take him some time to figure who that lady was, but for now, he was glad that Jory did not do it on purpose.

Heaving a breath of relief, his voice returned to its normal tone. "Are you certain that you made no mistakes when you sent out those photos?"

With a childish grin, Jory boasted, "Of course! Have I ever made you worry? I will not let

them find out that I sent it until we finish the job. For all you know, they might never be able to trace it back to me.”

Seeing how Dustin was looking at him suspiciously without a word, Jory assured him, “Don’t look at me like that. I have absolutely no interest in her. Besides, I will never fancy a woman who had given birth. After all, it is inevitable for their figures to change once they have gone through a pregnancy. Haha, she is definitely not my cup of tea.”

Those words posed no value to Dustin, and he did not wish to hear any of them. To him, when you love someone, you would love every part of her, whether it was her inner beauty or physical appearance. Loving only the appearance of a lady could not be considered true love.

Four days had passed since Larry had been unreachable. He was not contactable by his mobile, and he had not turned up at work nor returned home.

As Joan did not want Finnick’s wife to worry about Larry, she did not visit them over the past few days either.

Determined to look for Larry, she even applied for a week’s leave from school. However, it was ending soon, and if she continued to do that, her attendance would fall below her minimum passing rate. Furthermore, she had looked everywhere in Marsingfill but there was no sign of Larry. Desperately, she was just short of pasting a missing person’s notice around the city by now.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1668

There were several blisters on Joan’s feet after walking for hours on end throughout the past few days. Many a time, she wanted to rest by the roadside, but Gabriella’s arrogant face would appear in her mind. It was as though she was standing right before her and mocking her. “Hah! You look rather pathetic, Joan Watts!”

Every time she thought of that, she inwardly cheered herself on—hang in there! She searched for Larry at every single place they had ever visited together without missing a single detail, retracing their steps in the past. The city was enormous, and she weaved through this big city like a headless chicken. At times, when she was truly at the end of her will, she went to the plaza with a water screen and sat on the stone bench while guzzling a bottle of mineral water to quench her thirst. The huge screen often played news of the current happenings in Marsingfill, small disputes, conflict of interests, or trivial matters in the local community. That day, it was a traffic accident. Joan's hand shook, and she almost dropped the bottle of mineral water in her hand. Her mind was flooded with blood-red images as though the old truck was right in front of her, plowing toward her ruthlessly. She knew that she shouldn't think of Larry at that moment, but fear abruptly seized her. She was struck with terror that such a thing would happen to him, even more so at the thought that perhaps the reason she couldn't contact him in the past few days was that... tragedy had already befallen him. Her legs went weak, and she almost fell to her knees. As gusts of cold wind swept past her from behind, her heart instantly went chilly. Then, she gulped uneasily. No, I must find him even if he's at the ends of the world! I must grab hold of him and question him on his reason for avoiding me and refusing to see me. Also, I want to ask him about the misunderstanding Nancy and Caspian have against me. As she inhaled deeply, Larry's voice when they argued echoed in her ears. You don't need to

sound so self-righteous! Haven't you been yearning to return to Dustin Silverman long ago and even take Leslie with you? Let me tell you, that's never going to happen!

At that time, his face was flushed bright red. He was so worked up that if Dustin had appeared before him in the next second, he would have ripped him to shreds. All of a sudden, Joan thought, Larry would certainly have sought Dustin out after our argument. Considering his temperament, he would have gotten into a heated row with him. However, Dustin has been interacting with me as though nothing had happened, never once bringing Larry up as though they never knew each other.

"Maybe Dustin can tell me something," she muttered. In the next instance, she sent Dustin a message, asking whether she could meet him. Dustin had always answered her messages within seconds, and this time was no exception. He replied: Sure. I'm at the college, so why don't you come over? His reply made it feel as though one could see his familiar smiling face through the screen. As soon as Joan stepped foot into Nirhaven College, she was stopped by a venerated lecturer at the guardhouse. The moment the lecturer caught sight of her, he hastily slid the window open and shouted her name. He initially came over to the guardhouse to hang out with the guards since he was bored, but he had never thought that he would bump into the legendary "transfer student."

Rumor had it that she was the wife of a president of a large corporation. She already had a child at such a young age, yet she still wanted to go back to college to study. Coincidentally, she was a student in his class. For some reason, she had taken a leave of absence for several days in a row, and the reason was indicated arrogantly as "none." If there's no reason, why

on earth are you taking a leave of absence? However, nothing could be done since she had connections. Other students attended Nirhaven College to expand their knowledge, while she was here just to kill time. "Hah! She's acting high and mighty just because her husband has money, no?" That was the comment he heard most about her among the other female students. After listening to such comments time and again, he naturally formed a negative impression of her. Unexpectedly, fate arranged an unintentional meeting between them that day. All at once, he quickly slid open the window and hollered at Joan who was rushing into the college, "Hey, you there! Hold on a moment!"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1669

Taken aback, Joan stared blankly at the man who came out of the guard shack. She racked her brains in search of his countenance, but there was a glitch that simply exasperated her, for he seemed very familiar, yet she just couldn't remember who he was.

She stood there in stunned silence for a long while before finally deciding not to greet him.

After all, it would be bad if she called him by the wrong name. The man nudged the glasses on the bridge of his nose as he concealed the displeasure within him. Inwardly, however, he chided, What kind of attitude is this? Even if you're rich, you're still a student in this college!

And even if I'm a lecturer whom you aren't acquainted with, you should still greet me when

I'm standing right in front of you, let alone when I'm your lecturer!

In the next moment, he flashed her an awkward smile. "Why did you take several days of absence? What's more, you didn't even indicate the reason for doing so."

"S-Something came up at home... a-and I hadn't the time to inform the college," Joan



stammered in reply. Huh? He knows that I took a leave of absence... Oh God, that means he's my lecturer! Nevertheless, she was in a hurry to find Dustin, so she inwardly prayed that he would let her off posthaste. Sometimes, the more one hoped that things would go as wished, it would simply refuse to comply and go the other way round. This was one of those times. The lecturer chattered on with her, speaking of attendance, disciplinary warning, demerit, and even turning up late for class. What on earth is this? Does he think that I, Joan Watts, am an elementary or junior high student? To be honest, she had zero liking for the middle-aged man in front of her. Just when she was suppressing the urge to get a piece of tape and plaster his mouth that kept opening and closing, a gentle voice drifted over. No matter whose voice it was, it would naturally sound like music to her ears at that moment. Yes! I can finally be free of this old man's jabbering! She was so ecstatic that she almost jumped for joy. "Mr. Yardley, how can you claim that she's late when she has submitted a request for a leave of absence? Also, if you think that her reason for doing so doesn't comply with the standard approval, I think you should inquire about the specific situation from the lecturer who approved the request if you want to give her demerit points. After all, if you think there's a problem with something that's been approved by another lecturer, the consequences... shouldn't be borne by the student, no?" Unexpectedly, Dustin was even more eloquent than the middle-aged man. He didn't even need to think before he spoke, yet he successfully rendered him speechless. Nonetheless,

they were colleagues who would be seeing each other every day, so he couldn't take things too far. Stopping while he was ahead, he threw him a compliment instead.

"Well, no wonder everyone unanimously votes for you as the most popular lecturer of the year when you're so concerned about your students!"

Hearing that, the middle-aged man chortled in delight and almost burst with pride. "Really?"

"I'm not as popular as you are, Mr. Silverman. And in work, I merely give it my all to do the best I can..."

Upon seeing that, Joan was utterly stunned at his ignorance. Dustin merely said that to

make up for having rebuked him, but he's actually so dense to be jabbering on and on about his teaching methods!

At long last, even Dustin who was even-tempered and patient couldn't take it anymore.

Giving a soft cough, he surreptitiously interrupted his "speech," saying, "I heard that the

outstanding lecturers who have been shortlisted are to head to the conference hall on the

second floor of the administrative building for a meeting. I'm afraid you might be

reprimanded before all the venerated lecturers if you don't get a move on now."

When the man heard that, his expression changed. Hastily taking his leave from Dustin, he

then trotted over to the administrative building. Before he left, he even flashed Joan a kind

smile, exhibiting a drastic shift from his previous admonishment and disdain toward her. His

plump body jiggled as he ran, creating a hilarious sight.

Subsequently, Dustin walked over to her. "Phew! He's gone at last! He didn't put you in a tight spot, did he?"

"You arrived before he could do so." As Joan stared at the plump back, she suddenly

remembered her purpose in seeking Dustin out and grabbed his sleeve at once. "Let's forget

about that. Dustin, I'm here because of a very crucial matter."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1670

At that, Dustin's expression turned solemn as well. "Come, let's talk in my office."

However, Joan couldn't wait anymore. Following him closely, she asked in a voice colored

with urgency, "Did Larry ever come and look for you a few days ago? Did he say anything to

you?"

Hearing that, Dustin glanced over his shoulder at her. "Why do you ask? And what makes

you think that he'd definitely come and seek me out?"

"Because the meeting at the hospital that day was definitely not the last time you two saw

each other. Considering his temperament, he'll certainly seek you out to get to the bottom

of things." Then, Joan continued, "I haven't seen him for many days now, so I need to know

where he is!"

"I'm sorry, but I have no idea on his whereabouts," Dustin replied unhurriedly.

All at once, Joan again reached out and grabbed the hem of his shirt. "I don't need you to

tell me where he is. I only want to know whether he came and sought you out!"

Stopping shortly, Dustin whirled around. His movement was so sudden that Joan almost

smacked into him in her distracted state. Even then, she almost fell to the ground due to

inertia. Unexpectedly, Dustin reached out and wrapped an arm around her waist.

As the warmth of his palm seeped through her quality clothes to reach her waist, it burned

like a brand and scorched her.

This time, Joan reacted swiftly. She still had her wits and she knew that she should keep

some boundaries between them. Her hands shot out without even thinking about it, and

she pushed his shoulders to immediately put a distance of at least one meter between them.

Dustin, however, disregarded her wishes. Instead, his arm around her waist tightened a fraction. Sure enough, she's still the same as before! The moment something related to

Larry is brought up, she'll behave like a porcupine with all her quills standing up straight as she's seized by the urge to lash her tail at me.

"Let go of me, Dustin!" Joan screeched. Afraid that he would do something that crossed the line even further when he was hugging her, she timidly reminded, "We're in the college."

Nonetheless, Dustin was unfazed although a few people were already drawing close to them

to watch the show. Inwardly, Joan whined, Argh! I'm dead now! With this, not only will the rumors of me and Dustin flying around the college cease to abate, but it'll even escalate

instead! It's precisely the slew of rumors about us that caused the misunderstanding between me and Larry to deepen...

At the direction of her thoughts, she didn't dare contemplate further. She simply couldn't

shake off the feeling that Dustin would grow even closer to her, while her beloved Larry would swiftly leave her at a speed indiscernible to the naked eye.

"What if I were to tell you that I did something to him?"

The gentle voice was no different than before, but as it fell into Joan's ears at that moment,

a chill ran down her spine. Did Dustin... really do something to him?

Feigning calmness, she

countered, "T-That's impossible. You'll never use such a stupid method.

You know full well

that I'll lose my mind if something really happens to him, so you won't make waves on a tranquil sea."

Finally, Dustin released his hold on her. "Sure enough, it's Joan Watts who knows me even

better than myself in this entire world.”

When he mentioned her name, his jet-black eyes stared right at her.

Every time he gazed

into her eyes, he always wondered whether he could see through her  
and fathom her

thoughts by looking into her eyes.

Conversely, Joan couldn't understand what he meant. How could a  
person think that

somebody else understands him better than himself? Furthermore, I  
think I don't

understand him at all. I'm merely speculating from what I know about  
him without having

any inkling whether it's accurate or otherwise.

“He indeed came to seek me out. I told him that we're merely friends,  
and that has never

changed since the beginning. Thereafter, he left. As for where he went,  
he merely said that

he's going to clear his head. That's all I know.”

Huh? Larry only told him that he's going to clear his head? So, I merely  
came here for an

answer that's of little value in the end? Are there no other leads for me  
to find him?

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1671

For some inexplicable reason, Joan breathed a sigh of relief upon  
hearing Dustin's

answer. Phew! Thank God they haven't had an altercation without my  
knowledge, and it

seems that my relationship with Larry hasn't deteriorated further!

But was this the end of things? After she had gotten an answer from  
Dustin, she spun

around to leave. Other than Larry, she currently wasn't in the mood to  
think about anything

else.

“He'll never allow you to find him so easily!” Dustin called out behind  
her.

Without a backward glance, Joan asserted in a voice that was only  
audible to him, “Even if

he doesn't want me to find him in this lifetime, I'll still search for him  
until I breathe my last.”

Perhaps such a remark was too melodramatic, but it was undoubtedly a sentiment that

came from the depths of her heart at that very moment.

“Larry, from the second we both fell in love with each other, we’re destined to torture each other...”

Meanwhile, Larry had turned off his cell phone after leaving Caspian’s house. After

struggling with himself for several days, he decided that he needed to put everything aside

and find a place where no one knew him to lick the wounds caused by the person he loved

most.

He settled everything at the office, ensuring that Norton Corporation would be able to

operate as usual without him for a few days. He had been battling the despondency within

him throughout the past few days, so he was truly worn out. Amidst his loneliness, he

couldn’t help but recall the beach that had kept him company during his childhood and the

sea that was filled with beautiful memories of his mother’s chatter.

Instead of driving, he took a bus there. He opened the window in the bus, but the towering

buildings obscured half the sun. Later, the setting sun gradually tinted the clouds in the

distance light orange.

Throughout it all, he felt an indescribable sense of helplessness and disconcertment

flooding him like a tidal wave, hammering at him like torrential rain on a stormy night, and

engulfing him in a deluge of bitter frost...

After alighting from the bus, he quietly lit a cigarette. In the hazy cloud of cigarette smoke,

his thoughts drifted. He recalled his adorable child... and Joan who once loved him deeply. It

seemed as though a beautiful mask had been removed from the past familiar to him,

revealing the entirely foreign present.

Dustin. That was a name that lingered in his mind, haunting him like a terrible nightmare.

Those heartbreaking photos were a sharp tool that shattered the beauty of everything between them. He wanted to believe in his wife's innocence, but he was defeated by reality. Are you really betraying me, Joan Watts?

Betrayal... All of a sudden, he felt that something was amiss. For a moment, he forgot about the lit cigarette in his hand, and the smoke went straight down his throat to his lungs.

However, he couldn't be bothered about that, merely coughing a few times.

Have I been obsessed with the possibility of an affair between them? The rumors, photos... everything was from other people's mouths and hands. Joan has never defended herself against all that, yet I arbitrarily made up my mind that she was tacitly admitting to it and betraying me?

Because of the rumors and photos, he had been questioning Joan relentlessly.

Subsequently, he misunderstood her silence on the matter as a tacit admittance when he never heard any explanation from her. All this while, they had been trapped in the endless cycle of relationship problems, hurting and torturing each other.

Isn't Dustin Silverman the person who benefits most from it? After all, when two people fight, it's often the third party who stands to benefit! The person who has been pursuing Joan relentlessly is probably smirking triumphantly now. He thought that he could destroy our relationship without expending any effort, and indeed, my fight with Joan as well as the disintegrating relationship between us seems to be gradually moving according to his plan!

In truth, my target should be Dustin Silverman who covets Joan every second of every

day! Recalling the punch he landed on Dustin's face at the hospital that day, regret pervaded him. He regretted not having hit him harder so that the malevolent man would never again be able to think of any ploys to ruin his relationship with Joan.

As the azure waters lapped against the reefs along the coast, they set off wave after wave, each higher than the other. The waves danced in midair slightly before falling again, returning to the embrace of the sea.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1672

Larry had never seen the coast at night. When he was young, he only strolled along the beach with his mother in the afternoon or early morning. Back then, he was always morose and griped that he had no freedom and rights, so his mother coaxed him by saying,

"Everything you're learning now is helping you lay your path to make it easier in the future."

Having heard that too many times, he naturally found it irritating and couldn't be bothered

to listen to her anymore. Thus, his mother came up with an idea—whenever he was

downcast, she would bring him here to look at the sea and amble along the beach with him, leaving rows of neat footprints.

"There are many things in this world, but there is only one sea.

Regardless of whether it's

the present or the future, the sea we behold will be the same sea.

Everything in this world

will change, but not the sea. As long as you want to see it, it'll always be here."

His mother's words had been keeping him company for many years, bringing him through

the barren desert and biting winter... leading him to the oasis time and again. She had

grown old and could no longer walk the beach with him, but the sea she spoke of had

always remained here.



Avoidance was never the answer to any problem. Nevertheless, he hadn't been in contact with Caspian and Nancy these few days though they were the ones who dragged him back from the bar in the middle of the night. As for Joan, he hadn't seen her in a long time either. At that time, I said I was going to the office to handle some matters, but I haven't gone back to see her in ages. What would she think? And there's Leslie as well. With so many things happening, he's the person I owe most. As a child with both parents alive and he should be loved and pampered by all having been born in a harmonious family. But no thanks to the conflict between his parents, he was placed in a child care center. It was a compromise that Joan proposed, but no one ever considered whether it was fair or otherwise to him. He's merely a child who still doesn't understand the world, but he's now paying the price for the conflict between his parents. Actually, neither Joan nor I am good parents. We can't even handle our own problems, so how are we going to raise a child? How are we going to make him happy when we ourselves aren't happy? Joan, on the other hand, had been mulling over the meaning of Dustin's remark. Dustin said that Larry won't allow me to find him easily. He also claimed that Larry merely wants to clear his head, but I've already searched all the places in Marsingfill that he might go to, yet I didn't see any sign of him. At a loss, she went to Finnick and Vivian. She purposely bought supplements for them both so that her visit this time would appear sincere. Actually, Finnick and Vivian were very fond of Joan. But ever since she and Larry got into a row, she rarely came over to visit them. For that reason, her visit this time came as a surprise to them.

Thinking that they had already made up, Finnick asked, “Why didn’t Larry come with you, Joan?”

At that, Joan flashed him an awkward smile. “He’s swamped with work recently, so he can’t make it.” As she said that, she stepped forward and tugged at Vivian’s arm affectionately.

“Vivian, he’s too busy recently, so I’m thinking of taking him on a trip. But then, we’ve basically explored all of Marsingfill, so I simply can’t think of any good places...”

In the end, that was the excuse she came up with to surreptitiously inquire about the places

Larry loved to visit in the past without arousing their suspicions.

Meanwhile, Gabriella’s fruit stall business was still booming, and she was busy like a bee.

Ever since she went to the café with Joan back then, she had been working harder than

before. On the one hand, she indeed needed the money to better support the son she had

with Carl. On the other hand, the server’s contempt toward her that day and Joan’s disdain

motivated her to do the best she could.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1673

During the lunch break, Gabriella simply spread out a piece of newspaper on the ground

and sat there while hugging her knees. As the weather was growing increasingly hot, she

opened a big plastic umbrella that had the words “Cola-Cola” printed on it and placed it beside her.

At this time, a man in his early twenties sauntered up to her fruit stall.

He looked very much

like a ruffian with a black baseball cap on his head. While the style of the cap was very

simple, someone with a discerning eye would be able to tell that it was a luxury accessory of

the upper-classes at a single glance.

Dipping his head, the man glanced at Gabriella, who had no image to speak of, before

snagging an apple from her stall and started tossing it. As the red apple was tossed back and forth between his hands, the sound of it hitting his palm had Gabriella jerking her head up to meet the man's gaze. "Put it down at once if you're not going to buy it!" she roared at him. The corners of Jory's mouth curved into a flippant smile. "It's just an apple. Even if you sell it, how much money would you make?" Upon hearing that, Gabriella saw red. "Give it back to me!" After saying that, her hand shot out to snatch it back from his hand. However, Jory dodged her hand with a nimble swivel and tossed the apple even higher. "I wonder if Landon Ward would feel that all his pride throughout the past fifty years and counting is all but obliterated if he were to learn that his biological daughter is selling fruits by the roadside." All at once, Gabriella's heart jolted. She had deliberately picked this spot to set up her fruit stall to keep a distance from Ward Group. Despite having told herself time and again not to concern herself over her father's pride, a bolt of fear inexplicably struck her when someone said that. He's aware of my identity? I don't remember telling anyone about my past or identity, and I've never seen this man before me ever. So, who is he? "Did he send you here? Well, are you here to see how I'm reduced to making a living on the streets?" She then glared at him. "I'm earning money and supporting myself with my own capabilities, so how is that embarrassing to him? Instead, it's the other way around. Even wild beasts don't devour their own cubs, yet he abandoned his biological daughter. It's his behavior that's shameful and humiliating!" Thereafter, Jory flung the apple behind him and applauded her with a smattering of

applause as he grinned widely. "Excellent! I loved it! You're truly someone to be admired for her spunk! You're not wrong, for the one in the wrong is your father who disowned you!"

His speech had Gabriella bewildered. If he's sent here by Landon Ward, he should have mocked me when I said such unpleasant words. Moreover, the people my father employs have always been old and experienced. This man before me is at most twenty-one or twenty-two years old in addition to having a temperament that is extremely unpredictable, so he's probably not sent by him.

"Buzz off if there's nothing else. I don't have time to talk nonsense with you here. I've still got to run my business..." Glimpsing the stark disdain and contempt in his eyes as he looked down at her, her impression of him instantly fell to rock bottom. She then started arranging the wares at her stall. At that precise moment, Jory took a step back and whipped out a thick stack of bills from somewhere or other before brandishing it in front of her. "I know you've now fallen from grace, and I'm also aware that money is the most important thing to you. Once upon a time, millions or tens of millions is a drop in the bucket to you, but now, it must be difficult for you to even come up with forty or fifty thousand, no?"

People who did business, especially small businesses, were exceedingly sensitive to money. Before she was kicked out of the family, she had never thought that there would one day in her life that she would be so worried about money. Thus, she was inevitably tempted when greeted by the sight of the stack of bills in his hand.

"This stack of bills is enough to buy half a month of your fruits, yes?" Smug triumph flooded Jory when he noticed her gaze pinned intently on the money. Hah! There isn't a single

person I can't convince. After all, isn't life a pursue of status, fame, and reputation? Putting it bluntly, it's all for the money! "I don't mind giving you this money, provided you do me a favor. When the matter is settled, I'll naturally keep my word."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1674

"I just knew that you won't be giving it to me without any strings attached," Gabriella muttered softly.

At that, Jory leaned close to her and brandished the bills in his hand.

"Well, that's because there's no free lunch."

"Well? Spit it out! What do you need from me?" Gabriella urged impatiently.

At the side, Jory hooted with laughter. "Alright, since I'm the one asking for your help, I'm

naturally on the lower end." At that, he tugged at the cap on his head.

"Are you not acquainted with Joan Watts?"

"Yeah," Gabriella answered. "I've got an irreconcilable grudge against her."

In truth, the latter half of it was merely a half-hearted remark. After all, Joan had lent her a hand when she was at her lowest. And though her pitiful life at present was all thanks to her, she had also done a number on her when she was high and mighty in the past.

Hence, she felt that they were even.

"What a coincidence! I hate her quite a bit as well," Jory commented.

"So, we should ally ourselves and work together!"

Hearing that, Gabriella's guard instantly went up. "What do you want me to do to her?" In

the past, it was because she had wanted to eliminate Joan that she had gotten herself into

hot water. Otherwise, she wouldn't have ended up in such a sorry state.

Jory then took out a tiny and thin metal device from his jacket pocket before saying, "You

only need to find an opportunity to affix this to Joan Watts' cell phone."

Gabriella took the metal device from his hand. "What is this? And how am I supposed to affix it to her cell phone?"

"You need to find an excuse to get her cell phone. Then, you just need to open the back of it. This device can be adsorbed into her cell phone, so she won't notice anything. As for what exactly it is, you don't need to know the answer to that."

Gabriella then pocketed the tiny device. "Are you really going to give me a sum of money when I've accomplished this?"

At that, Jory arched an eyebrow. "Do I look like I'm strapped for cash to you? I'll keep my word to you, but I hope that you'll also settle the matter you promised me."

"How am I to look for you after having done that?" Gabriella questioned. "You don't need to look for me. I'll come and look for you instead." After saying that, Jory spun around coolly to leave.

"Hmm... I remember that I used to bring Larry to the beach whenever he was dejected back when he was young. After some time, he started badgering me to go instead." Vivian's eyes were filled with nostalgia toward the past, lighting up like flickering candles.

"The beach?" Joan murmured. Ever since I got acquainted with Larry, he had never brought me to the beach. If that's his favorite place, why didn't he share it with me?

Vivian then took her hands, passing a steady stream of warmth from her palm to hers.

"Yeah, to behold the sea. When you look at the vast sea that extends infinitely, you'll find that the problems that appeared gigantic and aggravating are actually very insignificant in front of the boundless sea.

"Perhaps he has bidden farewell to his troubles and afflictions after making acquaintance with you and having you by his side. Because he's happy every single day when he's with

you, he is no longer morose and wanting to look at the sea anymore, unlike his younger days." She then led her to the balcony by the hand. As greenery surrounded them, everything seemed utterly relaxed. "Actually, Joan, we know that there are problems between the two of you, especially when you both had such a huge row when we were at the hospital that day despite it being such a public place. While Finnick and I hadn't said a word, it doesn't mean that we're truly ignorant. "Joan, fights and misunderstandings between couples are inevitable. No matter how close two people are, they are still different entities at the end of the day. The interaction between husband and wife is a process of learning and adapting to each other. Whether two people can live happily for a long time depends on whether they can ameliorate their shortcomings and rectify their mistakes..." Vivian said to Joan earnestly.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1675

"Joan, don't feel embarrassed because of your conflict with Larry and bottle it up without sharing it with us. Sometimes, when you can't bear it alone, you should tell me and Finnick about it. We're both your elders, so we understand life better than you do. The two of you should learn from our life experiences so that your life will be better." Vivian's words almost had tears streaming down Joan's face. It had been a long time since an elder had placed herself into their shoes and looked at the problem from their perspective, let alone given her some many nuggets of wisdom. Thus, she was undeniably moved. While her expression remained unchanged, she had already hugged Vivian multiple times in her heart. At times, she found herself to be very selfish as well. Just because she wanted to see Leslie,

she proposed sending him to a child care center. She seemed to consider only her gains, yet never once considering things from Finnick and Vivian's perspective and taking into account their anguish at not getting to see their grandchild in their golden years. Inwardly, she resolved to pick Leslie up and bring him here for them to take care of him.

Then, she wanted to go to the beach and ascertain whether Larry was still there. If he were, she would definitely rush forward and hug him tightly before sincerely declaring, "Let's make up, Larry!"

Subsequently, she grasped Vivian's slightly coarse hand, a mark left by time. In the eyes of all children, that was the most beautiful mark that belonged only to their parents.

"Are you sure you want to terminate our contract?" That was the third time the receptionist had asked Joan that particular question. The fees for this child care center were exorbitant, and back then, she had paid a year's payment for Leslie at one go. But since she had changed her mind, the contract between them should end here.

"Yes. I know all payment that has been received can't be refunded in the event of a breach of contract, but I'm here today specifically to take my son back. As for the payment, I won't request a refund since I've already signed the contract back then," Joan enunciated. I never knew that terminating the contract would be so troublesome. If I'd known, I wouldn't have sent Leslie here no matter what!

"Please wait for a moment, then. We'll process it right away." Flashing her a smile, the receptionist picked up the phone and said a few words before hanging up. Then, she turned to back to her and said, "You can now pick your child up."

It had been more than a month since she last saw Leslie. A child of his age was at the peak



of growth, seemingly changing every single day. However, she felt very blessed, for she believed that she wouldn't miss any stage of his growth. The receptionist led her through a long corridor before pushing open a blue door. Leslie was lying in a crib with a teddy crib mobile. Perhaps he had a telepathic sense, for the moment she walked in, he giggled. She carefully picked him up and swung him in an arc. Leslie loved being picked up, so he was particularly thrilled every time someone did so. His tiny yet chubby hands flailed in the air as he babbled nonsensically. Having picked him up, she was gripped by the urge to never put him down again. She cradled him while humming to him. Suddenly, she glimpsed his pillow out of the corner of her eyes and noticed that something seemed to have been shoved underneath. There was a bulge that appeared very much out of place. Following that, she freed one of her hands and flipped the pillow over. In the next moment, she was greeted by the sight of a quality piece of jade that was engraved with a lopsided "Joan" on it. She recognized it at a single glance as the unmarked jade that Larry had presented to her back when they had just gotten married and suggested that they engrave it together. At that time, she was still analyzing the company's design drawings, so she merely brushed him off with a lukewarm reply when he came to her enthusiastically, saying, "I'm not doing any engraving. I've got to work."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1676

Never had she expected that Larry would engrave the jade on his own in the dead of the night. Now her name 'Joan' had been specially and ingeniously inscribed on this expensive jade.

The crooked and unsightly inscription was nothing like Larry's elegant handwriting. Larry must have tried his best to control the graver, but how could one compare between writing with a pen and a graver? That was how this one-of-a-kind jade came about.

As her finger stroked the uneven surface of the engraving on the jade, millions vivid images of Larry flashed across her mind. Other than the happy memories of him, she recalled his enraged face and the times when they got into a serious fight. The last image that came into her mind was Larry sitting at his desk, holding a graver while looking out the window at the night sky, and his forehead was drenched in sweat.

The man had never shown her the engraved jade, but in the end, it somehow ended up in Leslie's and her hands.

Larry visited Leslie before he went missing. I believe he'll definitely come back, because he's still holding onto many people and things. He'll never abandon me and Leslie just like that.

When Finnick and Vivian saw Joan bringing Leslie to them, their eyes misted over right away. Turning around in silence, Joan blinked back her tears and hailed a cab to the beach.

Regardless of whether she could find Larry, she wanted to give it a try. A man would be constantly on a woman's mind if she cared deeply for him, wanting to set foot in every place he had been to before.

People usually took the things they had for granted or even despised them. Only when they lost something would they remember the goodness that they once had or the people who they cared for, and that would become the most precious part of their memories.

The waves crashed against the shore unceasingly, glimmering as the sunlight hit the surface

of the sea. Only a handful of people were on the beach. Joan was worn out as she had been to various places over the past few days. But the scenery of the endless ocean and the relaxing rhythm of the waves calm her down, and her anxiety ceased. She sat by the reefs on the beach, but Larry was nowhere to be seen. Leaning against a huge rock, she listened to the sound of the waves and gradually drifted off. Just as she was about to fall asleep, her phone rang suddenly. The piercing sound of her ringtone broke the peaceful silence on the beach like an off-key note in the midst of a melodious symphony. Taking out her phone, she saw Vivian's name on the screen, so she quickly swiped to answer the call. The woman's loud and anxious voice echoed on the other side of the phone, "Joan, where are you? Come back now! Something's wrong with Leslie!" The news was like a gigantic, heavy rock on her heart, making her feel out of breath. "I'll be right there!" As a mother, these words were the only response she could give now. On her way back, she kept calling Larry, hoping that he would finally answer one of her calls for the first time since he disappeared days ago. The ringback tone went on, but she never heard the familiar voice sounded on the other side of the phone. Joan had never felt so despondent in her entire life, trying vainly to reach Larry while worrying about Leslie's condition. A serious complication has already happened when I secretly took Leslie out, but now... She dared not to think further about it. "Please drive faster. I'm in a hurry," she urged the driver. Fortunately, there was no heavy traffic on the road at night. The driver hit the pedal and

sped all the way to the destination, while Joan was on pins and needles, squirming nervously in her seat. I guess this is how being in a terrible fix feels like. Stepping into the hospital, she had lost count of the number of times she came to the hospital recently. I guess no one comes to the hospital as frequently as I do.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1677

In a familiar corridor in front of the ER, Finnick wrapped his arm around Vivian's shoulder, comforting her in a gentle tone. Beside the couple on a bench, there was a conspicuous, towering figure with his back facing her.

"Larry?"

Her voice was soft, yet he heard it. Just like a slow-motion scene in the movie, the man

turned around and looked at the misty-eyed woman. The sorrow and grievance in her heart

were replaced by excitement the moment she saw him.

Larry smiled warmly at her. How can he still smile in such a situation? Is he really Leslie's

biological father? As the woman was finding fault with him, she blamed herself too. Hold on.

How can I be in the mood to find fault with him at a time like this?

The two stood rooted to their spots, staring at each other. None of them took the initiative

to walk closer to the other person. At the moment, time seemed to have stood still, and

both their watches and the clock on the wall stopped ticking. They could see no one else

other than each other.

A doctor in a white cot came out of the ER while taking off his mask.

"Who is the family of Leslie?"

"It's me!" Joan and Larry answered in unison.

They glanced at one another before Larry stepped forward to sign the document.

"The child is suffering from acute gastroenteritis. But don't worry, this illness is rather

common among children. It can be caused by the child's eating habits, the amount of

nutrients he received when he was in his mother's womb, and genetic inheritance. Once it's been triggered, it's impossible for the child to be completely healed of this illness. However, it'll be under control as long as you pay attention to his diet and take good care of him."

Afterward, the doctor made some arrangements regarding his hospitalization before he waved at them and said, "Don't worry, he'll be discharged tomorrow morning."

Initially, Finnick wanted to stay back to visit his grandchild, but Vivian shot him a look, hinting at him to give the young couple some space. Later, the two left hurriedly, using the excuse that they were going to pay for the admission and leaving Larry and Joan alone.

"You..."

Unexpectedly, they spoke at the same time again. The two broke into a fit of giggles, though none of them knew why they were laughing. Perhaps that was the thoughtfulness they both had after going through such a conflict and the tacit understanding between a husband and a wife.

"You go first," Larry said.

Joan did as he asked. "Are you still going to question me about my relationship with Dustin?"

Without hesitation, the man shook his head.

"Why?"

Right after asking that, she couldn't help but laugh with amusement. The woman added, "I shouldn't ask you why. I've been in deep contemplation over the past few days. If we're really going to stay together for a lifetime, we have to overcome all our incompatibilities, distrust, and misunderstandings. My mindset, beliefs, values and perspectives must be in line with yours."

“These thoughts have been running through my head these few days as well. When that incident happened, I kept questioning your fidelity. However, after I simmered down, I realized I should ask myself whether I trust you and agree with your viewpoint, instead of demanding a satisfying explanation from you. So what if I get it? I should believe in you even without an explanation from you.”

“Trust is crucial in a marriage. We should understand, tolerate, and trust each other in all things, big or small. So Mr. Norton, are you willing to trust and tolerate me and face every obstacle coming our way together?”

During their sacred wedding ceremony, he made a vow to love and cherish her until death did them apart. She had imagined many romantic episodes that they might go through, but she didn't expect to experience a heart-warming moment under such a circumstance.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1678

“Yes, I will.”

Instead of saying the usual ‘Yes, I do’, he gave her a firm and definite answer. In Larry’s eyes, having willingness didn’t guarantee that he would do it. Hence, saying ‘I will’ showed that not only was he willing to take up his responsibilities, but he also was going to keep his words.

The couple was so in sync with one another that Joan understood him right away. Without a second thought, she wrapped her arms around his neck, whispering in his ear, “Larry, I will do the same as well.”

It had only been a few days, but his hair already appeared disheveled, unlike his usual clean and neat style. There was a whiff of tobacco smell on him. As stubborn as Larry was, it must have been tough for him to change his mentality, despite days of efforts. His trust in her was

like a caterpillar that was struggling to break out of its cocoon, and it would soon emerge as a ravishing butterfly.

As for Joan, she had been running around looking for him, skipping meals and not resting well. The exhaustion caused her to lose weight. Larry's heart ached at the sight of her slim frame. When he first met her, the man liked pinching her face, teasing her with a smile, "You are so chubby." Without him realizing, her cute and round face became a pretty, oval-shaped one.

Early in the next morning, the two went home with Leslie. It was during rush hour when everyone was on the way to work. Much to their surprise, they couldn't hail a cab in the bustling city. Having no other choice, Joan suggested taking the subway. "Why didn't you drive?" Joan questioned him and plastered on an irritated face.

Larry didn't style his hair today, and his shirt was slightly crumpled. Holding Leslie, he actually looked a little comical. With an aggrieved expression, the man explained pitifully, "If I had driven my car, Caspian could've quickly tracked me down using my car registration number. There's no way I would let you guys find me so easily." His words wiped the smile off Joan's face. He nudged her with his elbow and asked in a low voice, "Is there anything wrong with Caspian?"

"When I couldn't find you that day, I went to Caspian's place to find out your whereabouts.

However, no matter how I knocked and shouted at the door, he and Nancy just refused to let me in. I guess they must have misunderstood me."

A look of realization crossed his face. "Oh, right. Speaking of misunderstanding, you owe me an explanation. Why have photos of you going out with Dustin been taken? Someone even sent them to me."

Joan was baffled. "What photos are you talking about? What did you see?"

Letting out a snort arrogantly, Larry ignored her and marched toward the subway station with Leslie in his arms. The woman swiftly kept up with him and grabbed his arm. "Okay, okay, I remember now. Dustin saw that I hadn't eaten for a few days, so he invited me to his house for a meal. Then, we went grocery shopping together. You said someone sent you those photos, but I don't get it. What's so interesting about buying groceries? Why did the person send them to you?"

"He did that just so I would blame you, and that would drive a wedge between you and me."

Larry reached out to poke the tip of Joan's nose gently. "Silly girl."

"Who is that? How could he ruin our relationship for fun and create misunderstandings between us?" Joan said furiously. "I'm going to punch that person if I ever see him face to face."

Nonetheless, she became dejected the second she thought of Caspian again. "But why did Caspian ignore me? And Nancy too! I still can't believe that they shut me out. Aren't friends supposed to talk it out whenever they misunderstand each other? Yet, they didn't even give me a chance to do any explanation."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1679

Larry recalled the day he got drunk. It took Caspian and Nancy tremendous efforts to bring him home. Thinking of the misunderstanding between them, he heaved a sigh. "Maybe he just cares too much about me." The relationship between Larry and Caspian had gone beyond just comrades-in-arms. They were as close as blood-related brothers, cherishing each other with all their hearts.

She remained silent, adjusting Leslie's clothes carefully as Larry held the boy in his arms.

Later, Joan knocked on the door of Caspian's house the second time. Just like her previous



encounter, she was kept out once again. But this time, before Caspian could close the door,

Larry stretched his arm and held the door.

“Are you going to shut me out too?” Larry questioned.

Caspian shuddered at his question. A few seconds later, he couldn’t help quivering as he

said, “Boss, you’re back.”

Amused, Larry chuckled. “Who else could it be? Or do you think that the one who’s standing

right in front of you is a clone?”

“Boss, since when did you like joking around?”

Larry let out a cough. “We can’t keep standing here. Why don’t you let us in?”

Caspian swiftly opened the door. Even so, when Joan was walking in, the way Caspian stared

at her was as though he were looking at a disgusting cockroach.

She could tell that the man was absolutely reluctant.

Even so, the woman still went into his house.

“Caspian, why isn’t Nancy around today?”

As soon as she asked, the man rolled his eyes at her. It was obvious that he wasn’t going to

answer her question.

Larry stretched his leg out to kick Caspian’s calf, looking daggers at him.

The latter was

quick-witted, flashing Joan a flattering grin right away. “She went to her parents’ place

today, so she isn’t at home, my dearest Joan.”

What a hypocrite! Despite his malicious gaze, he still speaks as Larry wants him to. He could

have killed me with the look in his eyes. She smiled in embarrassment.

“Speak properly!” Larry was unwilling to speak harshly to Caspian and Nancy, as he was

indebted to them for taking care of him before. But this time, Caspian had jumped to the

conclusion too quickly.

“Boss! Have you forgotten about the photos and what you said at the bar the other day?”

Caspian grew agitated suddenly. “Are you going to tell me that those photos have been

photoshopped again?”

Joan clarified hurriedly, "Caspian, stay calm and listen to me. I don't know where you saw

the photos, but I want to tell you that they're real, not photoshopped..."

"Then, what else do you have to say? You!" He stood up promptly from the couch, startling

Joan and Larry.

Larry knocked on the glass coffee table with his knuckles. For some reason, the sound made

the man appear dignified and imposing all of a sudden. "What are you doing? Sit down!"

Caspian pursed his lips with displeasure, but he still sat down indignantly.

"If it's not true,

why would someone send the photos to you anonymously?"

"Anonymous?" Joan was taken aback. "What anonymous?"

"Someone named 'S' stored the photos he took secretly in an email..."

Caspian answered

without glancing at her.

"What? Who's that freak? I'm going to call the police!" Joan jumped to her feet at once.

Larry held her arm. "Calm down." He then turned to look at Caspian.

"What's the big deal

about the anonymity? Just check it out now, and his IP address will be exposed."

"How could I not think of the IP address? I looked into that much earlier, but this man is so

cunning. He sent every photo with a different IP address. I guess he must have altered them.

Since he's done that, we won't be able to find out his actual IP address."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1680

"Oh my! What a guileful man!" In utter disbelief, Joan shook her head exasperatedly.

Holding her hand, Larry caressed the back of her hand with his thumb.

Caspian snorted

coldly. "But I believe we should never sin if we don't want to get caught."

Just when he was about to say something else, Larry lifted his foot and stepped on the

man's slippers. With a smile on his face Larry said, enunciating every word. "Shut your

mouth."

Clearing her throat, Joan answered him solemnly. "Caspian, we've been friends for years, and our relationship is comparable to that of siblings. If there's any misunderstanding, we should talk it out, so that the one who is at fault can make things right. But now I don't even know why you're mad at me..."

Right after she spoke, Larry added, "Caspian, you're usually very cautious. Why don't you give this incident some thoughts? Why did S send those photos to me on purpose? Don't you think that the anonymous person has an ulterior motive?" Right then, someone opened the door, and a sweet voice sounded, "I'm back! Did you miss..."

Nancy didn't expect to see Joan and Larry here. The woman was dumbfounded the moment she saw the couple sitting on the couch. The handbag that she held up in the air dropped onto the floor.

"Why? Are you shocked to see us again after a few days?" Larry joked. Nancy could tell that situation had changed. "No, I'm excited to see you and Joan." With much enthusiasm, she skipped toward them and held Joan's arm. "I'm so sorry, Joan. I shouldn't have treated you that way previously..." The woman gave Caspian a death stare.

"It's all Caspian's fault. He mistreated Joan."

In the meantime, Caspian was seething with rage. Larry's fury was replaced by a smile at the sight of his irritated face. "Alright, let bygones be bygones.

Misunderstandings are inevitable between friends. It's good that we've cleared the air. Don't worry about it. We're still buddies."

"Hmph! Did you hear that? Larry is the best. Oh, by the way, I heard that Leslie was sick and hospitalized last night. How's he doing now? Was it very serious?" Joan recollected herself and replied, "Nothing too serious. It was just acute gastroenteritis.

He'll be fine after some time if we take good care of him."

Nancy's eyes curled into a crescent shape. "Okay. Since we're on good terms again, I'll treat all of you to dinner tonight at Paramount Hotel, except him." She pointed at Caspian while speaking.

As Joan and Larry exchanged glances, they understood each other and smiled meaningfully in unison.

Meanwhile, Jory was watching a footage of the surveillance camera at the entrance of Caspian's place. Closing the laptop in front of him forcefully, he punched the wooden table with his fist.

When Dustin walked in with two cups of warm tea, Jory was lying on a couch with a pillow over his face.

"What happened? Why are you so annoyed?"

He took the pillow away from his face. "I've never failed before. Yet, my plan boomerangs, and it actually works out well for them. They had a stroke of luck and escaped it too easily."

Dustin took a sip of the warm tea silently. Looking at the man's calm face, Jory became all

worked up. "Aren't you angry? How can you not lose your cool?"

"What's the point of getting angry? Rage doesn't solve any problems. I won't give up on my loved one, and I believe that God has a plan," Dustin said impassively.

However, he was the

only one who felt the raging emotions and indignation within him.

Glancing at the contact on his phone, he made up his mind to speed things up to reach his

goal. On his phone screen was a text from Gabriella. He didn't even try to hide it.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1681

Mister, I'm free today. I'll ask her out to a café later. After it's done, I hope you won't forget

our agreement. May our collaboration succeed. Gabriella.

As he typed away with both hands, a line appeared on his phone screen at one: You may

call me S.

Everything was in his control and was going to unfold just the way he wanted it. The corner

of Jory's lips twitched up in an inconspicuous smile.

As the night fell, an attractive figure was sitting at a desk. Rubbing her temples, she picked

the pen up and continued editing her design draft. For some inexplicable reason, something

about this design felt off, yet she couldn't quite put her finger on it.

Lifting her head, Joan

glanced at the clock on the wall.

It was already midnight. The woman breathed a sigh. Because of Larry's disappearance, she

had put her job aside for quite a while. Holding the pen, Joan couldn't find any hint of

inspiration. Even the feel of the pen in her hand felt strange to her.

Later, Larry tiptoed into the room and placed a glass of milk on the desk.

At the same time,

Joan was staring blankly at the design draft, as if her soul had left her body.

"Hey! A penny for your thought?" He waved his hand in front of her eyes.

Deliberately, the

man plastered a scowl on his face and questioned, "Are you missing another man? Joan,

how dare you!"

His voice broke her out of her reverie. She reached out to slap the back of Larry's hand. "Yes,

I miss my dad." Looking at his unbelieving face, she replied patiently,

"Okay, I'm working on my design."

Larry took the paper from the desk and studied it for a few seconds.

Pursing his lips, he

commented, "You did a great job! The design is impressive. What else do you need to edit?"

She hummed in response. The man leaned his face closer to her. "Do you want me to get

someone to make some arrangements to commercialize your design?"

"Are you kidding me? This design is just half-done. If you commercialize it now, you'll suffer

a great loss." Joan tried to grab the design draft, which he was holding up.

He got hold of her wrist, pulling her closer to him. His warm breath was like a soft feather,

brushing over her face lightly. "I don't mind going into bankruptcy for the clothes you

designed. If you're worried about the sales, I'll be your first customer. Once it's launched, I'll

buy a hundred pieces and help you set a new trend in fashion."

Cupping his face with her hands, she intentionally squished his cheeks, making his dashing

face look like a bun.

"Larry, oh Larry, you used to be so domineering and aloof. Why did you turn into a

comedian after running away from home?"

He reached out to pinch her plump cheeks as well. "Have I turned into a comedian? Besides,

I've never been domineering and aloof. Could it be that I am..."

Joan quickly covered his mouth with her hand, forcing a smile. "No, no. You're the most

sensible and assertive man. Thanks for your support. It's getting late. Why don't you go to

bed?"

Larry planted a kiss on her palm. His voice sounded rather coquettish.

"No, I want you to go

to bed together with me."

"But my work..."

Before she could finish talking, Larry cut her off with a passionate kiss.

Their slender figures

reflected on the French window as the dazzling city lights flickered outside.

Other than the sound of the clock ticking away, the only thing they could hear was their

hearts thumping hard. Their heartbeats were loud and clear in this quiet atmosphere.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1682

"It's been a while since we last met." Larry whispered into her ear,

"Being apart from you

makes me feel flurried and insecure... Joan, I've missed you so much."

Joan rested her face on his shoulder. The smell exuding out of Larry's body made her feel at ease. "Me too."

"Well then... Between your work and me, which one takes precedence over the other?" Larry teased her.

Joan chuckled and replied, "You."

Delighted, Larry put on a smug face and carried Joan onto his shoulders to give her a

piggyback ride. "Then, let's go!"

The blueprints on Joan's table fell onto the ground as the two of them passed by. Joan

pointed at the blueprints on the ground and yelled, "My blueprints!"

Larry dropped her off on the bed and covered her with a blanket. He then lay down beside

her before uttering, "Who cares about the blueprints? You said so yourself just now that I'm

more important, remember? Now, get some rest. Nothing should come before your health.

As for the blueprints, you can look at them tomorrow!"

Joan was left speechless. Larry then gave her a warm and gentle kiss on the forehead before

murmuring, "Good night."

With Larry sleeping beside her, Joan slept like a baby. It had been so long since she last had

a good night sleep.

Larry even exhorted her to take a leave from work beforehand if she couldn't wake up on

time the next morning. He said that he'll deal with the fine later.

After hearing that, Joan didn't even bother setting up the alarm clock for the next morning.

That being said, her tranquil slumber was still cut off short the next morning. She was woken

up by a sudden call.

"Hello, who's this?"

"Joan? Do you realize what time is it now? You're late for work."

"Hello? Who exactly are you? Tell me now or I'll just hang up the phone..."

Joan was still in a daze. She couldn't even hear the person on the phone laughing at her.

Gabriella raised her tone, "Don't you dare!"

Joan instantly sobered up upon hearing Gabriella's high-pitched voice.

"You are..."

Although she recognized that it was Gabriella's voice, she refrained from saying her name

out loud. It'll be bad if Larry heard it...

"It's me, Gabriella. I assume you're not coming to work today. Am I right? Or else you

wouldn't have overslept..."

"Why did you call me?" Joan queried.

"I want to see you."

"What?" Joan was perplexed.

"I said, I want to see you. I'll be waiting for you at the place we last saw each other."

"You what? Hello?" Gabriella hung up the phone before Joan could say anything. Even

though she was peeved, Joan abstained herself from saying Gabriella's name out loud.

Meanwhile, Larry, who had just woken up, turned to her and asked,

"Who was that?"

"Ah... That was Nancy. She invited me to have breakfast with her," Joan lied.

Fortunately for her, Larry didn't seem to notice anything amiss as he just went back to sleep.

Having arrived at the entrance of the café, Joan, who was still yawning, made sure to finish

her yawn before going inside to avoid giving the impression that she had just woken up.

Gabriella was sitting at the same spot as the last time while waiting for her. There was a

steaming glass of green tea on Joan's seat.

"Why are you so stingy? You ordered a glass of green tea for me while you yourself get to

enjoy the luxurious coffee from Illurasia." Joan placed her purse on the table and sat herself

down opposite Gabriella.

Gabriella intentionally squinted at her before replying, "If I recall correctly, you ordered a

glass of hot green tea the last time you were here. But if you want some coffee, I'll get you



one immediately.”

She then signaled the waiter to come over with a hand gesture. Seeing as such, Joan quickly reached out her hand to deter her from doing so. “No, it’s fine. Thank you for the green tea.

So, is there something urgent that you want to talk to me about?”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1683

Anxious, Gabrielle was stirring her coffee over and over again. That being said, she still looked gorgeous as usual. Her purple dress complemented very well with her slender

physique. Despite having given birth before, her waist remained thin and slender. Moreover,

her lustrous and curly hair further illustrated her charm and beauty.

Biting on her lips,

Gabriella was pondering on how she should convey her thoughts to Joan.

The black special device on her palm felt very hot as if it was burning her hand. The vivid

memory of Jory looking down at her with contempt was suddenly evoked in her mind. The

money that she had worked incessantly for was all that she could think of at the moment.

Disappointed, she even started ridiculing herself. Gabriella, why can’t you be rational for

once. Ever since I started getting jealous of Joan in college, everything went awry because of

my precipitous actions. On the bright side though, at least I don’t have to depend on

anyone now. I can finally do what I want without being constantly fraught with guilt.

With that said, what I want to do isn’t anything fancy or extravagant.

My only solemn wish is

to live a comfortable and unfettered life with my child.

Having pondered for some time, Gabriella blurted out, “Joan, do you hate me?”

Joan was caught off guard by her question. Every disaster that had befallen her in the past

few years was mostly because of Gabriella. With that said, Joan definitely disliked her, but

not to the point where she hated her. This was because Gabriella had already received the punishment due for all the awful things she did. It would be unfair for Joan to still hate her after that.

"I hated you before," Joan answered her question tersely. She then added, "But that aversion is slowly fading away now. Seeing as you progressively become more independent and hardworking, I'm quite relieved. If it weren't for all those things that happened in the past, you wouldn't have become who you are today. There was no way you would have taken the first step to make a change in your life."

"Truth be told, I've hated you ever since you decided to barge into my relationship with Larry. Everything bad that happened to me after that, I would always pin the blame on you.

You were very mean to me back then. That being said, when I was in privation, you were the one who helped me out of it. It was ironic, wasn't it? After that, I tried my best to earn a living by myself and learned to be independent. Now that I'm back on the right path, I can't help but ask myself, have I been hating on the wrong person all this time?"

The sweet smell of the coffee from Illurasia went bitter as soon as it reached Gabriella's tongue. The bitterness reminded her of her life up until now. When she was young, she was revered as the little princess of the Ward family. After she grew up, a lot of people acted amicable toward her to get on her good side. But when her father disowned her, everyone that was so good to her before left her, including her husband. She and her child were forced out of the house and had to eke out a living on the streets.

"Don't worry Joan. I'll unequivocally pay you back the money that I owe you together with

the interest. Here..." Gabriella pulled out a card from her purse and placed it in front of Joan.

Without a second thought, Joan returned the card back to Gabriella. She gave her an

obstinate look before responding, "I don't want it."

Miffed, Gabriella swept the card over to Joan again and retorted, "Are you looking down on me, Joan?"

"This has nothing to do with that. I helped you because I wanted you and your kid to have a

roof to live under. I didn't do it while expecting you to give me my money back together

with interest." Since Gabriella swept the card too hard across the table, the card fell onto

Joan's lap.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1684

Gabriella let out a faint smile and accepted the card back from Joan.

"Okay then, if that's

what you want. Remember, it's not that I don't want to pay my debt; it's because you

insisted on giving the money to me. I'll accept your kindness quietly then. By the way, don't

ever bring up my debt again. Consider the green tea in front of you as my payment."

Amused, Joan laughed out loud. "Is this some sort of super tea?"

Unperturbed by Joan's joke, Gabriella was reminded of her objective—the special device in

her left palm. She needed to focus on completing her mission.

She grabbed her phone that was out of battery which she had prepared beforehand and

feigned a sad expression. "I want to call my friend and tell her the good news, but my phone died."

She showed the phone to Joan as she said that. Jory only instructed me to get my hands on

her phone. Having known Joan so well, this method should work flawlessly.

As expected, Joan immediately lent her phone over to Gabriella after seeing the dead

phone. "Don't worry, you can use mine."

Gabriella gave Joan a polite smile before heading to the bathroom with Joan's phone.

In the bathroom, she effortlessly opened the rear casing of Joan's phone. The black special device in her palm was soaked with her sweat as she was very distressed at the moment.

Recalling Joan's kindness toward her, the overwhelming guilt almost persuaded her to throw away the special device and forget about everything.

The special device was sucked in once it came into contact with the back of the phone. It seemed like it was magnetized to the phone. After putting the rear casing back on the phone, the phone looked like it was never tampered with in the first place.

Gabriella then used Joan's phone to call a contrived number that she had prepared

beforehand and let the call run for two minutes. After seeing the two-minute call appearing on the call logs, the vise that was gripping Gabriella's chest all day long finally loosened up.

When Jory handed over the black device to her, he didn't inform her about the function of the device. That being said, Gabriella didn't really care as long as she got her money in the end.

"Here." Gabriella returned the phone to Joan.

After finishing the glass of green tea, Joan gazed at Gabriella with her head tilted and

queried, "So, what did your friend say?"

Gabriella faked a smile and replied, "She asked if I've courted a rich man.

She said that she'll

have to depend on me for goodies later on."

Joan put her phone back into her purse. "Well, I should really go now.

I'm really late for

work. Bye."

Before exiting the café, Joan came back to Gabriella. "You're the one who's paying right? I'll

forget about your debt after this."

Staring at the empty seat in front of her, Gabriella was filled with mixed emotions. She kept telling herself that she had no intention to hurt Joan. But in reality, she did all those bad things behind Joan's back knowing that it would potentially hurt her. Gabriella opened her phone and sent a message to a saved contact named Mr. S.

"It is done. I'll meet you later in the afternoon."

Mr. S was quick to respond her message. "Okay."

Glaring at the message sent by Gabriella, Jory, who was assuming the identity of Mr. S,

stubbed out his cigarette before sending an email to Larry.

"I hope you accept my challenge."

Three days later, Larry was analyzing an anonymous email that read, "I hope you accept my challenge." What's the meaning of this? Could this be the same person who was sending

those sneaky photos? What is he up to now?

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1685

"Can I come in?" Joan was knocking on the door. "Would Mr. Norton please let me enter?"

Larry pinched his forehead and replied, "Half of your head is already inside. Just come in, will you?"

Joan was wearing a black chiffon skirt, paired with a white T-shirt. Her outfit made her look

youthful and energetic. She blinked for a few times before uttering,

"What? Are you busy right now?"

Larry looked tall and slender as he stood up. "My beloved Ms. Watts, what brings you here today?"

Sitting on the comfortable sofa, Joan was in bliss as the soft cotton fabric of the sofa came

into contact with her skin. "I came here because I wanted to see you. Is that not a good

enough reason? Do you have time tonight? I've booked us a seat at a restaurant..."

Before Larry could give a response, the notification sound of a new email being received

attracted their attention.

Larry quickly went to check out the new email received on his computer.

Curious, Joan got

up from the sofa and queried, "Who is it from?"

"It doesn't really matter. The email's not important," answered Larry.

Joan walked toward

him and uttered, "Is it a confession from one of your fangirls? Just tell

her that you already

have a wife!"

Seeing as Joan was already in front of the computer, Larry dropped the

act and showed her

the email. "See? It's just my weekly health report."

However, Joan was drawn to another email on the screen. She snatched

the mouse from

Larry's hand and opened the email from a sender named Mr. S.

"I hope you accept my challenge? What's the meaning of this!"

Larry scratched his head. "I didn't want you to worry. That's why I was reticent about this."

Joan rubbed his forehead. "Are you daft? We're a married couple. We

face everything

together. What's an email going to do to us?"

"Mr. S? Is that the same person who took sneaky photos of me before?"

Larry nodded. "I wonder what his scheme is this time around. That being

said, I should thank

him for sending your pictures to me. Because of that, we were able to reconcile..."

Suddenly, the noise of loud footsteps was heard at the door. The

secretary was carrying a

stack of files as she hurriedly entered the office.

"Bad news... Mr. Norton." She was panting heavily. "It's ok, you should

catch your breath

first," said Joan.

The secretary was still in a panic. "There's no need. Mr. Norton, a group

called the Alpire

Group bought over three of our small companies."

"Bought over? Our small companies aren't cheap, you know? They are

all outstanding

companies. How could they have afforded them?" Larry looked rather

confused.

Glancing at the email sent from Mr. S, Joan seemed to have figured something out. She turned to Larry and saw that he was glaring at the email too. "Mr. S?" The two of them uttered in unison. "I bet he has something to do with this!" Joan was livid just thinking about him. He tried to obstruct our relationship before this. What is he plotting now? What's this stupid challenge about? Is he making fun of us? "This might just be his warning. Things will get crazier after this... I must instruct our branches to stay on their guard." Larry took a deep breath. "I doubt the other branches would be bought over that easily." Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1686 Joan asked, "Is he doing this for money?" "It's obvious that he wants to acquire the branches. But now we're the prey, and he's the predator. Things don't look good for us, especially since we have no idea what he plans to do next." "You can't even find out the IP address for the new email?" Nancy said as she frowned. She had not expected so many things to happen one after the other recently. It was getting harder and harder for them to move on. Lines and lines of alphabets covered the screen on Caspian's computer. As he tapped on the keyboard, he said, "Yeah, this guy didn't even leave us an address this time..." "Type softly! You're going to break my computer!" Nancy complained. "I'm finding another route to get the IP address of this S person. I'm not trying to boast, but I'm the only one that can solve something this complicated..." As Joan played with the little doll on the sofa, she noticed Caspian's extremely gloomy expression. Those who saw it would certainly unconsciously become fearful. "What... What's wrong? Is there something wrong with the „green channel?"" asked Joan.

Nancy had on a cocky expression as she said, "Huh, you've bragged too much, haven't you?"

Who was the one that said he could solve it? Aren't you embarrassed now?"

For once, Caspian did not refute Nancy's words and stared at the computer screen with a dull face. Realizing that the situation was not good, Joan put everything down and hurriedly walked over to Caspian.

"Did it really get blocked?"

"Huh? Did I seriously get it right?" Nancy instantly got nervous. Despite her harsh words, she still leaned forward into him.

By then, small beads of sweat had already appeared on Caspian's forehead. He obviously felt helpless about the matter too.

Then, noticing that he had not moved in a long time, Joan said, "Caspian, check on Alpire Group."

"Alpire Group?" Nancy asked uncertainly.

"Nancy, you know them?"

She nodded. "Alpire Group's a joint venture between a local and foreign company. I've seen

my dad's collaboration proposals before. This Alpire Group was on it."

Caspian's eyes lit up. He looked at her and asked, "Does that mean we can get more

information about Alpire Group from your dad's contract?"

"Of course not!" Nancy's expression instantly became serious. "Once you sign a contract, it

means you have to bear the legal consequences. If you leak confidential information of

other companies, you'll go to jail! Also..."

Nancy then glanced at Joan and secretly shot her a look. As soon as Joan understood

Nancy's meaning, she instructed Caspian to think of other solutions and hurriedly dragged

Nancy away.

Outside the office, green, lush potted plants lined the corridor.

Joan checked her surroundings, and when she was certain that the area was empty, she said,



“Okay, there’s no one else now. Err... Was there something you wanted to say?”

However, Nancy was a little hesitant. “Actually, we don’t have to avoid everyone. We only have to avoid Caspian...”

“Caspian? Why? Is it related to him?” asked Joan.

Nancy shook her head. “No, it’s not...” After a while, she corrected herself. “Uh... Yes, there seems to be...”

Upon hearing her words, Joan became more anxious. “What exactly is going on? Hurry and tell me. I swear I won’t tell anyone!”

“Not even Larry!”

“Okay, I won’t tell him.”

Hesitantly, Nancy said, “I... I’ll say it then! When you guys mentioned Alpire Group just now, there was something I didn’t say. The Alpire Group’s president’s son was my ex-fiancé.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1687

“Your ex-fiancé?” Joan shouted in surprise.

Nancy immediately covered her mouth. “Hush! Caspian’s right inside!”

Joan moved her hand away and continued, “Are you kidding me?

Weren’t you and Caspian

always together? Why is there suddenly a fiancé?”

“I swear I have nothing to do with that person! I don’t even know his name!” Nancy denied,

then anxiously explained, “Look... He’s my fiancé in name, but I don’t know him at all and

haven’t even met him once. This marriage proposal was clearly arranged by my parents and

born out of some business deals!”

“Wait, wait, wait... I’m kind of confused...” Joan’s mind was in a mess.

Nancy then became even more patient and said, “Let me simplify it.

Before I met Caspian,

my family had arranged this marriage proposal for me. The man is the son of Alpire Group’s president.”

She paused, then continued, “You can understand it as an arranged marriage too. It’s just

that before both of us even met, our parents had already agreed to the marriage. They wanted to sacrifice our marriage and love for the sake of benefits to both families and businesses. In short, we have to marry someone we don't know at all." "I'd always thought I was fortunate because I met Caspian before I met him. So just like that, my family broke off the marriage proposal... Ever since then, my family has never cooperated with Alpire Group again."

Joan asked, "If that's the case, isn't it very clear? You had someone else in your heart, so you rejected the marriage proposal."

"It is because I rejected the marriage that I later found out that that man minded it a lot and has even threatened to terminate the long-term collaboration between our companies several times... I heard that he's a very proud person. Come to think about it, a person like him was rejected by someone he'd never met before. Imagine how angry he must have been!"

Nancy was suddenly worried. "This time, when I heard you guys say that this mysterious S was related to Alpire Group, I suspect that it is that person who wants to retaliate on me because of my rejection back then!"

"Huh?" Joan was puzzled. If that mysterious S was really trying to get back at Nancy, why did he have to go through Larry? Also, he had previously secretly taken pictures of herself and Dustin so that Larry would misunderstand and be wary of her. Is S trying to take down everyone at once? First, it was Larry and me, then, it's Nancy and Caspian. He's really crazy.

"Joan, please don't tell others what I just told you, especially Caspian. I don't want him to overthink. If he found out about this, he'll definitely think that I'm cheating on him."

“What are you guys talking about out here? It’s already been so long,” Caspian said as he walked out of the room while crossing his arms. As soon as Nancy noticed him, she tugged on Joan’s sleeve as a reminder not to talk about whatever they had just discussed. Joan secretly signed an “Okay” back to Nancy.

“Is there a new solution?”

Caspian shrugged helplessly. “Nope. I’ve tried all the solutions and found that there’s no better choice.” He then snapped his fingers in front of Nancy and asked, “Say, do you guys think that this guy could be an expert hacker?”

Nancy flinched in fright, then forced a smile out. “If he’s really a hacker, isn’t it a little of an overkill to use his talents to only hide one IP address? If he wants to acquire those three branches, it’d be better to hack into the branches’ computer systems. Not only will the internal information he obtains be more accurate, but it’d also be the most damaging for the company.”

Joan rubbed her forehead and said, “Nancy, you just said that disclosing other companies’ confidential information is punishable by law. If it’s illegal to disclose such information, then hacking into others’ computers is definitely a more serious crime.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1688

Caspian purposely put on a look of disgust. “Don’t listen to her.

Everything else about Nancy is good, except that she always lacks some brains whenever she’s thinking about problems or is trying to do something.”

Not to be outdone, Nancy quickly stepped forward and used a grappling technique on

Caspian, pressing his arm against his back. “Who did you say lacks brains?”

When one’s wife had a black belt in Taekwondo, even Caspian, who was well-trained in

martial arts, had to bow down to her in respect. Rendered immobile by Nancy, he could hear Joan snickering by the side. Thus, he could only repeatedly apologize. "Me, it's me. I'm the ignorant one and also the one who doesn't use his brains..." "Oh right, that S has already attacked three small companies under Norton Corporation. If he's aiming for the entire company, he'll take action soon!" Nancy then let go of her grip on Caspian.

Joan nodded. "I know. I'll tell Larry when I get back and get him to increase the security for the internal information of each branch," she said as she moved to pick up her handbag from the sofa. Just as she stepped out of the room, she turned back and added, "You guys have to strengthen your cybersecurity too..."

Caspian was confused. "We have to strengthen what? Isn't S's goal..." Before he could say the word "Boss," Nancy suddenly realized something and interrupted him. "It's better to take precaution anyway. As they say, play it safe. If S's target is all of Marsingfill's well-known companies, then my dad's company may also be invaded!" Recognizing that she made sense, Caspian stopped rebutting against Nancy. However, she knew that Joan's words were actually to remind her that if S's goal was to avenge the marriage, his next target would be her family's company.

Three branches under Norton Corporation had been acquired by multinational companies. Consequently, their stock prices dropped sharply that day. Furthermore, there were endless discussions from everywhere in the stock market. Norton Corporation had always been one of the most stable stocks in the market due to its excellent business model and employee management. The recent acquisition was the first in thirty years for Norton Corporation.

As a result, Larry was extremely stressed by it. Other than his hatred for the mysterious Mr.

S, he was also questioning his own management style.

Meanwhile, Jory was leisurely leaning back on the sofa with a cup of tea in his hands while

watching the news. His smile got wider as he crossed his legs, and his black leather shoes

clicked rhythmically in time with the news.

Gabriella had recently been going to Jory every two or three days. Ever since she attached

the black device he gave her onto Joan's phone, she had often felt uneasy, feeling as

though something was about to happen. Although Jory had said that nothing would

happen to Joan, Gabriella was still flustered. Thus, she constantly ran over to Jory's office.

However, it was an office in name only. In reality, it was just a floor that he had rented in a

building. Even though Gabriella had privately collaborated with Jory, he knew everything

about her, yet she knew nothing about him, not even his name.

The first time she went to Jory's office, she realized that it was nothing compared to the

office of a manager working under her father. Compared to the highly-paid, white-collar

workers she had met before, Jory's office was so small that it looked a little pitiful. However,

Jory knew how to enjoy life. Even though the place was small, he had decorated it very

stylishly.

Every time Gabriella turned up, she would ask Jory the same question.

"What exactly is the function of that black device?"

Jory's reply was consistent every time. "You don't need to know.

Anyway, it's already been

installed. Even if it had any function, you can't change anything anymore."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1689

However, that day, Jory no longer dodged the issue with the same excuse. He stared at the

large TV screen, ignoring Gabriella, who was standing to one side. Following his gaze, Gabriella's attention was instantly captured by the words "Norton Corporation." It was a familiar name that she used to have deep connections with.

"Three branches of Norton Corporation were acquired by multinational companies, causing its stocks to plummet?" How is it possible that Norton Corporation's branches were acquired? Norton Corporation enjoyed a good reputation locally, and even foreign companies were trying to secure a collaboration with them. As Gabriella pondered, she did not realize she had just said everything out loud. Jory glanced over at her and could not help but sneer.

"Don't be ignorant. Larry's not a god, so why can't someone else rule his company?" Gabriella took a few steps forward and asked with a trace of doubt on her face, "Is this related to you?"

Jory looked at her with his eyes full of arrogance. "Is it related to me? What do you think? Do you think that I can acquire those three small companies?"

"Are you kidding me? Do you think that Norton Corporation's branches are that easy to acquire? Even if you have a lot of money, Larry won't turn out this way just because of a small issue like poor management."

"Gabriella Ward, do you know why you were so stupid that you got kicked out of the house? Because you can never learn how to think and analyze situations. You'll never use your brain to think about the problems," said Jory lightly, purposely angering Gabriella.

As it happens, Gabriella was indeed angered by his words. He was mocking her with her past, yet she did not have anything to use against him. "What are you trying to say? Huh,

how am I supposed to believe that you have the ability to acquire Norton Corporation?

You're just someone who only knows how to make cynical remarks about others."

She scanned her surroundings and deliberately smiled disdainfully, her eyes full of

contempt. "Look at this place. Aren't you embarrassed to call this your office? Never mind

Larry, this doesn't even compare to a manager's office in my dad's company."

Jory pressed the switch on the remote control, and the screen then turned black. He rose

from the sofa and stood face to face with Gabriella. "Dad? Which one? Landon Ward? Why

do I seem to remember that he'd announced to the public that he had severed ties with

someone named Gabriella Ward?"

Jory was not someone who had a mature appearance. If he changed his outfit, he would

look like a bright young man. However, the person in front of Gabriella smoked and drank.

Although his smile should have looked brilliant, it looked sinister to Gabriella instead.

Furthermore, his blunt personality made her feel disgusted.

"You..." Gabriella was so angered by him that she had forgotten what she wanted to say.

"Me?" Jory asked, pointing to himself. "Speaking of which, you keep coming here every few

days. Don't tell me you want to get some benefit from me?"

Gabriella instantly froze, for he had seen through her intentions.

Although a part of her

purpose in going to Jory's office was to ask about Joan, the bigger part of it was to get

money.

Whenever Jory took one step forward, Gabriella took a step back.

However, she did not

notice that there was a chessboard on the ground behind her.

Consequently, when her heel

stepped on it, Gabriella lost her balance and began to fall.

She did not expect that Jory would grab her and even place his hand on her waist. When he gently pulled her in, Gabriella fell into his arms. Her curvy body pressed against his, and the touch of his skin on her wrist made her body heat up.

Jory's looks are not that different from Larry's. That was the only thought that appeared in Gabriella's mind. However, their auras were very different. Compared to Larry, Jory had an additional air of mystery and arrogance.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1690

If she managed to attract Jory, she and her kids would no longer have to worry about making ends meet ever again. They would probably not enjoy riches, but at least they would have more than enough to get by.

Since the man was hugging her right then, Gabriella figured that he probably had the same intention. Even though she had given birth, the woman was still confident of her looks and figure. With her alluring aura, she knew that she easily stood out among the crowd.

Gabriella traced her hands up and down Jory's arm and rubbed the back of his hand with her fingers gently. She noticed that Jory's eyes were getting hazier by the second as he stared at her lips which looked even more attractive with her peach lip gloss.

Even though a lot had changed over the years, the woman's confidence remained. As she pressed her body tightly against Jory, she was certain that no man would be able to control himself.

However, seconds later, Jory, who had a natural air of arrogance to him, regained his composure and retracted his hand. At once, he pushed Gabriella away, keeping a distance of one metre between them.



“Don’t think of using those tactics you used to seduce other men on me. Not all men think only with the lower half of their bodies. Unlike others, I think with my mind,” Jory said as he looked at the woman coldly.

Gabriella felt extremely awkward that things had not proceeded according to her wishes. In fact, she had not expected herself to touch Jory’s hand. She thought that she was different from before, but it turned out that nothing much had changed. Perhaps, that was just her character. Or maybe, it was because she had suffered enough and desperately wanted her life to improve.

Jory was also surprised at his own restraint. In his younger days, he was unambitious, neglected his schooling and was known to be a womanizer. However, it all changed when a daughter from a rich family rejected his marriage proposal when he was eighteen years old.

Consequently, there was a hundred and eighty degree change in his attitude. He stopped fooling around and became more motivated. It was as though he had made conquering the heart of that woman his life goal.

Marriages of convenience were a common occurrence in the business arena. The coming together of two powerful families would allow ease of cooperation between the families.

Both families would also be able to enjoy more resources and prosper together.

It did not make any sense for two strangers to marry each other.

Marriages of convenience were way more impractical than flash marriages. However, that fate fell upon Jory. Even if he was physically repulsed by the woman chosen for him, he would not have any choice but to marry her.

But of course, Jory, who was eighteen years old then, did not think of it as a bad thing. It

was simply to get married. To him, that meant that there would be one more person to entertain him. He was from a rich family and getting married did not mean much to him. As long as he wished, he could always continue hooking up with other women outside. However, what he did not expect was that the other family ultimately chose to terminate all cooperation with his family and even rejected his marriage proposal. Alpire Group was one of the top corporations in the industry. Furthermore, Jory's father was a reputable figure in the industry and many of the chairmen from other corporations treated him with due respect. Naturally, many would want to be united with the Synders through marriage. Combining forces with the Alpire Group would greatly boost any company's status in the market. It was definitely an opportunity that was hard to come by. Advancing one's own interests were the priority for most in a capitalist economy. The happiness of their kids was of secondary concern to most businessmen. In their eyes, love was overrated and all marriage partners served the same purpose. Money was always more important. However, there was always an exception. When the marriage proposal made by the Alpire Group was rejected, everyone in the company was shocked. The reason given by the other party was that Jory was unaccomplished and often bummed around, which made him incompatible with the daughter of that family. That caused Jory's dad to feel utterly embarrassed. Even Jory himself was incensed. In fact, he had never felt that angry before in his entire life...

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Since young, everyone had treated him like a royalty. He was always well-protected and

taken care of. No one had dared to comment on his behavior until then. He could hardly believe that such an eligible bachelor like him would be rejected! Besides, the other party was even willing to suffer a loss in reputation as well as huge financial losses just to escape from the marriage, causing Jory to feel utterly humiliated. Even though everyone had accepted the fact that the marriage proposal failed, Jory refused to go along with it. In his opinion, it was impossible for any woman to refuse him. Very quickly, he guessed that there was probably someone else that the lady was interested in, otherwise, it didn't make sense for her to reject him so resolutely. Just like what he thought, after Jory insisted that he wouldn't take no for an answer, the other party had no choice but to tell him that the lady had already fallen for another man. After his suspicions were confirmed, Jory felt victorious and behaved smugly in front of his dad. Even though he felt appeased after knowing the real reason, his dad was obviously unhappy. Jabbing a finger at Jory's face, his dad scolded, "Are you feeling very proud of yourself now? If you continue being a good-for-nothing who bums around, even if she didn't have someone else in mind, there was still no way she would settle for you!" Jory was rendered speechless and could not find any words to defend himself. However, his dad was unstoppable as fury overcame him. "You're nothing without me! All you know is how to fool around. I just don't understand how you can even be so full of yourself!" Back then when he was eighteen, Jory never took responsibility for any of his poor behavior. After much thought, he still attributed the failure of his marriage proposal entirely to the lady.

Whenever Jory recalled how his dad reprimanded him, his hatred towards that lady would deepen even further. As such, for a few days after he was rejected, he took no action. However, the lady was unable to wait any further as she needed Jory's cooperation in order to get together with her lover officially. Being an intelligent woman, she sent Jory an anonymous email, which managed to pique Jory's interest. He had interacted with all sorts of women but had yet come across such a petty one who even refused to reveal her identity to him. She continued writing him numerous emails, all to which he replied. Even though it wasn't a lot, but Jory felt that he had gained some valuable information through their brief interactions. His most important takeaway was learning that he was actually just a joke to many. If he were not born into a rich family, he would literally be a nobody. However, it was difficult for him to understand what she meant by reciprocal true love because he had never experienced it before. Even though he had been in many relationships, he had not truly loved any of those women. However, he accepted the fact that the woman would not be able to see any value in him in his current state. He was aware that perhaps, the reason that she rejected his marriage proposal wasn't because of another man, but rather, it was because she saw nothing in him that was worthy of her affections. In the end, Jory still conceded to her wishes and accepted the situation. At the same time, he started working on himself and had a complete change in attitude. He had changed a lot since then, but one thing remained unchanged and that was his hatred towards that woman.

He wanted her to know that rejecting him would be the worst decision as well as the greatest regret in her life. Apart from helping Dustin, he had another objective, which was to destroy the Barrymore Group.

Although he was focused on dealing with Larry at the moment, he was fully confident that he would be able to take down the Barrymores as well. Even though Nancy had remained anonymous and did not divulge any of her personal information to him at that time, Jory had still managed to find out her identity.

“Nancy Barrymore... Just wait and see. I’ll make you regret your decision,” Jory muttered as he leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes while tapping his fingers on the armrest rhythmically.

“Mr. Norton, another one of our branches got acquired by the Alpire Group this morning,” a male employee reported as he entered Larry’s office in a fluster.

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Larry was resting on the sofa and looked pale. He replied weakly, “Got it. I heard you... You may leave now.”

Just then, Joan walked into the office. When the male employee was about to greet her, she quickly stopped him by waving her hands and gestured for him to keep quiet.

Even so, Larry, who had folded his arms behind his head, knew that Joan had arrived as he heard her footsteps.

“Joan, this is already the fourth branch that we lost. I’m too ashamed to face my dad.”

Joan knew how tortured Larry felt about the acquisition of the company’s branches and had been worrying about him. Upon hearing his words, her heart ached for him even more.

She immediately stepped forward and held his hand, hoping to give him some warmth.

“Don’t say that. We’re already trying our best to salvage the situation. Even though the end result matters, we should also give ourselves credit for the efforts we put in. Larry, don’t be too upset. Although we still haven’t found out who’s the one behind all these and we haven’t found an appropriate measure to tackle the situation yet, I firmly believe that justice will prevail and good always triumphs over evil. As long as we press on, we will be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Don’t you agree?”

Larry pulled Joan into his arms when she finished speaking. He had changed a lot after his previous disappearance. He used to be too perfect. In fact, he was so perfect that he didn’t even seem real to his peers. However, he had become more patient and was willing to listen to others. He would also feel helpless when he encountered problems. “Joan, thanks for staying by my side,” he said.

Putting her arms tightly around the man, Joan replied softly, “Larry, we will face any hardships together. This time around is no different. We will come up with a solution together, alright? Even if we don’t manage to salvage the company in the end, don’t be too upset. Just remember that I’ll always be by your side.”

No doubt, money was important, but love gave life meaning. Without love, there would always be a void in one’s life. However, one would not be able to survive purely on love alone. One would lead a most fulfilling life with both financial success and meaningful relationships. A life without both would be a wasted life. Sometimes one would be caught unaware by problems that suddenly occurred. But wasn’t that how life worked? It would not be a problem if one could prepare for it beforehand.

Consequently, the success or failure of one’s life depended mainly on the way problems

were handled.

A couple was supposed to be a team, going through thick and thin together. The strength of a relationship was usually tested during times of hardship. Larry would never forget the encouragement and support Joan gave him during one of the most difficult periods of his life.

Meanwhile, Dustin walked into Jory's office and threw a newspaper on his desk. "Did you do this?" he asked nonchalantly.

Jory took a glance at the newspaper and replied, "Alpire Group... Yup, that's my family business. Is there an issue?"

"What's your purpose for doing this?" Dustin did not bother to beat around the bush.

"That's none of your business," Jory answered curtly. After a second of thought, he corrected himself and said, "Nope, actually, it's related to you, but only to a small extent."

Dustin leaned forward and put both hands on Jory's desk. Looking down at him, he asked,

"What are you trying to do?"

Jory gave a bright smile. Putting one hand behind his head, he replied with an innocent expression, "Don't worry, I'm not interested in Joan's design company. That's just a small company and doesn't have much value to me. Besides, money isn't even my objective."

Maintaining the same posture, Dustin said, "You must have some guts to attack Larry's company. I really need to salute you... "

"Thank you, I'm so flattered," Jory clasped his hands together and replied, together with a bow.

Softening his tone, Dustin asked, "Can you tell me why?"

Putting on an innocent face, Jory replied, "Do I need to have a reason for everything I do?"

Knowing that Dustin was not going to accept that as an answer, Jory had no choice but to

continue speaking, "Fine, I will tell you. I'm dealing with Larry for you. I don't think there's

anything more devastating for him than his company being destroyed."

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"That's not entirely it."

Dustin's reply was like a hit to Jory's head. Apart from Nancy, who rejected his marriage

proposal back then, the only other person who could always see through his thoughts was

Dustin.

"If it's just to deal with Larry, you're really making a mountain out of a molehill. There's really

no need for you to go to such extent. Besides, according to the direction Norton

Corporation is developing, it is definitely no simple task to put them in such peril. In fact,

more than your reason for doing this, I'm actually more interested in how you managed to do it."

Jory shrugged and with one hand on the back of his neck, he replied, "Can you sit down first? I have to strain my neck to look at you."

Dustin took his hands off the table and pulled out a chair. With a serious look on his face, he sat down opposite Jory.

Jory gave an uncanny smile and said, "I got it all planned out."

Dustin's facial muscles relaxed as he let out a sigh. "Forget it. If you don't feel like sharing, I

wouldn't force you to do it. You must have your own reasons for doing things. Just do as

you deem fit. I'm not going to stop you... "

"Well, it's not like you can... " Jory interrupted him and continued, "We always want what we

can't have. I want to let someone know that she will end up losing everything she has

because of a foolish decision she made... " Jory straightened his collar with an air of pomposity.

"Oh, I have something to ask you."

Dustin turned around and replied, "What is it?"



“Give me the address of Barrymore Group. I want to pay them a visit.”  
When Joan left the previous time she visited, the advice she gave Nancy caused her to feel

troubled for the next few days. Norton Corporation had already lost their fourth branch to S.

According to her calculations, the Norton Corporation must have already lost close to 80 million.

The more she thought about it, the more she suspected that S was the man whom she rejected years ago. Fear crept up in her as she grew increasingly worried that Barrymore

Group would be Alpire Group’s next target. Nancy grew more restless as her mind ran wild.

She wanted to station herself at the company so that she could keep track of any unusual movements.

When she woke up, it was already 9 a.m.. As she saw sunshine permeating the room

through the windows, she suddenly realized that she was late.

People tended to be more paranoid when in a state of fear. Sometimes, one might even feel

that danger was just seconds away. Usually, Nancy would pose in front of her full-length

mirror and make sure that she looked impeccable before heading out.

However, that day,

she simply grabbed a random blouse and went out without even checking herself out in the

mirror.

As she was in such a rush, the woman had almost sped past the red light.

As if she was

experiencing a series of unfortunate events, her car suddenly broke down.

What made it worse was that it broke down on a narrow side road, resulting in a traffic jam

behind her. Fortunately, there were not many cars which took that route.

Nancy quickly got

out of the car to check on the cause of the breakdown.

Jory had already spotted the red Bentley stopping in front of him from a distance away. As

such, he intentionally slowed down, thinking that the car would be driven off by the time he got closer. However, that red car remained stationary. A good dog does not block the road. What on Earth is the driver doing? Besides, Jory was on a mission to look for someone. Has the driver simply parked the car here and left? Jory poked his head out of the car window. With one arm outside the window, he looked at the car in front and noticed that the driver didn't seem to be inside the car. "Did the driver really treat this road as his parking lot? Where did he go to after leaving the car here?"

Jory got out of his car to check out the situation in front and realized that there was indeed no one in that car!

Just when he was worrying about how to get through, a petite figure popped out from underneath the car and was looking up at him.

"What are you doing?" The both of them asked at the same time.

"I asked you first," Nancy insisted.

Not to be outdone, Jory replied, "Well, I think I was the one who asked you first."

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Nancy snorted disdainfully, "Huh! How dare you confront me being a car thief!"

"Car thief?" Jory stared at her in incredulity, pointing at himself with his eyes widened. "Are you kidding me? I drove here!" He then pouted his lip, gesturing her toward his car behind.

After glancing at his car, Nancy shot him a disdainful look. "Well, my car is far more expensive than yours!"

Unfortunately, Jory could not refute her statement. Huh! Though I drive an ordinary car, it doesn't mean I'm poor. I'm just trying to keep a low profile! Being the heir to Alpire Group, I can afford any car that I want. I don't lack money or cars!

"Then, why did you park your extremely expensive car here? Huh! Don't block the path like a

dog!” When it came to insulting, Jory was invincible. Indeed, Nancy burned with anger, and her voice raised an octave. “Are you calling me a dog? How dare you insult me!”

However, Jory appeared calm and nonchalant, looking at her with his eyebrows raised. “This is not an insult! Isn’t it a fact?”

Staring at his annoying face, Nancy gave a roar of rage. “You bas\*ard!”

In fact, Jory was immune to her scolding and enjoyed seeing her aggrieved face flushing in rage.

“Yeah, I’m a bas\*ard! So what? Let me tell you, today I’m going to pass through here anyway!” He patted his car hood and leaned against it.

No way! I won’t let him pass through here even if there is nothing wrong with my car, not to mention that my car has broken down!

Nancy held her head up slightly with her nose angled upward. Though she was petite, she was not afraid at all. Since she was young, her father told her to uphold justice. Therefore, she would definitely not give in to a car thief. He’s a man—so what? If they really got into a fight, she could easily defeat him as she had a black-belt in Taekwondo.

“Since you’re so capable, why don’t you reverse your car all the way from here?”

Jory turned to look at the road behind. It was at least three or four hundred meters away. If I reverse my car for that distance and a car suddenly comes from behind, I’ll definitely get scolded!

“Why should I reverse my car? Don’t you drive a prestigious Bentley? Then, get into your car and drive off!”

Immediately, her anger spiked. “Who do you think you are? Why should I follow your instruction?”

After Nancy finished her words, she opened the car door and got into her car. She then

slammed the door. Meanwhile, all the car windows were shut, and there was no way that

Jory could talk to her anymore.

“Hey...” He heard a car door slam before he could respond. Damn it!

I’ve never seen such a

willful woman! She is so domineering that she has blocked the entire road without giving

others a chance to pass through just because she loathes me!

Oh Gosh! She even locked the doors and windows, trying to ignore me!

Do you really think

you’re a princess that you expect me to kneel and beg you to drive off so that I can pass

through?

Dream on! I’ve never been afraid of anyone! You’ve got to be kidding if you think I’ll give in

to you!

In the end, both of them sat in the driver’s seat of their respective car and remained silent,

challenging each other to see who could sit still for a longer period.

Nancy was not afraid at all as she had learned to be patient through practicing Taekwondo.

On the contrary, Jory would soon get bored by sitting in the car after a while since he had

gotten rid of the habit of hanging around and doing sweet nothing.

Initially, he wanted to visit Barrymore Group to meet their heiress, who refused to marry

him. However, he was blocked by a willful, arrogant, and domineering woman on his way

unexpectedly.

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At first, Jory was sitting calmly in the car. Soon, he realized the signal was poor and the

connection was very slow. With that, he could barely sit in the car any longer since he could

not browse the internet, and there was no broadcasting on the radio.

With a serious look, Jory then googled “what should I do if a domineering woman blocked

the road.” Unfortunately, the browser failed to display any search results due to the slow

data connection.

He felt a flash of irritation and tossed his phone onto the passenger seat. After pondering for a moment, Jory got out of his car and approached Nancy. In the beginning, he knocked on her car window patiently, but after seeing her grumpy face, he stopped behaving like a gentleman. Instead, he slapped the car window forcefully. It seemed like Jory knew Nancy held her car dearly. When she saw his reddened palm hitting the car window, she was afraid that he would break the window. At last, Nancy had no choice but to lower the window slightly. They were separated by the glass. He thought it was going to be easy, huh? In the end, he couldn't sit still! Staring at Jory's anxious look, she said faintly, "What's wrong? Can't you sit still?" In fact, he had run out of patience with her. "What exactly do you want? Can't you just drive off?" Nancy replied without hesitation, "I can drive off, but you have to beg me!" Jory was direct and frank, so he immediately responded, "I beg you to drive off, please!" Much to her surprise, he begged her frankly. Oh Gosh! I simply said it and didn't expect him to do so! Now that he has begged me, how am I going to handle this? After all, her car broke down, and she could not fix it by herself. Nancy remained silent and purposely turned away. She then stared blankly at the steering. "Hey, are you going back on your word? Why don't you drive off? How dare you break your promise!" Jory questioned her. He stretched Nancy's patience to the limit, and she struggled to choke back her anger. "I want to drive off, but my car has broken down! Why don't you try to drive it off?" Right away, Jory's face broke into a wry smile. "What? Your car has broken down?"

How dare you scoff at me! I curse that your car breaks down whenever you drive!

“Haven’t you seen a car breakdown before? What’s with the surprise?” Jory could barely conceal his amusement. “Of course, I’ve seen it before, but I’ve never seen a car breakdown on such a narrow road. Huhu! Didn’t you foresee this coming?”

Nancy tamped down her anger. “If I’ve foreseen it, why would I be stuck in this place and run into you?”

“Yeah, right! Running into me is very unlucky, and it’s even worse than a car breakdown! I

thought I ran into an arrogant and savage woman. Yet, I’ve run into someone who is

unfamiliar with her car! Oh well, I’d better get into my car and take a nap! Maybe your car

would have been towed away by the time I wake up!”

“Tow...” Nancy’s lips twitched. Towing may be more troublesome than calling the mechanic

to come over. Besides, if they accidentally damage my car, I’ll be extremely depressed!

Thinking of asking Jory for help, she had no choice but to smile at him shamelessly. “Do you

know how to fix the car? After all, it won’t block your way if you can fix it!”

Surprisingly, he insulted her instead of lending her a hand. “You must have bought your

driver’s license! Don’t you know the emergency breakdown procedure?”

Her face peered out with an innocent smile. “Oh well, my memory is poor!” Screw him! How

I wish I could kick his ass!

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Finally, Nancy opened the car door and let Jory take a look at her car. He was so capable

that he found the cause of the breakdown after a while.

Jory got up and dusted the dirt off his hands. “The valve spring is broken. Didn’t you notice

the symptoms when you drove it earlier? You’re really impressive!”

“Alright, stop making sarcastic remarks! Is there any way to fix it?”

Nancy shook him by the shoulder.

“Yes!” Jory nodded.

“How?” Nancy’s eyes sparkled with anticipation.

“Well, the easiest way is to change a car!” He burst out laughing.

Nancy rebuked, “Are you buying a car for me? Stop talking nonsense!

Can’t you think seriously?”

Jory rolled up his sleeves. “Since you joked with me, why can’t I tease you?” Despite being

mischievous, he still stepped forward and helped her to reinstall the broken valve spring in

reverse. He used his fair fingers to install the small valve spring carefully and perfectly.

The ray of sunlight shone on his handsome face, making him look like a charming prince

who came to her rescue.

Nancy subconsciously shifted her gaze from his hand to his face. Actually, he is not that

annoying. Though he keeps making sarcastic remarks and trying to irritate me purposely, he

still lends a hand to me in the end.

Indeed, Nancy was staring at Jory in amazement. It was until he waved his hand before her

eyes that she came to her senses. In the blink of an eye, the serious and mature appearance

a moment ago seemed to be her illusion when the man before her reverted to his

mischievous and playful personality.

“Are you looking at me?”

Nancy immediately denied, “Nope! Don’t talk nonsense. I’m just looking at the valve spring!”

Jory said with a playful smile, “What a lame excuse! I’ve already installed the valve spring.”

“Really? When? Why didn’t I see it?” Nancy suddenly behaved like a little foolish girl.

While pointing at himself, a sly glint came to his eye then, as if he was about to say

something mischievous. "I've installed it long ago! You didn't see it because... you were staring at me!"

What Jory said hit the nail on the head, so Nancy immediately pushed him away. "No! Don't overthink. You are so full of yourself!" She then turned the car key and started the car engine.

He leaned forward and put his hand on the car window. "Hey! I've helped you. Are you going to leave without saying a word of appreciation?"

Nancy's car started to move forward. Instead of looking at Jory, she looked straight ahead.

With a smile on her face, she said stubbornly, "You're helping yourself instead! You can pass through after I drive off!"

"But..." Jory watched her car moving forward slowly and shook his head helplessly.

"Thank you!" Her sweet and energetic voice was transmitted to his ears. Well, she isn't that arrogant and unreasonable!

Meanwhile, Caspian was studying the information of the four branches acquired by Alpire

Group. He had been staying late at the office for the past few days. Still, he could not find

any clues from the piles of papers on his desk. In the end, Larry called and informed him

that the leakage of internal information had resulted in the disclosure of their company's confidential document.

"I suspect the employee who is leaving for our competitor did this!"

Caspian rubbed his chin, pondering over it.

Larry took a sip of water and replied calmly, "This is impossible. In terms of salary, our

company offers the highest pay among other competitors."

"Then, our competitor must have sent over a spy!" Caspian said confidently.

"But... we don't have any evidence and can't identify any suspect!"

Larry responded.

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Feeling frustrated, Caspian covered his face with those papers. "Argh! What's going on? Why did the internal information leak out?"

"Let's think of a way to meet the directors of Alpire Group!"

Immediately, anticipation gleamed in Larry's eyes as he came up with a firm and decisive plan. "I want to question them why do they keep acquiring our companies!"

Caspian continued, "I'm wondering too. There are many ways to make a fortune, but why do they choose this way? Aren't they afraid that they will offend Norton Corporation if the acquisition is unsuccessful? Though we have similar standing, it will jeopardize their future development if they offend us."

"So... their target is personal instead of business!" As soon as Larry made such a remark, both of them were shocked.

After he hung up, he sunk in thought. This assumption is way too terrifying, but the probability of it being the case is very high!

If Alpire Group really targets one of us, who will that be?

Meanwhile, Joan had just returned to Nirhaven College. She had never expected the Norton Corporation to encounter such a problem. Luckily, it was summer break, so she could allocate time for herself while having sufficient time to deal with the upcoming problems.

"Are you going to invite the directors of Alpire Group for dinner tomorrow?" Joan was holding a fork and looking at Larry with her eyes widened.

He put some greens on her plate. While staring at those greens, his heart was filled with hope. "Yeah! They have acquired our branches, and we need to transfer those shares to them, so I think it is necessary for both parties to meet."

Larry then dipped the ladle into the casserole and continued, "So far, we've only received the acquisition contract, but they haven't taken the companies' properties and liquid assets"

away.”

“That means they don’t need the money urgently. If I were them, I would have withdrawn the funds and stocks after I acquired the company. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be able to cover the cost of acquisition!” Joan was trying to analyze the situation. Upon hearing that, Larry frowned. “Darling, I feel uneasy. I don’t think they are after our money. Do you think they are targeting someone in our company?” Joan forced a smile. “Who would dare to offend such a large company knowing that he would end up in deep trouble...” She swallowed a mouthful. Suddenly, something came into her mind, and she looked at Larry with her glazed eyes. “Could you be the target?”

The next morning, the mellow sunlight passed through the transparent windows and filled the entire room with warmth. Everything was in honeyed tones, beautiful and soothing. The heat of the sun gave the room a cozy lived-in air. There was a large bed occupying almost half of the room. A handsome man was lying on his side with a beautiful woman resting on his left arm, while his right arm was embracing the woman’s slender waist.

They were partially covered by a soft and fluffy quilt. There was a small figure squeezed between them, exposing half of his head. That was a cute little boy, with curly hair and ruddy lips. He was batting his long and delicate eyelashes, which looked like a butterfly fluttering its wings and shattering the rays of sunlight. He pouted his lips, snuggling into the woman’s arms. She was half asleep and could feel the touch. Then, her hand habitually pulled the quilt up, and she fell asleep again. The sun shone on the velvet curtain, and the warm light swayed gently, scattering the mottled colors all over the room.

Larry opened his eyes and saw such a beautiful scene. For a while, everything seemed to freeze. Waking up on a sunny morning with you by my side is the best moment in my life. Thinking about that, he could not help but chuckle. A beautiful family was indeed a diluent for all troubles. Even though Norton Corporation was in deep trouble, he still felt he was the happiest man in the world every morning.

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Perhaps the gods were jealous of his good life too, so they had to make certain arrangements to disrupt his hard-earned peace. The phone vibrated nonstop on his bedside table. Larry reached for it and peeked at the caller ID. Next thing he knew, his weariness disappeared without a trace. He sat up abruptly, removed the covers, and rushed out of the room.

What's wrong? Larry's sudden rise from the bed woke Joan up. She rubbed her eyes, still drowsy. Did Leslie wet the bed again? When Larry re-entered the room, he did not look so good. His wife noticed that his face was wet. Instincts told her something was awry. Joan sat up, pulled the blanket over Leslie, and cautiously climbed out of bed. She was getting increasingly distraught with each passing day as surprises kept popping up.

The familiar and overwhelming anxiety was eating her.

A while later she heard Larry speak. He said, as calmly as he could, "Alpire Group has acquired the fifth branch."

"Alpire Group", "acquisition", "branch"... These terms got thrown about frequently these days. She was becoming sensitive to each of those words and would feel nauseous for no reason.

The next moment, Larry put on his suit. He stood in front of the mirror fixing his tie. He only

needed to get the knot right. He seemed to have lost the leisurely mood he had once upon

a time, when he would eagerly make sure his attire was spick and span.

“I’ll have to convene a board meeting. We have to come up with countermeasures quickly.

Up till now, we’ve been too passive.”

In the directors’ conference hall, Larry sat in the main seat, dressed in formal work attire. His

face appeared gloomy, as though a large raincloud was hanging over his head. On both

sides of the long council table, there were ashen-faced junior executives, calculative

shareholders with grayish beards who kept their heads low, as well as assistants who could

not stop themselves from sweating profusely as they surveyed the room.

“I’m sure you all have picked up on the news lately. The ones about Alpire Group acquiring

our branches. As we all know, Alpire Group is a company which has never collaborated with

us before. So, for it to suddenly be capable of acquiring five of our branches in one go, I’m

sure you all want to know how they did it. That is the reason why I call for this board

meeting today.”

“Ah, wasn’t it four branches just yesterday? How did it get to five?”

The attendees began to whisper and discuss among themselves.

Larry cleared his throat and, at the same time, tapped on the bronze tabletop. Silence fell on

the room once more. He always had a knack for authority and the kind of aura that

demanding attention.

A potbellied senior director voiced out his disdain, “Are you doubting our loyalty, Mr.

Norton?” He had been working for Norton Corporation throughout most of his life and had

little respect for the young president.

“I’m not doubting anyone here. You can see for yourself the company’s offer on wage offer

and remuneration, how the management has been doing over the years.

You can even

compare them to other companies in the industry. I won't be suspicious of anyone for no reason. After all, we live in a society enforced by law. For everything we say and do, there must be evidence to match..."

Then, Larry's speech took a turn. "But each of us knows what we did, and each of us knows where we stand. The truth will speak for itself."

"Hmph," the senior director scowled. "A gigantic company like Norton Corporation should be more than capable. Even its branches should be able to stand out among the rest.

Everyone in the entire corporation is a hard worker. You don't need to tell me that. Do you want to know what I think? I think Mr. Norton needs to take a closer look at himself!" He put forward a plausible defense.

Larry snickered under his breath. "Mr. Harley, you've dedicated much of your life to the company and I respect that. However, I hope you can be mindful of one fact. Seniority and experience no longer take precedence, and age no longer translates to ability. "

Larry turned his gaze away from the older man and raised his voice, "Of course, I have absolute confidence in the financial prowess of our company, but even an ant hole could wreck a mammoth bridge. This time, five of our branches have been acquired. We have to find out which part of the company's operation is being taken advantage of!"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1699

"So far, after relentless investigation and tracking, we found that all five acquired branches have one thing in common. That is, information has been leaked from the inside. I hope everyone here can consider the issue from this angle. At the same time, we have to enhance the monitoring and supervision of all the information that come and go between various

departments, in order to avoid any more leakage. We don't want it happening again!"

As soon as he said that, the room became abuzz with chatter again. Larry did not intend to

stop them. However, the old man whom Larry referred to as "Mr. Harley" had something

more to say, and he went about it loudly, "Mr. Norton, I hope you can also bear this in mind.

The board of directors has the power to dismiss a president with poor performance at any

time. Norton Corporation has never encountered a crisis as bad as this one since its

establishment... until now. I implore Mr. Norton to reflect on his actions.

Similarly, we as the

directors should also be held accountable for failing to assist you..." The

old man gave Larry

a sidelong glance. He spoke eloquently, in a gentle tone.

Under the table, Larry clenched his fists. He would not allow Norton

Corporation to fall on

his watch. He swore he would not let his father's hard work go for nothing.

Additionally, he did not want to disappoint his followers and their expectations of him. He

also wanted to prove his point, that age does not translate to ability.

In the evening, Larry pushed the door open and entered his home. He was knackered with

his thoughts fully occupied by the tiring board meeting.

"You're finally back." Joan knew about Norton Corporation's crisis. She deliberately

requested the manager to let her get off work early, so that she could get home before

Larry did.

Larry buried himself in the sofa and accepted Joan's glass of lemonade.

"You should stop taking coffee, dear. It doesn't go well with the stress."

Joan sat down

beside him and dutifully massaged his shoulders.

Within a few days, Alpire Group had managed to acquire five of Norton Corporation's

branch companies. She was of the opinion that a huge acquisition project such as this would

have required long-term preparation. She had no intention of putting the blame on the company employees, but the information leak did not hinder one from wondering whether there were spies in their midst.

“Do you have any ideas who’s behind this?” Joan inquired softly. “Now that you’re home, let’s put the problem aside. You have to take care of your health. That’s the capital to move forward. Only then can you build the strength to come up with solutions.”

“Joan, at the directors’ meeting today, they questioned me. They questioned my abilities, my business methods. They still think that experience is everything...”

Larry’s voice was deeper than usual as he complained to his wife.

Joan gave his hand a tight squeeze. “Don’t take what they say to heart, dear. I believe in you!”

Larry drank the lemonade in one go. His mouth and teeth were instantly filled with

bitterness, just like his mood. But Joan held his hand firmly as she continued to give him the strength he did not know he needed. Her hand always seemed to be able to give him the power to march forward.

Joan chuckled softly. She leaned over to give Larry a hug and whispered in his ear, “Larry,

I’ve told you before. No matter what kind of difficulties we face, I’ll go through them with

you, hand in hand. Even if no one else believes you, please know that you have me. I’ll stand by you, forever and always.”

Forever and always...” Larry slowly held onto her fingers, feeling her cool temperament and

sweet sensitivity. Her presence was like peach blossoms in April. Fair, light, and swaying in

the wind. Then, her fragrance overwhelmed him and eventually got under his skin.

This woman had always been standing by his side.

To be able to spend the rest of his life with her, what more could he ask for?

Jory's journey to Barrymore Group this time had been smooth-sailing.

Unwittingly, he chose

the same road he had taken last time, where he had been stopped by a daft, boisterous,

egoistic woman and her red Bentley.

He had his hands on the steering wheel, his fingers tapping on the surface every once in a

while. As he came to a red light, he joined the row of cars in forming a neat and orderly line.

As he thought about what happened the other day, he actually felt a tinge of indescribable

disappointment. Once it popped into his mind, he laughed at himself for quite some time.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1700

Why are you disappointed, Jory? You're not a masochist, are you? Geez, that's right. Why am

I thinking of that woman? Though, if someone offers me the chance to see her again, I

probably won't say no.

The letters symbolizing Barrymore Group glared fiercely under the sunlight. Jory locked his

car and, with his hand, shielded his eyes from the sun hanging above his head. It was awfully

hot that day. Jory entered the building and was greeted by the security guard on duty. The

guard respectfully bowed at the man dressed in formal wear despite not knowing who Jory

was.

He found himself in the reception hall of Barrymore Group. The first thing he saw was the

large, golden front desk. The sight of it dazzled him only because he had just escaped the

sun's brightness. His eyes had not fully adjusted to the glare. This place made him feel like

he had just entered the evil landlord's lair.

There were many green potted plants in the area. Most of the staff in the company tended



to work their eyes intensively, so green plants could help keep their vision in check. On the leather sofa by the side sat a few important-looking people scrolling on their phones and sipping tea.

"May I help you, sir?" The receptionist gave him a welcoming smile. Jory put up an even more pleasant one. "I'd like to meet the chairman." "I'm afraid an appointment is required in order to meet the chairman, sir. Do you have an appointment?" The receptionist replied politely.

Jory shook his head, and fished out a name card from his suit pocket. The receptionist turned it over, and then kindly gave him the directions he would need, "The chairman's office is on the twenty-sixth floor."

Jory entered the elevator and found the button which would take him to the twenty-sixth floor. He pressed it. The doors of the elevator slowly closed, but then a palm-wide gap stopped it from going all the way. Jory thought that there was a malfunction, so he pressed the "close" button again. As he did so, a piercing scream almost penetrated his eardrums.

It was a little bit too late when he discovered a slender, fair hand had been crushed between the closing doors. He quickly pressed the other button, prompting the doors to slide open, and the woman outside rushed into the elevator, understandably fuming.

"I apologize," he said.

"Didn't you see me block the door? Why did you close it anyway?"

Jory's heart skipped a beat when he recognized the voice. He turned to face the other occupant in the elevator. She was still rubbing her injured hand.

"I said, why..." As she shouted, she lifted her head to confront the tall figure next to her, only to find herself looking into Jory's deep-set eyes.

"It's you!" the two of them blurted simultaneously.

Nancy quickly turned her face away. She chuckled softly. "Well, what do you know? It's a

small world after all.”

“Sounds more like you owe me one. I helped fix your car, remember?”

Jory quipped.

Before he could finish, Nancy held up her injured hand and waved in front of Jory. It had

become visibly red and swollen. “Well, look at what you have done.

Does this make us even?”

The conversation hung in the air as silence loomed over them, while the elevator slowly

made its way up the building. Jory felt like he would suffocate if he did not say anything. He

might not get another chance like this. The woman was heading to the twentieth floor, and

they were arriving soon. Just then. Jory did the unthinkable.

He broke the awkward silence between them. He was not very loud, but the tiny space in

the elevator somehow amplified the volume. “Your hand... is it okay?”

Nancy was obviously taken aback by his sudden question. They had only met each other

twice. Unfortunately, he had left her with a bad impression. She thought of him as a

generally salty person with a sharp tongue, and yet here he was, “kindly” asking about her

injury. For a moment, her hand was the least of her worries. She felt mortified all over.

Something was definitely off.

That was when the elevator decided to stop, for they had reached the twentieth floor. The

door opened slowly. Nancy simply straightened her hair and casually snorted at the man,

“It’s fine. I’m leaving.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1701

Jory watched her disappear behind the closing doors. He got even more crestfallen.

He rubbed his forehead and rearranged his thoughts. I’m meeting a VIP next. C’m on, get

your act together! Soon, the doors open again with a ding, and he exited the elevator with

steady steps.

Knock, knock, knock.

"Come in."

Simon Barrymore's voice, along with its hoarseness and vicissitudes that came with his age, rang from inside. One could actually feel what the old man had been through, even experience a little part of their life, just by listening to the sound of his voice.

"Mr. Barrymore," Jory greeted him loudly.

Simon looked up from his work to acknowledge his guest's presence.

Yet, he was unable to

recognize Jory. No one in the Barrymore Group would call him by his last name. Calling him

by his title would have sufficed. So who was this strange, young man standing in his office?

"And you are..."

Jory tilted his head. "Don't you remember me?" Simon only looked more confused, so the

young man added, "I'm from Alpire Group."

It took a while, but eventually Simon managed to pick up the man's name from the depths

of his memory. He stretched out a hand and rose from his seat. "Jory?

When have you

arrived at Marsingfill?"

"Not long ago," Jory responded with a grin.

Simon poured his guest a cup of tea and then, when he saw that Jory was still standing in

his office, offered him a seat on the sofa. "Why are you still standing there? Come, come.

Have a seat. How's your father been all these years?"

A green leaf could be seen floating on the steaming tea. Simon used a tea tray with designs

depicting ancient Chanaean culture. Its grid-like weaving method made the simple art of tea

sampling much more fulfilling.

One of Raphael's paintings, "The School of Athens", hung on Simon's wall. It was apparent

that the chairman was a great fan of Chanaean culture.

Jory was so deeply amazed by the ancient Chanaean relics surrounding him that it took him

a while to respond to the chairman's question. "He's doing fine. I believe business is thriving at Barrymore Group as well?"

Simon waved his hand. "No, no. We are no match for Alpire Group's rapid growth after all.

That's a given."

"Mr. Barrymore, I suppose I won't dally any longer. I come here today with a business

proposal," Jory said, driving his point home. "As you can see, Alpire Group's development is

gradually stabilizing. But, in the process of it all, what we lack is collaboration. And as you

know, collaboration between two strong companies is the unchanging rule for survival in

this industry. So..."

Simon interrupted the young man before he could finish. "Jory, listen. As the chairman of

Barrymore Group, I am more than happy to know that Alpire Group has chosen us to

establish a partnership. But, Jory, since you've come to us seeking one, I'm sure you're also

aware of our company's development so far. Our partners have always been local

companies. Barrymore Group has never cooperated with multinational companies. And we

don't plan to start now."

The corners of Jory's lips drooped briefly and, when he smiled, he looked defeated. "Mr.

Barrymore, that incident happened so long ago. You shouldn't take it to heart. I have

learned to move on, and you ought to let it go too. I'm the only victim after all."

Simon looked apologetic. "But, Jory, you have to know, the Barrymores are in your debt

because of what happened. While I'm pleased to know that you've moved on, that can't be

used as a reason for Barrymore Group to work with a multinational company such as yours.

Look, Jory. If you insist on bringing it up, then I'm afraid you're just wasting your time."

The old man was clearly still brooding over the incident many years ago. He claimed that Barrymore Group had never worked with multinational companies. That was obviously an excuse to brush him off. The old man just did not want to get involved with him. He had so many years under his belt, and yet he still bore an immense fear of gossip.

Since Simon was so frank about it—that collaboration was a no-go—then Jory would not force him, nor would he keep pestering the old man until he changed his mind. After all, Jory knew very well that Alpire Group was currently a lot stronger than before. Besides, he still had a trump card up his sleeves—the bug which Gabriella had installed in Joan's phone.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1702

One of the reasons for Jory's visit to Barrymore Group was to discuss collaboration with Simon. Being able to work together with a company of the same class would only reap benefits for Alpire Group. There was no reason for Jory not to give it a go.

Secondly, Jory came here to try his luck. He wanted to see if he could meet the woman who had rejected him back then. He also wanted to prove to her that he was not the worthless man she thought he was. In fact, he was a capable man of excellence, one who would make her regret her decision!

Between the two reasons, the second preceded the first. To him, it did not matter whether the business proposal fell through or not. If it did, then it meant good news for Alpire Group and its development; if it did not, it would not incur substantial damage to Alpire Group anyway.

Since it had come to this, Jory believed he had no more reason to stay. It was a shame,

because Simon had made him a good cup of tea, and he had only taken a sip. He would not have the chance to drink again.

Simon's mood obviously took a turn for the better now that Jory stopped bothering him about work. He even encouraged Jory to come visit him more often when the young man made to take his leave.

Of course, Jory was only being polite. After bidding farewell to Simon, accompanied by a smile, Jory placed his hand on the doorknob. He found it strange when he felt the knob shaking when he had barely made a move to turn it. Within half a second, the door of the chairman's office flung open from the outside. The doorknob which Jory had been holding also sprung out of his hand.

The person who entered the room had on the professional white-collar outfit of a businesswoman, but it was her face which Jory had a hard time taking his eyes off. They had met before, first on the road a few days prior, and the second time in the elevator, just over half an hour ago.

Difference being, this time she had a document in hand. Earlier, she had been empty-handed. The woman also recognized the guest in the chairman's office. Both of them bore the same frozen expression as they exchanged looks and locked eyes. Both were equally alarmed by the circumstances that brought them together. You again! Simon assumed this was the first time they met. Ever since the engagement was called off, he thought the two would never have the chance to meet. Obviously, fate had other plans.

Although Simon would rather they remain strangers, it could not be helped that they were currently facing each other. So, Simon bit the bullet and proceeded to make introductions.

"Jory, meet my daughter, Nancy."

"Nancy, this is Jory, heir to Alpire Group."

While Simon was doing that, the other two interpreted it differently. "There you have it. She's your ex-fiancée, and he's your ex-fiancé," was what they heard. Although they had met more than once... they had not exactly asked for the other person's name. As a result, this official introduction turned out to be much more embarrassing than their previous chance encounters. Jory was first to extend his hand. After all, he ought to be the gentleman in this situation, especially in front of a lady. Exercising basic courtesy, he said, "Nice to meet you. I'm Jory." Nancy was dumbfounded from the minute she opened the door and found him in her father's office. Back at the elevator, she had been wondering who he was and what he was doing here. Is he the manager of some other company? Or perhaps one of our major shareholders! He did press the button for the twenty-sixth floor, so he must be here to meet Dad! What a surprise! This man whom I keep walking into happens to be that unlucky playboy I rejected years ago! Nancy totally loathed the idea of him. She had always hated the kind of underachiever who somehow managed to live vicariously through the hard work of others. And, well, he seemed to fit the bill of one of those young, rich heirs who would rather be chasing skirts all day. So when she found out that he was her marriage partner, she wanted so badly to call it off. Even if she had not met Caspian then, she would have outright rejected Jory even if she had her head strapped on the guillotine! But after the last two encounters, Jory did not seem to the terrible man she had pictured him to be. The man was tough on the outside, soft on the inside, genuinely cared about others, and would actively admit his mistakes. In contrast, it would take a miracle for Nancy

to utter an apology.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1703

So you're Nancy Barrymore! My so-called fiancée who dumped me for no reason!

That was the only thought that popped into Jory's head when her name was revealed.

However, he did not feel the slightest hint of hatred, which he had originally expected to have when they finally met. In fact, he realized he did not hate her at all.

On the contrary, he seemed to have developed an interest in her.

"What a coincidence! This is the third time we meet, and I finally get to know your name. I'm

really sorry for what happened just now. Why don't I buy you a drink?"

Jory took note of her

crushed hand from earlier and decided to right his wrong.

Nancy was thinking along the same lines. "That's what I was thinking!

I'm really sorry for my

rude behavior the other day. I haven't thanked you enough for fixing my car."

Simon was startled by their instant friendliness and willingness to buy each other a drink. Do

they know each other already? Who has introduced them, and when did it all happen? There

was no room for him to think, for the two young people had cheerfully left his office to get

some drinks.

Jory and Nancy had gone to a bar with a rather unique ambience. It was unlike other bars

she had seen before, which were mostly smoky, reeked of cigarettes, frequented by men

looking for pleasure and women with obscure faces.

Jory simply ordered two glasses of wine with relatively low alcohol content, and was first to

break the stalemate. "I didn't expect our third meeting to turn out like this. To be honest,

you're quite different from what I imagined."

Nancy grinned. "Oh, do tell me. What kind of image did you have of me?

And how has that

perception changed now that we're formally introduced?"



Jory looked up at the crystal chandelier, with its sparkling glass crystals, hanging above him.

After putting in some thought, he said, "Well, for starters, before I met you, you sounded

like the kind of woman who would jump to conclusions about other people despite not

knowing them well. When I met you, I thought of you as arrogant and capricious. Now, after

meeting you for the third time, you're actually quite alright.

"As for why it came to that, I can't really tell. I guess it's just a feeling people get after they

realize they get to know each other!" Jory added.

Nancy toyed with the napkin on the table. "Don't you want to know what I think of you?"

To her surprise, Jory shook his head. His mouth twitched as he spoke, "I don't want to know,

and I don't think it's worth finding out. If I remember correctly, you got married a few years

ago, didn't you?"

Nancy argued, "So what if I'm married? There's no law that says a married woman cannot be

friends with an unmarried man, is there?"

"If you ask me, pure friendships do not exist between men and women.

In fact, it goes

beyond that," Jory gave a mysterious answer. He just wanted to let her know that he was

not promiscuous at all, so that she would doubt her own judgments, especially the ones she

had about him back then, all of which turned out to be false.

Nancy only got more confused, but she had always been straightforward, and that was how

she responded. "I used to hear that you're a run-of-the-mill playboy."

"And? Has our meeting today changed your opinion of me? As the saying goes, seeing is

believing. You should only believe what you see with your own eyes. So, now that you've

met me, do you think I'm what the rumors say I am?" Jory asked

jokingly, but his smile at

that time was a bit more restrained than the ones he had on during their previous chance

encounters.

"We've only just met for the third time. How should I know what kind of person you really are?" Nancy teased. "Who knows, maybe you're deliberately putting up an act in order to hide your true nature."

When Jory heard that, an odd feeling rose within him. His next comment was dripping with sarcasm. "Then, it seems my performance today wasn't good enough, for you to think of me that way."

Right then, the server brought them the wine they had ordered. Jory held the wine bottle in one hand and a glass in the other. He poured one for himself first, then another for Nancy.

Gripping the bottom of the wine glass between his middle and index finger, he proposed a toast, "I'm sorry I rubbed you the wrong way. Allow me to drain my glass first."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1704

Nancy hesitated. She seldom consumed alcohol, and she had no idea what sort of drunk personality she would exhibit later. She examined the red liquid in the wine glass in front of her, her mind a tangled mess.

Jory could easily see through her thoughts. He arched his eyebrows at her as he spoke,

"Don't worry, I ordered wine with low alcohol content. Just go ahead and drink."

Since he said that, she could not possibly refuse. She proceeded to take a sip of the wine. A

spicy and bitter taste instantly exploded in her mouth. Ew, how can anyone drink this stuff?

And even be addicted to it!

"You don't really drink, do you? Then, we shouldn't come here next time." Jory observed

the indescribable expression on her face. Her cheekiness had left the building. In its place was dismay.

Nancy coughed a few times. "Don't mind me. I've always imagined that the next time we meet, we'll either start a fight or verbal warfare. It's never crossed my mind that we'll be here, sitting at a table in a bar, having drinks and a lovely chat." Jory continued to sip on his wine while maintaining a rather elegant posture, like one of those members of nobility in one of those eighteenth-century oil paintings.

Nancy was not a seasoned drinker, and she had no plans to force herself. Sitting opposite Jory, she simply put down her glass and, resting her chin on her hands, watched him as he drank.

"By the way, what business do you have with my father? I saw you in the elevator this morning and there's something I've been wanting to ask you..." Nancy began. After careful consideration, she supposed she should not pass up such a good opportunity to dig up some answers. She might possibly be able to help Joan find out the truth behind the acquisition of Norton Corporation's branches.

Jory had his eyes closed as he savored the sensation of alcohol exciting his taste buds. "Ask away."

"Why does Alpire Group want to acquire the five branches of Norton Corporation?" Nancy asked as she blinked quizzically at him, keenly anticipating his response. "For the money." Jory had always answered questions in a simple and concise manner. His three-word reply was clear-cut and irrefutable because he had just laid out a bare fact. The fundamental purpose of mergers and acquisitions between companies was, ultimately, money-motivated!

Those three words completely stumped Nancy. She feigned calmness and took another sip of her drink, only to cover her mouth again as more coughing ensued.

Jory poured her a glass of plain water from the jug next to him. Between her coughs, it was strenuous for Nancy to express her gratitude. It took some time for her to recover and utter her thanks, however faintly it turned out.

"Of course, it's for the money. I didn't think it was a secret. As I said, a large part of a company's growth has always been done through the acquisition of other companies and reaping the gains from their stocks in order to keep growing. You should know that, don't you?"

Nancy nodded. She understood that acquisitions were performed with a financial motive, but that was not what she was asking at all. In her subconscious mind, she believed that Alpire Group's repetitive moves to acquire Norton Corporation's branches were essentially an attempt to gradually destroy the said company. Furthermore, Alpire Group's greed did not come to an end when profits had been made. Instead, it intensified. Their plans were still being carried out progressively, while Norton Corporation was slowly being devoured by the giant.

Nancy knew the reason for the whole venture had to be beyond monetary gains, but she had no clue how to go about questioning Jory. To him, she was the woman who turned down the engagement and brought him much humiliation. If she had been the one who had been divorced, she would probably remember it for the rest of her life and might not forgive the other person. Therefore, she could totally empathize with Jory's current mood. She could not imagine how much it must have taken for the man to confront her, to let go of the past completely, and to let his guard down around her.

She held the glass of plain water that Jory had poured for her. The lukewarm temperature was similar to general feeling Jory rubbed off on her—gentle and approachable. But she refused to trust him so easily. She could not be sure if his gentlemanly appearance was a farce he put up just to confuse her. She could not be sure if the person before her was as gentle and elegant as the plain water in the glass, without a trace of danger.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1705

Hurriedly, she made up an excuse and left the bar, leaving Jory there all by himself. He did a

lot of thinking. He thought about the past, the present, and the future.

He let his

imagination roam and his fantasies fly, and somehow he seemed to understand a little bit

more why Dustin had been so desperately searching for that person...

He used to tease Dustin that he got hung up over a woman too easily, that he could never

seem to let go of Joan. He often failed to understand why the man would rather reject the

many wonderful women around him and continue to waste his efforts on a married woman.

Love does not discriminate when it comes to time or targets, and it makes matches in no

particular order. How can you be sure who you'll fall in love with in the next second? One

could not predict when or how it would happen, just like Jory at the moment. He had no

idea that he was starting to develop a different kind of feelings for Nancy.

He supposed he

might have fallen in love with her, but if someone asked him what love was, he could not

come up with a clear answer.

"What's up, Caspian? Are you still unable to contact the director of Alpire Group?"

"I'm afraid not, Boss. I don't know what's going on. I've searched for all the contact

information of almost all the existing corporations, but I can't find anything on Alpire Group!" Caspian reported. He was extremely anxious, for this was the first time he had ever felt so powerless. His efforts had been in vain. On the other side, Larry was getting increasingly worried. "What can we do now? We want to meet them, but we can't even find their contact number. The branches are being acquired one after another. If this goes on, we'll eventually go out of business!" Caspian did not respond. The noise on his side was getting louder and louder, so much so that Larry could barely make out his voice. Larry placed his ears closer to the receiver in desperate need to hear Caspian amid the noise, when the latter suddenly yelled, "Get them out of here!" Before Larry could even ask the man whatever was going on, Caspian beat him to it. "Boss, whatever you do, don't come to the company. I don't know how the hell they did it but this place has been swarming with journalists for the past few days, especially today. They all want to come into the building to interview you. Boss, you cannot come here! They'll have you cornered!" "Caspian, what's going on? Why are there suddenly so many journalists?" Larry asked uneasily. "I don't know, boss! There's a lot more of them today! It's like they have made a pact to swarm in here! I heavily suspect that they're acting under someone else's orders. Whatever you do, do not come here!" Despite Caspian's repeated warnings, Larry believed he had to go see for himself. He was the president of Norton Corporation. He should be shouldering all responsibility, and not be shielded by his staff. He was not a coward. Hence, he must step forward to bear the burden.

As the saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility. He understood that much since he took over his father's company. He thanked Caspian hurriedly over the phone and swiftly made his way to the company. Before Larry's black car could even come to a stop in front of the company's entrance, the journalists, all of whom had been pestering the front desk manager despite being blocked by the security guard, immediately swarmed towards the president. One by one, they pressed themselves on the car windows like layers of vines. They held up microphones representing various TV stations and online shows. Behind them were the camera crew. They clung onto Larry, hungry and desperate for the latest scoop.

"Mr. Norton, can you tell us how your company's doing lately?"

"Mr. Norton, can you talk about the underlying causes of the stock volatility?"

"Mr. Norton! Mr. Norton! What's your opinion on the rumors that Norton Corporation's about to be acquired by Alpire Group, the multinational company?"

"Mr. Norton, can you take a moment to accept our interview?"

Their many faces resembled the scary images one would often find in horror stories. They screamed, clamored, and twisted, while Larry struggled to catch his breath. He could not even make out their faces as he could only feel the opening and closing of their mouths. So much mumbling and murmuring rang about his ears, but he could hear nothing else other than the sounds of his own beating heart. Thump! Thump! Thump! It was all so deafening, as if the noise could pierce through his chest at any given moment.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1706

Larry did not have any bodyguard with him, so he had to push through the mob like a lone ranger. He moved through it with much difficulty, listening to the many voices in his ears

throwing around the word “interview”. But he took no heed of it all, as he kept muttering to no one in particular, “Excuse me, coming through.”

Once Larry got out of his car, the ruckus downstairs suddenly got so loud that even Caspian, who was upstairs, noticed the oddity. No way! I just got off the phone with him! I told him not to come! How did he make it here so fast?

Caspian wanted to take the elevator down, but it took too long and he did not have the patience to wait. He stomped his feet once and decided he might as well use the stairs. He glanced downwards from the stairway and, as expected, spotted Larry’s tall, distinctive figure amid the crowd, surrounded by pesky media representatives and moving very slowly, with no one there to rescue him.

Caspian clenched his fists. Holding on to the handrails, he sprinted down the stairs, taking two to three steps at a time. When he reached the bottom, Larry barely managed to squeeze into the hall, blocked by a wall of humans. He did not see Caspian, and the latter, who had emerged outside, had lost the patience he once had.

When the commotion started, he still had the patience to confront the journalists and tell them, “Sorry for the inconvenience, but the president is busy. He will not be accepting interviews, but in time we’ll clarify our situation.” Now, witnessing these journalists and their stubborn refusal to back down, with little care for how other people feel, he decided that the time for niceness was over. He charged over, grabbed hold of a random journalist, and swiftly tossed him aside.

He was a soldier once. The skill had not completely left him. Since getting married, he had had one too many peaceful days, and never really had the need to practice. Surprisingly, the



situation that day gave him a chance to exercise his muscles. One by one, he lifted the members of the press with ease. It did not matter they were male journalists at six feet tall, or female journalists weighing about a hundred pounds. Caspian picked them up like he was carrying chickens.

After getting rid of the last journalist who got in his way, Caspian spotted Larry who was trapped with no way out. He rushed to his front and gave the scowling journalists a telling off, "Look, you're all well-known figures of the media. I'm sure you abide by your professional work ethics. The way you guys block the entrance to our company has greatly impacted our operations. If you still have the minimum level of conscience, please leave before we call the police. We will make an announcement about our company affairs in due time."

Caspian's statement had not completely fallen on deaf ears. Several journalists actually lowered their microphones, but there were still some restless troublemakers who would not take no for an answer.

"Then, tell us, sir. Why isn't Mr. Norton, the president, responding to any of this? Why must you stand up for him?" The journalist raised her microphone so high that it almost poked another person in the eye.

Caspian detested these people and wanted to throw them over his shoulder countless times. Fortunately, he had managed to send Larry into the building before the journalists got them. Otherwise, he feared that they would ask more loaded questions.

One troublesome journalist was like a stubborn piece of gum. She stepped forward and clung onto Caspian, leaning towards him with her microphone, its logo facing the camera. It

was like she needed the audience to know that she represented a weekly online news agency in Marsingfill.

If it weren't for the fact that you're a woman, and I don't hit women, I would have taken you out moments ago. Gosh, these nosy journalists are even more insufferable than my wife! Those were the thoughts running through Caspian's mind. He soon realized that the journalists who had previously lowered their microphones were raising them again. Perhaps the irksome journalist's question happened to be right up their alley. The situation escalated and got physical really fast. Some had resorted to grabbing Caspian by the sleeve, demanding an explanation.

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The tugging was the final straw for Caspian. He finally understood why there was always news about celebrities knocking down the camera crew's gadgets, or agents assaulting journalists and such popping up all over the Internet. In the beginning, he would have pitied the media reps who were just doing their jobs, but at that moment... Well, they probably deserved it.

He sharply yanked his arm away and almost tore his sleeve. Then, he glared at his surroundings. If this were a movie, there would be raging flames burning behind him. With a growl, the horrible din around him came to a standstill. "It's my pleasure to stand up for him. So what!"

Instantly, the mob fell silent. As soon as the words came out, Caspian wanted to bite his tongue. There were so many other ways to say it and he had to use those exact words! If that caused a misunderstanding of any sort, who knows what kind of news articles would show up online the next day?

He did not want to think about it. He wanted to get away from the mob as quickly as he could, but alas the place was tightly packed. Caspian could not stand it anymore. Lowering his head, he pushed through the stream of journalists, mumbling, "Let me through, let me through."

It took a while for him to break out of the crowd. He quickly ran towards the security guard at the entrance and muttered incoherently, "Shut the doors! Don't let those lunatics in!"

The security guard stared at him for a second, puzzled, but he knew the man was pretty close to the president. So, he obeyed, and closed the door quickly behind Caspian.

"Why did you come here? Didn't I tell you very clearly not to do that?"

As soon as Caspian stepped into the office, he darted towards the water dispenser. Arguing with the horde of journalists had gotten him extremely thirsty.

Larry ignored him. He sat in front of the computer, fingers busy tapping away on the keyboard. He brows furrowed tightly, and for a moment everything around him became nothing more than an illusion.

"Boss, I'm talking to you. Are you angry?" Caspian gulped down a mouthful of water but he talked too fast and almost choked.

Larry still did not turn his attention to him. Impatiently, Caspian leaned forward to peek at the computer screen.

Caspian rested one hand on Larry's desk and the other on the back of his chair. Larry's computer screen displayed a mixture of languages. Even Caspian, who claimed to be a computer expert, felt dizzy just looking at them.

"Isn't this... the exact IP address that belongs to S?" Caspian stared at the familiar string of codes before he realized what they were. This was the IP address that caused him so much

confusion and grief back then! Difference being, Caspian found many IP addresses that time, while Larry only managed to find the one and only. Larry merely glanced at him, and swiftly turned his attention back to the IP address on the computer screen.

“My gosh! How did you manage to find that?” Caspian exclaimed as he patted Larry on the shoulder. “Even I couldn’t find it. And I’ve spent hours searching for it. Boss, where did you pick up this skill?”

Larry rubbed his chin and totally avoided the question. “Are the journalists gone?”

“Ah? No, I guess not. I asked the security guard to bar the door and not to let them in. Boss, you haven’t really answered my question yet.”

Larry simply grabbed a fountain pen and scribbled the address on a piece of paper. “This IP

address belongs to Alpire Group, not S.” Paying no attention to Caspian’s stunned

expression, Larry continued, “Thanks to your reminder, I’ve just realized that this address is

the same as one of the many IP addresses we have come across which could be traced to S.

“I’m just taking a guess. S gave us a warning some time ago. That might indicate that he’s somehow related to Alpire Group, whose target is to acquire us. He may have sent us different photos from different locations, and I’m guessing that one of those might just be Alpire Group.”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1708

Caspian gave him a thumbs up. “Yes! That’s right! If that’s the case, Alpire Group and S are

definitely related to each other. Besides, Alpire Group seems to have been plotting to

acquire our company for a long time. I don’t think they’re after us for the money.”

Larry mulled over it for a while before replying, “Exactly, and that was what I worried about

the most, but, alas, it's now confirmed to be true. Anyway, what does S want from us?"

Meanwhile, Nancy was ordering coffee in a café. Her ears immediately perked up the moment she heard two of the servers gossiping about Norton Corporation.

"I wonder what's the relationship between this guy and Mr. Norton." What kind of relationship could they be referring to? Countless questions flashed through Nancy's mind as she sipped on her coffee, straining her ears to listen more.

"Yeah, it does look suspicious. Look at him—he is even publicly defending Mr. Norton."

As the servers continued to chatter and giggle at their phones, Nancy could not wait to share what she heard with Joan and rushed back to her seat.

They bumped into each other while on their way to Norton Corporation.

Thinking that she

had not formally apologized to Joan for locking her out previously, Nancy decided to invite

Joan for a coffee together at a café nearby. After all, their previous conflict was not something easy to be resolved.

"Joan, just now I heard the servers gossiping about Larry's relationship with another guy. I

wonder what's that about." Nancy eyed the counter, signaling Joan to look at the servers.

Joan could not help but roll her eyes. What relationship? What guy?

Brushing aside the

rumor, she told Nancy to pay no mind on the silly tittle-tattle. Just when Joan was about to

take a sip on her coffee, Nancy sprang up from her seat, pointing at the phone in her hand.

"Oh my God!"

"Gosh, Nancy, stop being so jumpy. I've had enough of stress at the company these few

days. My poor little heart can barely take it anymore," Joan said, patting her chest.

Nancy continued to stare wide-eyed at her and smiled stiffly, handing her the phone. "Okay,

"I'll shut up. Have a look at this yourself."

In the video, a group of journalists was swarming a man in the middle. Since this clip was taken by one of the onlookers in the jostling crowd, the whole footage was so shaky that it made Joan dizzy.

As the clip went on, the crowd got even denser. As such, Joan could not see the face of the man who was surrounded. Nevertheless, she clearly heard the journalists asking questions

related to Norton Corporation. Before the clip ended, someone among the crowd shouted,

"I don't care! I'll help him no matter what!"

Wait a minute. That's Caspian's voice. Turning towards Nancy, she saw her burying her face in her hands as if she was so embarrassed that she could not bring herself to face anyone.

The short clip immediately spread throughout all entertainment news with the

headlines: „The Commotion in Front of the Norton Corporation“,

„Norton Corporation's Staff

Is Gay“, „Staff of the Norton Corporation Provokes the Journalists“. At the time of their

viewing, the footage had about fifty thousand likes and twenty thousand comments.

The majority of the comments were about the relationship between Larry and the staff. Joan

could not help but sigh at the speed of the news became viral on the internet—probably

faster than the speed of a rocket launch. The media is taking the content in this video out of

context. It clearly shows that the man is only trying to get his friend out of a sticky situation.

Yet, the media misled the audience into thinking it was something else.

Joan handed the phone back to Nancy, speechless. Nancy threw her phone into her bag and

stepped out of the café with a grim expression, muttering, "I'm going to see him now!"

After leaving a tip on the table, Joan hurriedly took her bag and trailed behind Nancy to

look for the protagonists in the video. Have the words about the company's crisis spread out? Otherwise, why are those reporters flocking the company?

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When Nancy and Joan arrived there, the entrance was not as crowded as the video clip just now, but there were still a few journalists left. Some of them were pestering the security guards while the rest were hanging around, waiting for the people from Norton Corporation to come out.

As they were about to step inside, one of the journalists recognized Joan as Larry's wife and yelled about her presence. In an instant, all the others whipped their heads around and looked at her like a pack of hungry wolves before rushing towards her and seizing the opportunity to take all the photos they could.

Joan immediately realized the incoming trouble. She shielded her face with her arms and picked up her pace, trying her best to pass through the journalists. But whenever she took a step forward, they would block her way and refused to budge.

Unlike Joan, Nancy could no longer stand the reporters' questions. I'm not scared of them. I've got a black belt in Taekwondo. She then raised her phone in the air and put on a stern face to scare them off. "Get out of our way! I'll call the police and let you guys be arrested for being a public nuisance."

As expected, as soon as they heard the word "police," most of them quickly lowered their microphones and cameras. Meanwhile, when the others saw their fellow journalists had chickened out, they also gave up on interviewing the two ladies. Indeed, instead of risking their careers to get some shocking news, it was better to let the ladies through. Therefore, they glanced at each other before allowing a path for them.

Nancy let out a snort deliberately and walked into the building with Joan, leaving the annoying reporters behind.

Before they even reached the office's door, they could hear Caspian laughing and cheering inside the room, like a kid who was given candy.

"I bet you're happy because you know you've gone viral on the internet, aren't you?" Nancy went forward and knocked Caspian on the head.

Baffled, Caspian had two questions in his mind. Why is Nancy here? And how have I gone viral? He had absolutely no clue.

Seeing right through his mind, Nancy chucked her phone to him and said, "Look at this."

Caspian caught it fluidly and watched the video with Larry, who had leaned closer to the phone out of curiosity. After they finished viewing it, they stared at each other, dumbfounded.

Caspian's expression immediately turned livid as if he wanted to burn the phone in front of him with the fire in his widened eyes. "Who the hell filmed this? And what on earth are these nonsense comments? Do they have a death wish? I'm more than happy to end their lives!"

Judging by Larry's expression, he was obviously displeased with the video. However,

Caspian's reaction was so amusing that he wanted to laugh out loud.

With a stern expression, he said, "How could they spew nonsense? They can be sued for libel."

Caspian continued to grumble, "Was I wrong to defend Larry? These people are a bunch of shameless bastards who have nothing better to do in their lives!"

At that point, Larry suddenly remembered what he and Caspian had discovered just now.

Turning his laptop to Joan, he said, "Hey, take a look at what Caspian and I have found regarding the IP address of S."



Hearing his words, Joan retracted her gaze from Caspian and bent down to look at the laptop screen. "I thought you guys previously said that S sent each of the images using many different IP addresses. What have you guys found this time?" Nancy was also curious about their findings and waited patiently for Larry's explanation. "Do you remember the warning S sent a long time ago? I was thinking if the warning was actually a foreshadowing of Alpire Group's intention to buy our company and if S and their company were related to each other. So, I checked the IP address of their company, and Caspian then accidentally found that out of the many IP addresses that S used, one of them was exactly the same as the IP address of Alpire Group," Larry spoke solemnly.

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"So, you're saying that S might be someone from Alpire Group and that there's a possibility that S had sent one of the images from their company," Joan replied. Caspian shook his finger. "No, it's not a possibility; it's a certainty. He must be someone from Alpire, and they must have been plotting to buy our company for a good amount of time."

As the three of them continued to discuss the matter, no one noticed that Nancy's expression was turning grimmer by the minute. Sure enough, it's Alpire Group who did it. Suddenly, she remembered the guy who quarreled and fought with her on the roadside and hurt her finger in the elevator. Oh my, is he the one who did it? But he looks so cheerful and positive. However, if he is really the one, it means he has the upper hand because he knows so much about the Norton Corporation, but none of us knows anything about him. Most importantly, if he is S,

the fact that he can act so casually in front of me, despite his schemes, really makes my blood run cold.

Nancy gulped anxiously, trying her best to conceal her emotions. What will happen if

Caspian found out about our past? Judging by his character, the matter would definitely be

spiraled out of control. I would best pretend like I know nothing, then everything would stay

as it is.

Therefore, Nancy opted to zip her lips and remained silent. Who is Jory Synder actually?

Now it seems he's not just an ordinary playboy. Wait, Jory Synder?

Synder? S? Could he be

the mysterious S we've been looking for?

Although Nancy did not know much about Jory, her gut was telling her that he was not S.

So, instead of telling the rest about the conjecture in her mind, she decided that she should

go and ask Jory herself if he was S. If he really was S, I'd like to know why he did that! If he

wasn't, then we might become good friends! I sure hope he isn't though... No matter what,

Nancy hoped that he was not the person who had been sending weird images to Norton

Corporation.

"Nancy? Nancy?" Joan waved her hand in front of her. Crap! I was so lost in my thought that

I didn't realize that she's been calling me.

She hastily turned to Joan. "Yes, Joan? Anything?"

Joan teased, "Did you really get shocked by the news just now?"

Unable to contain himself, Larry burst into laughter upon hearing that.

Caspian immediately turned red.

On the other side, Jory thought he must be out of his mind. Ever since the last time he met

Nancy, he had no idea why he would come to the place where they first met every day.

There was one time the traffic was so congested that he had the urge to take a shovel and

remove all the obstructions in front of him.

Seeing the then empty road, his heart felt inexplicably empty, and he yearned to have something to fill the vacancy in his heart. Feeling frustrated, he turned his steering wheel and wanted to get out of here as soon as possible. Suddenly, he saw a red Bentley passing by and without a second thought, he immediately floored the accelerator and sped down the road. However, the red Bentley was also moving very fast. Hot on its tail, Jory fixed his eyes on the rear of the car for fear of losing sight of it. The sound of the honks from the other vehicles grew louder and louder, but he heard none of them and continued to weave through the traffic like a madman, ignoring all the angry glares from the other drivers. Finally, the red Bentley came to a stop, but Jory was so out of it that he only realized that when he was about to crash into the rear-end of the Bentley. He hit the brakes immediately, lurching forward. After he moved back to his original position, only then did he realize that his forehead and his palms were drenched with sweat. He then opened the door mechanically and stepped out of his car.

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Even though the distance between their cars was less than five meters, Jory felt as if he had taken a thousand steps to reach the Bentley. When he finally reached its rear door, the bright red car door was suddenly pushed open by a hand with a rose-gold bracelet, and a pair of black stiletto heels stepped out. It was a woman with a diamond necklace who came out of the car. Pointed her finger at Jory, she shouted, "Why are you following me? Do you want me to report you to the police? Why is such a young man like you stalking me?"

Seeing the fiery red nails inches away from his face, Jory's heart grew bitter. Did I mistake her for someone else? Why am I looking forward to seeing her? And this was my first time having such a strong desire. So, is the bitterness in my heart now actually the feeling of disappointment?

With such thought in mind, Jory gave her an icy glance and headed back to his car.

However, the woman was relentless and even pulled on his shirt, refusing to let him go.

After he got into his car, she put her hands on the bonnet and continued to yell at him, but

he simply ignored her and backed up his car, almost hitting her chin implant.

He had never mistaken anyone for somebody else in his twenty-two years of life. What is

happening to me these days? Jory pinched the bridge of his nose. Is it because I didn't sleep

well and keep thinking about her? No, I did not think about her. I should be hating her, not miss her.

When he was waiting for the traffic lights, he heard his phone vibrating.

He glanced at it

instinctively and saw it was a notification from his computer system: The system has been invaded.

He frowned for merely a second and chuckled. "Good job, Larry. You're even faster than I thought. Seems like you're not dumb either."

Then, he turned his steering wheel and headed to Dustin's office.

"Your system is hacked already?" Dustin had his back to Jory as he said this. Even without

looking at Jory, he knew that it was him just by listening to his footsteps.

Jory stretched himself out and waved nonchalantly. "Of course not. I'm smarter than that. He

only finds out one of my IP addresses, and that was the IP address at my dad's company. So,

my identity is not exposed yet. Besides, I've never stayed at my dad's company for more

than five minutes. They won't know that I'm S."

Dustin smiled and heaved a sigh of relief. "Speaking of which, what happened between you and your family?"

Jory feigned ignorance. "Huh, what do you mean? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Don't act like you don't understand me. You know you can't hide anything from me when I'm standing right in front of you." Whenever Dustin asked some serious questions,

he always had an uncanny ability to make people squirm under his stare and tell him the truth.

Jory moved backward uneasily and asked, "Why are you looking at me like that? Have I ever hidden anything from you?"

"We've known each other for so long, Jory. Yes, you've never hidden anything from me, but you've never told me about your family before as well." Dustin's eyes glinted with wisdom.

Jory still refused to answer his question. Instead, he argued, "You've never said anything about your family either."

Dustin replied calmly, "If I still have family, I'd definitely share it with you." There was a trace of sadness on his face.

"Hey, why are we talking about this all of a sudden? Don't cry in front of me, alright? I don't

know how to comfort other people." Seeing Dustin rolling his eyes, Jory sighed. "A long

time ago, I was supposed to have an arranged marriage with a woman whom I didn't know

her name. In the end, I was rejected and my father hates me after that.

So, I've never gone back home since then."

Dustin curled his index finger and placed it against his lips, pondering.

"Who would dare to call off an engagement with you?"

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Jory met his gaze. "She rejected me because of how flawed I was then. Don't tell me you assumed that I was always this impeccable?"

Boisterous laughter burst from Dustin. "That person must be unlucky. I bet she'll eat her heart out if she knew how great you turned out to be."

"No, it wasn't just because of my flaws. She rejected me because she has feelings for someone else." Jory shook his head whilst uttering this. A brief second passed before he voiced his doubt, "Dustin. Should a woman marry someone she likes or a different person who's impeccable in every regard? What do you think?"

"You shouldn't ask me this..." Dustin shifted uncomfortably. He then explained, "You know I won't say the right answer."

Jory snorted bitterly. "That's true, because we both love someone we can't have."

Then, silence shrouded them.

Dustin froze momentarily. Once he snapped out of it, he looked over to Jory. "We? You mean—"

"I saw her again."

Jory paused for a brief moment before continuing, "Speaking of which, the first time I met her was like a scene in a movie..." Jory reminisced whilst gazing absent-mindedly into the space. However, Dustin's patience was wearing thin as he interrupted, "Who is she?"

Jory coughed and couldn't bring himself to meet Dustin's eyes. Seeing this, Dustin questioned further, "Is she related to your plan?"

"Yes, but that's purely an accident." Jory grinned as he continued, "Now that she has reappeared in my life and I got to know her better, I'm unsure if I should continue with my plan."

He's not as ordinary as I perceived him to be... Dustin felt puzzled as confused thoughts

stirred in his mind. I initially thought I understood the motives behind his plan, but now...

I'm not sure anymore. If Jory's goal is the same as when he started, then I don't actually know Jory as well as I thought I did.

Jory suppressed the smile on his face. He had always enjoyed showing off his boisterous

smile to others, so it was strange to see him so serious now. Jory confessed, "Ever since she

reappeared, I'm no longer sure of my initial motives."

"I'm telling you this because we're friends," Dustin advised. "It doesn't matter what you feel

for that person. You must understand that she's married to someone else, and she's his wife

now. But dang, I never would have imagined that you would end up like me..."

It was as if Dustin saw right through Jory, whose eyes darkened as he abruptly turned to

leave. Despite this, Dustin still rubbed salt in his wound. "Remember what I told you."

Nancy texted a quick message to Jory before entering the room, then shutting the bronze-painted door. Inside, Simon was typing something on his computer. Nancy paced opposite

him and calmly greeted, "Dad."

"Excellent timing. I was planning to head over to you if you didn't come over. Now, I want

you to cut all ties with Jory from this point on. He is not someone that should be associated

with us, Barrymores. Also, it's not appropriate for you to visit him frequently."

Nancy gave him a baffled look, and her hand clutched tightly onto the handle. "What do

you mean by frequently? Did you get someone to stalk me?"

"I'm doing this for your safety. You understand, right, Nancy?" Simon affirmed with

unyielding certainty.

Nancy's face puckered, trying hard to disguise her disdain from him.

"Why must we

dissociate ourselves from him? Even if he and I once had a marriage contract and our

families almost collaborated, there's no need to cut off all ties with their family. Why must

we pay for your generation's greed for financial profits?"

Laughter thundered from Simon. "Nancy, listen to yourself. I almost believed that the person

you really like is Jory. I would have never guessed that Caspian is your husband."

"You're changing the topic! Even if Caspian and I are married, what law states that spouses

aren't allowed to associate themselves with the opposite gender?"

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"You're right. There is no law prohibiting mixed-gender associations.

However, you can

probably guess what the consequences will be if Caspian finds out. As your dad, I would

never put you in a difficult position. Everything I do is for your safety and wellbeing—"

"I know, Dad," Nancy interrupted. "I'm actually here to ask you about—"

"About Jory," he finished her sentence with the same certainty as before.

Nancy nodded hesitantly. "Yeah, I wanted to ask if our family had any special exchange of

interests with Alpire Group."

Simon fiddled with the fountain pen in his hand as he nervously responded, "There were

many business collaborations back then, but they all ended when you refused to marry Jory.

Moreover, I heard that Jory fought with his family over this issue and hasn't been home for

many years since. That is why I hope that you'll cease contact with him... because there's no

telling how much he hates you and if he'll end up taking revenge."

"I don't think he hates me..." Nancy murmured with a pout. At this, Simon petted her hair

and explained, "People are unpredictable. Can you really believe that a mulish boy, who has

magically transformed into a capable man, won't hold a grudge against us?"



Nancy interjected, "One more thing. I heard about how Alpire Group is acquiring Norton Corporation. It's clear that Alpire Group is making its first move, but why start with Norton Corporation? If the target is our family, then why not attack us head-on instead of choosing to strike against the almighty Norton Corporation?"

Nancy paused for effect before instinctively continuing with her revelation, "That means that we're not their target."

"You're still young and inexperienced, Nancy. There are things that you don't understand,"

Simon sighed. He then brought over a teapot and poured a cup of tea for Nancy. "Here, have something to drink."

A notification bell suddenly rang from inside her handbag. She opened the zipper and peeked, realizing it was a text from Jory that said: "I'm here and am waiting for you."

Seeing this, Nancy bounced onto her feet and hurriedly bid Simon goodbye. "Dad, I've got plans. I'll be on my way now."

Simon's hand still hung in midair, holding the cup of tea which swayed a little after Nancy had abruptly stood up. "Wait, you haven't had your drink yet."

He hadn't expected a response from Nancy, nor did he expect her to turn around and snatch the cup in his hands. She then downed the tea in one gulp then returned the cup to him before saying, "I'm off now. Bye, Dad!"

Simon gawked at the empty cup in his hand. He shook his head affectionately at the thought of how innocent his daughter was. If anyone ever tried to hurt her, he wouldn't hesitate to employ all of the Barrymore family's forces to protect her. Jory... if you're as ambitious as I think you are, then I hope you put a limit on those ambitions of yours.

Because if you go after things with force, then you may end up hurting others.

“Sorry for being late. I was at my dad’s earlier.” Nancy’s hand ran over her fringe, combing them into place.

“Don’t worry about it. The atmosphere here is pleasant, and the service is prompt, so I’m actually enjoying myself whilst waiting,” Jory replied with a humorous tone.

His heart swelled with joy when he saw Nancy’s message earlier. It was like something had filled up the hole in his heart. He hadn’t felt this child-like happiness in a long time, especially since many in the business realm chased after fame and fortune. The people he had met thus far were often scheming against others whilst under the pretense of caring for them.

Being around those scheming people had influenced him negatively; he had always felt like he was a man who lived only for the thrill of seeking profit. Being born into an extremely loaded family didn’t help either. He often felt that his life was miserable, even more so after Nancy refused to marry him.

Sitting before him now was Nancy, whose eyes sparkled. “I have a question for you, but you’ll have to answer honestly.”

Jory answered amusedly, “Go ahead. I’ll tell you everything I know.”

“Are you S?” she asked tentatively whilst twiddling her thumbs, subconsciously revealing the overwhelming anxiety and tension inside her.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1714

Jory was certain that no one would trace the letter S to him since he wasn’t acquainted with

Larry, let alone Joan. Furthermore, his connection to Joan was one-sided as he knew her, but

she didn’t know much about him. Alpire Group had never collaborated with Norton

Corporation before this, so nobody really knew of his name.

Although he had meticulously planned out everything, he neglected that Nancy had known

him long ago. Even if they weren't close, she could easily draw a connection between S and his family name, Synder. Their families had also been business partners for many years, so it was a given that she knew of Alpire Group. To top it off, Jory recently bumped into her on his way to meet Simon, and Larry had figured out Alpire Group's IP address. Hence, Nancy could easily guess who S was.

The IP address, Alpire Group, S—Nancy had connected the dots and found that they all led to Jory. She sat before him now, questioning if her guess was right. Jory wasn't sure what to say. He could have easily avoided her or even ditch today's meeting if he really hated her. Yet, he couldn't quite bring himself to leave her. For some reason, he couldn't lie to her face. So he asked instead, "If I asked you to keep it a secret, would you tell anyone?"

If Jory hadn't said this, Nancy would have without a doubt told Joan and Larry. However, Jory told her that this secret would be theirs alone. He asked her to keep it between them and not tell anyone else about it. It was as if Nancy fell into a trance, making a mental promise to keep her lips tightly sealed. So she nodded almost immediately. Jory stared at her for a moment, taking in the trust and resolution in her eyes before finally letting his guard down. He then nodded back in acceptance.

"But why did you do it?" Nancy felt confused by everything. Jory wasn't even close with Joan or Larry, and Alpire Group had no existing business relationships with Norton Corporation. It made more sense if Jory was attacking Nancy and the rest of the Barrymore family since she refused his hand in marriage. After all, it was only natural for her family to bear the cost of

causing him so much pain. But how did any of this involve Larry's family?  
And those  
pictures. Are they Jory's doing as well?  
Note: Not sure if the whole thing should be narrative or inner dialogue.  
Unless... he has feelings for Joan and wants to break her and Larry up?  
This speculation popped into Nancy's mind and startled her. But the  
more she considered it,  
the more reasonable her speculation seemed. Nevertheless, the thought  
of Jory trying to  
split up Joan and Larry still made her uncomfortable.  
Nancy had mumbled her doubts in front of Jory, who choked on his  
water and emptied the  
liquids in his mouth onto the floor. At this, Nancy fished out some  
tissues from her bag as  
she frantically apologized, "I'm so sorry, I was just casually blurting out  
my thoughts. If I  
misunderstood anything, then please don't take offense or be mad."  
"How could I possibly have feelings for some married woman who has  
also given birth?  
With a post-pregnancy body? Tsk. Tsk. Forget it," Jory muttered  
flusteredly.  
Back then, Jory often expressed his doubts towards Dustin; he never  
understood why Dustin  
devoted himself to Joan when there was plenty of other fish in the sea.  
Dustin could have  
found any girl that he liked, yet, he remained hung up on Joan. At that  
moment, Jory  
realized that he couldn't comprehend Dustin's stubborn feelings  
because he wasn't  
experiencing things from Dustin's perspective. After all, how could  
anyone truly understand  
if they haven't experienced that kind of situation for themselves?  
Perhaps it was because men didn't indulge in gossip as much as women;  
Dustin seldom  
brought up the topic of Joan before Jory, despite Jory helping him all this  
while. Jory now  
understood that an indifferent man like Dustin would also have  
moments where he would  
lose his cool—all of Dustin's indignation and resentment were sparked  
by Joan. Jory

understood that he and Dustin experienced the same kind of unrequited love—one where they stood no chance of pursuing the ones they loved.

Doesn't everyone have equal rights to love? So why are some people destined to never be with the ones they love?

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1715

"Why would I like her if I don't even know who the hell she is?" A creamy magnolia

fragrance wafted from the tissues Nancy had given him. He put down the tissue and

continued solemnly, "I have, and only ever will, have one marriage contract in this lifetime."

This was one of those instances where people blurt out their thoughts without considering

the consequences. It happened subconsciously and unexpectedly as people tended to

blunder out the thoughts that they had suppressed in their hearts for a long time.

Jory cringed after the words left his mouth. Did I just indirectly confess to her? He had his

fair share of experiences with women, but he had no idea what it meant to confess his

feelings. All he knew was that he sounded like he was saying, "I only ever had that one

marriage contract with you, and you were the wife that got away from me then."

However, Nancy didn't respond. She was still stunned by the new information that she had

discovered: Jory doesn't like Joan. So what is Jory's true motive then?

The weight behind

Jory's confession had gone completely over her head as she had stopped paying attention

to him halfway.

"I know you have some kind of motive that you won't tell me, so I won't bother asking. Just

knowing that you're S is reassuring enough," Nancy sighed relievingly.

"How are you so sure that I won't tell you?" Jory instinctively responded.

Little did he expect that she would beat him to speaking. She waved her hands at him, signaling him to halt. “No, no, no! Don’t tell me. Because if you do... I won’t be able to keep it a secret!”

Although she was also born into a powerful and influential family, her heart was much purer than his. She said whatever came to mind in an unapologetic manner which was unlike the way he behaved. Since young, he had learned to prepare default responses when talking to others for fear of saying the wrong thing and negatively affecting his family’s reputation.

He initially believed that people who were born into such wealthy families were all like him; they acted friendly but deep down, they were scheming on how to maximize their own interests.

Not her, though. She was as pure as the driven snow—untrodden and untainted. Then there were also times when she was like a blizzard, cleansing his tarnished soul.

Nancy propped her head up with her hands and frowned. She questioned her own actions. Did I agree to keep Jory’s secret from the others simply because he asked me to? Or was I not planning to expose his secret in the first place?

She felt like a horrible person. How could she think of such messed-up things despite already being married to Caspian? Especially since she was the one who insisted on canceling the wedding. I shouldn’t think about my ex like that. Wait, no. Can Jory even be considered an ex? Nancy mentally scolded herself. What am I thinking? I should be grateful that Jory and I don’t know each other well enough to be enemies. Thankfully it’s not as bad as Dad says...

A hearty laugh erupted from Jory as he saw the massive frown on Nancy’s face. With

amusement laced in his voice, he comforted, "Don't worry about these things anymore. It'll just make you feel more troubled. Hmm... how about this? Since I made you think of such unhappy thoughts, why don't I take you somewhere to make it up to you?"

"Where will you take me?" Nancy asked.

"It's a secret!" Jory gave her a cheeky wink before waving the server over. "Check, please!"

Jory's Volkswagen was parked outside the restaurant. He unlocked the car and opened the door to the front passenger seat. With a mocking tone, he invited Nancy in. "I guess you'll have to take my cheap car this time around."

She hadn't expected Jory to use that incident against her. A bright red burned onto her

cheeks as she said, "Why'd you bring it up? That was because I misunderstood you as being

a conceited prick, so obviously, I felt like you needed a good beating to be humbled!"

Jory drove at a speed that was abnormally fast. It was the kind of speed that people like

Nancy, who had just gotten their driver's license, would never even consider driving at. She

reminded him throughout the drive, "S-Slow down! Go slower! I'm literally about to fly out of my seat."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1716

A radio station was being broadcasted loudly through the car speakers as Jory yelled at her,

"How is this fast? This is nowhere near a real race car yet!"

Nancy mentally screamed as she had a bad feeling. Sure enough, Jory slowed down in the

racing track's parking lot. Her heart dropped. I knew it. I'm doomed.

Jory pulled out a VIP card and led her into the race track. Amongst the grassy space were

red and white lanes with white numbers written in paint.

Jory leaned onto his race car and placed his right hand on the door. His blue and white car

had a uniquely streamlined shape that reminded Nancy of a rocket. That was the first time in her life that she witnessed a real race car up close and personal. She couldn't help but step forward to touch the car's smooth body. It was clean, and there was not a speck of dust caught on the car's curves. She could tell that the car was well-loved by its owner.

Nancy recalled the first time she mocked Jory's car for being lowly and disreputable. Now she gawked, knowing that her behavior then was short-sighted. Jory flashed a smile at her jaw-dropping expression. "Do you want to hop in? We're the only ones here today, so I'll let you experience how fast a race car can go, and I can assure you that it's very different from your Bentley."

Nancy nodded as she accepted the helmet that Jory handed her. Since she barely ever wore a helmet, her hair got tangled and caught uncomfortably in the helmet. She eventually grew frustrated after some time of trying to put it on. Seeing this, Jory cautiously offered, "Why don't I help you?"

He approached her side and placed both hands around her head, carefully untangling strands of her long hair from behind her neck. He had always believed that he could have as many women as he wanted, so he never thought that one day he would so delicately detangle a woman's hair like this.

There were many firsts in life, but he strangely felt comfortable being in this situation.

"That should be it." His face was extremely close to hers as they locked gazes. Sparks went off like fireworks around them. A gold light gleamed in her eyes while her lashes were slightly curled upwards, like a doll's. Jory was stunned for a moment as he couldn't keep his



eyes off her. Nancy felt that their closeness was inappropriate and immediately looked away.

At this, Jory's face tinted red in embarrassment. He then returned to the driver's seat and floored the accelerator. The blue and white race car propelled forward like a rocket, taking off swiftly as it left behind a dark trail on the race track.

"What do you think? Doesn't the whizz of this speed make you forget about every troubling thought?" Jory roared excitedly.

"We'll be fine, right?" Nancy's eyes shut tightly as she didn't dare to look outside. The car moved so quickly that the view from their window blurred like a smudged painting.

This way of releasing stress is unusual, but it's definitely more effective than hedonistic ways such as drinking and smoking. Regardless, Nancy agreed that releasing stress was truly an important thing in life. At that moment, she felt the wind blowing against the window. She then cracked her eyes open and saw a sea of green, well-trimmed grass outside their speeding car.

She stole a glance at him but only saw his stoic expression. He was obviously used to driving at such a high speed. Is he stressed out about something? Does a wealthy heir like him have things that bother him too?

Meanwhile, a calmness anchored in Jory's heart as he felt more at peace than ever. This peace was a feeling that only racing could bring him. Not only that, but he felt liberated from the many years of regret that he felt for the woman sitting beside him now. His mind was finally clear, and he knew that he never hated her at all. Instead, what he felt was the reluctance to let her go. And at that moment, he felt himself falling for her.

As he thought about what it meant to like someone, he could only answer with how he felt

now; it was like being in a car with surroundings that constantly changed, yet all he wanted

to do was to keep looking at her.

The blue and white race car ran lap after lap. It kept going until he felt tired of seeing the same view, then he pressed on the brakes and steadily slowed the car down.

“You mentioned earlier that I needed a good beating when we first met. So let’s see who’s

better at beating the other up between the two of us!” Jory mockingly challenged and

raised a fist at her.

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Nancy confidently declared, “Well then, you’re going down.” Few people who fought against

her were able to win, even Caspian. He was a soldier then, yet even he couldn’t escape from

her iron-like grip.

“Why do you say that?” Jory asked.

Nancy positioned herself into a standard Taekwondo pose. “Because I’m a black belt.”

Jory then tapped at the car’s frame as he casually said, “What a coincidence, so am I.”

At Strength Taekwondo.

“It’s really a Taekwondo dojo!” Nancy’s eyes widened at the dojo before her as she hadn’t

stepped foot into such a place for many years. At first, she thought that Jory was only

kidding about sparring. She didn’t think that he would actually bring her here.

A cunning delight flashed in Jory’s eyes as he intentionally side-eyed her.

“What’s wrong?

Are you going to chicken out? Too bad, that won’t work on me.”

Nancy coiled her fists. “Who said anything about quitting? I’m just worried that you might

back out at the last minute. You better not cry when I beat you into a pulp.”

“A man must keep his word. How could I back out and embarrass myself in front of a girl

like you?” Jory leaned in to say with both hands at his back.

At his sudden proximity, Nancy instinctively leaned backward to put some space between them. She retorted, "I hope you don't regret calling me a little girl once we put on our uniforms. You'll soon see that I'm a force to be reckoned with." Jory clasped his hands together and welcomed her threat. "Alright then, I'll indulge your attempt since you seem so fired up."

Nancy normally had a demeanor that was as sweet as pie. After changing into the uniform, she tied her shoulder-length hair into a tall ponytail. It added height to her otherwise not-so-tall figure and made her seem more handsomely refined like a female warrior.

Jory, whose appearance usually gave others the impression of being a spoiled dandy, looked more serious when in uniform. Despite that, his disregard for trivial matters was still visible as he hadn't smoothed out the crease in his collar, which subtly revealed his well-sculpted collarbones.

The two of them simultaneously tightened the black belts on their waists before they stepped forward and bowed with respect for one another. Jory then motioned for her to make the first move since she was a girl. Allowing women to begin their sparring was a habit that he had practiced ever since he started Taekwondo.

Even if he allowed Nancy to start, he was absolutely confident that he wouldn't lose. He only allowed so because he wanted to leave the impression of being an incredible and gentlemanly fighter, regardless of how miserably defeated she would be. She mentally scoffed at him. He's letting me go first? Seriously? Or has he lost his marbles? Is it because I'm a girl? Well, I won't shy away since he's letting me. This way, I'll have a good reason against him when he loses.

She made the first attack, raising her leg into a swift kick at him. What shocked her was that Jory didn't dodge her kick. Instead, he boldly raised a hand and blocked her attack without

so much as a sweat.

Nancy anxiously skidded to a halt. What's wrong with him? I can't believe he actually used his hand to block my leg. Most people's arms would snap because the bones on our wrists are much weaker than other parts of the body. Does Jory think his hand is made of steel? Is he not afraid of breaking a bone? While Jory didn't seem too fazed, he definitely couldn't ignore the sharp pain that pulsed in his right palm. He couldn't help but applaud this girl's strength. If he were to compare her to the teammates that he trained with back then, her kicking power was equivalent to the combined strength of two of his female teammates.

I shouldn't have let her go first! All I can do now is pretend like I'm fine. Thank goodness I didn't use my forearms. Otherwise, I'd probably end up in the hospital for tonight.

"Is your hand alright?" Nancy lowered her fists and came closer to him. Jory massaged his right hand then shrugged it off with the same cocky tone as before, "I didn't say I was hurt. Go on."

Is he planning to let me make three moves? He's that confident about winning? We'll see about that. Just you watch, Jory. Nancy repositioned herself into her fighting stance once more, then immediately raced forward. Jory secretly felt awe for her perfect combination of movements. She really is no ordinary person. With such agility and vigor, she's certainly the best among all black belts.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1718

He had always believed himself to be talented in the sport of Taekwondo, but it turned out that he was not. His advanced level was achieved through long periods of training, whereas people like Nancy were naturally talented. Her effortless movements outshined him and made him seem average.

He nullified Nancy's fierce and offensive blows by speedily dodging. However, there was still a stinging pain in his forehead. I must have bruised it by accident. Thankfully, it's disguised under my hair, so it doesn't look too bad. Nancy secretly exclaimed. He only withstood a heavy impact from her blow earlier that he blocked with his hand. Apart from that, she barely even left a scratch on him. This would have been impossible back then; even with Caspian, three moves were enough for her to lock his arm onto his back and bring him down to one knee. Jory had exceeded her expectations completely. Seeing him unscathed, she admitted deep down that she had met an equally capable opponent. Jory stood behind her. His white uniform swayed ever so slightly as if he were a warrior in a period drama. Delight was evident in his low voice as he said, "My turn." Nancy felt her body move instinctively. A second or two after he finished speaking, she quickly turned and clutched tightly onto his left shoulder. She did this as she moved behind him and tried to capture his right arm. But Jory wasn't someone who could be caught that easily. Just as Nancy wanted to extend her arm, she realized that she couldn't because Jory had somehow latched onto her without her knowing. Jory was terrifyingly strong. All he did was tug on her arm, and she felt like she was already being flipped in the air. She was naturally scrawny and light-weighted, so she felt horrified that he would accidentally toss her away like scum. Thankfully, Jory didn't use all his strength. All he did was pin her onto the ground. Since Jory held his strength back, Nancy took the opportunity to break free from his grasp. She hurriedly spun around and began attacking Jory's back, making him stumble forward.

Nancy raised her leg again and aimed for his shoulder. Although Jory had his back facing her, he figured out her next move by intuition as well as sensing the shift in the air from her raised leg. He waited patiently for the right moment before spinning on his heels. Hence, he briskly dodged just as Nancy's left leg came close to him.

Nancy thought that she had him then and there. She was not expecting him to slip away like that. What the... Does he have eyes in the back of his head? Is he even human? He left her leg swinging in midair before her entire body fell forward, almost landing in a split. Then her left hand immediately pushed against the ground to steady herself. Jory, you jerk! Nancy mentally scolded him because he then yanked her left hand, making her collapse fully onto the floor. However, Nancy wasn't someone who would easily admit defeat. Before she fell, her right hand shot up to Jory's shoulders and dragged him down with her.

She lay on the ground whilst he knelt. They stayed in this odd position as they continued their sparring competition. The two stubbornly froze like this as both of them refused to let go. It was as if whoever loosened their hold first would become the loser. After staring each other off for some time, Jory was the first to speak up. "I guess I finally found an opponent who's on par with me."

Nancy chuckled in response, "We're evenly matched." A strong emotion lingered in their gazes as they looked at each other. It was similar to when they first met; Nancy sat inside her Bentley while Jory leaned into her car window. Back then, the two of them stared each other down with distaste. But at that moment, there was something more to their gazes. It was akin to the joy of

finding commonalities with a stranger—the kind of happiness where they were each other’s equally matched companion. It was important because every move in Taekwondo was like comparing who knew who better. If the fighter understood his opponent, then he would know what their next move would be. He would know it better than the opponent themselves and could then react accordingly.

“I wouldn’t have let you go first if I had known that you were so good at this.” Jory

straightened out his clothes and re-knotted his belt.

Meanwhile, Nancy sat cross-legged on the floor. “But I still didn’t get the upper hand, even though you let me make the first move. Plus, you ended up pinning me down...”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1719

Her voice trailed softer. At that, Jory panicked and thought that she was upset. He quickly

comforted, “But look! You still managed a firm grip on my arm. I can’t move, see?”

Nancy patted his shoulder. She spoke earnestly at first before her voice started to bubble

jovially, “So that means... I won this sparring match!”

There was no way Jory would admit defeat before a mere girl, so he swatted off Nancy’s

hand from his shoulder. “What do you mean? I was technically the first to pin you down. No

matter how you look at it, we’re evenly tied for this match.”

A wide grin spread across Nancy’s cheeks. She then roared out in laughter, “Just kidding! No

need to take my words seriously. You shouldn’t be so petty.”

Jory pointed at himself in disbelief. “I’m petty? Are you kidding me? If I was petty, then why

would I let you start first? How ungrateful!”

Nancy had already stood up and was holding her clothes. “I’ve gotta admit that I’m

impressed. Your ability to react is much faster than mine. But then again, we have to

consider that I haven't practiced in a long time. Also, there's a natural disparity between

men's and women's strengths. It just can't be helped..."

That last bit sounded like she was reminding herself. However, her words rang true to Jory.

He agreed that the difference between men's and women's strengths was an important

factor in winning sparring matches. Some men packed a powerful punch and weren't afraid

of pain; they could easily stand a couple of blows from a woman, whereas a woman might

end up being thrown over the men's shoulders. In such situations, it didn't matter how agile

or good a woman's moves were because they wouldn't even get the chance to show their

skills.

This was obviously the way things worked in Taekwondo. Yet, it also seemed applicable to

the unspoken rules within the commercial field; it was impossible to defeat the larger

companies with big businesses and abundant funds. No matter how hard anyone tried, they

could never single-handedly win against those big companies.

Even if they resorted to dirty tricks to take down those large companies, their efforts would

go to waste. This was because those companies were deep-pocketed and quick to recover.

In such situations, the obvious plan of action was to attack the enemy from its roots. Just

like if an extremely powerful Taekwondo athlete suffers from acute gastroenteritis before a

match, then all his strength would be pointless in a game.

When Jory first faced the powerful and established Norton Corporation, he knew better than

to attack them head-on. This was not only because it would lead to destructive results, but

Alpire Group would also be adversely affected. Alpire Group would have a difficult time

operating in the business realm should his attack fail.



Hence, he subtly used computer systems—something he was most familiar with—to find a suitable opportunity for his attack on Norton Corporation. He also manipulated Gabriella and pulled many unexpected stunts to dissolve Norton Corporation. To some extent, Jory even took advantage of his father and Alpire Group—the company that currently belonged to his father. Ever since they got into a conflict, his dad had no intentions of making him Alpire Group’s heir. But no matter how silent Jory was about the matter, he knew that he was his dad’s only son; Alpire Group would still become his regardless of how unbecoming, worthless, or absurd he was. It was the same as ancient, regal families where blood and kin triumphed over all other factors. A prince would still retain his title no matter how unworthy he was. Likewise, nothing would stand in the way of him inheriting the throne. What’s more, the previously idle and philanderer version of Jory had died along with his failed marriage contract. The Jory at that moment had a purpose in life, so how could he end up incompetent or left with nothing? Jory’s father actually knew that Jory was the mastermind who used Alpire Group’s name to acquire Norton Corporation. However, Jory’s father wasn’t bothered about it. He thought that as long as there were profits and shares to be earned, then why not? Whenever anyone asked, he would say that his son was behind it. This conveniently changed the frivolous and playboy image that others had for Jory. The sparring match that day allowed Nancy to know Jory better. Initially, she had her doubts on whether the rumors about him were true. However, she couldn’t see the resemblance between him and the hedonistic black-sheep-of-the-family reputation he had.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1720

Seeing past his sharp tongue and big-headedness, Nancy could see herself being the best of friends with him. After all, there were not many people that could tie with her when it came to Taekwondo. Jory was the first. So how can I not feel empathy for such a well-matched and gentlemanly opponent? However, there was no need for her to question whether those past rumors about Jory's reputation were true. She didn't need to know because she was already married to Caspian. Thus, she told herself to forget about this could-have-been fiancé from long ago. Plus, Jory had admitted that he was the mysterious S. So there was no telling if he was the saboteur behind her friend's company as well. Nancy reminded herself that she should keep her guard up around such a man, no matter if she did or did not have conflicted feelings for him. Oddly enough, she couldn't bring herself to be vigilant, let alone resist him. There was a special feeling that fluttered inside her every time she met up with Jory. This upset her greatly. She scorned herself for acting like an unfaithful wife and behaving as if the grass was greener on the other side. But then again, she had no reason to feel so guilty as there was truthfully nothing going on between her and Jory. Yet, she couldn't help but have a guilty conscience every time she thought about Caspian. The guilt had haunted her. It lingered at the back of her mind ever since she bumped into Jory. Elsewhere, Joan took a striped necktie from the shelf in her closet. She then turned to look at Larry, who was scrolling through the latest news on his phone whilst sitting on the sofa.

“Are you really going to meet with Alpire Group’s chairman?” Joan asked. Her hair cascaded casually onto her shoulders, giving her a laid-back appearance from waking up early.

Despite this, the dark bags under her eyes revealed that she clearly hadn’t slept well for some time.

Larry turned off his phone as his gaze raised over to Joan, who approached him. He responded, “Mm-hmm. Caspian went through a lot to get Alpire Group’s address. They’re so secretive that we couldn’t find their location. I doubt we would have found them if it weren’t because we figured out their IP address.”

Joan placed the tie around his neck. She clumsily secured the tie in the style that he usually preferred. “Promise me that you’ll stay safe. Make sure you check for scams if you end up signing a contract. And be extremely cautious if they make any requests or comments. You must think it over and...”

She finished knotting the tie. Then Larry’s hands suddenly reached out and grazed against the delicate skin on the back of her hands. His brown eyes were rich with affection and care as he gazed at her.

“How did I not know that you can tie a necktie?”

A rosy tint spread across Joan’s cheeks as she mumbled, “There will be more surprises to come. I’ll learn how to do these things properly for you.”

Joan was a very reserved and traditional woman. It definitely showed when they first dated, as well as in their current marriage life. As a man, Larry felt the need to shower his wife with care. He knew that she liked being on the receiving end, so he often initiated things. He couldn’t help but wonder, when did this reserved and introverted woman learn to speak so affectionately?

Ordinary gestures, such as being asked if one has eaten or if they are alright, sparked an immeasurable warmth in people's hearts. Such small gestures often felt way more meaningful than saying, "I love you." At that moment, Larry's chest swelled with serene happiness.

He leaned his forehead against hers. A wide and toothy grin spread on his face as he felt her soft hair tingling against his forehead. He teased with immense joy, "I didn't know that you could say such romantic things to me." In response, Joan's hand reached up and rested on his broad shoulders. She hummed with a mellifluous voice, "I'll say them to you every single day once all of this passes."

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Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1721

Larry hugged Joan tightly. He rested his chin on her head and scoffed, "You better keep your promise."

Her encouragement meant the entire world to him. She was not simply a supporter, but also the source of his strength.

The chairman of Alpire Group set up his meeting with Larry at a famous bar instead of his office or the conference room. Larry was confused because a seedy bar was certainly of peculiar place to talk business. Most of his meetings with top businessmen took place either in restaurants, cafes or at the gyms.

Despite that, he decided to go and meet him out of curiosity.

After he reached, Larry struggled to find a parking spot since the bar didn't provide a reserved parking area. However, he found one at an intersection. He checked the address on his phone—Riverdale Route 36.

At the chairman's request, Larry went there alone without any company.

The moment he walked into the bar, he noticed something about the decoration that looked familiar yet strange to him. He recalled the day when he visited a foreign bar and got blackout drunk because he was wrecked by the devastation.

This must be the place.

He went deeper into the interior and was not impressed with it. The bar had triggered the opening of his memory box, that let his painful memories resurfaced, mirroring the myth of the box of Pandora.

The flickering light made him dizzy, and he felt foggy in the brain because of the smoke-filled room reeked of alcohol.

Who the hell would pick this kind of place to talk business? He doubted they would have a formal conversation in such kind of place.

The confusing pictures, the unidentified IP addresses, the inexplicable acquisition plan, and the illumination in that bar certainly shrouded that man with an initial S in mystery.

Again, Larry checked his phone to see the invitation. Somehow, the mysterious man felt so far, yet so close to him.

His eyes cast about the crowded bar, searching for a middle-aged man between forties and fifties. Right then, his phone vibrated. He pressed the notification. It was a message from

that unknown person: I see you. I'm on your right.

Larry turned his head to the right instinctively and saw a man waving his phone from a distance as if he had been waiting for his arrival.

Several people walked past them, so he only caught a glimpse of his face.

Amid the flashing lights, he could only assume that the man didn't have the stereotypical image of an

entrepreneur over forties. Rather, the latter looked much younger and was perhaps about the same age as he.

As he drew closer, he could see his face clearly. At that moment, everything seemed to be at

a standstill. The energy fielded around them was different. One was hot under the collar, the other as calm as a toad in the sun.

Larry clenched his fists unwittingly, and his brow furrowed tightly. The vein on forehead bulge as if he was on the brink of violence.

The man in front of him immediately noticed his expression, but he wasn't threatened or surprised. Instead, he swirled the beer in his glass while he maintained composure on his face. Then, he put down the glass on the table and dropped his hands. He welcomed Larry

like an old friend. His smile and deep gaze were indecipherable.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1722

"It's been a while, Larry."

Larry tuned him out in his head. As he watched his lips moved, rage started plucking at his nerves.

He stepped forward with lightning speed, grabbed his collar and stared at the man with eyes that seemed like he was about to eat him up.

"Are you trying to mess with me now?" Larry snarled through clenched teeth. The urge to punch him was hard to keep under control.

On the other hand, that man did not feel intimidated. Instead, his expression was as calm as still water. He gazed down at Larry with an enormous grin splitting his face. "If I say yes, are you going to swing your fist at me?"

It turned out that the mysterious man who invited him was none other than Dustin. Despite

the tense moment, he gave Larry a sarcastic reply with his composed face. Although it would seem like a joke between two friends in the eyes of others, his words were contemptuous irony.

Larry obviously didn't take his words as a mere joke because their relationship was more than that. Larry's wife, Joan treated Dustin as her life savior. She always felt that she owed

him, despite Larry and Dustin being fierce rivals. Soon, people began to gather around them. A buzz of chatter and gossip rose from the crowd. Yet neither of them cared about people's stares. At that moment, there was a tense atmosphere around them.

"I can't guarantee you will leave this place safe and sound if you try to play a trick on me,"

Larry said with dead seriousness. He had never wanted to punch someone in the face so badly.

"Chill, man. I won't mess with you. I'm the one who invited you." Dustin chuckled.

Provoked, Larry grabbed his collar tighter. The rage stirred, but Dustin wasn't bothered.

"If I wasn't the one to meet you, would you treat that person the same way as you did to me now? Or should I say, this is the special treatment that the renowned Norton Corporation would provide to their partner and rival?"

Larry loosened his grip, and Dustin pulled his shirt back effortlessly as he remained stoic.

The latter smoothed his crumpled tie and adjusted it before he sat down. "I haven't seen you for so long, but you're still the same as you were back then at the hospital. Too rash and reckless," he said in an indifferent tone.

Larry clenched his hands into tight fists. "I'm here to talk business. I have no time for your crap. Keep your trash-talk to yourself."

When he turned and was about to leave, Dustin stopped him. "I can tell you why Alpire

Group has decided to acquire Norton Corporation. Once you step out of that door, no one will ever tell you the reason as patiently as I do"

Larry's heart skipped a beat when he heard about Alpire Group.

As expected, this meeting is not a pure coincidence. He's got it all planned out. Wait... So he

is the chairman of Alpire Group? This is impossible. Norton Corporation was founded later

than Alpire Group. He was not even born yet.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1723

“If you invited me here for business, Dustin, tell me who exactly you are?” Larry peered at him with suspicious.

Dustin didn’t answer. Instead, he placed a name card on the table and shoved it a little

farther from him. Larry took a glance at it. Alpire Group Financial Controller was written in the bottom left corner of the card.

Larry simply snickered. “Huh, I see you have multiples identities. Foreign-trained doctor, university professor, and now what? Financial Controller? What else did we miss? I guess

creating a new identity is as easy as drinking a glass of water for you.”

His words were spoken with sarcasm to irritate his rival. However, Dustin knew for a fact that

Larry was right. To carry out his plan, he had to come out with a new identity. And before he

knew it, he had forgotten about his main goal and objective.

That was why he did not refute him. He remained silent and his gaze drifting from Larry to

his name card on the table.

The latter noticed he couldn’t utter any reply, so he switched to a scornful tone and

continued, “I’m here to meet the chairman. Now, where is he? Don’t tell me you’re here on

his behalf. You’re not in a position to talk business with me.”

“Mr. Norton, I’m afraid there’s been some misunderstanding. Actually, the chairman sent me

here to represent myself and the company. I’ve never said I’m here to represent him. So, if

you have anything to tell him, you can convey it through me. And as a courtesy, I’m here to

attend to your inquiry,” Dustin said it in one breath without blinking an eye. Each time he

opened his mouth, Larry was annoyed.

“All right, let’s get down to business, shall we? The chairman ordered me to discuss the



details of the acquisition with you. I thought this matter is very much important for you, but as soon as you saw me, I guess you're not curious about it anymore. I see, there's a strong resentment between us."

Larry took a deep breath. He's right. I'm not here to pick a fight. I need to hear their reason.

I shouldn't let this jerk affect my judgment. The company comes first. He tried to control his emotions as he knew it wouldn't do any good to waste his time on

Dustin's tactics.

Somehow, his temper rose again. He just couldn't sit face to face with Dustin and had a

formal conversation. He shut his mouth tight in a look of extreme displeasure.

Dustin reached out for a pile of documents beside him and laid them in front of him. Then,

with great confidence, he said calmly, "Here, the chairman wants you to look through all these files."

Larry's frowning gaze dropped to the files on the table. While he was dumbfounded, Dustin

pushed them closer to him and arched an eyebrow. Larry reached out and took it.

As expected, those documents contained all the reasons he wanted to know. Dustin clarified

that the poor data management of Norton Corporation had led to the acquisition.

However, Larry knew very well how the company had operated over the years. He couldn't

comment nor accuse him of the leaked information. Their reason was just inconceivable to him.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1724

He could not ask Dustin the questions he had in mind. The content of part one of the

proposal was as he expected. It was part two that left him shell-shocked.

It was clear from the proposal that they had the acquisition in mind a long time ago.

Although it was stated they hope the acquisition offer would be a boost for Norton

Corporation, one only had to read between the lines and would see they were aiming for an ultimate take-over.

This was Larry's greatest worry come true. He had been worrying about this possibility but

did not share that with Joan. He did not want Joan to be alarmed, as she may fret over it

constantly. That was the same reason he kept mum during the board meeting. He did not

want to affect the morale of the staff.

He felt like someone teased him with a warm light on a harsh cold winter night, then

extinguished it, taking with it his last glimmer of hope.

He kept his emotions in check and coldly asked, "Why?" He wasn't expecting a reasonable

answer from Dustin. Dustin would probably use a flimsy reason to brush his question off.

He actually suspected Dustin got his title through dubious means and did not have real

authority in this matter. He did not believe Dustin had the answers to his questions, but he

still asked him "Why".

"In business, everyone is after fame and fortune. I am sure you know it is survival of the

fittest in this world, and one has to go with the flow. Alpire Group may have been set up

earlier than Norton Corporation, but our development had lagged far behind you. Norton

Corporation is now a well-known conglomerate in the country whereas Alpire Group is just

beginning to grow internationally," Dustin said. He then politely thanked the server who

brought the alcohol and handed a glass to Larry.

"Alpire Group will create a name for itself if we successfully take over Norton Corporation's

current market share, don't you agree?"

Alpire Group is going to buy over every subsidiary of Norton Corporation, then head in for

the final kill of acquiring Norton Corporation. Clearly, that was what he meant. In other words, they were out to destroy Norton Corporation. Larry was in a daze and unconsciously took the glass Dustin handed him. Since the day he got blind drunk, he had developed a phobia of drinking. On this day, he actually accepted the drink.

"I don't believe this... there must be other reasons." The taste of alcohol flooded his mouth, and all he could taste was bitterness.

Dustin only smiled and did not deny Larry's speculation. Indeed, this was only the tip of the iceberg, as Jory and he had bigger plans, and he had no qualms making their intention known to Larry. That was the reason why he could confidently bring the proposal to meet Larry, all by himself.

They were not worried about how the plan would play out, as they were confident everything was within their control. Dustin had his own objectives, and Jory too, had his own secret intentions, which he never shared. These, in addition to the long-standing cash flow issues, were the three factors leading to the acquisition.

Dustin made part of their plans known to Larry as he wanted to taunt him. He wanted Larry to know he's not invincible, that he too had weaknesses... The pain of seeing what you treasure disappear right in front of your eyes is worse than the loss itself.

Dustin was never a magnanimous person. Ever since Larry hit him at the hospital, he bore grudges and had marked Larry for revenge.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1725

There are many ways for one to seek revenge. It does not have to be an eye for an eye. One needed to calmly analyze the situation, made the best use of one's advantage then go in for the kill.

Dustin was not certain what made him hate Larry that much. Joan could be the reason. He always fought hard for what he desired and was convinced he would have her by his side someday. He only had to be persistent and work zealously towards his goal.

Dustin collected the papers on the table, finished his drink, and stood up from the sofa.

Under the blinding lights, he looks intimidating. Larry was beginning to feel breathless.

“If there are no other questions, we shall call it a day...”

No other questions? Of course, there were many questions in Larry’s mind. But, he knew even if he were to ask, a cunning man like Dustin would not have answered his queries truthfully.

“Have a nice day, Mr. Norton.” Dustin smiled and politely extended his hand to Larry.

That was a signal for the end of one’s conversation. But has the issue really ended? Larry knew this was only the beginning.

Larry went through the motion and shook Dustin’s hand. He thought Dustin had challenged him with a crushing handshake. That, plus the plastic smile on Dustin’s face, convinced Larry he was being mocked.

They are out to take over Norton Corporation. Larry could not get that thought out of his mind. Dustin’s sly smile was the other thing that bothered him. He knew Dustin was up to no good.

Or maybe, he had not gotten over Joan? This thought suddenly came to Larry, and he was thunderstruck. He nearly ran the red light and was about to hit a pedestrian. Thankfully, he snapped out of it just in time to jam the brake. He was thrown forward violently as he narrowly avoided the accident.

“You rascal! Are you blind? Watch how you are driving!” the middle-aged man shouted at

Larry. He could hear it loud and clear even though the windows were all wound up. Larry managed to escape from a confrontation as the lady, which looked like the man's wife, told him not to pursue the matter and dragged him away. He was furious when he saw the photos last time as he suspected Joan had betrayed him. He never gave much thought to the other party in the photos. It has been Dustin's scheme all along! Even if Joan is not interested in him, he would have made excuses to get close to her. This is all because he knows that Joan would never give up on me! Larry wanted to give himself a tight slap. He made a huge mistake. The person he needed to be wary of was Dustin, not Joan! He had been making his and Joan's lives miserable all these while when it was none of her faults. Oh no, what have I done? In order to wait up for him, Joan had applied for time off work in the morning for the past few days. He went for the meeting with Dustin and came home later than usual this evening. As expected, Joan was seated by the door when he reached home. Her hands were supporting her chin, and she was nodding off, body swaying precariously. It was obvious she had waited for a long time. She was half asleep and did not even realize Larry had walked up to her. Larry stared at the sleepy Joan. This was the girl that used to be shy but was smart and decisive. She was also the same girl who waited up for him every night, who learned new skills just for him, who.... memories came flooding back to him. I am blessed to have met you. Larry let out a small sigh, bent over, and picked Joan up. He could feel her cold limbs, and it pricked his conscience. She has waited by the door in the cold for so long...

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1726

Her long curly lashes fluttered, and her eyes slowly opened, still sleepy. She realized she was being carried into the house by Larry, so she struggled to be let down. However, Larry would have none of that but tightened his embrace instead. "Why are you awake? You were sleeping so soundly at the door," he teased.

It was amazing he still had the mood to joke, but that did not cheer Joan up. "I woke up when you sighed. Why are you sighing? Did the discussion not go well today?"

Larry had laid her down on the bed and was pulling a blanket over her. He paused when

Joan posed the question. She held his right hand and looked him in the eyes, full of concern. "Please don't hide anything from me."

Larry sat by her side and held her hand tightly. "I... the meeting today was with Dustin."

Joan sat up straight immediately and exclaimed in disbelief, "How is that possible? Dustin?"

Was it a chance meeting? I thought... I thought you said you were going to meet the

chairman of Alpire Group. How did you end up meeting Dustin instead?"

Joan bombarded him with a load of questions as she could not believe it was Dustin. The

last she met him was when she went to ask him about Larry. He had not contacted her since

then too. Why did he approach Larry this time around?

"It was him. He is now the financial controller of Alpire Group. He said their chairman sent

him. At the meeting today, his message was clear. Alpire's target was Norton Corporation.

They wanted to take over everything."

"What? Dustin has become the financial controller of Alpire Group? And they want to take

over Norton Corporation? This is unbelievable!" Joan's eyes widened with surprise. To her,

the chance of Dustin doing that seems so unlikely, like that of seeing a comet fall on earth.

Larry held back his rebuttal. They had overcome much hardship and misunderstanding before finally settling down to a blissful life. He would rather maintain that bliss than try to win an argument.

Financial controller? Joan was baffled. Isn't Dustin a medical doctor? He was in charge of her treatment when she was in A Nation. He went on to become a lecturer at the medicine faculty of Nirhaven College. That switch was logical given his expertise and training. On the contrary, his latest move to that of a financial controller was puzzling. Wherever he went, they seemed to meet time and again. There were valid reasons for them to meet in his first two jobs, but Joan could not associate his position at Alpire Group with herself.

"I feel he may have some ulterior motives..." Larry tried to suppress his emotions and spoke as calmly as he possibly could. It was tough, as the thought of Dustin made him boil. How he wished Dustin would vanish in the air instantly.

"I think that is unlikely. He was a helpful and nice doctor and didn't look like a scheming person," Joan tried to defend.

His wife defending a man he detested made Larry cringed, but he did not rebuke Joan. He would have picked a fight with her previously. After they went through all the earlier misunderstandings, Larry had matured and learned to keep his emotions in check.

Joan was defensive of Dustin as he had been nice to her. People like Dustin only have eyes for those they love and would do anything to get their hands on what they wanted. He was more toxic than Joan could ever imagine. She would always remember the good in people and forgot the fact that everyone had an opposing dark side.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1727

“I wished I could say he is a good man.” Those were the only words Larry could say in

response to Joan’s defense of Dustin.

“Is this the Barrymore residence? There is a parcel for Ms. Barrymore.” A courier man was

outside the door. He was fanning himself furiously with his cap, melting in the scorching hot weather.

A gush of warm air rushed into the room as Nancy opened the door. The courier man

stuffed a kraft paper package through the door and left hurriedly. He couldn’t wait to

deliver this last package of the day and make his way home.

She was curious about the brown package in her hand, as she did not do any online

shopping. The sender’s address was Marsingfill, where Nancy was staying. She wondered

why someone would bother to use express courier service to send her this urgently when

they were in the same city.

She tore open the wrapping and found an ordinary envelope, well protected with bubble wrap.

To Ms. Barrymore. That was written in black ink on the envelope. The sender was formal and

had used her family name instead of her first name.

It was written in traditional calligraphy with a fountain pen. The strokes were bold and

carefree, reflecting the personality of the sender.

Nancy already knew who the sender was when she saw her name on the envelope.

She opened the envelope, and there was a red invitation card inside. It was a handwritten

card, inviting her to be his teammate in the coming competition.

Taekwondo competition, of course. Nancy’s lips curled into a smile. That was the most

exclusive Taekwondo competition for all the practitioners, so she would definitely not give it

a miss. Moreover, her partner would be Jory, whom she had sparred with on numerous



occasions and already developed special feelings for. Her first impression of Jory was that of a playboy. After some heart-to-heart talks, she discovered that he was actually a lively, warm, humorous, and chic guy. She realized his youthfulness and carefree personality gave others the wrong impression of him being a playboy. Both Jory and she were born in the same year. That was the reason why both their parents had always wanted to pair them up. The timing did not work in their favor. She met Caspian before Jory, so she ended up being with Caspian. Nancy carefully placed the handwritten invitation card in the second drawer of her dresser. She left the drawer open and was staring dazedly at her name written on the envelope. She was not sure what was going on in her mind. Could she be feeling regretful for rejecting the marriage proposal? Somewhere deep in her heart, she had someone in a special place but that was not meant to be. She heard the key turned in the lock and hurriedly closed the drawer. The next moment, Caspian's voice drifted in. "I'm back, Nancy! Where are you? Boss went to meet the chairman of Alpire Group. I bet you won't be able to guess who that person is..." Caspian started chattering as he changed out of his shoes. Chairman of Alpire Group? Did Larry meet Jory's dad? Isn't his dad overseas? He could not have come back. Did Larry meet Jory instead? What is going on?

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1728

All these thoughts ran through Nancy's mind, and she nearly blurted them out. Caspian walked over with a smirk, wanting to keep her in suspense. Upon seeing her with a desperately curious look, he offered, "It's Dustin!"

He crossed his arms and continued, "I did not expect him to be related to Alpire Group. That aside, the most damning thing was he told Boss they are targeting the whole of Norton Corporation. They want to take over Norton Corporation!" Whew! Thank goodness it was not Jory. She breathed a sigh of relief as she remembered no one else actually knew Jory. She was too nervous earlier to think straight and to focus on what Caspian was saying.

Larry's company was in a crisis, and all she could think of was Jory. "We'll have to help Larry. Please let him know he could contact my dad and me if he needs our help." She made a casual offer, but Caspian took it as a sincere offer and was rather touched.

He stepped forward to give Nancy a hug, yet she used her arms to block him off. She was taken aback by her own reaction but went on to banter with Caspian. "You are hot and sweaty. Go get a shower."

Caspian scratched his head in embarrassment, held her hand, and apologized to her. He then went to pick his clothes from the wardrobe and got ready to shower.

It was only upon hearing the bathroom door closed that she slumped and sat on the bed.

She crossed her hands as she sank in confusion like never before. Innocent Caspian had not detected her abnormality in the past few days, but even if she could deceive Caspian, she could not hide her feelings. She knew she had changed and there was no turning back.

It was pitch dark outside, and one could hear the toads croaking amongst the bushes.

As she stared into the night, her mind drifted, and the window of the room turned to be that of her red Bentley. She could vividly see herself seated in the driver's seat and an exasperated Jory yelling at her to get out of the way.

She did not know how long she was in a daze, thinking of Jory. When she recovered from it, she was no longer on that narrow lane where they met. She was still seated on her bed at home, surrounded by silence, accompanied by the occasional toad croaks.

Larry and Joan did not approach Finnick and Vivian for help to resolve Norton Corporation's crisis. They did not even tell them about the problem.

However, in this digital age, Finnick and Vivian would have found out through different mediums in social media.

Larry and Joan found they had little time to spend with Leslie as they had to try ways and means to save Norton Corporation. Out of desperation, Joan had to pay Finnick and Vivian a visit to ask for their help to look after Leslie.

She stared at the rosy chubby cheeks of Leslie, who was lying in the baby cot and sighed,

"Leslie dear, please do not be angry with Daddy and Mommy. We would love to spend all

our time with you, but at this moment, we had to fight hard to keep the company, which is

the fruit of blood, sweat, and tears of many people. Daddy and Mommy had no choice but

to send you over to your grandpa and grandma for the time being..."

Young Leslie seemed to have understood her, and his little face scrunched up, looking

displeased. Joan was anxious about meeting her in-laws too. They had not met since Norton

Corporation got into trouble.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1729

In all honesty, Joan didn't blame Larry as she understood him. However, she couldn't speak

on behalf of Finnick and Vivian since they had poured their blood, sweat, and tears into the

company. Now that it had ended up in such a sorry state, even she herself wasn't certain

whether Finnick would condemn Larry.

“You’re here, Ms. Joan?” The housemaid wiped her hands on her apron. Then, she spotted

Leslie in Joan’s arms. “Oh, you even brought Leslie along!”

Joan flashed her a polite smile. “Is Vivian and Finnick home?”

Smiling at her in return, the housemaid then hollered in the direction of the house, “Mr.

Norton and Mrs. Norton, Ms. Joan and Leslie are here!”

The moment Vivian saw Joan and Leslie, she hurried forward and carried him from Joan’s

arms. It had been a while since she last saw the baby. She hadn’t visited them out of worry

that she would be a bother. She initially thought that they would bring him back for a visit in

a few days, but it turned out that they actually dragged their feet until now.

Having not laid eyes on him for a long time, Vivian truly missed her grandchild greatly. She

cradled Leslie in the crook of her arms and rocked him gently, but it seemed that he had

had enough sleep. Surprisingly, he didn’t throw a tantrum but pointed at them while

giggling with his petite mouth open.

By then, Finnick had also walked over, and he looked as though he wanted to snatch the

child from Vivian. At that moment, the two elderly people whose hair was threaded with

gray resembled two immature children vying for their beloved toy.

At the sight of them both showering their affection on Leslie, Joan breathed a sigh of

relief. Phew! With Leslie diverting their attention, they most likely won’t pressure Larry no

matter how angry they are!

Before she could even say anything, Finnick had already seen through her and smilingly

remarked, “Well? Are you here to entrust Leslie’s care to us?”

Huh? I initially brought Leslie over so that I’ll gain the upper hand, but why am I now on the

passive end? As her intentions were suddenly exposed, she chuckled awkwardly. “Ah well, I

was worried that you two would miss Leslie.”

In the next moment, it was Vivian who exposed her, saying, "Okay, okay, that's enough. If you were truly worried that we were missing Leslie, you would've brought him over ages ago. You wouldn't have left this elderly couple languishing in loneliness until now."

Ah, why didn't Larry inherit Vivian's humor? What a shame! Joan lamented inwardly. Sure enough, her worry had been proven to be warranted, for it was always difficult to fool the elderly.

"Well? Aren't you going to say anything? Have we hit the nail on the head, then?" Finnick deliberately taunted. When he saw her terrified expression at his words, he then gave a soft cough. In the blink of an eye, he turned serious and solemnly patted her on the shoulder.

"It's fine. I've known about the situation at the company. My stance remains the same— everything will work itself out in the end."

"What if things fall apart?" Joan blurted out of the blue.

Amused by their daughter-in-law's instinctive riposte, Finnick and Vivian doubled over in laughter. After a long while, Finnick finally stifled his laughter and said to her with feigned authoritativeness, "Fall apart? Even if they fall apart, there'll still be debris left. When it comes to money, it'll be yours if it's meant to be. But if otherwise, it'll be of no use no matter how hard you work."

"Furthermore, it's not like the Norton family can't survive without the company," Vivian added.

Hmm? This doesn't seem right... It's completely different from the script I'd imagined!

Shouldn't they be wearing forbidding expressions and asking me what Larry is doing at the office all day that he has ruined their decades of hard work?

How could it be this scene before me instead? They actually busted a gut laughing, then

went to the side to discuss what brand of crib and milk to purchase for Leslie? Are there parents who could care less about their son than them? Shellshocked, she stood rooted to the spot. In the end, it was the housemaid who snapped her back to reality, urging, "Don't just stand there, Ms. Joan. Please have a seat." Only then did she compose herself and sat on the sofa. When Vivian noticed that she still seemed restless, she smiled. "Are you still worried about Larry?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1730

In truth, Joan wasn't worried about Larry. Instead, she was worried that Finnick and Vivian would blame Larry. Larry already has his plate full, so he can't take any more pressure from others! However, she couldn't say that, so she could only nod in tacit acquiescence to Vivian's remark.

Upon seeing her nod, Vivian affectionately wrapped an arm around her shoulder. "I've raised Larry from young, and he's the kind of person who'll give something his all when he has made up his mind to do it. It's the same this time. Whatever it is, the result doesn't matter as long as he has done his best and given it his all.

"The outcome isn't important. We don't have a strong affinity for money and the company.

Finnick has already made more money than a person could make in two lifetimes. If worse comes to worst, we'll just be more frugal in the future. We can still survive without any problems."

Gah! That's not what I wanted to say! Joan wailed inwardly. So, does this mean that they've long since planned for the eventuality that the company would go bankrupt? Are they truly his biological parents? Or was Norton Corporation given to them by someone for free?

The two of them really have no attachment to earthly possession, huh? They don't even care about anything Larry does. Well, that's a good thing! Joan was very much relieved. Since things are fine with them here, I'll now go and find someone. I wonder if he'll be able to shed light on the questions I have.

"I knew that you would come and seek me out." As Dustin looked at Joan before him, he wasn't the least bit surprised. "But why did you choose to meet in a nature park?"

An hour ago, Joan sent Dustin a message after leaving Finnick and Vivian's place. Dustin arrived very quickly, so they met in the park in no time. Since it was Sunday, the nature park was bustling even more than usual. At the gate itself, there was an unceasing throng of visitors. Vendors sold various kinds of balloons, while children who came and went tugged on their parents' hands as they beseeched them to get one.

Dustin was wearing a sky blue casual jacket and slim-fit pants that rendered him all the taller. On the whole, his dressing was vastly different from his usually serious and meticulous style.

As Joan stared at him with undisguised weariness in her eyes, she felt that something about him had changed despite looking no different. Yet, she couldn't quite put her finger on it.

All of a sudden, she blurted, "I remember back when we were abroad, I used to be very pessimistic just after you had operated on me. Thus, you brought me to the various parks in

A Nation. At that time, I always thought to myself that I'll bring you to a park in Marsingfill if I could ever recover my health..."

She naturally stood beside Dustin, and they walked side by side, creating a blissful picture.

“Later, I returned to Chanaea, but I couldn’t fulfill the promise back then due to various reasons... And you even left Marsingfill to head back to A Nation again because of me.” Joan stared down at the scattered pebbles below her feet. As she stepped on them, she felt the pressure accumulated at her soles dissipating. “That’s why... I decided on this place for our meeting today.” As the rays of sunlight shone on her head, they appeared both like crystal ornaments that adorned her hair and the stars scattered across the Milky Way. Conversely, Dustin’s gaze remained on her—the look in his eyes gentle as though he was looking at a priceless treasure. As a breeze blew her scattered hair into her face, he abruptly reached out and tucked her hair behind her ear. “Actually, as long as I’m with you... as long as I get to see you, I’m happy wherever it may be.” Such a declaration was tantamount to a confession of love, but Joan was already numb to it. Although Dustin rarely expressed himself to her, she wasn’t a fool, so she more or less knew that he had feelings for her. However, she didn’t want to hurt him, much less ruin the harmonious relationship between them, thus never once pointed it out before him.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1731

Of course, the punch Larry swung at Dustin at the hospital back then rendered Joan’s relationship with him even more ambiguous. In response to Dustin’s confession, Joan merely replied indifferently, “There’s someone whom I love.” All at once, a wave of bitterness surged within Dustin. He had known that he wouldn’t be able to get her love and had long since expected such a response, but he had never counted upon such an indescribable feeling upon hearing it directly from her mouth.



Before he had figured out how he should reply to that, Joan continued, "Besides, he loves me a lot as well, and our relationship is going very well." She then halted her steps and stared right into his slightly anguished gaze. "If possible, I hope we can be friends forever."

"Friends?" Dustin muttered. He snorted softly before shaking his head, the sorrow within his eyes brimming to the point of overflowing like a tidal wave. In the next moment, Joan asked him in a choked voice, "Dustin, tell me this. What's your relationship with Alpire Group? What was your motive in requesting to see Larry? Are you working with them to destroy his company?"

"Destroy?" Dustin echoed. "If all the fittest were to be accused of destroying the weak, would there still be order in this world?"

Bolstering her courage inwardly, Joan raised her voice to make herself sound more imposing. "You know full well that Norton Corporation is not weak. I don't know what method Alpire Group used to acquire Norton Corporation's branch companies, but I know without a shadow of a doubt that Norton Corporation will not be impeded by Alpire Group or the market considering its operation and capabilities. "Since you represented the chairman of Alpire Group to meet with Larry, I know you must be aware of Alpire Group's true motive in acquiring Norton Corporation. Likewise, you must know their plans after having done so." By then, her hands had already clenched into fists.

She truly couldn't figure him out, so she could only feel him out. But from the look of things then, she wasn't likely to gain any valuable information from him. Dustin was silent for a moment before he commented, "Joan, although you're a student at Nirhaven College, you're still unfamiliar with business matters. I'm not the person behind

Alpire Group. Indeed, their target is the entire Norton Corporation, but I have no say in whatever they do. The only thing I can do is to tell you both all this. If it weren't because of you, why would I seek Larry Norton out? Joan, I prioritize you in everything I do."

He sounded very sincere, and Joan could only hear the candor in his voice. Upon hearing his answer, she finally breathed a sigh of relief. Her tone eased as well as she murmured, "You know what, Dustin? The thing I fear most is that you'll one day tell me that everything that had befallen us was all your doing.

"When Larry told me that it was you who met with him, I really couldn't believe it. I know you've always been a good person. You saved me and promised to never hurt me. So, I trust you," she continued without noticing that his fingers were trembling slightly.

When Dustin heard that, he knew that the day she feared would come sooner or later. All he could do was to draw out the coming of that day, making it slower. Meanwhile, he must treat her better so that their ties would remain close when the day came.

But given the situation then, everything he had planned seemed impossible. Considering her abiding trust in me now, how much would she hate me when she learns the truth? I

once promised to never hurt her, but for the sake of that promise, I've been hurting the

person she loves. In that case, is it considered hurting her indirectly? Nevertheless, he couldn't be bothered about that. The only thing he craved was every ray of

sunshine that shone around her and every puff of air that glided over her. No matter how

despicable and shameless the method, he felt that everything was worth it as long as he could see her.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1732

As Dustin gazed into her dark eyes, he murmured with all the tenderness in the world, "Yes,

I'll never hurt you..."

Folding her Taekwondo uniform, Nancy placed it into her canvas bag.

She then plopped

down onto the soft bed, her body wobbling a smidge as the bed

depressed. All of a sudden,

she jumped up as something occurred to her. Snagging two bottles of cold mineral water

from the refrigerator, she tossed them in her hands before shoving them into her bag.

Instead of wearing her favorite platform high heels that she usually wore, she chose a pair of

down-to-earth sneakers. After nimbly tying a butterfly knot for both sneakers, she made a

turn in front of the mirror. Satisfied with her appearance, she then

shouldered her canvas

bag before setting out.

The invitation to the Taekwondo competition that she received from

Jory back then was still

in her bag. Before leaving, she touched the words that seemed to be glowing, and her

mood instantly brightened.

Well, probably because it was her favorite Taekwondo competition.

No sooner after she stepped out of her house, the sound of a honk rang out behind her. At

first, she thought that the driver was irritated at her for walking so

slowly, so she inexorably

quickened her pace and strode forward.

Unexpectedly, the car continued tailing her closely, and the honking grew louder as well.

Not only did it sound louder, but it also seemed closer to her.

Ugh! What's wrong with the car? Is the driver deliberately picking on me because he's irked

at me or something? Well, he picked the wrong person because I'm no easy prey with a

black belt in Taekwondo! When her head snapped back, the car door of the car in question

was open, and a familiar figure was looking at her with a smirk while leaning against the

open car door.

“Ah, you’ve finally noticed me! If you continued ignoring me, I would’ve run the engine and grabbed you!”

“It’s you?” Surprise showed in Nancy’s eyes.

Jory was currently wearing form-fitting sportswear with black stripes that were printed with English letters on the shoulders. In fact, his entire outfit was ordinary in the sense that it cost less than a thousand.

Swinging her bag at him, Nancy deliberately teased, “Wow, you’re actually still driving this piece of junk besides having dressed so ordinarily today. Don’t tell me the rich heir loves imitating the common folks as well?”

At that, Jory patted the front of his car. “My car is excellent! There’s no problem driving it around Marsingfill a dozen times a day, unlike someone’s luxury car that broke down on an isolated road and left its owner at a loss!”

If I’d known that he’d bring this up, I wouldn’t have teased him! Nancy griped. As she wore a huffy expression on her face, Jory felt that she resembled a little girl whose lollipop had been snatched away, inciting an urge to hug her tightly and stroke her head.

“You know what? I’ve waited in front of your house for an eternity. In order to save you from any trouble that your luxury car might cause once more, I purposely woke up early in the morning to pick you up, but you actually didn’t see me...” At that, Jory feigned a sigh. “Ah well, even if you didn’t see me, you must have noticed this Volkswagen of mine that’s so old that the paint is peeling off!”

Hearing that, Nancy hit him with her bag. “In that case... I’ll grace you with my presence in your car today to make it up to you!”

“Hah! It’s glaringly obvious that you’re just lazy to drive yourself...” Jory muttered. But when

Nancy shot him a glare, he hastily exclaimed with a smile, "Great! Let's go, then!"

There was a huge crowd outside the dojo that day. Most of the participants were young people of their age, and they were naturally accompanied by their parents, who kept reminding them of the stakes.

Twisting the window crank handle, Nancy wound the car window down a fraction. "This is a competition, yet these parents are acting as though they're sending their children off to battle..."

After parking the car, Jory tilted his head and followed her gaze. Sure enough, those parents were all making a big deal out of it.

"If... Well, this is a hypothetical question, mind you. If you didn't invite me to attend this competition with you today, would you have asked your father to come with you?" Having not expected him to lean his head over, Nancy almost knocked into him in her distracted state.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1733

Upon hearing Nancy's question, Jory's brows furrowed. "Huh? That's impossible! My dad can't possibly be in Marsingfill. Even if he is, don't you think it's strange if we were to appear at the same event at the same time?"

While Nancy knew that his relationship with the chairman of Alpire Group was strained, she never expected it to be so bad that it would be strange if they were to appear in the same place at the same time.

By then, Jory was already unfastening his seatbelt. "Let's not talk about him anymore. I'm in a good mood today, so let's not ruin it..."

"In this world, blood ties are the only bond that can never be severed. If there's an opportunity, you should keep an open mind and talk to him," Nancy exhorted without

looking at him as she unfastened her seatbelt. When Jory, who was unfastening his seatbelt, heard that, he lifted his head and glanced at her beside him. The gleam in his eyes at that moment was one even he himself couldn't decipher.

All annual competitions were as strict as the current one. Every single person who wanted to enter the dojo had to be checked one at a time before they were allowed entrance, as though passing a security check.

It was then midsummer, so it was really scorching. For that reason, it was truly torturous to queue outside the door to pass the security check. Worse still, they had to endure extreme thirst since there wasn't a single grocery store in sight.

Jory reached out and wiped the sweat off his forehead. Beside him, Nancy wasn't faring any better. Oh God, it's just too warm today! Fortunately, I didn't apply any makeup, or I would've ended up with it running down my face now.

She then reached into her bag for a tissue, inwardly lauding herself for having packed everything necessary before leaving the house. Out of the blue, she felt bursts of cool air against the back of her hand, and she suddenly remembered that she had thrown two bottles of mineral water into her bag before leaving.

Most importantly... it's cold!

In the next second, she brandished a bottle of mineral water in front of Jory as though presenting him with a priceless treasure. However, she then shifted it away before he could snatch it out of her hands. With a smug expression on her face, she declared, "You'll owe me a favor."

Meanwhile, Jory felt as though he was in a fiery furnace then. At that moment, he would agree without hesitation even if he were asked to pluck a star from the sky, let alone owe

her a favor.

Promptly agreeing, he swiftly snatched the bottle of mineral water from her hand. After

guzzling down several mouthfuls and quenching his thirst, he was once again energetic,

thus started growing mischievous.

He shifted close to Nancy. Nancy, who was rummaging for the uniform she put into her bag,

instinctively blurted, "Stay away from me when it's so warm now."

Her tone became very different from usual once she grew serious, so when Jory heard that,

he obediently put some distance between them.

He wanted to say something else, but the referee had already blown the whistle to summon

all contestants to enter the dojo one by one. Jory's turn was ahead of Nancy, so he coolly

bid her farewell upon hearing the referee's call. "See you later."

Unexpectedly, a creamy white hand shot out and clutched the hem of his clothes. In the

slightly flowing smock of his white uniform, he actually held a bit of resemblance to an

ancient warrior, especially when coupled with his jet-black brows.

"Be careful," Nancy murmured. "Remember to observe your opponent's every gesture and movement closely..."

She was still going to nag him further, but Jory chuckled and stretched out a hand to place

it on her hair. Gently rubbing his thumb on her forehead, he flashed her a smile that had

butterflies fluttering in her stomach.

She couldn't quite decipher the emotion in his gaze, merely seeing herself reflected clearly

in his pupils. "I got it. Thank you."

Hmm? Hey, he sounds as though he's mollifying a kid! Jory then stuffed his bottle of mineral

water into her hand before leaving. As his figure resembled that of a messenger walking

toward the light, a phrase suddenly flashed across her mind though it seemed rather

inappropriate to be used here.

Never will I meet another like him.

The soft mineral water bottle in her hand still carried the warmth of his palm, and the touch of his hand on her hair lingered.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1734

Argh! Having such a feeling is truly horrible! Should I be thankful that those thoughts are only

lingering in my mind? If they're lingering in my heart, then I'm really a fickle person, and even I

myself might not be able to accept that!

Clutching the bottle in her hand tightly, Nancy strode toward the dojo.

The atrium was no different

from usual except for the fact that there were many spectators today. In the past, contestants had to

watch the electronic screen elsewhere and await the live broadcast, but they had actually set up

"spectator seats" for the contestants.

Nancy was among those bringing up the rear, so she wasn't too worried about being called up

anytime soon. Thus, she found a seat near the arena and sat down blithely.

She had barely settled in when the girl beside her, who appeared to be about her age, struck up a

conversation with her.

"Wow, you're incredible, miss! You're already a black belt at such a young age..." The girl blinked

at her with stars in her eyes as though she was looking at her idol and would pull her into a bear hug

in the next moment.

While still wearing a polite smile on her face, Nancy had already put some distance between them

surreptitiously. "Not at all. As long as you practice diligently, you'll also be wearing a black belt one

day."

"Did you come alone today, miss?" Affable in nature, the girl held Nancy's arm as though they were

close friends, albeit having just exchanged a few words with her.

Meanwhile, Nancy's gaze was fixated on the arena where the two contestants had already bowed to



each other as a sign of respect. Hence, when the girl held her arm, she almost acted instinctually and grabbed her arm to flip her without showing any mercy.

Fortunately, her vision and mind were entirely captivated by the figure on the stage, so she didn't rebuff the girl's intimate gesture.

When the girl didn't receive any reply from her after a long time, she looked in the direction of her gaze. Then, her lips curved into a sly and intrigued smile. "Ah, I know! It turns out that you're here with your boyfriend!"

"I'm already married," Nancy countered as she turned to her. At her response, the girl was momentarily taken aback. Shouldn't the normal reaction be a blush and silence? Well... this is a really refreshing and novel answer!

The corners of her mouth twitched, making it evident that she was speechless at Nancy's reply.

"You're married, miss? So, that means... you came with your husband, yes? I really envy you for having found someone with the same hobbies and interests to spend the rest of your life with..."

Ugh! Can you stop talking already? Getting her to shut up was the only thing Nancy asked for at the moment. However, the girl's remark truly jolted her.

Looking for someone with similar hobbies and interests to spend the rest of my life with? But it

seemed to have been love at first sight for Caspian and I... She initially didn't believe in love at first

sight, thinking that the so-called love at first sight was merely about looks. But after meeting

Caspian, she realized that it wasn't just that, for it was his unique aura that enthralled her deeply.

However, after having been together for a while, she actually comprehended a crucial point—neither

looks nor aura could be a foundation in sustaining a happy life. If two people wanted to live together

for eternity, their lifestyles and interests should also overlap besides having similar values.

If the so-called principle of complementing each other's personalities and interests were to be applied in real life, that would only exacerbate the likelihood of a divorce. On second thought, are Caspian and I really suited for a lifetime? Shortly after Caspian and Nancy got married, Larry and Joan had a misunderstanding. The couple had spent quite a bit of effort and time before finally resolving the problem between Joan and Larry, but good times were short-lived. Subsequently, issues cropped up with Norton Corporation's branch companies, one after another. Therefore, Caspian and Nancy hadn't really interacted much. The thing is, in our limited interactions, I only noticed some divergence between many of my habits as well as interests and that of Caspian's. Be that as it may, she didn't pay much mind to it, thinking that they should tolerate and compromise with each other over time.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1735

Ever since Jory appeared in her world recently, Nancy realized that corresponding interests and topics were probably very important. The feeling when I'm with Jory is entirely different from when I'm with Caspian. No! I can't let my thoughts go there! The more her thoughts veered in that direction, the more she felt that she and Caspian weren't suited for each other, and the greater her fear that the distance between them would grow.

"Miss! Miss, your husband is trying to get your attention!" The girl beside Nancy nudged her with an elbow. Snapping back to her senses, she saw Jory making an OK gesture at her from the stage. In response, she fisted her right hand and flashed him a fist pump.

Jory's opponent stood at a height of about one point eight meters and was about the same build as him. Oh God, that shouldn't be his opponent, yes? Nancy fretted inwardly. Evidently, she had forgotten that it was a Taekwondo competition among formidable

practitioners, which meant that there was no discrimination of physique as long as two contestants were evenly matched.

Heaving a long sigh, she kept her attention on the competition. It was difficult to tell who would win in such a competition, so it had the spectators gripping the edge of their seats in anticipation.

As Nancy observed the match where neither were trumping the other, she inwardly chided herself, Dang it, I'm such a doomsayer! Hmm... Jory's opponent is really skilled. I can't imagine how it would be if a newbie were paired with him when he's equally matched with Jory!

Even after the two of them grappled for more than twenty minutes, neither managed to defeat the other. Below the stage, all the spectators were fired up at the unexpectedly intense match in the very first round, both contestants fighting tooth and nail. At long last, the referee blew the whistle to signal an intermission.

All at once, Jory's opponent was surrounded by a horde of friends and relatives who passed him water, gave him a towel, and fanned him. The dojo was airconditioned, but they were simply making a huge fanfare.

When the referee saw that Jory was alone, he kindly handed him a towel. At that, Nancy got to her feet. Just as she was wavering whether she should go over, he turned to her and flashed her a bright smile as though he could discern her hesitation and worry, seemingly telling her that he was fine.

Because of that smile, Nancy hastily pulled out the bottle of mineral water that she had handed to him earlier from her bag and trotted over to the arena. As she clutched at the red ribbon that kept the spectators out, the smooth ribbon wrinkled

from her tight grasp. "Don't force it if you can't hold out. You've got to ensure that you remain unscathed."

Surprisingly, Jory was still in the mood to crack a joke at that time. "Do you think I look like

the kind of person who'll surrender when I can't beat the other guy?"

His voice was as flippant and frivolous as usual, but Nancy was afraid that he would

misunderstand, thus hurriedly countered, "No, no... I didn't mean that you can't beat him!

That's not what I meant!"

Jory placed his hand on her shoulder, his gaze steady and compelling.

"Hey, calm down. I

know what you meant. And don't worry, for there are few who can hurt me after all the

years I've spent practicing Taekwondo. While that guy is a bit tricky, he still has weaknesses.

I've got his measure earlier, so I'll be able to defeat him with just a bit more time..."

Then, he jutted his lips in the direction of his opponent and continued,

"Besides, he doesn't

have much stamina. After all, he was the one who requested for an intermission from the

referee."

Nancy looked at the man as well. Just then, he had rolled up the sleeves of his uniform,

revealing the stark contrast of the bulging muscles on his arm with Jory.

At that sight, she

became increasingly worried. "But..."

Nonetheless, Jory pressed down on her shoulder lightly and interrupted her with a smile.

"No buts. Don't worry, for no one can stop me when it's something I want to do. I want to

win now, so he's nothing in my eyes."

At that precise moment, the referee again blew his whistle to indicate the end of the

intermission. After taking a gulp of water, Jory threw the bottle into the trash can and strode

toward the arena.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1736

Nancy held the belt barrier and bit her lower lip in worry. Right at that moment, Jory turned around abruptly, like they were bonded telepathically. "I know what I'm doing. I won't let him lose so badly."

His reassurance was indeed a much-needed shot in the arm. Nancy instantly felt relieved. If

Jory says he can, then I should have faith in him!

Hence, Nancy went back to her seat. The competition was heating up increasingly. Jory's

white uniform moved with his body as he switched his moves from time to time. Nancy and

the crowd were fixing their eyes on Jory.

She could have never imagined Jory, a wealthy heir, sweating it out in a Taekwondo match.

He was also the same man who helped her fix her car and took her on a car race. Whichever

persona he donned, it was far from the stereotypical image others had of him—flirty.

Indeed, seeing in believing. This is the real Jory Synder that I see.

Suddenly, a piercing scream came from the crowd. Her heart tightened when she saw Jory's

opponent launched a flying kick at his shoulder.

"That was cruel!" Nancy shouted, regardless of others' strange eyes. If his kick had landed

accurately on Jory, with his entire body weight, Jory would have suffered a bone fracture, or

worse...

It was coming down to crunch time for Jory to attack. He grasped the man's calf and threw

him on the ground effortlessly. Fortunately, he wasn't hurt as it was a rubber floor.

As Jory had predicted, his opponent had poor stamina. The earlier rounds had drained the

latter of his energy. Naturally, the violent hit by Jory earlier knocked him down completely

as he remained unmoving, lying on the ground.

While the crowd was cheering for Jory, Nancy couldn't bring herself to feel happy. She

noticed Jory's subtle move of massaging his left shoulder—where the kick had landed on.

“How was it? Do you find me attractive?” Jory smiled smugly after his win with his hands on the hips. His little canine teeth were like pearls dazzling in the sun. Nancy was not in the mood for jokes. Subconsciously, she reached out to touch Jory's shoulder. “Your shoulder...”

Jory was as agile as ever, as though he was still in the match. Before Nancy could reach him, he patted the spot as he exclaimed, “My shoulder is fine!” Nancy was doubtful of his words. She raised her hand to pat his shoulder. It looks like he's speaking the truth. It doesn't feel swollen nor is it bleeding. She punched him sulkily without paying attention to the faint discomfort Jory was feeling.

He frowned a little, but he didn't utter a word. Instead, he teased Nancy with his energetic voice, “It'll be your turn soon. Perform well later, okay? Don't lose too miserably.”

“Hey! What makes you think that I will lose?” Nancy folded her arms across her chest in dissatisfaction.

Jory grinned mischievously as he bowed down to her. “Please forgive me for my stupid choice of words.”

Nancy held her head up proudly. “That's right.”

Upon seeing her confident demeanor, Jory burst into laughter. Say, my opponent really did give it his all into kicking me. My shoulder was almost crushed. I wonder how long it will take to recover.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1737

Bearing his shoulder pain, Jory continued watching the competition with Nancy. The following matches were full of surprises and excitement. It was even more intense than Jory's match.

Even Jory himself had to admit that every contestant was very skilled. Before long, it was

almost Nancy's turn. That was the first time she was so nervous in a competition.

Her palms were sweating. Jory noticed Nancy became quieter as it was nearing her turn.

Thinking that she must be nervous, he wrapped an arm around her in a bid to calm her down.

"Don't be afraid. I'm here for you!" His domineering proclamation was a contrast from his

child-like appearance. Nancy broke free from his arm and got back to bickering with Jory as

usual. "Me? Afraid? Hah! I'm just worried my competition would drag on, causing the crowd

to miss their lunch and tea time."

Jory raised his hands in surrender. "Fine, fine, fine. Whatever you say. I wish you break a new

record."

Nancy patted his head earnestly. "Hmm. That's right. You're pretty smart."

Nancy's opponent was a fierce-looking woman. One look at her, and Nancy knew that the

woman was not one to be messed with.

That woman seemed to be taking the competition more seriously as compared to Nancy.

She didn't let out a single smile from the moment she entered the sparring arena until they

bowed to each other. Nancy was there because Taekwondo was her interest—unlike the

others, who were eager to get the provincial certificate of qualification for them to advance

to a higher level of competition.

Seconds before the match was about to begin, millions of thoughts were still running

through Nancy's head. Why the hell am I having all these thoughts when the competition is

about to begin! Perhaps, it's my way of relieving my anxiety.

Instinctively, she looked towards the direction of the audience seat, where Jory was sitting.

He immediately reassured her with an OK hand gesture when he saw Nancy looking at him.

Jory can do it. So why can't I do the same?

Meanwhile, the girl who sat next to Nancy just now returned to her seat with a glass in her hand. Surprised by Jory's presence, it took the girl some time before she could react.

"Excuse me? Were you the senior from the first match?"

As Jory was focused on Nancy, he didn't even realize that the girl was talking to him.

Therefore, he did not give her any response.

The girl didn't feel awkward at all and took her seat. Jory only noticed there was someone

beside him when she sat down. The girl murmured to herself, "You both indeed make a

good pair. She was looking at you in the same way just now."

Her words snapped Jory back to his senses. Finally, he came to a realization that someone

was talking to him. He responded numbly, "Are you talking to me?"

The girl burst out laughing. "Do you see anyone else around?"

Jory then looked around and realized their surrounding was almost empty. Most of the

contestants had already gone back with their group of friends and relatives after the

competition. Therefore, the number of audiences was reducing rapidly.

Those who remained were either waiting for their turn, or they were Taekwondo enthusiasts.

"I don't remember seeing you just now. Aren't you one of the contestants today?" Jory

folded his hands on his thigh. "Are you a Taekwondo enthusiast?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1738

The girl adjusted the blue belt on her waist. "Look. I am a blue belt. How could a blue belt

possibly be sparring with you guys? I'm just a rookie who sneaks over from somewhere else

to watch you guys' matches!"

"Did you just say s-she was looking at me in the exact same way? Just like how I'm looking

at her right now?" Jory hesitated. Why am I feeling so embarrassed? It's only a simple

question. It's not like I can't deal with this kind of situation.



“That’s right. But she looks a little more anxious than you. She was sweating bullets throughout the match.” The girl paused for a second before she carried on, “By the way, you guys are so weird. Isn’t it normal for couples to care for each other? Why do you guys behave so awkwardly?”

Upon hearing that, Jory was at a loss. He didn’t know how to feel. Nancy had rejected him once. Moreover, she was married to Caspian, whom Jory couldn’t recall how the latter looked like.

No matter how close they were then, it should be nothing more than close friends. Coming to think of it, the reason for my returning to Marsingfill is to target Barrymore Group, no?

As Dustin was in the picture, he had to take down Larry’s company while executing his plans.

At that point, he was unsure of his initial motives anymore. After spending more time with Nancy, he found himself caught in a conflict of interest. Despite so, their interaction for the past few days gave him a feeling he had never experienced before.

Right then, he no longer had the desire to strike at Barrymore Group anymore. Obviously, Nancy was the reason for the change of heart. Actually, it all started with Nancy’s rejection of their union many years ago. Aggrieved, he decided to take revenge on Barrymore Group.

Couple? That only applies to Nancy and Caspian. I’m suddenly intrigued to meet this guy

Caspian. Just what kind of a man is capable of defeating me...

He became increasingly curious about Caspian—his character and appearance. What is it about him that makes Nancy fall head over heels for him and marry him within a mere three months after knowing each other?

The more he thought about it, the more tempted he was to meet Caspian. Although it was

him who came up with the idea of ruining Norton Corporation, he did it for the sake of

Dustin. He was not the least bit interested in Norton Corporation at all—he would do

whatever Dustin wanted him to.

Jory turned his gaze to Nancy. As the match went on, Nancy's stamina was visibly running

low. Her opponent is indeed powerful. She didn't do any additional training since the last

time we went to dojo together. Can she take it?

Nancy was a little stressed to face such a strong opponent. The woman seemed to be more

powerful than her, albeit just to a limited extent. If they were worlds apart in their skills,

Nancy would definitely choose to give up. However, they were more or less equal, so there

was no way she would admit defeat.

After a moment of confrontation, her opponent was clearly impatient, and she tried to lock

Nancy down to the ground a few times. Fortunately, Nancy was agile enough to shun her

opponent.

Nancy didn't have the strength to launch an attack on her. Hence, all she could do was stay

calm and identify the opponent's weakness. Just like Jory did—I have to find her weakness.

There's got to be another way!

As she was thinking to herself, her opponent raised her hand suddenly and requested a

short break from the referee. Nancy was confused. It has just started not long ago. She is

asking for a break already? What is wrong with her?

The woman suddenly turned around and gave Nancy a wicked smile while she was grabbing

a towel. Her opponent was far from good-looking, and her smile made her look even

scarier. Nancy had chills all over her body upon seeing her smile.

Despite so, Nancy understood clearly that the smile was a show of contempt.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1739

The woman was mocking Nancy for overestimating herself. They were both black belt holders in Taekwondo. After their brief exchange earlier, the opponent was confident that Nancy wasn't as good as her. Hence, she couldn't help mocking Nancy. "Hey! What are you thinking?" Jory, who was standing behind her, reached out to ruffle her hair.

Nancy's eyes widened in surprise. As a black belt holder, she should have maintained sharp senses. She couldn't believe that she failed to notice Jory's presence. "How long have you been here?"

Jory placed his hands on the belt barrier. "Since your opponent smiled at you."

"You saw it?" Nancy tilted her head and asked, "Do you know what she meant?"

Jory smiled as well. "Of course I know..."

"Then tell me." Nancy was looking forward to hearing his answer.

However, Jory stood up straight with an unfathomable expression. "No, I'm not telling you. I'm afraid that you will be upset. Besides, I believe you actually know what she meant too."

Nancy sighed as she shook her head. "Jory, we've just known each other for a short period of time. How can you understand me so well?"

At once, the smile on Jory's face became stiff as his tone turned cold and serious. "A short period of time? How could that be? We had known each other since our engagement."

It was words that he had been keeping to himself. He never had the intention of messing up with her life. Initially, he was going to bury those words inside his heart for good.

Unexpectedly, he blurted out at such an inappropriate timing.

The atmosphere turned awkward instantly. Moments later, Jory broke the silence. His voice

was still resonant as he encouraged Nancy, "Remember how I clasped you tightly as I turned

around when we were sparring? I know it's not that easy, but you're a quick learner. Since you've experienced it yourself, it shouldn't be a problem for you to master the tactic."

The images of their practice flashed in her mind. Jory's words rang in her ears once again,

"Even if your opponent is stronger than you, the move could save you from a nasty defeat—ending in a tie."

Oh my goodness! He even notices this! There is no reason for me to doubt his

judgment. Nancy's lips curved into a proud smile. "I don't want to end it in a tie. I will not let

that happen. Just wait and see. I will turn the table!"

After the referee blew the whistle, the match continued. Jory went back to the seat.

Meanwhile, the girl beside him was enjoying her large glass of juice.

When she saw Jory, she

immediately went over and asked, "What did you say to make her spirit lift?"

Nancy almost got defeated by her opponent just now, but she was suddenly full of beans.

She made a series of counter-attacks against her opponent. The woman didn't even know

how to fight back. Jory was proud of Nancy. "I was just encouraging her and steering her to the right way."

The girl didn't understand a single word. Hence, she bit the straw and turned her head to

the competition. With clenched fists, Jory was shouting in his mind. Take her down! Don't

waste time anymore. Your stamina and strength are depleting.

In the next second, Nancy clasped her opponent and pinned her to the ground with all her

might. At the sight of this, the crowd went into an uproar. Some of them were cheering for

Nancy, while some were encouraging the woman to stand up. If the latter managed to break

free of Nancy's grip, then there would be no chance for Nancy to defeat her anymore.

Everyone was paying close attention to the arena. It was not long before the woman requested to end the match immediately. With that, the match was concluded. Nancy was the winner!

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1740

“Oh my God! What kind of tactic is that. My instructor has never taught me that. She is

amazing!” The girl couldn’t stop praising Nancy.

Jory was overwhelmed with pride. “We should use different tactics against different

opponents. We should be flexible and innovative—knowing to change easily and adapt to

different conditions and circumstances as they occur. Taekwondo develops our agility, as

well as improves physical balance and coordination. It should also enhance our flexibility

and adaptability in overcoming challenges.”

The girl’s eyes beamed with admiration. That was an insight Jory had gained after years of

practicing Taekwondo. Growing up, he had always loved Taekwondo. As such, those

principles and understandings were deeply etched in his heart for a long time.

Nancy was worn up. She had exerted all her energy to clasp her opponent just now. While

the crowd was cheering for her, she could only sit there gasping heavily for air. However,

she didn’t forget to give Jory an OK gesture. She was telling him that she was fine—she

finally made it.

Jory quickly rushed towards the sparring arena and crouched down beside Nancy. He gave

her a thumbs up. At that moment, both of them didn’t say anything but exchange a

knowing smile—no words needed.

“It’s getting late. Let’s go get changed and go back.” Jory held her arms and helped her to

get up.

The scenes when she was sparring just now flashed through her mind like a movie. Jory was too careless to notice Nancy frowning when she stood up. She accidentally sprained her ankle due to overexertion in the competition earlier. For that reason, she actually leaned her entire body weight on her opponent. Who would have thought her sprained ankle was actually the reason why she won the competition! What an awkward situation. Luckily, Jory didn't realize anything. If he found out about that, he would definitely make fun of me.

After that, she forcibly stumbled her way to the changing room. She sat on the bench to take a look at her leg. Her right ankle was red and swollen like a bump on the road.

"Ouch..." Nancy howled in pain. Oh dear, it's so swollen! I can hardly put on my shoes, let alone walk on my feet. It's so painful! Tears began to well up in her eyes. "I should have just admitted defeat. At least I won't injure my foot," Nancy mumbled softly to herself. But if she could go back in time, she would still do the same.

Jory was really quick at changing clothes. He tidied himself up neatly and waited for Nancy outside the changing room.

"Are you done? I'm waiting for you here. I'll give you a lift later."

Meanwhile, Nancy was still struggling to put on her clothes. As Jory said that, she was trying to think of an excuse to send him off.

"Actually, you don't have to wait for me. I still need to use the washroom after I get dressed. You can go back first if you're in a rush."

Jory was confused. "Rush? What's the rush? It's fine. I will sit down and wait for you. Besides, you didn't drive today. I will give you a ride."

"Oh... Okay then." At that moment, she had no choice but to agree with him. She just hoped that his patience would slowly wear thin and leave after waiting for a long time.

Nancy had been on Facebook for half an hour inside the changing room before hearing

Jory's voice. He voiced out worriedly, "Are you okay? What's taking you so long?"

She hurriedly put her phone back into her bag and replied, "I'm fine! I'm coming out in a

minute!" Instinctively, she got up from the bench and subconsciously placing her weight on

her injured foot. As a result, she lost her balance and fell to the ground.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1741

Jory was standing in front of the door of the changing room. His shoulders raised slightly

when he heard a loud noise from inside. At once, he knew that Nancy had fallen onto the

ground.

Jory rested his hand on the doorknob. He was so close to open the door.

However, he was a

well-mannered man to the core. Hence, he stopped himself from breaking in.

"What's wrong? What happened?"

When it rains, it pours. I totally forgot I am actually injured. I couldn't even stand up now. I

guess I have no choice now but to rely on Jory.

"I-I fell..." For some reason, Nancy sounded aggrieved at that moment. I am a formidable

black belt holder, so how did I end up in this predicament?

Jory's heart clenched tightly. Without any hesitation, he opened the door.

Nancy sat weakly and limply on the floor. She raised her head and looked at the man who

was walking in. She couldn't see his face clearly, but she could see the sweats on his

forehead glowing under the lights.

"Why are you sweating so much? Aren't those air conditioners working?" She asked with a

puzzled look.

Jory crouched down to Nancy's eyes level. "Are you stupid? You were the last contestant. Of

course, they will switch off the air conditioners after the competition is over."

“Oh? Then, you...” All of a sudden, Nancy was overwhelmed with guilt. Jory wiped the sweats off his forehead. “That’s right. It’s hot and stuffy out there. And yet, someone was purposely dilly-dallying inside and refused to come out...” Nancy stared at her injured ankle. She didn’t know what to say. Perhaps, karma was coming back at her. She tried to make Jory leave on purpose. Unfortunately, she fell once again and aggravated the swelling on her ankle. Jory casually placed his hand on Nancy’s knee. He heaved a soft sigh and said with an indescribably affectionate tone, “Hey, can you stand up?” Nancy shook her head in despair. It was a striking contrast with her haughty attitude when they first met. Jory found it amusing that she was trying to hide her injury from him. At that, he approached her with a helpless grin. Knowing what he was going to do next, Nancy instinctively shrank back a little. But, Jory stared intensely at her. She couldn’t help feeling weak and helpless. Jory turned around and showed her his wide shoulders. “Get on my back,” he said casually as if it was not a big deal to him. Nancy was hesitant. After all, it was an intimate gesture. Apart from that, she was married to Caspian. Jory could read her mind even he was facing away from her. Thus, he pretended to be indifferent and said, “Otherwise, I can call 120 and let them carry you home with a stretcher. Choose one.” I will go with the stretcher. She was about to speak her mind before she quickly swallowed back the words. Then, she obediently rode on Jory’s back. She didn’t wrap her arms around his neck. Instead, she placed her palms on Jory’s shoulders. As for Jory, he held the drawstring of his pants tightly while carrying her without the intention to take any advantage of her.



“You don’t look fat. But why are you so heavy?” Jory exclaimed in surprise as he stood up,  
“You weigh like a thousand pounds! Are you a pig?”  
Nancy pinched his ears. “What did you just say? Who did you just call pig? I dare you to say that again!”

Jory howled in pain, “Hey! You’re pulling my ears and threatening me. Get down and walk back yourself if you’re that great!”

On the other side, Joan was quietly turning the keys as she unlocked the door. She was afraid of waking Larry up. Then, she sneakily pushed the door open, holding her breath. So, am I feeling guilty? As Joan thought about it, she gritted her teeth and closed the door carefully.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1742

Her surrounding was pitch dark. She took a breather while she leaned against the door. As she was about to turn on the lights, a deep cough sounded from behind her.

The room brightened in an instant, which forced her eyes to shut in reflex.

“Seems like someone doesn’t feel the need to let me know that they had left. They didn’t

even bother to let me know when they’re back,” Larry complained.

Joan got nervous and started to stutter. “I-I was afraid of waking you up.

There are already a

lot of problems at the company. I don’t want to add on to your burden.”

Joan felt a tinge of guilt in her heart for lying to Larry. Larry, on the other hand, seemed to

have seen through her lie.

“Really? Then why don’t you fill me in now?” Larry maintained a poker face when he asked.

Joan tilted her head slightly and replied with a wide smile, “Make a guess.”

Never had she acted this coy before; she would be utterly embarrassed if they were in public.

"It's alright. I don't want to know anyway." The sarcastic undertones in his words were apparent.

Oh, dear... I'm dead meat. No! I must stand up against him!

Alas! She couldn't bring herself to defy Larry as she tugged the latter's arm coyly.

"Okay. Please don't be angry. I'll tell you, okay? Do you want to know?" she said in a coquettish voice.

That was exactly the reaction that Larry was expecting from her. He could have guessed where she went, but what he wanted was for her to show her honesty. "Sure," he replied with a nasal voice.

Joan lifted her head to look at him with her sparkling eyes. "Well... You'd have to promise me not to get mad!"

"You went to find Dustin, right?"

She opened her mouth in shock. "Y-You knew?"

Larry flicked a finger at her forehead. "I guessed it. How could you do that behind my back?"

Joan sighed. "I only wanted to find out the truth. I believe that Dustin is a good person. He wouldn't do anything to harm others."

What I knew for sure was that he would not do anything to harm you.

Larry did not say it out to Joan as he wanted to protect her.

"I wish that you'd remain this innocent," Larry muttered and stared out blankly. "Huh? What did you say?" Joan was confused.

I hope for you to remember the good side of Dustin. It would be tiring for you to hate someone whom you used to trust.

Larry remained silent as he reached out to hug Joan and caressed her back. Joan returned

his hug by encircling her arms around his waist. The world is too complicated; Larry's embrace was her only sanctuary.

"At the moment, all activities and Alpire Group's acquisition are put on a halt. Other than

their recent acquisition of five of our companies, Alpire Group made no other movements.

This should give us sufficient time to prepare. Don't worry. We are heading in a positive direction." Joan felt his warm breath above her head as he spoke.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1743

"I only hope for the best," Joan told Larry.

Joan buried her head into Larry's embrace and listened to his strong heartbeat. "I'm willing to share your heavy burdens with you."

At Jory's office.

Dustin threw a stack of newspapers onto Jory's desk and asked agitatedly, "What is going on?"

Jory briefly scanned the headlines on the newspapers: Acquisition of Norton Corporation Put On Halt!

"What are you worrying about? I'm only slowing down but not aborting this plan. As for the stock prices..." Jory's gaze shifted from the phone screen to the newspapers and back.

"They're stable at the rock bottom. I don't think it's something that you should be alarmed by."

"What I wanted to ask was why did you put a halt onto the plan?"

"I-I..." Jory hesitated for a moment. He raised his brows at Dustin and explained, "Because I

want her to be happy. Seeing her in a miserable state breaks my heart."

Dustin was bewildered. He tilted his head and asked, "Her? Do you mean that girl who refused to marry you?"

Jory's heart skipped a beat as he had never mentioned anything about Nancy to Dustin, including the rejection he faced.

"How did you know?"

Dustin smirked. "You told me when you were sleep-talking."

What? He had indeed been dozing off in the office. However, was it possible that he let it slip during his nap?

"So I'm guessing that your secret plan is related to this."

Dustin was smart indeed, as he had connected the dots intuitively. However, Jory doubted that he had said her name out. Dustin pressed his lips into a smile and said, "Don't worry. You did not tell me exactly who it is. Though I did not know much, I was able to guess it." Jory placed his right elbow on the desk and rested his head on it while his fingers lightly tapped on the newspapers. "You know me the best." "Well, we've already known each other for more than a decade. The younger me would've never imagined that the kid who used to follow me around to play such a critical role in fulfilling my goals," Dustin said as he leaned against the chair across Jory, giving off an aura of a gentleman. The beat of Jory's tapping accelerated. "Well, everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. I'm just doing what I like. Unlike you, who is perfectly all rounded." Dustin sighed. "I'm not that great either. I have been the center of gossips since young. From then on, I have been drifting further away from my initial ambition of being a doctor." Jory leaned back on the chair leisurely and stretched his back lazily. "And it's all due to you falling for someone who doesn't feel the same." He felt a wave of sharp pain as he was stretching and whined. Dustin was puzzled, so he asked, "What happened? Are you okay?" "I'm fine. I got kicked a few days back," Jory said indifferently. "Wow. That person must have some guts to kick the man who holds a Taekwondo black belt. If you're injured, it only means that person is paralyzed," Dustin joked. Jory formed a fist with both hands and said, "Thank you for your compliment. However, that person also holds a black belt in Taekwondo. In fact, that person is stronger than me." "So you went to a competition? Did you manage to defeat him?" Dustin was more relaxed

and spoke in a more friendly tone.

Jory replied while adjusting his hairstyle, "I'm just joking. Who am I? Do I look like the type

to let him off without any injury?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1744

Jory saw Dustin's smirk and elaborated, "I was focused on defending, but I still won."

"Let me guess. You were not alone." Dustin's question threw Jory off guard.

"W-What?" Jory's face flushed.

Dustin rolled the newspapers into a stick and fumbled with it. "You're not the type to waste

time on meaningless stuff, so..."

Dustin's voice trailed off. It was clear what he was getting at—it was as if he could see

through Jory.

Dustin ignored Jory's look of surprise and continued, "Furthermore, your actions earlier on—

your trembling voice, pale lips, and flushed face—it must've been someone special."

"You're an impeccable doctor—very observant," Jory praised.

Dustin tossed the newspaper into the bin and stood up abruptly. "Alright.

I shall not probe

you further. Bye."

Jory knew that Dustin did not like to pressure others into answering his questions and

appreciated his understanding. Both of them practically grew up together and attended the

same college. They had a strong bond despite Dustin being older than Jory by three years.

He would give his utmost support for anything that Dustin wanted to do.

His phone screen lit up before he tapped on it—it was a text from Nancy:

Take a look at the

updated name list through this link!

Jory's lips curled into a bright smile as he pictured Nancy's excitement from the text. If it

were in the past, he would be elated at the news because of Taekwondo, but he was actually

delighted because of her.

It would be lovely for the time to stop at that moment where everyone still had positive relationships with each other.

Caspian had been staying at the office for several days, and he was worn out. When he returned home, he found Nancy, who was recovering from her leg injury.

“Nancy, what happened to your leg?” he asked as he closed the door and hurried towards her.

Nancy was seated comfortably on the couch while scrolling on her phone and chewing gum casually. Her injured leg was wrapped in a bandage and leveled on a wooden stool.

She paused her movements as she saw Caspian approach her.

“No big deal. I was injured while practicing Taekwondo,” she replied. However, Caspian’s face darkened. Since they were married, Caspian has been expressing his disapproval for her to continue practicing Taekwondo. He believed that he was capable of protecting her.

Caspian was a traditional guy—he believed that men should protect their country and their loved ones. Nancy’s achievement in Taekwondo was something for leisure, as he expected for her to morph into the role of a loving wife after marriage. He was not pleased that Nancy continued with Taekwondo, and this injury definitely deepened his displeasure towards it.

“Nancy, could you please stop practicing Taekwondo? You’ve already achieved the highest ranking for it, so it’s about time you...”

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1745

So what if I have a black belt already? There’s something called lifelong learning. It’s the same for Taekwondo—to constantly compete with people who are stronger than us—the competitive spirit of sports. How could I give up after one failure.” He did not have a high educational background, nor was he good with words. Hence, Nancy

would often gain an upper advantage when it came to defending her own decisions.

However, at that point, both of them were brooding on the topic of Taekwondo—Nancy insisted that she wanted to continue, while Caspian insisted for her to quit.

Caspian was fuming with rage as he sensed that Nancy would drift away from him if she continued to practice Taekwondo.

“I want you to stop.” This time around, his tone was sterner.

“You want me to give up?” Nancy clarified as she did not expect Caspian to be so persistent.

Caspian avoided her gaze and moved forward to check out her injury.

However, Nancy

moved her leg off the stool to avoid his hands. He froze in position as he was taken aback.

“Does it mean that I’d have to stop doing whatever you’re unhappy with in the future?”

Nancy questioned.

“You know that’s not what I meant,” Caspian explained frantically.

“Then what do you mean?” Nancy asked in a gentler tone as she noticed his apologetic expression.

“I think that as a wife, you should place your family first. Look at this.

You’ve injured your leg

because of Taekwondo. It’s causing unnecessary issues. If you had quit the sport earlier, you

wouldn’t have injured yourself.”

That was the day that Caspian spoke the most fluently in his entire life—even he himself felt

convinced by his words. However, it seemed to fuel Nancy’s rage.

“Unnecessary? What are you saying? I don’t understand a single word.”

Nancy was trying

hard not to burst out in anger.

Nancy stood up. Caspian was worried about her injury and wanted to hold her, so he

reached out his arms in an attempt to help her.

However, Nancy shrugged his hands off and exclaimed, “Do you mean that taking care of

me is a burden to you?”

“Why are you thinking this way? You know that’s not what I meant!”

Caspian exclaimed.

“I’m sorry. I guess I’m not smart enough to understand your words,” she said sarcastically.

She adjusted her slippers and explained, “All I feel was your lack of understanding towards my hobby and your disdain towards me. Don’t worry. I won’t bother you with my injury. You should use the time to help Larry instead.”

She headed to the room without turning back.

Caspian could not comprehend the situation and felt that there was an invisible wall

between Nancy and him.

He sat on the seat that Nancy was on and felt her warmth—it was as if it could shorten the distance between them.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1746

Nancy leaned her back against the room door, shut her eyes, and bit her lips as she realized

that her words were hurtful. She knew that he meant no harm and was concerned about

her.

It felt like there was a shift in the relationship.

Both of them mulled over their worries in separate rooms for the whole night—perfectly

depicting the situation of their relationship. It was a night filled with troubles, and both of

them could only look out at the stars through the window.

“Nancy! Nancy!”

That was the fourth time Joan called out to Nancy, so she waved in front of Nancy’s face.

“Huh? Joan, what did you say?” Nancy asked as she regained her senses.

Joan stirred her coffee and chuckled. “I didn’t say much. On the other hand, you seemed to

be troubled. Did you rest well?”

Nancy shook her head while smiling. “I’m fine. I didn’t sleep well last night.”

“Oh no. A good night’s sleep is so important. Are you really okay?” Joan exclaimed while she

opened a packet of sugar for Nancy.



Nancy took over the packet of sugar and poured it into her cup. "Thank you, Joan. I'm fine, really."

Joan poked her mischievously and probed, "Hey, no need to keep a secret from me, okay?"

Nancy slowly took a sip of her coffee and asked, "Joan, if you were to injure yourself, who would be the first to help you up?"

"Larry, of course," Joan replied instantly.

Nancy's hand quivered slightly, which caused the teaspoon to knock against the wall of the cup and produced a light clinking sound.

"What if you fell, but you quarreled with Larry? Would you feel repulsed if he were to help

you?" Nancy's eyes widened in anticipation of Joan's reply.

Joan looked into a distance and bit her lips. "Of course not! If he were to help me up, I

would feel that he was trying to make up for the quarrel. It's not usual to catch Larry

yielding into others."

Nancy's mind was in a complete mess as she did not feel the way that Joan had described.

Instead, she felt disgusted and belligerent.

Joan sensed that something was off with Nancy and asked cautiously, "What happened?

Why are you suddenly asking such questions? Did you quarrel with Caspian?"

Joan guessed as she found it unusual that Nancy was spacing out and asking such questions.

Even though Nancy denied it, it seemed like she was actually admitting to it. Joan did not

react to the denial and advised, "There are bound to be conflicts in every relationship. It

would be boring if a relationship were to be conflict-free. The most important part is for the

both of you to be able to reach a compromise."

"Should we be compatible to be together?" Nancy questioned.

Joan smiled and nodded in agreement. "If you were incompatible, how did the both of you

end up together? What I meant was to compromise on the differences on the basis that

both of you are generally compatible.”

Nancy smiled sheepishly at Joan’s advice, as she already knew. She decided to stop asking

such questions and continued sipping her coffee to hide her anxiety.

“I asked for both of you to wait for me, but y’all already finished your coffee?” Larry

exclaimed as he held a pretty plate with a toasted sandwich.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1747

Larry placed the sandwiches in front of Nancy and asked, “I thought I asked you to bring

Caspian along for breakfast. What happened? Is he still asleep?”

“He is not in a good mood recently and is resting at home,” Nancy lied.

The truth was that

she intentionally kept it from Caspian when Joan texted her. Regardless, she felt guilty for

lying about it.

“Hmm... Indeed. The company must’ve been busy recently. Let him rest then. I hope he can

consider returning to help me out when he’s available. Furthermore, the situation at my

company has stabilized.”

Nancy’s eyes widened. “Really? There are improvements? That’s great news! Congrats, Larry.

All your efforts were worthwhile. Let’s get together again when this ends.

My treat. I need to

make a move now to prepare for my plans later.”

She spoke speedily while Larry and Joan exchanged glances. Joan

wanted to speak but was

stopped by Larry.

Nancy gave them a bright smile and left in a hurry. As Joan watched Nancy leave, she asked

Larry, “Why did you stop me from asking her to stay?”

Larry narrowed his eyes and exclaimed, “I thought you said that a woman knows another

woman the best. It’s already so obvious. Do you really need me to tell it straight to you?”

Joan hesitated for quite some time and finally said, “A-Actually... I am not certain and don’t

wish to think that way.”

“She avoided all questions relating to Caspian, averted her gaze, and stuttered.” Larry summarized.

“It seems like there’s really a problem!” Larry and Joan exclaimed in unison, pursed their lips, and nodded at the same time.

Nancy drove her Bentley back through the same route and was stuck in a traffic jam, causing her to be irritated.

A sudden thought crossed her mind, so she turned her steering wheel and drove towards a less crowded alley.

Unexpectedly, that path was smooth with few pedestrians. It saved her a lot of time.

It was morning in Marsingill when everyone was rushing like ants trying to move their

house when it rained—in a calm and orderly fashion.

After passing a small street, she managed to drive smoothly through the alley.

He would come. He would not come. He... Ugh! Whether he appears or not, it’s none of my business!

Nancy growled in her heart. A black dot appeared in her vision. As she got closer, she

figured that it was a car. That moment, her head exploded.

She felt so frustrated that someone drove in the opposite direction and stopped their car in

the middle of the road. However, she knew who that annoying person was.

It was Jory.

It was the exact Volkswagen that she had made fun of. He was in the backseat of the car

waving to her.

She knew she should not head in that direction, but she could not stop her heart from

favoring him.

Jory was like a band aid—he sealed her wounds and healed her troubles, protecting her

happiness. It was like the sky instantly cleared up after a storm with a rainbow across the sky whenever she sees him.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1748

She had never had these feelings from Caspian. If what Caspian could offer to her was a peaceful and stable life, what Jory could offer was the happiness every girl dreamed of.

She braked slowly. While her car rolled to a gradual stop, Jory also opened the car door and alighted. Nancy also switched off the car engine and pushed the car door open with trembling hands.

When she saw him, she did not say anything. She was still immersed in her light-heartedness and joyful mood. With his hands crossed behind his back, Jory strode toward her. "Miss, why are you just smiling? Shouldn't you ask me something?" "Huh? Am I smiling?" Nancy suddenly returned to her senses. "Yeah." Jory nodded. "A particular person kept smiling the moment she sees me. Her eyes are crinkling into crescents and there's a huge grin plastered on her face."

"Nonsense!" rebuked Nancy directly.

However, Jory was even more direct with his response. Smiling warmly, he replied, "You look so beautiful when you smile."

Only then did she raise her eyebrows in satisfaction. "That's more like it... Oh, right! Why did you stop your car here? You're blocking the road, making it inconvenient for people to pass through."

Jory yawned. "There's only you here."

As if she had discovered a loophole, she raised her voice and exclaimed, "So you're deliberately blocking me, huh? Don't you know that it's rude to be in someone's way? Get your annoying car out of my way!"

Feigning a wronged expression, he patted his car. "I'm innocent! Anyway, this isn't just an average, annoying car. It's a Volkswagen!"

Nancy scanned his car before turning her gaze back to her watch. A look of revelation dawned on her face. "Oh, I understand now. You must've been hit by bad karma and your car broke down. That's why you're forced to stop here, right?"

"Nonsense!" Jory rebuked, "Your car's more likely to break down than mine. Even if you're right, have you forgotten who repaired your car the previous time?"

Nancy stared at him for a while. Sporting a normal hairstyle and with a black baseball cap, he did not look like the rich kid she had remembered him to be. In fact, he seemed drastically different from her impression of him.

Jory scrutinized her. "Why are you staring at me? Is there something on my face?"

Nancy shook her head and asked him seriously, "I've always wanted to ask you a question, but..."

Looking at how hesitant she was, Jory waved his hands dismissively and said, "Just speak your mind!"

"You must be very different in the past, right?" It was a question, but Nancy said it so affirmatively as if it was a statement. Back then, she had communicated with him briefly through emails. She knew his history and character extremely well. Instead of answering her directly, he beat about the bush. "Hmm... Don't you know? I think that you'd know better than I would."

However, Nancy sighed. "Well, as the saying goes, seeing is believing. Now that I've seen you, you're completely different from how others describe you!"

When their gazes met, sparks flew for a moment. Nancy continued, "You might not believe it, but even I'm confused now. I don't know which version to believe anymore..."

"Well, you chose to believe someone else back then." Jory choked up. Nancy hit him suddenly. "Hey, you aren't still hung up over how I rejected your marriage proposal, right?"

Jory's greatest merit was that he always spoke his mind. Without any hesitation, he admitted honestly, "Of course I'll remember something as significant as that forever."

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1749

An exasperated look spread across Nancy's face. "You're so petty." Jory laughed. "What are you saying? I don't hate you now..." Perhaps, I hated you before I

formally got to know you, but I don't hate you now...

Gazing at Nancy's exasperated look, he continued, "Conversely, I'm extremely grateful for your rejection back then. If you didn't reject me, I might still be nothing but a spoilt playboy now."

"If I didn't reject the marriage..." repeated Nancy under her breath, "We'll be..." Realizing

that something seemed wrong mid-sentence, she quickly fell silent.

Jory had an urge to tease her. Smiling flippantly, he probed, "What will we be?"

Nancy shoved his shoulders and hurried back to her car, while Jory remained standing

outside. Looking at her furious look, he felt intrigued.

"My office is nearby. Would you like to drop by?"

When Nancy started the car engine, Jory raised his volume. "I even have some great

beverages to offer you! It'll be a pity for you to miss them."

Nancy burst out laughing when she heard that. "I don't know where your office is. Why

don't you lead the way?"

Just like that, the two cars drove out of the narrow road.

Meanwhile, at Norton Corporation, Caspian was busy with a huge pile of documents.

"Come in!" he yelled, not even raising his head or bothering to find out who was knocking

on the door. He continued immersing himself in his work.

Larry deliberately walked in quietly. However, as they were such close friends, Caspian knew

who he was without even raising his head. He asked, "Boss, are you so free that you have

the time to visit me?"

However, Larry replied, "I should be asking you that question."  
Seeing Caspian raise his head away from the pile of documents in a puzzled manner, he continued, "Didn't I tell Nancy to stop you from coming? You're extremely busy recently, so you need to take a good break."  
When he saw a solemn look creep into Caspian's eyes, he inferred, "She didn't tell you, right?"  
Even at such a moment, Caspian still did not want others to worry about him. He quickly defended Nancy, "No, she told me already, but I insisted on coming. We want to help you as much as we can..."  
Larry scoffed, "Nonsense. After all our years of friendship, I know you very well. Just tell me honestly, why did you argue with her? Is there a problem so significant that both of you can't resolve it as a married couple?"  
"Actually, it's nothing... We just feel tired of being with each other all of a sudden. Both of us are no longer as carefree as before." Caspian's tone sounded sad, but he was trying his best to control his emotions and preventing himself from erupting into an outburst in front of Larry.  
Larry did not know how to console him. Although he knew that it was normal for couples to have conflicts. Even when Joan and Dustin were being ambiguous, he did not feel like giving up on the relationship. But instead, he was jealous and furious. Caspian and Nancy were obviously facing a different situation. After thinking about it, he asked cautiously, "I've experienced something similar before too. When I was in such a despondent state then, you and Nancy pulled me out of the slump. Why aren't the both of you able to overcome this obstacle?"  
Both of them fell into silence. Larry started tidying the documents that were messily strewn

across the desk. Suddenly, something Caspian said shocked him so much that he almost dropped the documents.

“Boss, what does having a divorce mean?”

Surprised, Larry chided, “Are you out of your mind? Why are you having such a crazy thought?”

When Caspian saw how furious he was, he quickly explained, “Boss, I just want to know. I’ve never thought about something like that before...”

“It’s best that such thoughts will never cross your mind. If you dare to contemplate about them, I’ll definitely break your leg!” Larry knew that Caspian treated him as his brother since his father had been long gone. Hence, he believed that Caspian would definitely treat his words with importance.

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However, he still explained, “A divorce represents the end of a relationship. It’s also the starting point for both parties to begin their new paths in life. After a divorce, both will have nothing to do with each other—they’re even.”

Caspian felt a chill run down his spine when he heard that. Even when he was on the battlefield, he had not experienced such fear before. Describing his current emotions as being terrified or scared was an understatement of how he was actually feeling.

“No matter how many misunderstandings I have with Joan; no matter how angry we are with each other, we’ve never thought of divorce. It’s a very serious term. None of us can handle its consequences...”

Caspian waved his hands. “I only wanted to ask about it. I’ve never thought about it before, so what are you talking about? It’s only a minor conflict. I’m sure that everything will be fine after we talk it out. “



Larry wanted to say something, but his phone's ringing interrupted his words. When he picked up the call, the other party hung up immediately. He glanced at the number before turning around and said to Caspian, who was still immersed in his work, "I hope that you'll remember what you said today. As long as there's a solution, you mustn't resort to the worst option."

"I know," replied Caspian heavily, his voice laden with listlessness. Larry placed a hand on Caspian's shoulder. "I know that it's tiring, but as a man, you should shoulder the responsibility. Whenever appropriate, you should give in toward the person you love."

When Caspian heard it, he nodded. Larry smiled at him and continued, "I've got something else to attend to, so I'll take my leave now. You can just leave early for the day. You need to rest well, okay?"

"I'll leave after a while. Don't worry." Caspian tidied the documents and placed them at the edge of the desk neatly.

After Larry left, Caspian stopped tidying the documents. He raised his head and gazed at the two figures in the photograph. Although it looked the same, he felt distanced. Everything seemed so unreal.

Suddenly, he felt a wave of disappointment rise within him, and his heart started to ache. He had an abrupt premonition that the peace right now was just superficial, just like the hidden dangers that lurked underneath the calm surface of the ocean.

However, he shook his head violently. Caspian, what nonsense are you thinking about? That's weird. Don't women tend to overthink more? Why is a man like me being so melodramatic? It's just a minor argument! Naturally, I have to be forgiving toward my wife. I should just give in to Nancy and resolve the conflict.

He scrolled through his contacts and looked for a friend's number. The person picked up the call soon.

"Help me order a bouquet of tulips, thank you."

Gabriella stood outside Jory's office, wearing a red, body-hugging dress.

Peering through the window, she saw that there was no one inside. As the door was not locked, she pushed it open and entered without hesitation.

Jory's office was clean and neat. To put it more specifically, there were no important

documents inside at all. Instead of an office, it looked more like a study.

She grabbed a thick book placed on the shelf. There was not a single speck of dust on the

cover. Could it be that this dude takes some time off to read every day?

He keeps

concealing his identity from me and acting all mysteriously. When he speaks, he sounds like

an ignorant hooligan. Why is he reading books and pretending that he's a cultured man?

Gabriella had to admit that she was even more curious about this mysterious man now.

She roamed around Jory's office but did not find any reports or information on Norton

Corporation. There was no news about the market's current situation either.

She did not know what Jory instructed her to install on Joan's phone.

Although she would

come over to "harass" Jory every now and then, he was completely not interested in her at

all.

Daily More new Chapters IN

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1751

The computer on the desk attracted Gabriella's gaze. She had tried to unlock his computer

before, but as expected, his password was too secure to be hacked.

Gabriella used to be the heiress of a rich family. If she ever wanted something, others would

bestow it to her right away. Not even a two-factor authentication system could faze her. If

she wanted to hack it, there would definitely be a group of highly skilled hackers rushing to unlock it for her.

Yet, times had changed. The more she thought about it, the angrier she became. She

slammed her right fist on Jory's desk so forcefully that the computer trembled as well.

Gabriella walked toward the water dispenser, poured herself a cup of warm water, and sat

on the couch leisurely, waiting for Jory to return. Since he did not lock the door, it meant

that he would certainly return.

—An office building?|| Nancy looked at Jory, puzzled. —Didn't you say that you're bringing me

to your office? Why are we at a random building?||

Jory pressed a button on the lift. —Yeah, my office's here.||

—I thought that your office would be at Alpire Group...|| Nancy teased, —I'd assume that the

son of Alpire Group's chairman would at least be the general manager.||

Jory placed his arms on his waist. —You're overthinking it. Do you think that the old man

would willingly pass the position to me after I fell out with him? My family practices a merit-based system, not a hereditary one.||

Deep in thought, Nancy nodded. —Yeah, that sounds about right. The position of chairman

or general manager must be reserved for talented and capable people.||

Jory nodded subconsciously but soon discovered the implicit message hidden in her words.

He even foolishly agreed to what she said. Pinching her cheek gently, he said, —Are you

saying that I'm neither talented nor capable?||

As he was pinching her cheek, Nancy said playfully, —That's what you said. I didn't say

anything...||

The sensation of Nancy's face against his hand felt good. He snorted coldly, —Forget it. I'm in

a good mood today, so I won't make a fuss about it.||

Nancy clutched her face. —Why isn't your relationship with your family good?||

—Our relationship isn't good?|| Jory raised his eyebrows. —What makes you think so?||

—Isn't it so obvious? It's almost as if it's written all over your face?|| As Nancy spoke, she pointed at her own face.

The lift stopped on the thirteenth floor and they walked out. Jory rolled his eyes. —I'm relying

on my own capabilities to support myself. I'm not like other rich heirs who can only inherit

their father's business and leech off them!||

He was indirectly hinting at Larry. After he gathered information about Larry, he

subconsciously labeled him as such a person. To be honest, he could not figure out why

Joan would rather be with a leech like him than an educated and intelligent man like Dustin.

Thinking that he was mocking her, Nancy asked, —Are you saying that I'm not capable of

anything and am only relying on my father to enjoy the rest of my life?||

Jory did not expect her to think that way. —Huh? That's not what I meant. Even if you didn't

rely on your family, you can still earn a living by working as a Taekwondo coach.||

Nancy did not expect him to react so quickly. She was deliberately putting him in a tight

spot, but he could react so swiftly. His words were very tactful too. If Caspian were in his

shoes, he would definitely stutter, —T-That's not what I mean. Don't misunderstand!||

What's going on? Why am I comparing these two men who have nothing to do with each

other? Am I subconsciously pitting Caspian and Jory against each other?

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Deep in thought, Nancy continued to follow behind Jory. Suddenly, he stopped without any

warning, causing her to run into his back, almost falling.

—Why did you stop? Have we reached?||

From behind, Jory's body appeared to be very stiff. Even without seeing his face, one could feel the change in the surrounding aura. The lightness and joy that were just present had transformed into a tense atmosphere.

—Because my mood just worsened.||

Jory only quietly replied to her with one line. However, Nancy did not understand what he was talking about. Just moments ago, he was still joking around with her in the elevator. He had also said that he was in a good mood, so why was there suddenly such a change?

Nancy then noticed that he kept blocking her view. Is there something in front? She stepped aside, subconsciously looking at Jory's expression. He looked calm, but there was an additional layer of hatred in his gaze, and the frown on his forehead was deeper than usual.

Following his gaze, her eyes landed on an enchanting, beautiful woman sitting on the sofa.

She raised the glass in her hand as she gave both of them a smile. With her legs crossed, her red platform heels really emphasized her fairness and charm.

Her long, wavy hair also fell in front of her chest. At first glance, she seemed to have an exotic kind of beauty.

—Jory... T-This is...|| Stunned, Nancy could only speak slowly.

The woman in front of her seemed to have some special magnetic force. Anyone would be lured to her, like a moth to a flame.

Suddenly, there was pressure on her wrist as Jory held her back just in time. Dazed, Nancy looked back. However, Jory was still looking at the woman, his gaze full of vigilance and precaution.

The pressure on her wrist tightened as Jory pulled her back to stand behind him. Clearly, he did not want her to see that woman.

—I've been waiting for you for a long time,|| said the woman. Instead of standing up, she

simply turned her head to look at them. It looked as if she were the owner of the place and had control over everything.

Controlling his emotions, Jory lowered his voice and asked, —What are you doing here? Who let you in?||

—Your door wasn't locked, so I thought I'd come in to wait for you. I was wondering why your attitude toward me today was different from usual. Looks like it's because you brought a little girl back here.|| Although there was a trace of happiness behind Gabriella's gaze, a mix of other malicious emotions was present too.

Nancy remained rooted in shock. What does she mean by his attitude was different from usual? How does he usually act? Does Jory always change his attitude toward others according to different circumstances?

—Get out. Before I kick you out myself, leave.||

—Oh? Why does this little lady look so familiar?|| Ignoring his words, Gabriella stood up and walked straight toward Nancy.

Jory raised the hand that was grabbing onto Nancy's wrist, shielding her protectively behind him.

Gabriella pretended to blame him as she said, —Why's she so important that you need to protect her this way? Why didn't you tell me that you have someone so important to you...||

She then shifted her gaze to Nancy and stared at her for a long time.

Gabriella asked, —You look kind of familiar. Do you remember me?||

Both Nancy and Jory were surprised by her words. Subsequently, Nancy emerged from behind Jory and stood confidently in front of Gabriella. It took her a long time to recall whatever information she knew about this person.

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—It's you? Gabriella... Gabriella Ward?||

Jory glanced over at Nancy with a slightly surprised look. How did she know her? However, he soon composed himself, making it seem as though nothing had happened.

—Nancy Barrymore... If I'm not wrong, that's your name. You're the daughter of Barrymore Group's chairman.|| Gabriella then stretched out a hand toward Nancy, wanting to give her a handshake.

Before Nancy could even reach her hand out, Jory had slapped away Gabriella's outstretched one. If one were close enough, they would be able to see the red marks left behind on Gabriella's pale hand.

Instantly, both parties' eyes had a fiery look to them. From Jory's aura, one could clearly tell that he disliked Gabriella a lot.

—Is this how you greet your collaborating partner?|| Gabriella asked as she kept on a smile.

Compared to the Gabriella of the past, she was now a little calmer. If the same situation had happened before, she would have been tearing her hair out by then.

—Shut up!|| shouted Jory. Never would anyone have expected that Jory would be the one that was stressed out instead. Looks like he doesn't want Nancy to find out that he'd cooperated with me before.

Gabriella looked the man up and down. Besides not revealing his name, he had also

suggested a collaboration but refused to tell her about its purpose and details. While he knew everything about her, she knew nothing about him.

However, at that moment, she was no longer totally ignorant. At least she knew then that the mysterious S cared about Nancy very much.

Once a person had something he cared about, he was no longer invulnerable. This was no

different for S, who had kept himself hidden. Nancy is his weakness! You're too good at hiding secrets. It makes others want to do whatever they can to unearth

them.

Nancy quickly realized that the two people staring at each other had some unspeakable secret. But didn't Landon chase Gabriella out of the house? Even if Ward Group and Alpire Group were going to have a collaboration soon, Ward Group would never send Gabriella over to talk to Jory about it. What exactly is going on? Wait, no. She just said, —your collaborating partner.|| Was it really some secret collaboration? Nancy had only previously heard of some rumors about Larry and Gabriella. However, she had always considered him to be a role model amongst men. As a result, she did not believe the rumors.

Yet, at that moment, she trusted Jory even more. No matter what secret he had, when faced with Gabriella right then, she had to trust him.

Consequently, Nancy, who had been silent the whole time, suddenly interrupted the confrontation. One moment, Gabriella was thinking about how a brat like Nancy would react. The next moment, she wanted to catch the ignorant brat and push her to her death.

—Have you not been able to go home recently, Ms. Ward? Or rather, has Mr. Ward come to pick you?||

Although her voice sounded sweet, it carried a dangerous undertone. If one was not careful, they might fall into her trap without realizing it.

That brat actually dared to rub salt into my wounds? Does she have something against me?

Or is she purposely siding with Jory to piss me off? Gabriella was not a fool. She was able to tell that Jory did not want to see her. However, Nancy seemed to be linked to Norton

Corporation, making her feel very curious.

—No. I'm tired of the rich lifestyle. I want to live a life of self-reliance now,|| replied Gabriella, trying her best to glamorize her hard life.



Sensing the familiarity in Gabriella's words, Jory froze. Isn't this what I've just said earlier in the elevator? Coming to think of it, she and I are really no different... He had a wealthy family and business but did not want to inherit it. Instead, he wanted to live an ordinary person's life while making it clear that he was self-reliant.

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However, the only difference was that even though he was —wandering|| around outside, Jory still received money from his father every month, although he had never used it before. In

comparison, Gabriella had really been kicked out of her house and had nowhere else to go.

Jory was very touched when Nancy took his side and stood up for him, for she had not

questioned him alongside Gabriella. Instead, she was showing her unconditional trust in him

by speaking up for him.

—So... after you've bothered Larry about every little thing, did you change targets?||

Jory only knew that Gabriella had been kicked out of the house by Landon because of an

unspeakable matter and had no interest in knowing what the problem actually was. Thus, he

had not bothered about her past before he asked her for help.

Yet, as soon as Nancy said those words, both Jory and Gabriella's faces hardened. They had

probably wanted to ask why Nancy knew about that. At that moment, Gabriella was raging

with fury. She had originally only wanted to knock Nancy off her high horse because she

seemed to know nothing. She had not expected that brat to attack her.

As it happened, it was a mere casual remark from Nancy as she only heard a little about the

rumors. Nevertheless, she had never believed anything that was not based on fact.

Previously, there had been a few times when she asked Joan about it, but the latter always

seemed to avoid answering the question. As Nancy was an outsider, it was appropriate for her to continue probing further. Never would she have thought that there would come a day where those rumors would come in handy. Moreover, judging by Gabriella's expression, it seemed to be true.

At that moment, her focus was no longer about refuting Gabriella. If that rumor was true, exactly what kind of person was its male lead, Larry?

However, Gabriella was also not one to mess with. She hailed from the Ward family after all. Even if she was at a low point in her life and no one would help her because she had no money, at least she still had her social relations. Hence, she would have heard some news about the Barrymore Group too. Previously, when she was expelled from the Ward family, she happened to hear that the daughter of Barrymore Group and a good friend of Norton Corporation's president got married.

That person should've been Nancy, so she should already be married. So why's she standing next to Jory right now? If I didn't come today, only the two of them would be in this room.

Bearing that thought in mind, a calm and unscrupulous smile spread across Gabriella's face.

—There are some benefits to being wicked after all. At least, no matter what I've done before, I've already gotten my punishment, so I don't feel as guilty. Unlike some people who pretend to be polite and spotless on the surface but are actually unfaithful and have poor morals!||

Never would Gabriella have thought that there would be a day where she would get so agitated that she spoke that harshly. Even though she had not said a single curse word, she had made the two hypocritical people in front of her become so angry that they were

speechless.

—You!|| Jory clenched his fist so tightly that his veins were popping out. His knuckles were white, and it was as if a strong force was prompting him to raise his arm for a strike.

Nancy then grabbed him on the wrist. Although Gabriella was mocking her, she was so much calmer than Jory was. However, Nancy's palm on his skin was still cold to the touch, revealing that she was actually very nervous and was angrier than he was.

The two most difficult things to practice in the world were patience and understanding. At

that very moment, Nancy was having an internal conflict in managing those two. Gabriella's words were indeed describing whatever Nancy was doing then.

Therefore, while Nancy wanted to rebut her, there was nothing she could refute.

—Why aren't you talking? Did I hit the nail on the head and make you feel uncomfortable?||

asked Gabriella, taking the opportunity to provoke her even further when Nancy kept silent.

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Nancy swallowed. Suppressing the tremors in her heart, she said, —I didn't do anything wrong. I'm not in an affair. Jory and I are just old friends. We're not as despicable and dirty as you think!||

—She's right. It's you who keeps coming to my office and disrupting my work. Do you want

me to call the police?|| Jory said with a stern expression. He was livid, causing others to shudder.

Gabriella was so furious that she could not speak, her anger hovering like a dark cloud over her head.

She then smiled at Nancy disdainfully, masking her malice.

—I really envy you. No matter where you are, some guy will always have your back.|| When

she was done speaking, Gabriella turned to pick up the handbag on the sofa. As she headed toward the exit, she slammed into Nancy's shoulder, forcing her a few steps back.

Gabriella's strong perfume suffocated Nancy, invading her senses from all directions as if it were deadly poison.

Although Gabriella had left, her words remained deep in Nancy's heart. Gabriella was not

wrong. She was a greedy, shameless, and unfaithful woman.

For a long time, Nancy stood still with her hand on Jory's wrist. He then reached out with his

other hand and held hers. Only when his warm palm touched her hand did she snap out of

it, freeing her own hand and slowly moving away from Jory.

—My rebuttal just now... was it powerless? Did I sound unconfident?||

she whispered, her voice faint.

However, Jory did not know how to respond to her. Gabriella's words had made him

understand something. From the beginning, he had ignored Caspian's existence and that

the very person he was pursuing was not even single.

As his hands felt weak, he eventually slipped them into his pockets.

Throughout his life thus

far, Jory had never felt so powerless until then. In the past, he had everything he wanted.

Then, when he gave it all up to pursue whatever he wanted to, he still had it all. However, at

that moment, he had to admit that he was small and powerless.

He was powerless to change anything. There was no way to change it.

—I... am sorry...|| Those were the only words that came out of his mouth after a very long

time. It was as if he had deliberated for ages before deciding to say it, but simultaneously

also seemed to be something he said without thinking.

Nancy smiled, though it was one of unease and bitterness. —Sorry?

What for?||

Then, both parties fell into silence. As Nancy gazed at Jory, she felt a familiar sense of

distance from him. Although he was right in front of her, she felt as though they were very far apart—so far that she would never be able to touch him. —Actually... I really like being with you...||

As soon as Jory heard those words, he felt more secure. It was such an unrealistic feeling that he wondered if he had fallen into a third dimension. He was so happy that he simply stared at Nancy, admiring the smile on her face. Her smiling eyes reminded him of pink cherry blossoms. At that moment, her smile was the only thing that mattered.

Nancy's dress fluttered beautifully as she walked past him. Jory did not know where he got the confidence and courage from, but the moment she was about to pass by him, he reached for her wrist again. He held her tightly as though she was going to disappear the next moment and he would never see her again. It was as if he were drowning and holding on to his last chance at survival.

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Nancy had originally planned to leave, as Gabriella's words had made her understand her own situation. She couldn't be as self-indulgent as Jory was. Besides, she was married then.

That was the reason why Gabriella had dared to say those bold words. Back then, the failed engagement and her failure to meet and understand Jory were probably due to fate.

Thus, although Nancy wanted to leave his office in a carefree manner, she realized just then that how difficult it was to pretend to be nonchalant. Yet, why had she felt joy the moment he stopped her from leaving? Why did she have a sudden urge to give up everything for him?

Just then, Jory's voice rang out, carrying a more solemn and calm tone than usual. Although it was a far cry from his typical image, it was still pleasant to hear.

—I also really like it...||

Nancy's smile widened. Even if he had not said anything, she knew it. Their mutual affection and feelings that they had found their confidant had caused both parties to fall for each other.

Jory studied her face, his gaze falling on her flowing hair, then on her long eyelashes.

Watching him, Nancy saw something in his expression that she had never seen before. She saw gentleness.

—You...|| Jory held her hand and gave her a warm smile. —I wasn't finished with my sentence.

There, you have to connect them for it to be a complete sentence. It's what I truly want to tell you.||

Tears soon welled up in her eyes, causing her vision to become blurry.

All Nancy could feel then was his warmth.

Jory still understood her even if she had not spoken and could perfectly express what she wanted to say. Considering that they had such deep understanding, it had to be fate.

Jory then held her hand and turned her body to face him. When he saw the tears on her face, he was dumbfounded and pulled her into a hug. Since she was confused at the moment, he wanted to give her a reliable source of support.

That hug probably counted as the first real hug he gave her. Nancy's entire body was wrapped in his, and she could only feel the warmth radiating from his chest.

Jory stroked her smooth hair and said, —Why are you crying? You're such a crybaby.||

Nancy had been contemplating whether or not to raise her hand and hug him back.

However, upon hearing those words, she immediately hit him on the back a few times. Since she had just cried, her voice reflected it clearly when she spoke.

—Y-You'll be the death of me...||

Jory did not move, allowing her to let out her anger. —If you die, I'll join you. There's no

reason for me to continue living in a world without you.||

He tightened his arm around her as she buried her face in his shoulder.

—Some things have only just begun, but it's about time some others ended,|| she said in a

dull voice, closing her eyes tightly as she tried to force out the image of Caspian's face in

her mind. Nancy was about to make a selfish decision that would be the root of his pain.

The more guilty she felt, the more she told herself that perhaps

everything had been wrong

since the very beginning. At that moment, she was resolved to try her

best to remedy that

mistake.

In Nancy's lifetime, she had met two men. The first was Caspian, and the other was Jory,

who had become a changed man. The moment they appeared, they had easily changed her

life.

Nancy stood outside the door, reaching for the keys in her bag. As there had been a fight,

she reminded herself repeatedly to bring the keys when she left home.

This was so that he

would not trouble Caspian to unlock the door. However, the hand which was reaching for

her keys suddenly paused. She pondered for a moment, then knocked on the door. It'll

probably be less awkward if it starts off this way.

Knock knock knock.

Three knocks later, still no one came to the door. Annoyed, she could only be thankful that

she had brought her keys out. Otherwise, she would have to continue waiting outside.

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She gingerly turned the key in the lock, and after a few audible clicks, the door opened. Her

heart was still pounding in her heart, and she could hear the sound reverberate through her

entire body.

As she was removing her shoes, she suddenly felt the presence of a suspicious dark shadow inching toward her. When it finally got near her, a bouquet of golden tulips was suddenly thrust in her face.

Nancy screamed in terror.

—Surprise!||

How is that a surprise? Is this guy trying to scare me to death? Despite being well-versed in

Taekwondo, Nancy had been feeling so guilty and terrified that she couldn't even react

when Caspian jumped out to surprise her.

Caspian was still grinning like a Cheshire cat as he shoved the bouquet into her hands.

—What's the matter? Did I scare you? I only wanted to give you a surprise. I didn't think I'd...

—

—It's ok. I understand,|| she replied. The more subservient he was toward her, the more her

heart weighed with guilt and anxiety. The beautiful tulips were such a stark contrast to her

mood—their bright, golden color being even more dazzling than the sun.

Nancy smiled faintly and hugged Caspian. A hug could never make up for what she owed

him, but that would have to do for then. Even though Caspian was taken aback by this

unexpected behavior, he secretly praised himself for having made the right decision to buy

Nancy flowers. After all, women were emotional creatures who needed to be coaxed and

spoiled.

The more he thought of how clever he was, the more he beamed with pride. Since Nancy

had taken the initiative to make up with him, Caspian knew he should return the favor. Like

Larry and Joan had said, it was common for married couples to argue, but one should never

let these arguments fester.

—I'm sorry, Nancy,|| he whispered. —What happened before was my fault, and I promise not to



make any more unreasonable demands. You have my full support in whatever you wish to do or learn. Now that I think about it, Taekwondo's pretty good too. After all, it is your way of life... —

Caspian was so lost in his thoughts that he didn't realize Nancy had become a sobbing mess. Even though she had kept her eyes shut as tightly as possible, tears still streamed down uncontrollably. He always had her best interests at heart and tried to please her or give in to her whenever he could. How could Nancy, in good conscience, tell him that she wanted a break-up? Doing this to a man like Caspian would undoubtedly make her the greatest sinner of all time.

When he felt a patch of wetness on his shoulder, he realized she was crying and panicked a little. —What's the matter? Have I said something wrong to upset you again? If so, I'll apologize again, but please stop crying. You know how I'm like when women cry in front of me... —

His words only made Nancy bawl even louder as she lamented her fate. Why was she forced to choose between two people? Why did life have to be so complicated for someone as ordinary as her?

Caspian panicked even more as he tried to comfort her as he would a kid. —There, there.

Don't cry. Boss told me today that we should always talk through our misunderstandings.

Besides, our problem is peanuts compared to what Boss and Joan had to go through.

Despite all that, they still stuck through thick and thin.||

Caspian's lips curled into a smile as he continued, —Us, on the other hand, are always fighting over the little matters in our daily lives. To think we call ourselves adults when we behave so childishly.||

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The more he said, the sillier Caspian felt about his fight with Nancy. —Boss and Joan may have many problems, but at least when they upset the other person, they would apologize without any hesitation.||

For someone who wasn't good with words, Caspian was surprisingly very eloquent and forthcoming. Nancy listened to him attentively. She had never heard him say so much in one breath, and she was afraid she might never again get the chance to in the future.

Caspian gazed at the golden tulips held tightly in Nancy's hand, feeling the warmth that seemed to emanate from them. —Nancy, I'll change for the better. Tell me what you're

unhappy with, and I promise I'll change! But you know I've always been a wild child, so some habits may take longer to get rid of... —

—Caspian,|| she interrupted. Even though it was just one word, it had taken her a lot of effort and courage to get it out.

Caspian hummed in response as his gaze remained on the tulips. He stayed silent to let Nancy carry on with what she had to say.

But, no matter how hard she tried, she just couldn't get the words out. Caspian treated her with so much love and respect, and she couldn't bring herself to hurt him.

—Joan had invited you along to brunch with us. I... I'm sorry I didn't tell you.||

—Is that it? Don't worry. Boss had already told me a while ago. We'll go in the afternoon. We won't make it for brunch, but we can still treat them to a nice afternoon tea.||

Nancy nodded, unable to go through with what she had planned to tell Caspian. The more she saw how he blamed himself for not treating her right, the more she couldn't get the truth out.

She knew she wasn't thinking clearly. She had never panicked this much, not even when she was up against a more formidable opponent in Taekwondo. The only thing she could do now was to follow her heart and go with the flow.

The day to meet up had finally come. It was a glorious afternoon as the dappled sun shone through the trees, casting beautiful shadows on the roads.

The café by the road had set up umbrellas to provide shade for its beautiful outdoor seating. There weren't many people idling about at that time, which added to the leisurely atmosphere.

Joan lifted the jug and poured herself her fourth cup of water. Larry looked on, bemused.

—Don't drink so much. Caspian and Nancy aren't here yet, and we haven't even ordered our meals... —

—I've been thirsty ever since I had my lunch. When I heard that Caspian and Nancy have made up, I was so excited I forgot about my water and came straight here. How dare you complain about me drinking too much!!

Larry laughed as he shook his head. —I'm not complaining. I'm just worried that if you drink so much now, you might need to keep running to the restroom when they finally get here.||

Upon hearing that, Joan tried to hit him in mock annoyance, only to have him swiftly place his hand over hers.

—You've been drinking so much of the café's water that people might think you're trying to get a free meal,|| he whispered.

Joan knew Larry had a point, so she scoped out the surroundings, only to find a few young servers eyeing them and talking in hushed tones. They were probably wondering why such a well-dressed couple was only drinking water and not ordering food. Joan felt a hint of embarrassment as she gingerly pushed her glass away. Even though she

was still thirsty, she knew she had to practice some self-control.  
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Larry tried to hold his laughter in. —I'll call to get them to hurry up.||  
Before he could pick up his phone, Joan saw two figures walking toward  
them. —They're  
here! Look, they're here!||  
As the pair got to the table, Nancy slung her bag over one of the empty  
chairs. —I'm so  
sorry,|| she apologized. —We were held up by traffic.||  
—Did you drive here?|| Larry asked as he accepted the menu from one of  
the servers and  
passed it to Nancy.  
Nancy nodded earnestly.  
Larry pointed at Caspian and burst out laughing. —Come on, Caspian.  
You have to improve  
your driving skills! Aren't you ashamed to always have Nancy drive you  
around?||  
—But that's only because Nancy doesn't let anyone else touch her  
precious car,|| Caspian  
whined.  
Joan ignored them and looked at Nancy. —What would you like to get?||  
Nancy cast a cursory glance at the menu before handing it to her  
husband. —I can't think of  
what to order. You can decide for me, Caspian.||  
Caspian seemed to be in high spirits as he placed an order for four  
different coffees. He had  
a smile on the entire time he was chatting with the server, a stark  
contrast from his usual  
scowl.  
—Boss, how has Leslie been?||  
Larry and Joan exchanged glances and smiled. —Speaking of Leslie, we  
really have to thank  
Nancy for the brilliant idea of sending him to my parents'. We'll pay him  
a visit when we're  
free.||  
—Ever since what happened to Norton Corporation, I realized that  
having a child is a lifelong  
commitment and responsibility. No matter how much we as parents  
have to suffer, we can't  
drag our children down with us,|| Joan said with a sigh.

Nancy looked at her quizzically. —Joan, that was too profound for me.||  
—You'll understand when you have a child,|| Joan replied while stifling a  
chuckle.

Larry immediately added, —Oh yes, if you have a daughter, we can be  
in-laws! And if you

have a son, our kids can become blood brothers!||

Caspian lowered his head and smiled. When he saw that Nancy had  
become speechless and

turned red, he gently nudged her to get her attention.

Instead of turning to him, Nancy looked straight at Joan and Larry. —We  
don't have plans for

that,|| she said matter-of-factly.

Caspian's heart dropped as soon as the words left her mouth, but he still  
tried his best to

look normal and salvage the awkward situation. —Well, yes. We don't  
have plans yet.||

Joan found Nancy's reaction very strange. Being so straightforward  
about not having

children made it seem as if she was intentionally avoiding something.

Joan thought she

might be overthinking when she noticed Larry also had on a forced,  
awkward smile. She

knew then that he felt the same as she did.

The awkward silence had become too much to bear, and Caspian knew  
he had to do

something to break the ice.

—Larry, Joan, because of some of the misunderstandings Nancy and I  
had in the past, we

have made you worry about us. Now that we finally have this  
opportunity, please let this

meal be my treat. It's our way of thanking you for all your help. Isn't that  
right, Nancy?||

Nancy wasn't expecting Caspian to lob a question at her, so her surprise  
was palpable when  
he did.

—Yes, that's right. Even though we have settled some of our differences,  
there are still other

disagreements. Hopefully, things will get better as time goes. But even if  
they don't, we can

only do our best with what we have now and live every day to its fullest.||

Larry and Joan couldn't help but feel that there was an underlying meaning to Nancy's words. But no matter how hard they tried to decipher, they just couldn't figure it out.

Caspian may not be the brightest bulb around, but even he could tell something has

changed. Ever since that fight, Nancy was never the same again.

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Joan's expression had taken a drastic change after hearing what Nancy said. She got up

wordlessly and pulled Nancy along toward the restroom.

Nancy could more or less guess what Joan wanted to talk to her about, but she kept her

smile as she looked apologetically at Larry. —Excuse me, Larry. We'll be using the restroom

first.||

The restroom was empty, and Joan slammed the door behind them once they were inside. It

was clear as day that she was a little peeved.

However, the truth was Joan wasn't in a bad mood. It wasn't so much that she was angry. It

was more that she was confused by who Nancy was now. She was no longer the girl who

blushed every time she talked about Caspian. There was something about her that had

changed drastically.

—Your misunderstandings have not been cleared, have they?|| Joan questioned.

Nancy was expressionless as she replied, —They have.||

Seeing that Joan still wasn't convinced, Nancy quickly added, —But, it's just Caspian who

thinks that way... —

—What do you mean it's just Caspian?|| Joan interrupted angrily. —What about you? What has

he done that you can't forgive him?||

There was a glimmer of sadness in Nancy's eyes as she wondered how best to put her words

across. —Joan, he hasn't done anything wrong. It's me. So if anything, it should be me asking for his forgiveness.||

Joan frowned and looked at her in confusion. —What on earth happened between the two of you?|| When Nancy showed no intention to answer her, Joan got even more agitated. —If you

treat me like a friend and a sister, then please tell me.||

Nancy held her gaze for a split second before lowering her head again.

Joan calmed herself down and tried to comfort Nancy instead. —I'm sure Larry is also

questioning Caspian now. It's common for husbands and wives to have disagreements and

misunderstandings. The important thing is to be considerate toward each other, to know

when to give and take, and try to change yourself for the other.||

—But two people should only be together because they're a good fit for each other. If you

change yourself for the other, that's called being accommodating. That's not love,|| Nancy

retorted.

Joan realized all the advice she had given to Nancy in the past had fallen on deaf ears.

She knew that everyone had differing opinions on various issues, and if someone else had

told her what Nancy just said, she would have found them perfectly reasonable. But it was

appalling that those words came from Nancy, and Joan believed there was more to it than

meets the eye.

Nancy held Joan's hands as she continued, —Besides, if the love isn't strong enough, then

one wouldn't even be accommodating in the first place... —

The more she tried to explain, the more Joan thought there was something seriously off

with Nancy. She wasn't the Nancy she used to know. She was like a stranger now. She pulled

her hand out and fixed a steely gaze on Nancy. —What are you trying to say?||

—I'm in love with someone... —

Telling the truth felt like a weight off her shoulders. All this time, Nancy had been trying to convince herself that her feelings for Jory weren't real. But when her heart pounded after seeing that woman in his office, she knew she had fallen for him. The pressure and anxiety she felt from keeping this secret had become almost unbearable.

She was so relieved now that she had told Joan the truth. But that also meant she had come to terms with her feelings for Jory.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1761

Joan couldn't believe her ears. There was no way the Nancy she knew would say something

like that. —T-This isn't funny, Nancy,|| she stammered. —Don't say any more. Whatever it is

you're playing at, I don't think it'd be much fun to carry on.||

Nancy smiled at her friend. —Why haven't you asked if the person I'm in love with is

Caspian?||

Joan got all tongue-tied as her world started spinning out of control.

Everything was coming

at her so fast that she could no longer tell what was true.

Try as she might, Joan couldn't shake away the escalating sense of foreboding.

She took a deep breath to steady her nerves as she looked at

Nancy. —That person... do I

know him?||

—You don't. But I've mentioned him to you before.||

From what Joan knew, Nancy had always come across as an introverted and reserved

person. Other than Caspian, she couldn't remember Nancy ever mentioning another man's

name to her.

If she hasn't mentioned other men to me, does that mean it's Caspian she loves? Is she just

taking me for a ride? The suspense was killing her, and Joan decided to confront Nancy with

her thoughts.

—It's not Caspian,|| Nancy said with a resolute shake of her head.



When she saw how adamant Nancy was, Joan was well and truly stumped.

She could only imagine how humiliated Caspian would be if he found out about it. No man would be able to take this sort of news well, not even the strongest ones.

Nancy remained cool as a cucumber even though she noticed how quiet Joan had become.

—If I told you now, you might have some recollection.||

When Joan didn't object to it, Nancy continued, —Remember when we went to Norton

Corporation for Caspian? I told you then about the fiancé I used to have. Well, he's back

now. And his name is Jory Synder.||

—Is he the mysterious S? Is that him?|| Joan asked as realization slowly crept over

her. Wouldn't that mean Jory was the one who secretly photographed Dustin and me?

—I don't know. I've never brought the matter up.|| Even with that, Joan couldn't tell if Nancy

was covering up for Jory or if she meant it.

—I ended things with him in the past because there have been misunderstandings and

malicious rumors. But now he's back. And more importantly, he hasn't forgotten about me.||

Despite Nancy pouring out her emotions as she spoke, Joan no longer felt the same about

her. The Nancy then seemed a little more pretentious—a far cry from what she used to be.

—You should know that things are different now. Caspian is your husband, and you've

stopped being Jory's fiancée when you turned him down!|| Joan finally replied, her tone cold

and harsh.

—That may be so, but it still doesn't mean that what I have with Caspian is love. We've lived

together for so long, but everyone can see how incompatible we are.

Living with him has

been exhausting for me. I'm sure it is for him too.||

Joan was getting riled up even more now. —Nancy, do you know what you're saying?||

To her surprise, Nancy still had a smile on her face. —I do. Joan, I'll find the right time to break this to Caspian and end things with him. Since the two of us aren't compatible, I don't want to continue this loveless relationship. All I'm asking of you now is to help keep this a secret.||

—You know very well he's never going to accept this, but he'll still have to find out about it eventually. Just how cruel can you be? You said to find the right time, but there can never be a right time for something like this.||

Ever since she got to know Nancy and Caspian, Joan had treated them like family. Nancy suddenly becoming this cruel was the scenario Joan thought one could only find in television dramas.

Joan sighed before continuing, —But rest assured that Caspian will only hear this from you. I promise to keep it a secret until then. Thank you for opening up to me, and thank you for treating me as a good friend. However, before this matter is made public, I don't know if we can still be friends.||

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If this were someone else, Joan would have berated them without hesitation. But because it's Nancy, Joan found herself at a loss for words.

Nancy stepped forward and held Joan's arm. —That's good. I want you to know that you're still very much like a sister to me, and that would never change, no matter what happens in the future.||

Joan didn't pull herself away from Nancy as she led them out of the restroom. She took comfort in the fact that they could remain as friends for now.

When Joan and Nancy left the table earlier, Larry began his interrogation on Caspian. —Have

the two of you not made up?||

—We have. I had just given her flowers yesterday, and everything seemed fine,|| Caspian

looked downcast as he replied.

—From what she said earlier, are you facing any relationship issues?||

—What? No, no. You're overthinking it, Boss.|| Caspian tried to play it cool by brushing Larry

off. Deep down, he knew Nancy had changed a lot over the past few days. He had

suspected something himself, but he wasn't keen to elaborate in front of Larry.

The onlookers would always see most of the game as compared to the players themselves.

So even though Caspian didn't say it, Larry could guess as much. —That better be the case,

Caspian. But you should still pay more attention to your relationship.

Identify the issues

early on, and you'll be able to tackle them better.||

Caspian waved him off as he awkwardly replied, —You're exaggerating, Boss. It's not as

serious as you make it out to be.||

Just then, the ladies made their way back to the table. Nancy was all smiles when she pulled

her chair out. —We've been gone for so long, and you still haven't ordered any food?||

—No, because Boss and I don't know what to order. Why don't you do it since you're familiar

with the food here? Joan, let Nancy know what you want to eat, and we'll order them all.||

Nancy quickly added, —Oh, yes, yes! Caspian's buying this meal, so let's eat our fill. Don't be

shy, Joan. Go ahead and order whatever you like.||

The sudden change in both Nancy and Caspian took Joan by surprise. It felt as if nothing

ever happened, and the awkwardness from before had all disappeared. Whether it was

intentional or not, they had managed to synchronize their acts.

Larry, as expected, noticed the change in Joan immediately. Judging by her expression, he

guessed Nancy must have confided in her.

Nevertheless, he decided to hold his tongue and keep things civil. He patted Joan as they flipped through the menu together. They soon settled into a familiar routine of laughing and chatting over food and drinks. The only exception was that the comfort they used to have with one another was missing.

Everyone had something weighing on their minds, and everyone had questions they didn't dare to ask.

There was no doubt that this was the calm before the storm. After the meal, Nancy drove straight to her father's office while Caspian rode with Larry back to Norton Corporation.

When Nancy arrived at Barrymore Group, she entered the elevator and promptly pressed for the twenty-sixth floor.

She knew that the only way to end things with Caspian was to have a divorce. But before she brought that up with him, she'd have to inform her father about it first.

Nancy tried to make as little noise as possible by tiptoeing her way into her father's office.

She was about to close the door when she heard her father. —When will you ever learn to knock before you enter?||

—Dad, how did you know it was me?|| she replied with a cheeky grin.

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Simon rubbed his forehead in mock annoyance. —Because you're the only one who comes in without knocking on the door.||

After closing the door and locking it, Nancy sat in front of her father, all prim and proper.

When she realized he was too immersed in the pile of documents on the table, she willfully snatched them away from him.

—Is your daughter not as important as these papers?||

Simon sighed loudly. —Very well then. What brings my precious daughter here? But please, keep it short.||

Nancy held the documents against her chest as she stared at her father. —I'm getting a divorce.||

Like her father requested, Nancy had gone straight to the point, leaving Simon in a state of bewilderment.

—What? A divorce? Did I hear it right?

—You heard right. I'm getting a divorce.||

—Why?|| Simon's frown deepened as he continued, —Was it something Caspian did?||

—It's not him. It's something that I've done.||

Simon was even more confused now as he gazed at his daughter. —Nancy, please tell me, what have you done?||

—One of the reasons I want a divorce is that the person I had let slip in the past is now back.

But the main reason is that I don't love Caspian anymore. I can't see myself living with him any longer. Two people should be together because they're compatible, not because they're constantly accommodating the other.||

—Someone you had let slip?|| Simon mumbled to himself. —I don't recall you ever talking about other boyfriends. Isn't Caspian your first love?||

Nancy held her father's gaze as she continued, —Dad, do you remember a few years back

when I rejected a marriage proposal from Alpire Group?||

Simon fell back into this chair. —Please don't tell me you've fallen for someone from the Alpire Group.||

—I won't lie to you, Dad. It is him. I rejected him back then because of some misunderstandings and rumors. But now he's back, and he still remembers me! I think this must be fate.||

—Jory Synder?|| Simon almost choked on his words as he pounded his fist on the table.

Nancy twitched from her father's sudden outburst and nodded. —Yes. You know him, Dad.||

—Don't you know that Jory's despicable and ruthless? Haven't you heard about all the problems he had caused?|| Simon's brows furrowed deeper as he tried to talk some sense into his daughter.

Nancy was visibly agitated now. —It's because of those baseless accusations that I rejected the proposal and ruined the working relationship our families had!|| —You're still speaking up for him? Who was the one crying about wanting to reject the proposal back then? Because of you, I ditched all my plans to work with Alpire Group. Don't you think I've done enough for you?||

Seeing how furious her father was, Nancy softened her voice. —That's not what I meant, Dad.

Back then, I only had people telling me how awful Jory was, and that's why I misunderstood

him. But now I have the opportunity to get to know him better.||

Simon stood up, his naturally majestic aura filling the space around him as he scolded his

daughter, —No. Your engagement with him is over! Don't forget that you are both of

completely different statuses!||

Nancy remained silent as she pondered her options. She knew her father was high?principled, and she couldn't persuade him the way she did with Joan. If she did, he would criticize her for being shameless and rude.

Once Simon got angry, there was no holding his words back. He leaned into her, ready to

give her a piece of his mind. —You have let Caspian down, and I'm sure it's hard to break this

to him. But since you have the guts to do it, I'm sure you wouldn't be afraid of others talking

behind your back, right?||

—Yes...|| Nancy mumbled. She thought she had mentally prepared herself enough to face the

inevitable storm that'd come her way. But when her father scolded her as expected, the full

brunt of his words still proved too much to bear.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1764

—Have you talked to Caspian about the divorce?|| His tone eased significantly, causing Nancy to sigh in relief.

—Not yet. But, it's about time. I will find a suitable opportunity to tell him.||

Lighting up a cigarette, Simon exhaled slowly. —Indeed, it will be painful for him. If you are really going ahead with the divorce, you should let him have a bigger share of the assets.||

When Nancy didn't reply, Simon assumed her silence meant consent. He added, —If he finds out about this, he would definitely not agree to the divorce. As for Jory, there would be no escape for him.||

If it were any other time, Nancy would shrug her father off for worrying unnecessarily. But right then, she couldn't deny the validity of his concerns. After being married to Caspian for almost two years, she knew him like the back of her hand. But to a certain extent, she still couldn't get a good grasp of how he would react.

However, there wasn't any doubt in her that Caspian would make Jory pay. Furthermore, there was another issue. She wondered how she was going to bring this up to Caspian. She could avoid mentioning Jory, but how could she lead the conversation toward a divorce?

At Jory's office.

Knock! Knock!

—Come in.|| Jory was reading the latest analyst report on Norton Corporation that Dustin brought. He yelled for the person who knocked to come in.

If he had looked up, he likely would have regretted his action.

Gabriella was dressed provocatively as usual. Although she was modest in front of Joan

most of the time, she was always flamboyant toward Jory.

—Get out,|| Jory snapped without hesitation when he saw who it was. Gabriella smiled. —How can you ask me to leave right after giving me permission to enter?||

Ignoring her, Jory continued to study the report in his hand. As for Gabriella, she paced around the office and even touched some of the displays inside.

—I heard the lady say that you're Jory Synder. Despite working for you, I don't even know your name,|| Gabriella sneered.

With his eyes still on the report, Jory replied plainly, —The deal was that you focus on your work, and I pay you for it. There's no need for me to tell you my name. It's utterly unnecessary...||

Gabriella sighed. —There's no way I can beat a businessman like you in a verbal exchange. But, as a woman, I know how to judge another woman.||

Jory closed the report in his hands with a clap. —If you're here to talk about the Barrymores or cause trouble, you should leave.||

—What? Don't you dare admit what you have done? Are you feeling guilty?|| Gabriella pressed to her advantage. —Despite having an affair with a married woman, Mr. Synder, you really are audacious.||

Jory sprang to his feet and grabbed her wrist. Pulling her forcefully, Gabriella lost her balance and crashed her thigh into the corner of the desk.

—Do you believe that with just a phone call, you will be swarmed by reporters questioning you about all your misdeeds over the years? Also, don't forget about Landon. He was surrounded by reporters from every TV station because of you.||

—You...|| Briefly stunned, Gabriella suppressed her anger. —We are partners, so let's not talk about such nonsense. All this while, I feel that it isn't normal for you to know everything about me while I know nothing about you. But now, we are even.||

Jory flung her wrist aside as if he was throwing something filthy away. He felt like his hands would be tainted if he held them any longer.

—Remember this, going forward, you are not allowed to come here. If you dare defy me in



any way, I will make sure to teach you a lesson with the help of the reporters.||

Gabriella was enraged. —I'm not planning to do anything to you. Instead, you are the one disrupting Larry's life.||

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Jory was stunned when he saw her staring at the cover of the document he was reading. On

top of it, the words —Norton Corporation analyst report|| were clearly written. He quickly

turned the document face down. When the folder's hardcover dropped on the desk, the

resulting bang jolted both of them.

Suddenly, a ruthless look flashed within Jory's eyes. Ever since he changed, he told himself

that he would never give anyone the same look. But, in the face of the insolent Gabriella, he

couldn't help but break his own vow.

—Let me warn you one more time. Don't meddle in my affairs.||

Gabriella's eyes sparkled in triumph. —I knew it! The Norton Corporation's stock price crash

and subsequent takeover must have something to do with you. Now, I wonder if it's

somehow related to our partnership?||

She had expected Jory to be infuriated and to coerce her into keeping his secret. However,

his expression became more resolute instead, as if it didn't matter to him at all. In fact, he

was actually smiling.

—Go ahead and tell everyone. If anyone believes you, I will consider that I have lost,|| Jory

declared confidently, —By then, I can hand you over to the police for disrupting public order.||

He was right. Without any proof, no one would believe her. But Jory was different. He was

rich and powerful. Also, he wielded the influence of a large conglomerate. No matter what

he did, there would be many who would willingly protect him.

There was no competition between the two of them at all.

Just when Gabriella wanted to vent her frustrations, she suddenly thought of Nancy.

Coincidentally, she had met Nancy once before. When one had a weakness, one would no longer be invincible. Jory was no different as Nancy was his weakness. She held onto her injured wrist. —Your plan of being together with Nancy is not realistic at all. The chairman of Barrymore Group would never admit that his daughter had an affair.

Also, there's still Caspian whom I interacted with before. He is a stubborn one. Although he isn't meant for great things, he loves Nancy a lot.||

When Jory remained silent, Gabriella continued, —Taking a step back, even if for some reason

Mr. Barrymore agrees to their divorce for the sake of Nancy's happiness, do you think

Caspian would stand quietly while you take Nancy away from him?||

—Caspian. I have indeed never met him before...||

Placing her hand on Jory's shoulder, Gabriella smiled deviously. —Therefore, why don't I help

you take Caspian out of the picture. When that happens, no one will stand before you and

Nancy.||

Jory narrowed his gaze on the hand she placed on him. —What do you plan to do?||

Gabriella's flaming red fingernails looked as if they were on

fire. —There's no need for you to

worry about the details. All you need to know is that you will be satisfied with the results. As

for my reward, I'm sure you know better than anyone else what I want.||

—Is it all just for money?|| Jory asked skeptically.

Gabriella pretended to sound pitiful. —Ever since I was kicked out by Landon, money has

become everything to me. Someone like you who is never short of it will never understand

how I feel.||

When Jory thought back to this incident much later, he could only hate himself for not

giving Gabriella a slap and blame himself for not asking for more details.

With regard to Nancy's situation, Joan didn't have much to say about it. After all, Nancy was her good friend and she was obligated to side with her no matter what. However, she did promise Nancy that before the latter broke the news to Caspian, she would keep it a secret, even from Larry.

Meanwhile, it was obvious to Larry that Nancy and Caspian were having problems.

Furthermore, he could also tell that Nancy must have said something to Joan.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1766

—She really didn't tell me anything. So, stop asking me about it.|| When Joan repeated her

denial for the third time, she was already sick of doing so.

Before Larry replied, he saw the traffic light in front and stepped on the brakes gently.

Joan couldn't help but sigh. Gripping her seat belt, she remarked, —She only told me about

the many differences they have in their daily lives...||

—Differences? Just a few days ago, I told Caspian that a couple must always learn how to

compromise. Didn't you tell Nancy the same?|| Larry asked.

—Of course I did. But did you know what she said?|| Joan turned to face Larry. —She said that

love is about compatibility without having to change one's interest or personality to

accommodate the other.||

Larry was stumped. The words seemed to make sense but he still felt there was something

wrong with it. However, he couldn't put his finger on what it was.

—Are you feeling the same way as I did? You have the urge to rebut but can't find the basis

to do it?|| Joan asked.

Larry tightened his grip on the steering wheel. —If it really was about compatibility, then why

did she choose to get married in the first place? Now that they are, how can she say

something like that?||

Joan plainly replied, —Perhaps, love at first sight caused both of them to lose their rationality.

But living together might have brought them back to reality.||  
—Hmm... It sounds like Nancy doesn't intend to reconcile with Caspian.||  
As Larry stepped on  
the accelerator, their car continued on its journey.  
At that point, Joan was overwhelmed by guilt. Although it had nothing to  
do with her,  
hiding something from Larry filled her with self-reproach. After a long  
hesitation, she  
stuttered, —S-She... she said... she wants a divorce.||  
Given that traffic was noisy and Joan spoke very softly, Larry didn't catch  
her words. —Huh?  
What?||  
—D-Divorce.|| Joan raised her volume.  
She could obviously feel Larry trembling as he gradually applied the  
brakes and stopped by  
the roadside. After He finally regained his senses after a long while and  
asked, —Divorce? Did  
you hear her wrong?||  
Joan shook her head. —I thought I made a mistake too. But that was  
what Nancy told me.||  
—Have Caspian agreed to it?|| Larry asked.  
Joan shook her head. —No, Nancy hasn't told him about it yet.||  
Unexpectedly, Larry burst out in laughter. However, it was a wry and  
helpless one. —Caspian  
would never agree to it. How could he?||  
—Larry, everyone has the freedom to make their own choices. There's  
no rule saying that one  
person must be with another forever. As outsiders, all we can do is  
respect their decision,||  
Joan remarked. The best she could do now was not mention Jory in front  
of Larry.  
However, she still felt conflicted. Although she managed to keep Nancy's  
secret, it felt like a  
betrayal to Caspian. Is this how I repay him after everything he has done  
for us?  
—Previously, I told Caspian to never bring up about divorce no matter  
what happened with  
Nancy.|| Larry's eyes were filled with an indescribable sadness. —He  
agreed and even said that

the idea never crossed his mind. However, I didn't expect Nancy to be the one who would bring it up.||

As Joan gazed into his eyes, she put her hand on Larry's. —Perhaps, there is a period in everyone's life when their fate is no longer in their hands.||

Joan wondered if Nancy had thought this through, especially of the consequences. As for the latter's decision to divorce, it was one where Nancy just couldn't help herself.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1767

If one is forced to be with a man she doesn't love, it will be unfair to all parties.

However, does fairness really exist in this world? Or can it be that true fairness would inadvertently result in someone getting hurt?

—There's no way Nancy is going to change her mind. Larry, if you have the time, it's better that you advise Caspian to let go. Also, you have to remind him not to give up on life...||

Larry didn't say anything further. If Caspian knew what Nancy's thoughts were, Larry wasn't sure if he would even have the opportunity to console the former. Given how rigid Caspian's temperament was, Larry was worried that he would end up doing something stupid. After restarting the engine, they continued on their journey, leaving behind a cloud of smoke on the quiet street.

When night fell, on the roof of Nirhaven College, one could see stars blanketing the sky, sparkling dimly over the city. As the moon shone brightly, its light was enough to illuminate the path of anyone walking home.

It was said that when one was missing another, all one had to do was look up at the moon.

Who knew the person whom you miss would be looking at the moon too at that moment?

As for Dustin, gazing at the moon at night with the gentle breeze blowing across his face

was the only way he could feel at peace. As if he was all alone in that space, he enjoyed the moment very much. However, there was something different about that particular night.

There was someone who insisted on gazing at the moon with him. He was even reciting poems while doing so.

—Given that you offered to join me here, I guess you must be in a good mood today?||

Dustin placed both his hands on the roof's parapet. —Has she accepted you?||

Jory was holding a wine bottle in his right hand while his left hand held the stem of a wine glass in between his fingers. —You can put it that way. But, it seems that this is just the beginning.||

Dustin received the wineglass that Jory handed him. As the moonlight reflected off it, it made it look like a red ruby. —Congratulations, the time you spent building your career overseas was not in vain.||

Jory took a sip. —I always wondered how my life would be if she never appeared.||

Dustin laughed. —What do you expect? You will never be short of money. Who knows, you might even inherit Alpire Group successfully.||

Jory laughed together with him but his tone was filled with contempt. —Do I look like someone who cares about money to you? When I left my father, it was because he looked down on me for not having achieved anything. Hence, the last thing I wanted was to live off him for life.||

Smirking, Dustin replied in a dispassionate tone, —I admire your pridefulness. If I were you, I would be begging the chairman to allow me to inherit the company. At least with power and influence, and not to forget money, I can certainly achieve something.||

Jory quickly understood what Dustin was trying to insinuate. Putting down the half-empty wine glass, he asked, —Do you really think that Joan didn't choose you because you didn't have all that?||

Dustin retorted, —What else could it be?||

Jory shook his head. —I don't believe that's the case. If she really was in it for the money,

would you still have fallen for a gold digger like her? Of course, if you insist that you would

still love her for whoever she is, then I have nothing else to say.||

Dustin stared at his wineglass. —Of course, I won't.||

Jory patted him on his shoulder. —Although I don't know why you are so infatuated with

Joan, there's one thing I'm sure of—you wouldn't have fallen for her if she were a shallow

person. Perhaps, Joan really saw something in Larry in which you don't possess.||

Dustin took a deep breath and tried his best to maintain his calm. —Enough about me, let's

talk about you instead. How did you get her to agree to be with you?||

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1768

—This might be the only thing in my whole life that I didn't plan for.

Because it really seemed

like fate and everything else just fell into place.|| Jory lifted the wine bottle and refilled

Dustin's glass. The clink between the bottle and wine glass sounded especially melodious at night.

—Since my transformation, I would draw up a plan in my mind for everything I'm about to

do. I would use it to guide me step by step during the execution. But, when it came to her, it

really felt like fate had decided everything. I didn't even need to plot and scheme at all.||

He added, —It felt as if as long as we had each other, it didn't matter whatever we did or

however much we had. More importantly, her happiness is all that I care about because I am

happy whenever I see the joy on her face.||

Jory's words were so sincere that even Dustin couldn't help but be stunned by them. After keeping silent for a while, Jory extended his hand to shake him. —What are you thinking about? Why are you being so quiet?||

Dustin repeated slowly, —Her happiness is your priority?||

Jory nodded. —Don't you feel happy whenever you see her happy?||

—Kind of...|| Dustin mumbled to himself. —In that case, is what we're doing right? Using your dad's Alpire Group to takeover Norton Corporation's subsidiary and to see both Joan and Larry be devastated by it...||

Jory fell silent as all he thought about initially was that this was a great way to destroy Larry. However, if Joan really loved Larry, she would definitely not leave him for Dustin when his company was in trouble. In fact, she would stick with Larry until the crisis was over.

Joan would never be happy if Larry were in trouble. It would then spiral into a vicious cycle.

Jory began to doubt if he was really helping Dustin that way. Having no answers, all he could do was to help his best friend achieve whatever he wanted.

—There's no point in overthinking it. Not like it's going to make you any richer. Come, let's drink up.|| Jory toasted his wine glass toward the moon. —In appreciation of the beautiful moon tonight. Bottoms up!||

Dustin yawned as he clinked glasses with Jory. —You're right! Bottoms up!||

Jory shook the empty bottle. —Red wine is for celebrations while whiskey is for forgetting our sorrows.||

—Celebrate? What are we celebrating?|| Justin squinted his eyes as he raised his tone in surprise.

After pondering a moment, Jory pointed at the moon while grinning widely at Dustin.

—We're celebrating how beautiful the moon is tonight.||

Dustin laughed and didn't say anything further.



The next morning.

Larry was woken up by a phone call. On the line was Norton Corporation's head of financial analysis. His words were rapid and his tone anxious. Still feeling groggy, Larry was instantly awoken upon hearing his report, to the extent of having cold sweat break out from his back.

—Mr. Norton! Something bad has happened! Alpire Group has taken over two more of our subsidiaries. As of now, we have lost a total of seven!||

Larry sprang up from his bed and gulped in concern. —How did this happen? Why didn't we see it coming?||

—There really was no sign of it. It just happened all of a sudden. Our financial analysis systems did not indicate that we were under attack. Their method did not leave a single trace at all.|| The department head's pitch was off due to his nervousness. In the background, Larry could hear the arguments going on.

Larry replied with a solemn tone, —I'm coming over at once.||

After ending the call, he was still unable to digest the massive amount of information that he had just received. All he did was toss his blanket aside and space out while sitting on the bed.

When Joan felt the sudden gush of wind from the blanket being flipped, she was awoken by it. Rubbing her dreary eyes, she asked in a daze, —What happened, Larry? What time is it?||

Turning to his side, Larry looked out with disbelief and suspicion. —The seventh subsidiary is gone.||

Right then, even Joan was fully awake and she too broke out in a cold sweat. On her face, was the same look of disbelief. —How can that be? Didn't they stop attacking us for a while now?||

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1769

Larry shook his head. —We are too careless. When Dustin spoke to me, he told me Alpire Group's target was the entire Norton Corporation. We didn't take him seriously then. That was a big mistake from the beginning. They just wanted to lower our guard so that they can achieve their objective faster.||

—No, Dustin wouldn't do that,|| Joan mumbled to herself. As if he was woken from a dream, Larry took out his phone and searched for Dustin's number. —That's right. Dustin must know something about this.||

As Joan watched him make the call, they waited for a whole thirty-seven seconds before they heard a female robotic voice inform them that there was no one answering. Both of them exchanged glances and were puzzled as to what was going on. Joan quickly found her phone on the bed. As if she was grabbing on to the last glimmer of hope, she called Dustin's number.

Thirty-seven seconds later, she raised her gaze at Larry as the phone she was holding slipped onto the bedsheet.

—No one is picking up.||

After a while, Larry turned off his phone as the flood of notifications he was receiving was giving him a headache. —No, I must head to the office at once.||

Tossing her blanket aside, Joan pushed back her hair. —I'm coming with you.||

News traveled fast indeed. Before they even reached the office, the media had caught wind of the situation and the news dominated the headlines of all major websites.

When Nancy was waiting at a red light, she reached into her bag for a bottle of mineral water. Just when she lifted her head to drink, she heard the news being broadcasted over the radio, causing her to almost spew the water out from her mouth.

—After a brief respite, Alpire Group is back in action in its' acquisition of Norton

Corporation's subsidiary again...||  
Alpire Group? Alpire Group! Does Jory have something to do with this?  
Is he attacking  
Norton Corporation again? Fearful of thinking any further, she turned  
the car around and  
sped toward Jory's office.  
Meanwhile, Jory, who was in the midst of his morning exercise, was also  
surprised to hear  
the news. Takeover? Is this Dustin's doing? Although Jory was the heir to  
Alpire Group, he  
had delegated to Dustin the authority to manage the matter. It shouldn't  
be him. We were  
just admiring the moon the night before.  
Jory told himself not to speculate any further. Instead, he should  
immediately ask the  
person directly involved. Hence, he had to call Dustin at once.  
The moment he called, he received a message saying Dustin's line was  
busy. Why is his line  
busy? Can there be someone else wanting to talk to him during a  
moment like this? After  
ending the call, Jory patiently waited for a minute before calling again.  
This time, the line was no longer busy. Instead, it went unanswered.  
Why isn't anyone  
answering? How can this be? Did he dispose of his phone away right  
after answering the  
earlier call?  
Jory was puzzled. After changing out of his sports attire and into his  
office suit, he saw a  
striking red Bentley driving in from afar. Jory stood where he was to  
await his guest's arrival.  
Wearing a pair of flats, Nancy ran over to him once the car came to a  
stop. With the wind  
blowing in her hair, her fringes strewn messily all over her face.  
Holding her phone, its screen was still lit up. She looked upset and  
seemed to want to show  
him something.  
—Nancy, what are you doing here so early in the morning?||  
Still panting heavily, Nancy raised her phone at him. —D-Did you do  
this?||

Glancing over, it was indeed the news of Norton Corporation being taken over. If he denied it, no one in their right mind would believe him. After all, he was inextricably linked to Alpire Group.

—Would you believe me if I said it wasn't me?|| Jory asked her in return. Nancy furrowed her eyebrows. —Since when do you need to say something like that to me?

If you say that it wasn't you, of course, I would believe you.||

As Nancy's trust warmed Jory's heart, he pulled her into his embrace without any hesitation.

Resting his chin on her hair, he explained in a gentle voice, —Thank you for your trust. To be clear, this isn't my doing and I have no idea what's going on. Hence, I'm on my way to investigate the matter.||

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1770

Nancy placed her hands on his hips. —Investigate? Does it mean that you have a lead and that you know who did it?||

Nancy was extremely sharp to decipher his words. Jory was naturally not going to lie. —I'm not sure yet. I just called him but he didn't answer.||

—Perhaps, you can get through now?|| Nancy gave him an encouraging glance. —Why don't you try again?||

After waiting for another thirty-seven second, both of them gave up on calling him. Jory

turned off his phone. —When you arrived just now, I was about to head over to see him.||

—The reason I rushed over was because of this too...|| Nancy sighed. —Joan and Larry must be

devastated to hear the news in the morning. After all, it has been a long time since something like that happened.||

Staring at her anxious expression, Jory asked, —You do care a lot about them, don't you?||

Nancy nodded without hesitation. —Of course, they are my best friends.||

Before Jory could respond, Nancy dragged him into her car. —Come, let's go and find the culprit. We need to question him on what his motives are. I don't believe he has fled just

because he isn't answering his phone.||

Jory had wanted to say something to defend Dustin. But, when he grabbed onto her hand,

the words that left his mouth were instead, —Let's go in my car. Or perhaps, I'll turn on my

GPS and you can just follow me in your car.||

Nancy smiled helplessly. —Does it matter whose car? Come, let's go.||

At Norton Corporation, Larry had learned his lesson from the last time.

Instead of going

through the front door, he entered via the back door with Joan. Upon reaching his office, he

realized that the main entrance had been swarmed with reporters who were waiting for their

appearance.

—Luckily, we managed to avoid them.|| Joan patted her chest to calm herself down.

Larry remained expressionless as he was used to it by now. —What's the use of avoiding

them? What is done is done. Unfortunately, we do not have a solution as of now.||

Joan held his hand in an attempt to give his cold hands some warmth. —There has to be a

solution. There definitely has to. We will face this together.||

Larry smiled back at her as he clasped the hand that held onto his. Both of them were like

travelers of the south pole desperately trying to survive the cold by giving each other

warmth.

The moment he walked out of the elevator, Larry received a message from the largest

shareholder of Norton Corporation. Joan too, peeked over to read the contents of the

message.

It stated: Shareholders' meeting in ten minutes.

Despite how short the message was, Joan's heart dropped when she saw it. Tightening her

grip on Larry's hand, she choked, —Can it be t-that they...?||  
Larry massaged her palm with his thumb as if he was trying to rub her worries away. He softly reassured, —No, they won't. I didn't do anything wrong. Hence, they have no reason to strip me of my power and position yet.||  
Ever since the previous misunderstanding, Larry was no longer as brazen as he used to be. Instead, he was now filled with a sense of calmness and humility that wasn't there before. Hence, Joan could see a shadow of his former self from his words. To her, he seemed exceptionally confident and she could recognize that the invincible Larry was back. Therefore, when he said they would be fine, she definitely believed that to be the case. The atmosphere at the shareholders' meeting was tense. Everyone's expression couldn't be any more solemn. All the attendees had taken their seats and were waiting for Larry's arrival. The meeting room was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop. The only sound that could be heard was Larry's footsteps and the beating of their own hearts.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1771

The entire meeting room resembled a black and white oil painting. The snow-white walls contrasted against the black suits crowding within it and the grey tiles laid on the floor. The angular shape of the meeting table accentuated the company's clinical style. Larry pulled up a chair and sat steadily in his seat. Everyone else around him opened the folders in their hands with pens, ready to get down to work. —I believe all of you have seen the latest news about Norton Corporation. The Alpire Group has again mounted attacks against our company right under our noses. Together with the earlier incidents, our accumulated losses have grown to a massive amount.||

Larry cleared his throat. —I have previously declared not to let history repeat itself. Hence, in the face of what happened today, I would like to apologize to everyone.|| —Wait, Mr. Norton.|| A white-haired shareholder sitting beside Larry suddenly asked, —Even if we didn't manage to stop their attacks, don't you owe us an explanation about how much you know about Alpire Group?|| Not shirking from his responsibilities, Larry was forthcoming. —Indeed, I have not met the chairman of Alpire Group before. But based on my knowledge, their objective is to take over Norton Corporation. However, I have met with their head of finance. Although he wasn't willing to divulge the secrets behind the takeover, he did tell me that Alpire Group intends to acquire Norton Corporation in its entirety. Also, this man is our only source for more information.|| —In that case, why don't you bring him over so that we can all talk to him?|| the old shareholder pressed on. Larry could only brace himself and continue, —When I found out about what happened this morning, he was the first person I thought of. Of course, I tried calling him but he didn't answer and his whereabouts are currently unknown.|| The old shareholder sneered. His laugh was filled with mockery toward Larry. —Since you don't know where he is, why did you even mention him? Are you trying to shirk your responsibility and hide the truth from us?|| Another middle-aged shareholder added, —That's right. Now that you're unable to contact your source, how do we know you're telling the truth or if he exists?|| Instead of focusing on the crux of the matter which was Alpire Group's intention of taking over Norton Corporation, they kept harping on the veracity of Larry's contact. Larry was

dumbfounded by their reaction. Given what had happened, he had lost all credibility before the shareholders.

Larry straightened his posture in an attempt to seem more authoritative. —As Norton Corporation's shareholders, you should focus on the problem at hand and not doubt the truth of my words. There's no reason for me to fabricate a person just to deceive you.||

Pressured by Larry's commanding presence, the meeting room fell silent. —With regards to this unexpected incident, it was indeed caused by my oversight. From now on, I will try my best...||

—Mr. Norton!|| suddenly, the old shareholder interrupted Larry again.

—We can't allow the company to continue the way it is. All the shareholders here have invested their life savings into it. Hence, shouldn't you be giving us a deadline?|| the old shareholder threatened with a dissatisfied gaze.

His brazen words suddenly caused tension to fill the room. If Larry failed to solve the problem by the stipulated deadline, he would then be removed from his position.

—That's right. If you can't do it, let someone else take over.||

One by one, the shareholders had insidious looks on their faces. Letting out their devilish grins, they were all showing their true colors.

Larry cleared his throat to signal everyone in the meeting room to quiet down. —Alright. Give me three months. After three months, I will provide all of you a satisfactory answer.||

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1772

—What if you don't?|| the old shareholder pressed on.

Larry sneered.

I'm afraid this bunch of wily old foxes don't really care about the company's future.

—If I'm unable to produce the expected result, I will resign,|| Larry declared confidently. He had rediscovered the bold confidence that he used to have.



Within the meeting room, the attendees exchanged glances with each other. Some of them

looked shocked while others were gloating in glee.

—Alright, now that you have vowed to do so, we will then judge the matter three months

later,|| the old shareholder declared loudly to a few others behind him as he closed the

document on the desk.

Three months was hardly enough time to deal with such a complex matter, but Larry

couldn't delay it any further. He needed to take action at once to prevent the matter from

escalating.

—How was it? Did they make things difficult for you?|| Joan squeezed his hand.

—Everything is fine, don't worry. They are not that ruthless as now is not the time to remove

me.|| Larry stroked Joan's hair lightly.

Luckily, it turned out alright.

When Larry walked into the meeting room alone, her heart was pounding furiously, worried

that something would happen to him. She knew that none of the shareholders were to be

trifled with. Now that something as big as this had happened, they would not let Larry off

easily.

Ring! Ring!

Her handphone suddenly rang.

When she checked to see who it was, she saw that it was Caspian. She hesitated for a

moment but finally decided to answer.

—Joan, are you free today? I would like to treat you to a meal. It will only be the two of us.||

Caspian was forthright in his question.

Suddenly, Joan's eyes were filled with wariness. Caspian seldom asked anyone out for a

meal, especially one where there would only be the two of them. It has to be about Nancy.

Or else, I cannot think of any other reason for him to do so.

—Alright, send me the address. I'll go over...|| As she looked at Larry who was standing in

front of her, her stance began to waver.

—Caspian asked me out for a meal. I suppose he wants to talk about Nancy.|| Joan's eyes

were suddenly filled with sadness.

Given how much Caspian had helped her and Larry, there was no way she could lie to him.

However, she had promised to let Nancy explain to Caspian herself.

Hence, until that

happened, she wasn't allowed to tell him anything.

—Go ahead. You will have to think on your feet as you have made a promise to Nancy.

Remember not to panic as it's best to let them resolve the matter themselves.||

At the restaurant.

—Joan, over here!|| Caspian waved at Joan when she entered the restaurant.

Quickly collecting herself, Joan walked toward Caspian with an awkward smile.

—Joan, please order whatever you like.|| Caspian passed her the menu enthusiastically.

However, Joan could only stare at the menu he handed her as she didn't dare make eye

contact. After all, his gaze was filled with the trust he had for her and the devotion he had

for Nancy.

—I'll just have a coffee as I already had something with Larry earlier.

Caspian, you seem pretty

rich recently. After buying me a meal not too long ago, you invited me for another treat

today...|| Joan remarked on purpose as her hands were clasped together tightly as if she was

trying to get rid of the anxiety she felt.

—Joan, actually, there's something I want to ask you today.|| Caspian scratched the back of

his head awkwardly.

Joan took a deep breath and stared right at him. She prepared herself for what was about to

come. After all, there was no avoiding it.

—Joan, do you know about Jory?|| Once the question escaped his mouth, Caspian's eyes darkened.

Joan could sense that he was trying his best to suppress the emotions within him.

—Jory?|| Joan murmured on purpose.

—That's right. Jory. The one who has just returned to the country recently...|| Caspian's words seemed to be all over the place as he couldn't wait to express what he wanted to say.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1773

The reason he was so anxious was that he wanted to verify the truth about Nancy and Jory's relationship.

Joan was puzzled as to how Caspian knew about Jory.

—I don't know him well. What about him, Caspian? What do you want with him?|| Joan looked carefully at him.

At that moment, Caspian had a dejected look on his face while his eyes lost their shine.

—Nothing much. It's just that I heard Nancy rejected his marriage proposal before. But now that he has returned, I figure...||

Joan had never seen him so disheartened before. He truly loves Nancy to the extent he would give his all to her.

But if the love is not reciprocated, how could they even sustain their relationship?

Perhaps, Nancy is right. If one has to constantly compromise in a relationship, he will be doomed to a miserable fate. Instead of having both parties suffer, it would be better for them to let go and seek out their own happiness.

But Caspian...

He has sacrificed so much...

—Caspian, don't let your imagination run wild. You have to trust each other. In matters of love, only the ones involved can decide. No matter what happens between you and Nancy,

I'm sure you will have a good talk with her, am I right?|| Joan looked at him with a serious expression.

Although Caspian was someone stubborn, Joan was sure that he would not do anything rash when it came to Nancy.

—Sure, Joan. I understand,|| Caspian promised.

However, he didn't manage to read between the lines of what Joan had said.

Staring out of the window, Joan's eyes were filled with pity.

She wasn't sure if what she did was right. But, she hoped that Nancy would tell Caspian the truth.

Nevertheless, Joan knew Nancy well and was aware that there was no stopping her from whatever she wanted to do.

Ring! Ring!

—Hello, alright, I know. I'll go over at once. Wait for my return,|| Jory said into the phone as he looked out the window.

—What's wrong?|| Nancy looked at him quizzically.

—Nancy, there's an urgent matter that needs my attention back at the office. I will have to go back there.|| Jory stroked her hair.

Despite frowning slightly, Nancy turned the car around and drove toward Alpire Group.

Along the way, she tried to find out more about the person they were going to see but her questions were brushed aside by Jory.

Given that he couldn't get in touch with Dustin, Jory knew that he couldn't act hastily.

Before Dustin was found, he had to quietly watch the matter unfold.

Dustin's sudden disappearance caused Larry and Joan to worry. After all, he was the key to solving their problem.

—I'm sorry, the number you have dialled is unreachable. Please try again later.||

Rubbing her hands, Joan paced around anxiously.

—Larry, what are we going to do? There's no way we can get in touch with Dustin if he

doesn't pick up.|| Joan grabbed onto his arm as if she could channel him some positive energy.

Larry lifted his gaze and looked out of the window, his eyes flashed with sudden darkness.

—It's alright. I'm sure we can find another way. Don't worry, with me around...|| Larry gently patted Joan on her back.

She knew that Larry was just comforting her. Why is Dustin doing this? Can it be that he wants to push Larry to the brink?

—I'm going to see him.|| Just as she spoke, Joan stood up and prepared to leave.

—Joan, where are you going to find him? He isn't at home. I have already checked.|| Larry's expression darkened.

At that point, no one knew where Dustin was, and no one could get in touch with him.

Regardless of whether he did it on purpose, it was something that was devastating for Larry.

He was caught off guard by Dustin's disappearance and the pressure from the company shareholders. Everyone was waiting to see him fall and couldn't wait to gloat over his failure.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1774

Jory!

That's right, I need to find Nancy!

At that moment, as if she suddenly had an idea, she quickly rushed out after bidding Larry

goodbye. As she couldn't let Larry find out about Jory and Nancy, she naturally couldn't bring up his name.

—Nancy, there's something I need to speak to you about,|| Joan said anxiously.

—Coincidentally, I have something to tell you too...||

Both of them met up at a café.

—Nancy, I'm sure you have seen the news about Alpire Group's takeover of Larry's subsidiary.

Therefore, I need your help to talk to Jory about...|| Joan pleaded.

Other than Nancy, she didn't know anybody else who knew Jory.

Going through Nancy was the most direct route she could take.  
—Joan, don't worry. I'm here to explain what's going on. Jory doesn't know anything about the takeover. It's true. I just asked...|| Looking intently at Joan, Nancy gradually explained.  
She didn't know whether Joan would believe her, but she believed in Jory. If he denied it, then it meant that he wasn't responsible.  
Joan was puzzled.  
If not Jory, who else could it be?  
Doesn't Alpire Group belong to Jory?  
—No, are you telling me that Jory doesn't know about the takeover? How is that possible?||  
Joan looked at Nancy in disbelief.  
She didn't believe Jory knew nothing but neither did she believe Nancy was lying to her.  
—Joan, listen to me. Jory is also investigating the matter as he only got to know about it after watching the news. So, don't worry.|| Nancy reassured Joan.  
Don't worry? How can I not worry? Given that Larry is skating on thin ice right now, how can I remain calm?  
Joan's eyes were filled with anxiety.  
Perhaps, the world really is unpredictable. Just like Nancy denying the takeover was Jory's idea.  
Can it really be Dustin?  
Joan glanced at her phone. Despite having called him more than twenty times, no one answered.  
—Joan! Joan!|| Nancy gently tapped Joan on her shoulder.  
—Huh?|| She quickly regained her senses.  
—Joan, this matter requires further investigation. I believe in Jory. Since he has declared it wasn't his doing, then it must be so. Hence...|| Nancy held back what she was about to say.  
When she saw how convinced Nancy was, the intensity in Joan's eyes eased.  
No matter how ruthless Jory was, he wouldn't lie to the woman he loved.

—In time, the truth will be revealed. So, don't worry. It's just that, we are running out of time.||

Joan gradually calmed herself down.

That's right, I should trust Nancy.

—By the way, Nancy, did you manage to talk to Caspian? I met him just before this and he

already knows about Jory. Before you tell him the truth, you had better be mindful of that.||

Joan gave Nancy a concerned look.

The sparkle in Nancy's eye reflected the dilemma she was in. She really didn't know how to

broach the topic with him. She was aware of how much Caspian sacrificed for her and had

changed a lot for her sake. But, matters of love can never be forced.

A loveless marriage would only end in disaster.

This was a universal truth.

—I have not told him about it yet as I don't even know how to explain it to him. Joan, I'm sure

you're aware of how obstinate Caspian is. I'm afraid once I tell him, he will blame Jory and...||

Nancy's expression became awkward.

—But, Nancy, one day, Caspian will definitely find out about both of you.|| Joan was worried.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1775

The longer Nancy allowed the matter to drag on, the higher the chances of it blowing up,

not to mention that Caspian was already aware of Jory's presence.

Besides, everyone knew

about Nancy's temperament. There was no way she could resist seeing Jory. If Caspian

found out, she would not be able to get away with just an explanation anymore.

—Joan, why don't you help me persuade Caspian...||

—Come over for dinner today,|| Simon ordered authoritatively.

—Dad, what are you doing? I still have an appointment...|| Nancy was holding Jory's picture

and staring at it with a smile.

—No, you must come home!|| With that, Simon ended the call.

Appointment? She must definitely be going to see Jory. The thought of Jory alone caused

Simon's blood to boil. He wondered what had gotten into Nancy to no longer love Caspian who was so devoted to her. Instead, she just had to choose someone like Jory.

In a blink of an eye, Simon looked a lot older.

—Hello, Caspian? Are you free tonight? If you are, why don't you come over for dinner?||

Simon spoke genially over the phone.

Ever since he found out about Nancy's change of heart in favor of Jory, Simon felt sorry for

Caspian. Despite men's inherent instinct to compete with one another, they were in the best

position to understand one another. As a man, Simon could imagine what would go

through Caspian's mind the moment he found out about Nancy's relationship with Jory.

As tonight's dinner might be the last one shared by the three of them, Simon's eyes were

filled with sadness.

Although Caspian wasn't smart and didn't know how to be romantic, it was undeniable that

he was someone who loved his wife to bits. It was just that fate was unkind to him.

—Oh Dad, what are you up to? Why must you insist I come home for dinner? Can't we have it

any other night? Why does it have to be tonight?|| Nancy grumbled the moment she

entered the dining room.

—Nancy, I'm here.|| Before she could finish, she heard Caspian greeting her enthusiastically.

Why is he here? Nancy glanced at Simon suspiciously.

—Y-You... Why are you here?|| Nancy stuttered.

—I asked him to come as it has been a long time since we shared a meal together. It's so rare

for us to gather.|| Just as he spoke, Simon stood up and headed to the dining table.

—Come, Caspian, all your favorite dishes are being served tonight. I got the kitchen to

prepare them especially for you. Why don't you give them a try?|| Simon gently patted



Caspian on his shoulder.

At that moment, Caspian felt shy given how warm Simon was treating him.

Given how simple Caspian was, he really assumed that Simon invited him over solely

because he wanted the three of them to dine together. However, he found out much later

that he had been kept in the dark by everyone.

—Here, Nancy, this is your favorite.|| Caspian served Nancy a piece of meat.

When she saw the meat on her plate, Nancy couldn't help but frown.

Given that she had grown used to being intimate with Jory, she now resented everything

Caspian had touched.

—Nancy, why are you spacing out? Your husband has served you your favorite food. Go

ahead and eat it,|| Simon reminded her.

—Oh, okay.|| To prevent Caspian from suspecting anything, Nancy forced herself to swallow

the piece of meat.

—Caspian, ever since you and Nancy got married, I seldom have the opportunity to dine with

both of you. Tonight, we definitely must drink to celebrate.|| Just as he spoke, Simon raised

his wine glass.

When he saw how hospitable his father-in-law was, Caspian naturally didn't shy away.

Throughout the night, Simon and Caspian drank together. Both of them spoke and laughed

so raucously that Nancy couldn't tell if they were really drunk or still sober.

—Dad, it's time we take our leave. Caspian has drunk a lot. I'm afraid he won't even be able

to make his way home if he drinks anymore,|| Nancy grumbled softly.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1776

As of that moment, all Nancy could think of was Jory.

However...

—Caspian, Caspian, slow down.|| Nancy helped him into the bedroom.

Given that he was truly drunk, Caspian closed his eyes and started to snore the moment he

slumped on the bed. All this while, Caspian would try his best to suppress his snoring as he was worried he would disturb Nancy. But that night, he was likely too exhausted.

When she watched him lying on his bed, Nancy felt reluctant to leave him.

She recognized that Caspian was a wonderful man. However, she just couldn't bring herself to love him.

—Caspian, I'm sorry that you're not the one I love. Thank you for your patience and

understanding. It's just that we aren't suited to be husband and wife...||

At that moment,

Nancy looked exceptionally serious.

With his eyes closed, she wasn't sure if Caspian could hear her or not, but she definitely

couldn't bring herself to say something so cruel to him when he was awake.

—Caspian, did you hear what I say? Caspian...|| Nancy shook his body gently.

With a turn of his body, Caspian had his back facing Nancy. Smacking his lips, he seemed to

already be in deep sleep.

Suddenly, Nancy's gaze darkened. Perhaps, now is not the right time.

She got up and left

the room.

Unbeknownst to her, Caspian was lying in his bed with tears streaming out of his eyes.

What is love? Love is me waiting for you to return no matter what you have done wrong. I

will be there until the moment you no longer want to return.

Ring! Ring!

—Hello, Caspian?|| Joan answered.

—Joan, I need your help.|| Caspian got straight to the point.

Help?

Joan looked at Larry quizzically as if he knew something. But, Larry shook his head instead.

—I want to give Nancy a surprise. Tomorrow is our third anniversary, so...|| Caspian hesitated

bashfully.

Although Caspian didn't finish his sentence, Joan already knew what he was thinking about.

Hence, she agreed to help him.

In truth, Caspian had noticed that Nancy had been avoiding him regardless of whether she was conscious about it or not.

—Caspian wants to give Nancy a surprise. So, he needs us to help him make some

arrangements,|| Joan explained to Larry softly.

With regards to Caspian's request, both of them were more than delighted to help. If the

surprise could salvage their marriage, it was definitely worth a try. No one wanted to see

Nancy and Caspian head down the path of divorce.

—Nancy, are you free tomorrow? I would like to see you about something.|| Joan gave Nancy

a call at once.

—Joan, if it's for tomorrow, why are you calling me today?|| Nancy took a sip of coffee.

—I'm giving you advance notice given how busy you are,|| Joan replied on purpose.

She was aware that Nancy would definitely be spending time with Jory.

—Tomorrow, Joan wants to meet me about something. So, I won't be able to see you.|| Nancy

held onto Jory's hand with a reluctant expression.

—It's alright. Go ahead with whatever you need to do.|| Jory pinched her cheeks.

The next moment, Nancy blushed bashfully.

That was what a woman in love looked like.

Love was like a poison—it could cause one to lose their senses and also break all their

principles. No one expected Nancy to fall for a man whom she rejected before.

—Nancy, are you free tomorrow?|| Caspian gave Nancy a servile look.

It had been a long time since he saw her smile. Every time she came home, she would greet

him and head to her room, looking exhausted.

—Mmm-hmm. I'm meeting Joan tomorrow.|| Nancy sat languidly on the sofa.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1777

Caspian grinned from the corner of his mouth. Finally, it was the day of their third anniversary. When Caspian and Nancy first got together, he had already made an effort to remember every special occasion—Nancy’s birthday, their wedding anniversary, etc. Romance wasn’t something he knew well but he certainly tried to be romantic.

—Joan, what is it that you want to see me about?|| Nancy looked at Joan inquisitively.

They had never chosen the beach as a venue for their meetings.

—Nancy, tell me, are you really giving up on Caspian?|| Joan looked at Nancy intently.

As both of them had been through a lot in their relationship, Joan felt that it would be a pity if Nancy left Caspian out on impulse.

—Joan, I know. Perhaps it might sound like a joke to you but I really love Jory, and he, me.

Between Caspian and me, the spark is somehow just missing,|| Nancy answered with a serious expression.

Joan realized how adamant Nancy was and there was no way she could change Nancy’s mind.

—Nancy!|| With a bouquet of roses in hand, Caspian suddenly appeared dressed in a white suit. His outfit made Nancy and him look like a wonderful match. Caught by surprise, Nancy stood there stunned as she couldn’t remember what the occasion was.

—Nancy, perhaps this is the last time. So treasure it while you can.|| Joan glanced at Nancy before looking at the approaching Caspian.

Caspian has done more than he ever could. If Nancy doesn’t change her mind, he can only blame fate for his predicament.

Amidst the gentle sea breeze and the warmth from the sun, seagulls were flying far by the horizon while soothing music played in the background. Caspian walked up to Nancy with

the roses in his hand. Despite not being one for words, he was someone that was passionate. His feelings for her were obvious from the longing look in his eyes.

—Nancy, do you still remember? Today is our third anniversary together. All this while, I never knew how to make a girl happy. But, from the day I knew you, I have learned how to remember every special occasion.|| Caspian began explaining in a passionate tone.

Meanwhile, Larry was shocked to see Caspian's current expression. He had never seen this emotional side of Caspian before.

It was obvious how deep his love was for Nancy.

Suddenly, Larry's eyes darkened when he remembered that Nancy wanted a divorce with Caspian.

—This is a gift for you.|| Caspian handed her a box.

After glancing at the people around her, Nancy opened the box. Inside, there was a necklace with both her and Caspian's names engraved on it. However, she could only respond with a forced smile.

—Caspian, why did you go through all this trouble? I'm not a little girl anymore,|| Nancy replied awkwardly.

There was no way she could reject Caspian's gift in front of so many people.

After glancing at Joan and then back at Caspian, Nancy collected herself.

—Let's go grab a bite. Caspian, given how much effort you put into this, I'm sure you must

have prepared some food.|| Nancy changed the topic on purpose.

She really doesn't appreciate it. Joan couldn't help but shake her head. Perhaps, their relationship has passed the point of no return. Divorce is just a matter of time.

Prior to that, Joan had hoped that Nancy would be moved into changing her mind about

Caspian. But right then, it was obvious that all her hopes were dashed.

—Alright, alright, Nancy is famished, so let's go eat!|| Briefly stunned, Caspian quickly

regained his senses.

Larry looked at Joan helplessly while she had a conflicted expression on her face.

As Caspian wasn't someone meticulous, he didn't notice the expression on Nancy's face. If

not for him having overheard Nancy telling him that there was no love between them while

he was drunk, he wouldn't have enlisted Larry and Joan's help.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1778

Suddenly, Joan's phone rang. When she saw that it was Dustin calling, she was shocked.

Over the last few days, she had lost count of the number of times she tried to call him. Right

then, he was finally calling her back.

—Hello? Joan, did you call me?|| Dustin's voice sounded languid.

—That's right, I called you many times but you didn't answer. Where are you now?|| Joan

asked anxiously.

Now that they finally got in touch with Dustin, it was indeed a great news to both Larry and

Joan. He definitely knows something about Alpire Group's takeover of Norton Corporation.

—I'm overseas. Why? I've been feeling exhausted for a while now, so I decided to leave the country.||

Overseas? Why would he suddenly go overseas? Joan looked at Larry in disbelief.

—When are you coming back? I need to talk to you.|| Joan waited in anticipation for Dustin's answer.

—Sure, I'll be back tomorrow.|| After making a little small talk, both of them ended the call.

From Dustin's tone, Joan could sense that he had no idea what was going on. However, he

is very close to Jory and is deeply involved in Alpire Group.

If it's not Dustin nor Jory, who else can it be? Joan couldn't think of anyone else.

—Don't worry. The truth will be revealed once he is back. As long as I'm here, the company

will be fine.|| Larry helped Joan massaged her temple.

Suddenly, he felt guilty as she had to share his burden of worrying about the company.

—Why do you say that, Larry? Your troubles are also mine. Didn't we say so before? No

matter what happens, we will face them together.||

Without any hesitation, Dustin booked a ticket and flew back into the country.

Jory had already gotten in touch with Dustin earlier. When he found out that Dustin had

nothing to do with the takeover, he didn't say anything further.

—Dustin, I'm sure you have heard about Alpire Group's takeover of Norton Corporation's

subsidiary over the last few days.|| Joan looked at him intently.

—Norton Corporation? Subsidiary? Joan, if you want to speak to me about the company, I

think Larry would be in a better position to do so.|| Dustin took a sip of coffee.

The thing he hated the most was her speaking out for another man, even if she did so

willingly. Unfortunately, the harsh reality was that Joan only loved Larry.

—Dustin, stop messing around. Tell me, do you have anything to do with this?|| Joan looked

at him warily as she pleaded.

With her eyes filled with sadness, it was obvious to Dustin how much pain she was in.

However, he just refused to accept the fact that Larry was the one she loved.

—Joan, would you believe me if I told you that I had nothing to do with the takeover?|| Dustin

looked at Joan with anticipation.

He wanted to know if she trusted him.

Joan hesitated at his question.

Who else could it be? I mean, who else has the authority to instruct Alpire Group to execute the takeover?

—Dustin, tell me the truth. Does this really have nothing to do with you?|| Joan asked again.

Dustin snorted as he knew Larry's wellbeing was all that Joan cared about at that moment.

In truth, he wasn't the one behind the takeover but the end result was something that he had wished for. Somehow, someone knew of his intentions and brought forward the takeover plan.

However, he could sense all the sadness and pain she was going through.

Jory is right. Her happiness is what makes me happy, while her sadness naturally affects me

too. By then, his emotions were no longer within his control. Instead, they were simply being dictated by her.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1779

Sometimes, Dustin didn't even understand why he loved her so much. Is it because she is

beautiful? Has a good figure? Or knows a lot?

No, none of the above. Love can never be explained.

It was just a comforting feeling where one could immerse oneself in.

However, this same

feeling was causing Dustin pain.

—Alright, Joan, I'll be frank with you. I am not the one behind the takeover. With regards to

who is responsible, we are still investigating.|| A stern expression suddenly emerged on

Dustin's face.

Despite how much he resented Larry, he wouldn't stoop so low as to utterly ruin him.

Furthermore, he was aware of what sort of fate would befall Larry if Norton Corporation was

taken over. By then, Larry wouldn't be the only one devastated, Joan would definitely feel

the same, which wasn't something he wanted.

—If it wasn't you...|| Joan mumbled. Who else could it be?

Life was indeed complicated. Even such a trivial issue could cause so many other problems,

not to mention all the other issues or people Joan wasn't aware of.

—Larry, I met Dustin today and he denied that he was behind the takeover.|| Joan held Larry's

hand tightly as if to comfort him.



As Larry looked out the window at the pitch-black sky, his expression darkened.

He knew that there were tons of people waiting to harm him, such as the company shareholders, commercial competitors, and even members of prominent families that just didn't like him. All of them saw him as a thorn in their flesh.

—Alright, let's not think about it anymore. Everything will be fine. I'll take care of it.|| As Larry hugged Joan tightly, the strength from his arms provided her with a sense of security.

Faced with threats on all sides, Larry had no choice but to pick up his former boldness and make a comeback within the corporate world.

With his eyes filled with resolve, Larry recovered the determined expression he used to have.

—Larry, do you think the company will...|| Joan stopped halfway.

—No, it won't. Don't worry. As long as I'm still around, I will not let the company come to any harm,|| Larry comforted her as he gently patted her on the shoulder.

—But, we don't even know who was behind the takeover. How are we even going to turn this around?|| Joan looked at him quizzically.

The one who took over Norton Corporation's subsidiary...

Since it was neither Jory nor Dustin...

A cold glint flashed within Larry's eyes.

Perhaps, that person will show himself soon.

Ring! Ring! Larry saw that it was Caspian that was calling.

—Larry, I just heard about what happened to the company. I fell behind because I was busy with Nancy over the last few days. So, tell me what your plans are?||

Caspian remarked with resolve.

Larry was glad that he had a friend like Caspian—someone who was willing to jump through fire for his sake.

—Larry, what do you need done?|| Caspian got straight to the point. He was someone forthright and didn't like beating around the bush. The first time Alpire

Group acquired a Norton Corporation subsidiary, Larry had Caspian observe from the sidelines. But right then, given how the situation had deteriorated, Larry had no choice but to put Caspian to work. Or else, he would be forced to resign by the shareholders.

—Caspian, don't be hasty. The issue isn't as simple as we think. We can't wrongly accuse an innocent, but neither can we let the guilty escape,|| Larry plainly replied. Don't be hasty? Under such dire circumstances, do we even have the luxury to take things slow? Caspian felt extremely anxious.

—Larry, isn't it obvious? Alpire Group is the culprit. They are the ones who initiated the takeover. What is there left to deliberate about?|| Caspian retorted impatiently.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1780

He had long resented Alpire Group because of their earlier attempt at taking over Norton

Corporation and after he heard about Jory's return.

After calming Caspian down, Larry turned on his computer and looked through some data and documents about the company.

Ding! Larry took a quick glance and saw that it was a message notification.

It was a text message from Gabriella: Mr. Norton, are you free for a cup of coffee tomorrow?

Larry was puzzled as to why Gabriella would want to invite him for coffee during such a time. Sensing that she was definitely up to no good, he rejected her right away.

Given that he already had Joan, Larry subconsciously kept his distance from Gabriella.

Gabriella was enraged by his rejection, causing her hatred toward him to intensify.

—Hmph, it seems you have been very busy.|| Gabriella barged into Jory's office.

Jory wasn't surprised by Gabriella's sudden appearance at all. He had accepted their partnership and had seen her for who she truly was.

—What are you doing here?|| Jory asked coldly without even looking up. Gabriella swaggered her way up to Jory. —I'm here to see my partner. Am I not allowed to do so?||

Partner? Jory sneered.

Can it be that she is behind the recent acquisition of Norton Corporation's subsidiary by Alpire Group?

It was human nature to always stir trouble until they got what they wanted. Given that Gabriella couldn't be together with Larry, she naturally couldn't stand to see Larry living happily together with Joan, not to mention she was kicked out because of Larry.

—If you have something to say, spit it out. Or else, leave.|| Jory would never treat a person such as Gabriella with respect. If not for Nancy, he would never even consider working with her.

—Why are you in a hurry to chase me out, Mr. Synder? Aren't we partners after all?|| Gabriella winked at him while smiling deviously. Given how sharp he was, Gabriella's actions did not escape Jory's notice. Prior to this, he turned a blind eye when Gabriella pushed for Alpire Group to acquire Norton Corporation's subsidiary. After all, that was what Dustin wanted too. So, what does she want today?

—Tell me, what do you want?|| Jory glared at her coldly.

—Fine. Since you're so eager to know, I'll not beat around the bush. By now, I'm sure you would have guessed that my objective is to have Larry to myself. The recent acquisition of Norton Corporation's subsidiary is just a trivial matter. As for me, I will help you remove Caspian. How about that? I'm sure that you will be very happy with this deal.|| Gabriella tousled her own hair.

As Nancy was everything to Jory, she firmly believed that it was a deal he couldn't refuse.

However, Jory suddenly recalled that Nancy had told him before that Larry and Joan were

her best friends and she didn't want to see them get hurt.

—So how about it? Mr. Synder?|| Gabriella gave Jory a suspicious look.

—I wonder what will happen if Caspian found out about you and Nancy.

Would he go

crazy...|| Gabriella remarked on purpose.

Jory had no idea what Caspian was like. However, he had heard that

Caspian was extremely

stubborn. If Nancy was somehow hurt because of him, it would

definitely not be worth the

risk. Given how difficult it was for him to get back together with her, Jory

would not tolerate

her getting hurt at all.

However...

—So, Mr. Synder. Have you made up your mind?|| Gabriella looked at

him in anticipation.

Staring back at Gabriella, Jory smiled insidiously. As both of them shook

on the deal, it was

considered to be done.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1781

If they were successful, the result would be in Dustin's interest.

—Larry, have you found out who did it?|| Joan looked anxiously at him.

Recently, Larry was having trouble sleeping every night. Joan felt bad for

him when she saw

the dark circles under his eyes.

—Not yet,|| Larry plainly replied.

—Don't worry, it will be alright. We will find a solution no matter what.||

Larry held her

shoulders tightly.

Other than staying by Larry's side and facing the crisis together, Joan

didn't know what else

she could do.

Fate was always cruel. Just when one's life was at its happiest, it would

throw a wrench into

it so that one would be woken up to face reality and the problems that

came along with it.

—Joan, one day, when I have lost everything, would you still choose to

be with me?|| Larry

suddenly asked softly.

Briefly stunned, Joan quickly regained her senses.

—Of course I will. No matter what becomes of you, I will always be by your side, as long as

you don't leave me.|| Joan snuggled into his embrace.

Those were the most touching words he had heard of recently.

Ever since the incident, all of the shareholders avoided him. They neither offered their help

nor support. Instead, they couldn't wait for him to be removed from his position and leave

in disgrace.

Both Larry and Joan weren't aware that Jory and Gabriella had struck a deal, and Gabriella

had already put her plan into action.

—Have you offended anyone previously?|| Joan asked inquisitively.

Offended someone?

He had tons of enemies and had no time to investigate them one by one.

All he could do

was start from the biggest suspects.

—Sigh, Larry, can it be someone that fancies you? Perhaps, she is trying to gain your

attention by doing this...|| Joan carefully probed as if she had suddenly thought of

something.

—Silly gal, where did that thought come from? You are the only one I care about in this

world. Enough, stop letting your imagination run wild. Everything will be fine. I will get to

the bottom of this.|| Larry stroked her hair gently.

However, after hearing Joan's words. A woman came to Larry's mind.

She had just sent him

a message last night.

Yes, that woman in question was Gabriella.

Can it be that Gabriella is involved? Larry's expression darkened.

She has been chased out of her family. With her current influence, how is it possible for her

to persuade Alpire Group to acquire Norton Corporation's subsidiary?

Unless...

Unless she has something to extort Alpire Group with.

—Hello, help me investigate this woman called Gabriella. That's right...||

Larry recovered his

cold expression of old.

It seemed that there was more to the matter than it meets the eye.

Looking at the dark night sky, Larry fell into deep thought.

—Did you do it?|| Dustin sat on the bar stool as she looked at Gabriella suspiciously.

—So what if I did? Aren't you supposed to thank me?|| Gabriella took a sip of red wine.

Dustin couldn't figure out what Gabriella was thinking. By scheming behind the scenes, isn't

she forcing Larry toward his doom?

In this world, everyone was indeed different. Gabriella was someone ruthless and was willing

to do anything to achieve her objectives. In the event she failed to get whatever she wanted,

she would rather destroy it herself than let someone else have it, especially when it came to

matters of the heart.

As for Nancy, she did whatever she wanted without a care for her reputation. While she was

frollicking with Jory, Caspian was anxiously trying to figure out what he could do to make her

happy.

As the days went by, Larry was still investigating the takeover while Gabriella was waiting for

him to come and see her.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1782

—Nancy, about your divorce...|| In the hotel, Jory stopped mid-sentence. Divorce?

Suddenly, Nancy's gaze darkened. After such a long time, she still didn't have the courage

to tell Caspian about the divorce. But right then, she had no choice but to face reality. She

wanted to make public her relationship with Jory and to marry him. But, Caspian was still a problem.

She knew that he was an obstinate man. If she brought up the divorce suddenly, she was

worried that he couldn't accept it and then...

—Jory, I will definitely tell him about it. It's just that he is stubborn and may not be able to

accept it...|| Nancy lost her courage.

Previously, she had steeled her heart to divorce him. But later on, Caspian would constantly surprise her with touching gestures, all of which caused Nancy's guilt to intensify.

—What kind of person is he? If you feel that it's too difficult for you, I think I can...|| Jory

hugged her slender waist tightly.

—No, Jory, don't interfere. The divorce is between Caspian and me. If you meddle with it, it will only make things more complicated.|| Nancy's eyes were filled with resolve.

She was right. If Caspian found out about Jory and her, he would definitely not let Jory get away.

A desperate man was capable of anything, let alone one as stubborn as Caspian.

However, given how long it had been, Caspian naturally noticed something was amiss.

—Joan, I feel that Nancy has changed,|| Caspian remarked, looking disheartened.

Joan was immediately alert. —How? Caspian?||

—Joan, I'll be frank with you. Nancy and I haven't slept with each other in a very long time.

Furthermore, when I was drunk one day, she even whispered in my ear saying...|| Caspian

recounted what happened the other day.

When Joan saw how dejected Caspian was, she suddenly pitied him. She knew how much

Nancy meant to Caspian, but she was also aware that Nancy loved Jory.

—Joan, actually there's something I have never told you before. Some time ago, I saw Nancy

holding another man's arms walking into the mall. They were hugging and laughing with

each other.|| Caspian's expression darkened.

Holding another man's arm?

Could it be Jory?

Does Caspian already know?

Suddenly, Joan began to worry but it wasn't about Nancy. She was concerned that Caspian

would do something impulsive.

—Did you see who it was?|| Joan carefully probed.

Caspian shook his head. —It was too far away, so I didn't get a good look.||

Luckily he didn't recognize Jory.

—But, I wonder if it was Jory?|| Caspian gave Joan an inquisitive look.

Clasping her hands anxiously, Joan tried to calm herself down.

No matter how foolish a man was, he would naturally become smarter when it came to

matters of the heart. Just like in a marriage, a woman would instinctively know if the man

was up to something. Furthermore, Nancy's obvious treatment of Caspian didn't help

matters at all.

—Caspian, are you overthinking it? Perhaps, it was your father-in-law.||

Joan tried to defuse

the situation.

—Yes, you're right. It might have been him. But from his figure, it doesn't look like him.||

Caspian furrowed his eyebrows slightly.

Of course, it doesn't. Jory and Simon's figures look totally different from each other.

—Didn't you say that it was too far away for you to see properly?

Enough, stop letting your

imagination run wild. Today, it will be my treat. After all, you have been a big help to Larry

given what has happened recently.|| Joan changed the topic quickly.

—Sigh, Joan. Don't be a stranger. Larry is my best buddy. So, I am just doing my duty,||

Caspian replied with a smile.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1783

At that moment, a woman was sitting in a corner of the restaurant, staring daggers at them.

—Gabriella?|| In his office, Larry answered his phone with a frown.

—Alright, I know.|| Larry ended the call. Just as expected, she is working with Alpire Group.

Looking out the window, Larry's eyes flashed with curiosity. What is she really up to?

—Wait, Mr. Norton is busy.|| Suddenly, Dustin barged into Larry's office.

—What are you doing here?|| Larry looked at the intruder sternly.



—I'm just curious as to how much progress you have made with your problem?|| Dustin gloated with a smirk.

—Thanks for your concern. I'm handling it right now.|| Handling it? Dustin scoffed.

—Mr. Norton, I would like to remind you that no matter who it was that acquired Norton Corporation's subsidiary, I would like you to keep your eyes open and not implicate innocents,|| Dustin snapped.

Jory was the heir to Alpire Group which acquired Norton Corporation's subsidiary. Hence, he didn't want Larry to blame Jory for everything. Furthermore, Jory was his best friend and he didn't want Jory to be wrongly accused.

—Don't worry, the truth will be revealed eventually. Regardless of what the result is, someone will be held accountable as I will ferret out the person behind this.|| Larry glared coldly at Dustin.

Ever since Alpire Group repeatedly took over Norton Corporation's subsidiaries. Larry suddenly regained the prowess he used to have in business.

Ring! Ring!

Larry checked his phone and answered.

—Hello, Joan?||

—Sure, sure. Anything will do. As long as it's by you, I will definitely like it. Alright, I'll come back earlier today...||

When he heard Joan's name, Dustin's heart dropped, causing him to leave the office in silence.

—Nancy, I have to let you know that Caspian saw you and Jory at the mall. You have to be more careful and find an opportunity to tell him the truth. You have to do it sooner or later anyway. Besides, it's better than him finding out.|| Joan looked at Nancy with concern.

—But, Joan, I really don't know how to tell him. Did you know that he has been trying his best

to impress me recently?|| Nancy was in a dilemma.

—But what do you plan to do? You want a divorce because you love Jory and not him. If you

don't do something about this soon, a lot more people will get hurt.||

Joan was furious.

Nancy was never like that.

She was the one who insisted on getting a divorce, and now she has doubts about her own decision.

Nancy fell silent.

No matter how persistent a woman was, there would always be times when she wavered.

Nancy wasn't blind to how much effort Caspian had put into the relationship.

Ring! Ring! Her phone suddenly rang.

Checking it, she saw that it was Caspian. At that moment, she instinctively felt like avoiding him.

As the screen continued to blink with his name, Nancy didn't have the courage to pick up.

The phone continued to ring as if it would do so for eternity until she answered. After Joan

gave Nancy a look, she answered the phone on her behalf.

—Hello, Caspian?|| Joan replied softly.

—Oh, Joan, it's you. Where's Nancy?|| Caspian sounded concerned.

—I'm having lunch with her. But she's at the ladies now,|| Joan casually replied.

However, Joan could detect that something was amiss in Caspian's tone, causing her to worry.

—Caspian, what's wrong?||

—Erm, it's nothing. I... erm... let's talk about it some other time.||

Some other time?

Joan was certain something was wrong. What could cause a straightforward man like

Caspian to stutter to that extent?

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Caspian hung up the phone right after.

—What's the matter? What did he say?|| Curious and puzzled, Nancy stared at Joan.

—It's nothing. I'm just wondering how you're doing. Nothing special.||  
Joan decided to just  
keep it to herself.  
She knew that something must have happened with Caspian. As for  
what happened, the  
woman decided to just leave it to Larry. Joan left after chatting for a bit  
with Nancy.  
Even though she was mad, they were still family. Joan had only wanted  
to let Nancy come  
clean to Caspian sooner. That was why she had thrown a tantrum  
previously. She did not  
wish for unintended consequences to happen, nor did she want the two  
people to get hurt.  
Right then, Joan suddenly felt thankful for having Larry around.  
Otherwise, she would have  
no idea what to do.  
—Larry, please talk to Caspian to see if he's alright. I think that  
something's off with him from  
the way he stuttered when he was talking to Nancy today...|| Joan circled  
her arms around  
Larry's and muttered in a low voice.  
—What's the matter? Is Nancy still thinking about divorcing Caspian?||  
Larry combed through  
her hair with his fingers.  
—Yes, she seems quite adamant about it, but she has no idea how to tell  
him.||  
Larry snickered.  
So what if she had said it? Caspian would never agree to it anyway!  
When a man fell in a love with a woman, it would be near impossible for  
him to let her go,  
no matter the circumstances. Caspian was crazy about Nancy. Thus, he  
would never easily  
let go of a woman whom he loved.  
—What's the matter with Caspian today?|| Larry asked in a low voice.  
—I have no idea. He stuttered when he called Nancy today as if there  
was something he  
wanted to say to her, but in the end, he said nothing. So, I'm asking you  
to figure it out. It  
will be easier if you guys talked it out instead...|| Joan said as she toyed  
with Larry's palm.

—Okay, I'll talk to him tomorrow...||

Larry's phone rang right then.

Joan cast a glance at the clock on the desk and creased her brows.

Who is calling at this ungodly hour?

However, she knew that Larry had been swamped with work lately. She turned and looked out the window.

—Mr. Norton, I heard that you're looking for me?|| An enticing voice rang in Larry's ears.

—Yes, we'll talk tomorrow,|| the man replied and was about to hang up.

—Hey, Mr. Norton. You're the one who's looking for me. I have something on tomorrow, and won't be able to make time for you. You have to come over tonight if you want to see me,||

Gabriella cut to the chase and said.

Come over tonight? A cold glint fleeted across his eyes. He turned to look at the woman

beside him, but she had already shut her eyes.

—Send me the address,|| he said before hanging up.

Then, he pecked Joan on the forehead before getting up to leave.

Larry closed the door softly behind him, but it still woke Joan up.

It's already so late. Where is he going? If she heard it correctly, it was a woman's voice on

the other end of the phone.

She got off the bed and walked to the window. After a while, she saw Larry getting into the car.

It should have something to do with work, right? It's already so late.

Larry should know

where the line is; it doesn't matter whether he's meeting a man or a woman. At that

moment, Joan reassured herself over and over.

It was already late night, but the hour did not deter those night-owls.

The city was still abuzz

with people, especially in nightclubs and bars.

—Mr. Norton, you're indeed a man of your words. You made it, even though it's already so

late.|| Gabriella swirled her tall glass of wine; the glint of the ruby liquid was enough to

enchant the weak-minded.

Larry stared at the woman before him with a puzzled look on his face.

How exactly did this

woman manage to bag a deal with the Alpire Group?

—Take a seat.|| The woman gave him an enticing smile. It was apparent that she was already

tipsy.

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—It's already so late. Why did you call?|| Larry peered at her.

—Hmm? What? Have you forgotten that you're the one who's looking for me, Mr. Norton?

I'm making time to meet up with you today...|| Gabriella staggered as she approached Larry.

She made time? Larry snorted.

—You're drunk. We will talk tomorrow.|| Larry got up and wanted to leave.

—Hey, Larry Norton!|| Gabriella reached out to grab his arm and stopped him.

Gabriella widened her eyes and stared right into the man's eyes. It has to be tonight...

Gosh... He's still so charming and handsome.

—I'm not drunk. I'm perfectly sober right now.|| Gabriella swirled the glass in her hands again.

She's perfectly sober?

Bemused, Larry did not believe a single word she said.

—Okay, let's talk.|| The man took his seat again.

At that, Gabriella's lips curled into a triumphant smile.

—Why did you do that?|| Larry decided to not beat around the bush and said.

He did not wish to squander his time with Gabriella, lest the undue delay brought him more trouble.

—Why did I do that? Larry, have you forgotten that I, Gabriella, always get what I want. And if

I can't have it, I'm going to destroy it...|| the woman answered in a low voice as she sipped on her wine.

Her answer was crystal clear.

He could only choose between his company or the woman he loved. If he had chosen the

company, he would have to abandon Joan. On the other hand, he would have to prepare himself for a rebuttal from his shareholders.

What a vicious woman.

Larry eyeballed the woman before him. He had never imagined that the woman was capable of such things.

—Really? Then what is it that you want this time?|| Larry ordered a glass of wine as well.

—You. I want nothing else. But you.|| Gabriella muttered.

—Gabriella, I think you should be well aware that I have a wife. I will not lay a finger on another woman. Besides, I only love her.|| Larry rejected the woman outright.

Joan Watts? Gabriella sneered at the thought.

So what if you already have Joan? You still have to turn to me to solve the problems in your life.

—Larry, let me put it this way. Between your company and the woman you love, which one will you choose?|| Gabriella asked, despite knowing his answer.

Is she really asking me this question? Larry snickered in response.

He thought Gabriella really thought too highly of herself. Did she really think that the company wouldn't be able to survive without her?

However, he knew that the woman would not give up that easily.

—That's it. You're drunk, so you should head home now. I will settle the matters at the company,|| Larry muttered in a low voice.

He did not wish to waste another second on this woman. Even though the company was

important, Larry considered Joan to be his lifeline as well. He had never been threatened like

that in his whole life. Gabriella was the first, and Larry vowed that the woman would be the last one as well.

—Larry!|| Gabriella hurled herself at Larry all of a sudden.

—Gabriella!|| Larry was furious.

Then, she closed her eyes as if she had just fainted.

—Gabriella, Gabriella!|| Larry shook the woman's arms but to no avail.  
She merely slumped in  
his embrace, unconscious.

Any onlookers would have mistaken that they were engaged in a  
passionate exchange given  
Gabriella's exposed clothing and their suggestive manner.

—Gabriella Ward!|| Larry glowered. Meanwhile, a phone in a corner was  
recording the whole  
exchange.

Seeing that she remained unconscious, Larry steadied the woman to his  
car and drove her  
to the hospital.

At that moment, Gabriella had fallen asleep. She thought that the man  
would have brought  
her to a hotel room. To her surprise, the man had brought her to a  
hospital instead.

The next day, Gabriella was stumped to realize where she was.

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—Doctor! Doctor!|| Gabriella shrieked, sending the doctor and nurses  
rushing into her ward.

—What's the matter with me? Who sent me here?|| Confounded, she  
eyeballed the medical  
staff fanned out before her.

—Miss, you had too much to drink yesterday night and was suffering  
from an alcohol  
overdose. A man sent you here...|| A nurse explained to her.

Last night? Alcohol overdose? That's impossible! I was drinking with  
Larry last night, and  
then... I think I drank too much... And then.... What happened?

Gabriella's mind was blank as she sat upright on the hospital bed, trying  
to knock some  
sense back into her head exasperatedly.

She had planned to let Larry send her to a hotel, and then she would try  
to take some

photos or videos that might make Joan jealous. Damn it! I actually  
blacked out from  
drinking too much.

Then, Gabriella got up slowly and made her way to the window.

Ding! Her phone pinged with a message. She took out her phone to  
check her mailbox.

It was an email from Jory containing all the photos of her being together with Larry yesterday night.

An evil glint fled across her eyes that moment.

—Larry, where did you go last night? Why did you need to head out so late last night?|| Joan asked.

The man looked at her and decided to keep what happened last night to himself.

—I have a lot to deal with in the company. So, I will be quite busy lately,|| he explained as he caressed the woman's hair.

Was he really out to deal with the company's matters and nothing more? Joan's face fell, disappointed at his answer.

As an attempt to steer the topic in another direction, Larry asked, —How is Nancy doing?||

He did not wish to disclose what happened with Gabriella to her, apprehensive that Joan might overthink the trivial matter. Besides, she had nothing to worry about anyway, not especially regarding him and another woman. Larry knew he only had eyes for Joan.

—Same old, same old. Nancy didn't love Caspian and thought that both of them would suffer if they stayed together any longer. Hence, she was thinking that it might be better if they separate...|| Joan replied in a small voice.

Am I really telling Larry that? Or is that a message for myself?

—Alright, don't overthink this. Nobody knows what the future holds. I will talk to Caspian, but

I don't think we should get involved in what is clearly a matter to be resolved between the

two,|| the man said as he circled her in his embrace tightly.

Love was blinding and could easily drown people in apprehension as well.

Meanwhile, Joan did not know whether she and Larry would continue to live the rest of their

lives together. However, one thing was for sure – she was going to treasure every moment



spent with him.

—Larry, I'm saying this just in case. If, and I mean if, one day you've met the girl of your

dreams who feel the same about you. You've got to let me know, okay?|| Joan lifted her

head and looked straight into the man's eyes.

Larry was stumped. What is she saying?

Aren't you the woman I love?

—Joan, you're the woman I love, and you will be my last, as well as my only one. Joan, we're

in this for the long haul...|| Larry pinched her cheeks.

Joan was overwhelmed with bliss at that moment. Maybe, just maybe, the voice on the

phone last night wasn't a woman's... Maybe I was just imagining things.

Feeling reassured by her husband's words, she hugged him.

Ding... It was Caspian calling.

—Larry, where are you? I need to talk to you.|| Caspian sounded weary.

Larry cast a glance in Joan's direction with a glint in his eyes.

—Okay, where are you right now? I'll get there as soon as I can...||

Larry knew it was no minor matter if it warranted Caspian asking him out like that.

—Caspian, are you serious?|| Larry looked at the man before him in disbelief.

Never in a million years would he have imagined that Caspian would do such a thing.

However, those words did just come out of his mouth. What the hell is going on?

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—Larry, I don't dare to face Nancy because of this. I know that I'm in the wrong here.|| The

man's voice shook uncontrollably.

Caspian had always loved Nancy, and no other women even came close.

He wasn't sure if he

could forgive himself for what had happened, let alone thinking about if Nancy would ever

forgive him.

—What about that woman? Where is she?|| Larry asked in a low voice.

He never thought Caspian would ever betray Nancy.

—She's still at the hotel... She's asking me to be responsible for her because I've taken her

virginity...|| Caspian kept his head low.

Larry was rendered speechless right then.

He actually did not know much about what was going on between Nancy and Caspian.

Hence, he had always thought that Caspian was in the wrong, while Nancy was adamant

about getting a divorce. It seemed like the relationship had really gone to the point of no return.

—What do you plan to do next?|| Larry regarded Caspian with a serious look.

Caspian was a responsible man, and he would never shirk his duty.

Hence, Larry knew that

this man would not just abandon the woman in the hotel.

—Larry... I... To be honest, I don't know what to do. I love Nancy, and I don't want to hurt her.

But I can't just leave the woman in the hotel...|| Caspian sighed as he shook his head,

exasperated about his next move.

What on earth is happening right now?

While Nancy was trying to divorce Caspian, he just went ahead and had sex with another woman in a hotel?

It's just one thing after another, isn't it?

—What do you plan to do with Nancy, though?|| Larry reminded Caspian.

—I don't know... I don't know... I can't think straight right now...|| Caspian clasped his head in exasperation.

It was Larry's first time seeing him so frustrated.

However, what they did not know was that everything that happened to Caspian was within another man's control.

—Mr. Synder.|| Gabriella appeared in Jory's office all of a sudden.

—Why are you here? Don't come here unless you've got something important.|| Jory spared her no niceties.

Just looking at the woman was enough to spoil his day.

—Mr. Synder, what's with that attitude? We're partners right now. How could you treat your partner like that?|| Gabriella mocked.

Jory snickered. Partner? I've never seen this woman move a finger for me, and yet she dares to call herself my partner. All the talk about letting her handle the thing with Caspian, and yet, nothing fruitful came of it.

—I'm here to break a really good news to you, Mr. Synder.|| Gabriella smiled, deliberately beating around the bush.

What good news?

Jory looked at the woman before him with a puzzled look on his face.

What good news can she possibly bring?

—Why? Are you that busy that you don't even have the time to enjoy good news, Mr.

Synder? Fine then, I'll come again some other day.|| Gabriella turned around and was about to walk out of the office.

Looking at the woman before him, Jory clenched his fist tight.

She's acting all high and mighty just because I was nice to her for one moment. What's next,

huh? Is she going to sh\*t all over my head?

—Stand right there. Get straight to the point, and don't waste my time,|| Jory barked.

He had always loathed others beating around the bush.

Gabriella was stunned by the sudden domineering aura.

—Mr. Synder, why are you so mad? I'm just joking with you. How could you take it so

seriously? Chill, Mr. Synder. Here, have a cup of tea...|| Gabriella tried to appease the man.

She still needed to depend on the man for money to spend, so she couldn't afford to offend him.

Jory took his seat and gauged the woman before him.

—Gabriella, you'd better get this straight. We're only partners. You should know better what

you can or cannot do or talk about. I'm not pinning all my hopes on you for this Caspian

thing.|| Jory threw a derisive look at Gabriella.

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Gabriella knew Jory was right.

He did not need her to get things done.

At the same time, Jory was starting to think that something must have gone wrong with him

when he agreed to work together with the woman.

—Okay, Mr. Synder. I was just joking with you. Why are you getting so worked up? I really do

have a piece of good news for you...|| Gabriella took a seat beside the man.

Jory gauged the woman again.

—Don't worry, Caspian has been dealt with. I always achieve what I set out to do. You're

going to be able to get together with Nancy in no time.|| A wicked glint flashed in her eyes.

Only Gabriella could have been capable of such a despicable act, setting Caspian up so that

the man would leave Nancy out of overwhelming guilt for what he had done.

—Oh, what have you done?|| Jory was starting to get intrigued.

—As for how I've done it, I don't think it concerns you, Mr. Synder. You just need to know

that you're going to be able to be together with the woman of your dreams very soon. Oh

right, don't forget about our deal last time too, Mr. Synder. I really need to thank you for the

photos, though,|| Gabriella muttered in a low voice.

If it wasn't for the man, she wouldn't even have the money to employ a photographer.

—Gabriella, I have no interest in meddling in your business with Larry.

All I'm doing is just

making things easy for you.||

He recalled Nancy saying that both Larry and Joan were her best friends, and he did not

wish to upset her.

—You're right, Mr. Synder. You're just making things easier for me. As for Larry, you have

nothing to do with him.|| Gabriella knew what was on Jory's mind and attempted to appease

the man.

Even though the man was young, Gabriella knew he was actually cunning as a fox.

—Okay, you may leave now,|| Jory did not feel like playing nice anymore. He's asking me to leave already, just like that?

What a ruthless man.

—Okay then, Mr. Synder. I will not disturb you further. I am hoping that you will take good

care of me in the future.|| Gabriella turned on her heels to leave.

She believed that Jory was a man of his words, and he would walk his talk since he had

agreed to work together with her.

After all, businessmen's promises were as good as gold.

When she left, Gabriella's lips curled into a wicked smile, wondering what would happen

next.

—What did you say? Caspian has another woman?|| Joan could not believe the words that

came out of Larry's mouth.

Larry also appeared to be in disbelief.

—No, that's impossible. Caspian loves Nancy. How could he do something like that? Is there

a misunderstanding?|| Joan clutched tightly at her husband's arms and asked.

Larry and Joan had known Caspian for a long time and knew what kind of person he was.

However, nobody had forced him to come clean this time. He admitted to cheating on

Nancy himself.

That was why Larry still thought something did not quite add up.

Knowing Caspian, Larry thought the man wouldn't be so reckless, despite him being drunk.

Then again, Caspian's alcohol tolerance was above average. How would he get drunk that

easily?

—Larry, what really happened? I don't believe that Caspian would do something like this,

even if he's admitted that he did.|| Joan was getting exasperated.

Nancy had fallen in love with Jory some time ago while Caspian had another woman. What

in the world is going on? How could there be so much coincidence?

—Joan, listen to me. Please don't let Nancy know about this just yet. Otherwise, she's going

to overthink this. I think a lot of things don't add up. This is just not who he is. I think we have a lot to clarify in this matter, and we have to help him out. There's no sense that he has to suffer for something that he hasn't done...|| Larry gauged his wife with a serious look on his face.

Caspian was his bodyguard and also his best friend. It was impossible for Larry to stand idly by when his friend had clearly been set up by someone else. There had to be more to this.

Now all they needed was time to straighten out the facts.

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—Alright, don't worry about it. I won't tell Nancy. We have to get to the bottom of this,|| Joan said determinedly.

However, she was not totally convinced either. Joan was worried that it might have

something to do with Nancy.

If this was all planned out by her, then...

No, that's impossible. Even if Nancy was set on divorcing Caspian, she wouldn't have

resorted to such a despicable trick. No, it can't be Nancy.

Joan kept trying to convince herself that Nancy did not do it.

Even though she was keen on getting a divorce from Caspian so that she could be together

with Jory, Nancy couldn't have stooped so low to frame the man.

Besides, Simon wouldn't

have let her off the hook if he found out that his daughter had done this.

Both marriage and divorce should be done in dignified ways.

It seemed like there was more to it, and Joan had a hunch that things were only going to

get worse from then onward.

Suddenly, a person's face popped into Joan's mind.

It was Jory.

That man had always been distant and ruthless to others, sparing no mercy. Could it have

something to do with him?

—Nancy, where are you right now? Do you want to have lunch together?|| Joan decided to

ask Nancy out.

—Joan, I'm out right now. Um, why don't you send me the address and I'll get there as soon

as possible...|| Nancy said as if she was in a rush.

—Who is that? Why the hurry?|| A man's voice could be heard coming from the other end of the phone.

If Joan was not mistaken, it was Jory's.

They are together right now.

Has Nancy really been blinded by love? Why is she getting together with that man,

disregarding her reputation?

Otherwise, why would Caspian get drunk and have sex with another woman?

Joan blamed Nancy for all that happened.

She sighed. But who am I to judge?

Maybe in the olden days, she would be shamed for not staying true to her husband, but

they were no longer in the olden days. Nowadays, Nancy would be avowed as a woman

who was fearless in her pursuit of true love.

Joan felt her head going dizzy right then.

—What's the matter? Are you not feeling well? What if you take a raincheck and go tomorrow

instead?|| Larry massaged her temples and said.

—Don't worry, I'm alright. I have to go there and talk to her. I need to see if this has anything

to do with her. If she's really aware of it, I'm going to be so disappointed in her...|| Joan's

face fell.

She had faith in Nancy, and that was the reason she had given Nancy time for her to come

clean to Caspian. However, she had not expected things to take such a turn.

Life would always get in the way of one's plans, given its unpredictable nature, just like

Caspian would never have imagined that the woman would appear in front of him and that

he would have cheated on Nancy with her.

Meanwhile in the restaurant. —Joan, is there something going on? Why are you rushing to

see me?|| Nancy looked at Joan with a puzzled look on her face.

—Um... Nancy, how are you and Caspian doing right now?|| Joan was trying to sound her out.

—Oh, that. Not much progress on that front. I still haven't told him anything, and I have no idea how to break the news to him either. But I think it will be soon,|| said Nancy as she took a sip of her coffee.

Soon? What does she mean by soon?

—Do you mean you've figured out how to break the news to him?|| Joan pressed on.

—Yeah. I mean, there's really nothing left between Caspian and me. We're better off as friends, and a divorce is really inevitable, and I think better sooner rather than later. I'm planning to come clean to him during the weekend,|| Nancy explained while she kept her head low.

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Judging from the way she talked about Caspian, Joan thought that she did not sound like she had any idea what happened.

—Nancy, did Jory ever mention anything about giving you a hand at that?|| Joan asked the woman before her while she carefully gauged her reaction.

Nancy was stumped at first but soon regained her composure.

—He did mention that he wanted to help me take care of Caspian, but I rejected him. I didn't want him getting involved. I mean, this divorce is really just between Caspian and me. Joan, you know how Caspian can get. If he knew about Jory, I think...|| Nancy paused as she could not bear to finish her sentence.

What? Is that what she means when she talks about coming clean to Caspian?

What is Nancy thinking, really?

—Nancy, please tell me what's on your mind. Are you going to keep the thing about you and



Jory from Caspian?|| Joan asked exasperatedly.

Yes, she was indeed planning to hide it from Caspian. She did not want to let Caspian know

because she knew that her husband would hunt down Jory with a knife in his hand.

Joan was rendered speechless.

—Please just tell Caspian everything.|| Joan looked at Nancy with a hopeful look.

Nancy kept her head low instead.

Joan did not tell Nancy about the thing with Caspian. She just wanted to know if Nancy had

any idea about it. Right then, Joan knew that her friend was not aware of what had

happened.

Didn't Jory tell her?

Joan did not know who else would have the motive to frame Caspian.

However, Jory was an

experienced businessman. It seemed too tacky for him to do something like that.

—Joan, are you looking for me to talk about this?|| There was a hint of sorrow in her eyes,

perhaps it was the guilt she felt toward Caspian.

—Yes. I just wanted to ask when you are planning to tell Caspian about you and Jory,|| Joan

looked at the woman before her with a determined look on her face.

She had hoped that Nancy would come clean to Caspian about everything. However, it

seemed like Nancy did not have the same intention in mind.

—Okay, Joan. I will tell him everything, including the thing with Jory.||

Nancy suddenly

changed her mind.

Pleased, Joan smiled.

This was the Nancy whom she had known. As we sow, so shall we reap.

We are accountable

for things that happen in our life.

If Nancy had told Caspian about the thing with Jory before Caspian told her about the

woman in the hotel, maybe Caspian would not be as hurt.

Joan's face fell at the twisted turns of events.

She felt sick at how far some people would go just to get what they want.

Even though she could understand where Nancy was coming from, she did not agree with what she had done.

It was a reckless and irresponsible act, not to mention selfish.

—Joan, don't worry. I will tell Caspian everything.||

The look in Nancy's eyes told Joan that she had not judged her friend wrongly.

After having a meal, the two women headed home.

In the room, Caspian was laying on the bed as he stared blankly out front.

The man was lost

in his thoughts, and even oblivious to the sounds of Nancy opening the door.

Caspian would always be the first to notice when Nancy was home, and he made it a habit

to take her bag from her. However, it was different that day.

Nancy was puzzled to not see Caspian.

—Caspian? Caspian?|| Nancy called out his name.

However, Caspian was deep in his thoughts and did not give her any reaction.

—Caspian! Caspian!|| Nancy kept calling.

This was her first time not being greeted by Caspian after she had gone home.

She found the pin-drop silence in the house odd.

That's weird. Nancy slowly made her way to the room.

After pushing the door open, she noticed that a man was laying in bed, and it was Caspian.

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—Caspian?|| Nancy called out gently.

Still, Caspian did not respond. Nancy slowly made her way to the bedside.

—Ah? Oh, Nancy, you're back. When did you come back home? Are you hungry?|| Caspian set

his back straight and looked at the woman before him.

What is the matter with him today? Why is he in a daze?

Bemused, Nancy regarded Caspian.

However, Caspian was still contemplating whether he should tell Nancy about what

happened between him and the woman in the hotel.

Maybe we would get divorced if I told her, and maybe Nancy wouldn't forgive me her whole

life. But if I don't, then this will haunt me for the rest of my life.

Man, what should I do...

—Um, Nancy, are you tired? What did you do today? Do you want to eat something? I can

make something for you...|| Caspian was trying to appease her.

What is the matter with Caspian today? The longer he's acting like this, the more uneasy

Nancy felt.

—Um, Caspian, please don't act like that. I'm not tired. Don't worry, I'm all good.|| Nancy

managed an awkward smile.

Caspian felt a pang of guilt as he looked at his wife.

What should I do? Should I just tell him everything and explain it to him?

Meanwhile, Nancy was debating with herself.

What they did not know was, the two of them had the same thing in mind. Caspian had no

idea if he should be honest to Nancy either.

—Caspian, there is something that I need to tell you..|| Nancy spoke all of a sudden.

What is she saying? Does she already know about it?

Caspian suddenly felt apprehensive.

—Nancy, I have something to tell you today too...|| Caspian looked at the woman with a stern

look on his face.

Caspian looked more handsome than ever that day.

—Why don't you go first?|| Nancy said.

—No, ladies first. You should go first...|| Caspian passed the ball back to her.

Nancy hesitated for a moment but decided to just tell Caspian about herself and Jory.

She would have to tell him sooner or later anyway. It was just a matter of time. At least she

would feel better if she had told him right then, and she would be more at ease whenever

she was together with Jory.

—Caspian, I don't know if you've noticed it. But I think something is missing between us,

don't you think so?|| Nancy looked at her husband.

Yes, what they lacked was love.  
They were from different worlds, and yet somehow had been forced to come together. It was obvious that they would not be happy together.  
—Caspian, I am really grateful for the way you cared me about this whole time. Really, you're the best man I've come across, but don't you think there's no chemistry between us? It's like, there's no love.||  
Nancy knew that Caspian had been giving his best ever since they had gotten married. He was trying his best to be a good husband and a good man to her. However, that was not what Nancy wanted. She wanted to feel herself being in love, but that's something she hasn't felt when she's together with Caspian. There was no romance nor love.  
She had thought about just living the rest of her life that way, but then Jory came along, and she knew she could no longer go back to the way it was. Jory had awakened and renewed her faith and longing for romantic love.  
—So, let's get divorced.|| Nancy kept her head low.  
Caspian was thunderstruck.  
The man had not expected that the woman was asking for divorce not because of him, but because of herself.  
Everything seemed too absurd to be true. So my wife has another man out there, and she's the one to break the vow of our marriage.  
Caspian snorted. So what? I've cheated on my wife too. How ludicrous can our marriage get?  
—Who is the man?|| Caspian asked coldly.  
—Caspian, please listen to me. It has nothing to do with the man. It's all my fault...|| Nancy was almost begging him.  
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—Is it Jory Synder?|| A cold glint flashed across his eyes.  
—What is the man's name?|| Caspian demanded in fury.

Yes, they had both cheated on each other, but the nature of it was starkly different.

Nancy had cheated on him both mentally and physically, falling for a man when she was still

wife to another man, consciously. On the other hand, Caspian's mistake was an unconscious

and unintended one, when he was drunk out of his wits.

—Caspian, please calm down. Please...|| Nancy clutched the man's hand, afraid that he might

dash out to seek revenge on Jory.

—Nancy, tell me! Did he force you into it? Tell me!|| Caspian snapped at the woman before him.

He felt like killing Jory right then.

Caspian could not tolerate, let alone accept her mistake.

She was consciously falling for that man.

Caspian was not a sophisticated man, but he knew exactly what she meant.

—Caspian, I'm sorry. It's all my fault. Please calm down...|| Nancy stopped him in his tracks.

—Caspian, I thought you had something to tell me? Please, tell me. I'm listening...|| Nancy

reminded the man, hoping to stop him.

Caspian was suddenly reminded of the thing that he was about to tell his wife.

Yes, it was the same story, but it was a difference of night and day.

Caspian went silent all of a sudden.

—What's the matter, Caspian? What is it that you want to tell me?||

Nancy looked at her husband expectantly.

All of a sudden, Caspian dashed out of the room like a madman.

—I will tell you later!|| The sentence hung in mid-air and left her all alone in the room.

Nancy started to get apprehensive after her husband had left.

She took out her phone and called Joan.

—Joan, something bad happened, Caspian...|| Nancy stuttered.

—What's the matter with Caspian? Calm down and tell me.|| Joan sprung up from her bed.

Something must have happened to Caspian for Nancy to lose her cool like that.

—Joan, Caspian... he dashed out of our house. I told him everything. He...||

Nancy's face fell.

So is Caspian going after Jory? Nancy nudged at Larry who was just beside her.

—What's the matter?|| Larry rubbed his eyes.

—Did you mention Jory at all?|| Joan asked in a hurry.

—I did not mention his name, but Caspian guessed it right. Joan, what happens if Caspian

goes after Jory? You know how he is, he's not going to let Jory off the hook...|| Nancy's voice

was shaky.

She was right. Given Caspian's personality, he would not let Jory off easy, even if Nancy had

not specified that it was him.

—Okay, Nancy. You need to stop crying. I'll get to your place with Larry right now. We'll look

for Caspian together, alright? Don't panic...|| Joan coaxed her friend.

The two women hung up the call after Joan calmed her down.

Nancy looked for Jory's contact and called him afterward.

—Where are you right now?||

—At home. Are you coming over?|| Jory asked.

—Um, you'd better stay at home and don't head out. Remember that, okay?|| Nancy

reminded him.

Stay at home and don't head out? What does she mean?

Jory was puzzled.

Why can't I head out?

—Nancy, what's the matter with you? Did something happen? Why do you sound like you're

in a rush?|| Jory frowned.

Something must have happened. Otherwise, the woman would not have said something so

odd.

—Nothing. Um, a fortune-teller told me not to head out of the house tonight. I'm just asking

for you to stay home too.||

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Jory was skeptical of Nancy's advice. He was befuddled as to why the woman suddenly

believed in fortune-tellers, but he knew for sure that something must have happened.

Larry drove Joan to go look for Caspian.

—Quick, call him,|| Larry egged her on.

However, no matter how many times Joan tried calling Caspian, the man just would not pick up.

—He didn't answer.|| Joan looked exasperatedly at her husband.

They had no idea where Caspian would be right then, and could only look for him like headless chickens.

Larry and Joan went everywhere they thought Caspian would be, but there was no sight of him.

In the end, they thought there was only one place the man could possibly head to – Jory's place.

However, to their knowledge, the man did not know where Jory's house was.

—Hello, Nancy? Do you know if Jory is home?|| Joan decided to call Nancy and ask.

—I know. He is. Joan, would you guys come to pick me up? I need to be with you guys. I

don't want anything to happen to the two...|| Nancy said with a shaky voice.

Larry immediately turned his car around to pick Nancy up.

However, right then...

—Come out! Come out, you b\*st\*rd! You coward! Come out right now!|| Caspian berated in front of Jory's door.

—Jory Synder, you'd better get your \*ss out here right now!||

Jory was furious to hear the degrading commotion out his door.

Who has the audacity to reprimand me right in front of my door, and at this hour?

The man headed for his window upstairs and noticed a furious man downstairs at his door.

He did not know the man.

—Jory Synder! You get the hell out of there right now! You had the guts to seduce my wife

and yet you don't have the balls to admit it? Huh!|| Caspian shouted.

Seduce his wife? Jory furrowed his brows.

He finally knew why Nancy had called to ask for him to stay at home.

—Synder! Get the hell out of there right now! Damn it!!

So, he is Caspian.

—Get out, you coward!! Caspian did not appear like he was going to give it up.

Jory thought he would have to face the music sooner or later.

He clutched his fist tight.

Ding... It was Nancy calling.

—Jory, please don't head out there... Please don't...|| Nancy was almost begging him.

—Nancy, why shouldn't I head out there? This has to be dealt with sooner or later,|| Jory said

as he looked at the man banging on his door downstairs.

—No, Jory. Please don't go out first. I'll talk to him later.||

Boom!

A heavy downpour ensued after a deafening sound of thunder. However, despite Caspian's

continuous bawling, the man inside the house did not seem to be bothered by it.

—Hey! Will you shut the hell up? Look at the time, you idiot!! An aunty upstairs shouted at

Caspian.

Onlookers passing by looked at Caspian like he was a freak, but there were some who

cheered him on. requesting him to continue berating.

—Caspian!! All of a sudden, Nancy called out after him.

At the same time, Larry and Joan got off the car.

Nancy had not expected Caspian to really go after Jory like this.

—Larry, why are you here?|| Caspian was dumbfounded to see Larry.

—What are you doing here?|| Larry asked in a cold tone.

He knew that Caspian was a straightforward man, but there were civil ways of dealing with

things, and this was not one.

—I'm here to look for that Synder man! He took advantage of Nancy. I'm here to seek justice

for her!! Caspian said in a resolute tone.

He took advantage of Nancy?

Larry looked at Nancy, then at Joan. He knew that the woman were keeping secrets from



him.

—Caspian, it's really late now. Let's talk about this later. You're disturbing other people...||

Larry looked at the surroundings and said.

Caspian could not care less even if he was tearing the neighborhood down. So what if the

cops come? I'm not the only one who's done something wrong here!

—I'm not afraid! Synder! You b\*st\*rd! Come out right now if your balls are still attached to

you! Get the hell out of there! You have the balls to do it but no guts to admit it huh!||

Caspian continued to scream and shout.

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—Caspian, it's not what you think. Let's go back and talk. I'll explain everything to you...||

Nancy clutched at Caspian's arm as she pleaded earnestly.

Meanwhile, Joan cast a glance at Larry, and the woman was at a loss for words. Yes, she had

kept the fact that Nancy was cheating on Caspian from him, and Larry seemed to have

sensed it as well.

—There's no need to head back. I can give you an answer right now if you're still keen to

listen.|| Jory appeared all of a sudden.

—Jory!|| Nancy was surprised at the sight of him.

The man looked like he was ready for a confrontation.

He was not afraid, and he did not feel like there was a need to be.

It's either you're in love, or you're not. Why complicate things and drain everyone's energy

with your ridiculous notion of what love is?

—Jory, you b\*st\*rd!|| Caspian hurled his fist at the man as he bawled.

Jory did not try to dodge the punch. Instead, the man managed to hold his fist with just one

hand.

—Do you know what kind of man Nancy dislikes? She dislikes men who only know to resort

to violence to solve his problems,|| Jory replied impassively.

Caspian glowered at the man before him. I should have hit harder.

—Caspian, let's just go back now, okay? I'll explain everything to you.

This has nothing to do

with Jory. This is all my fault...|| Nancy's voice was shaky.  
Judging by what was happening before his eyes, it became clear as day  
to Larry what was  
going on.  
So, it was not just Caspian. Nancy had an affair too.  
Larry sighed at the revelation.  
All of a sudden, he cast a wary glance at Jory.  
Perhaps what happened to Caspian had something to do with Jory?  
Any man would have caved in front of a woman he loved, including  
Caspian, despite how  
strong-headed he was.  
In the end, Caspian relented as he could not bear to upset Nancy  
further. —Okay, it's already  
late. We'll talk tomorrow. Jory, man up and face me tomorrow!|| Caspian  
demanded.  
Jory snorted. He had never been one to chicken out.  
—No problem, I'll be there tomorrow!|| A cold glint flashed across Jory's  
eyes.  
He had heard a lot about Caspian, and he finally got to meet the man.  
Just as rumored, he  
was a simple, yet stubborn man. No wonder Nancy did not like him.  
It was destined that their peaceful lives would come to an end. From  
then onward, it was  
doomed that Nancy and Caspian would never be able to keep up  
appearances as a happy  
couple, no matter how hard they tried to.  
—You already know about Nancy and Jory. Why didn't you tell me?||  
There was a hint of  
disappointment and even fury in Larry's voice.  
—Larry, I didn't intend to keep it from you. I had only known about it  
just recently anyway. I  
didn't tell you because Nancy promised me that she would come clean  
to Caspian as soon  
as possible, and I was afraid about you telling Caspian. You know how he  
is...|| Joan lowered  
her head in an admission of guilt.  
—Joan, what's the matter with you? I'm really close to Caspian, but I  
know to toe the line. Do  
you think I'd have no sense in what to tell him? Now that Caspian has  
known everything,

how are we supposed to calm him down?|| Larry snapped, as he pressed down hard on the steering wheel.

A pang of guilt hit Joan hard right then.

She was just keeping a secret for Nancy because she was keeping a promise for her friend.

—Okay, I'm sorry for flipping out on you like that. I shouldn't have put you in a difficult position. But you have to promise me, Joan. Please don't keep this kind of thing from me ever again, okay? We need to be mentally prepped to deal with a bombshell like that...||

Larry circled her into his embrace.

He knew he acted rashly just now. However, it was out of his fear that Caspian might have acted out of impulse.

—But Larry, what should we do now?|| Joan looked at her husband helplessly.

—We can only see how things go tomorrow...||

Back in the house, Nancy sat by her bed and stared blankly out at the night sky, tears brimming in her eyes. Meanwhile, Caspian sat in the living room, his gaze empty. Larry hugged Joan in her embrace, all of them lost in their own thoughts respectively.

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All of them had a sleepless night.

The next day, warm rays of sunshine shone through the window and into the room.

However, the room felt oddly frigid to Joan.

—Let's go and have a look. They'd better not make a scene,|| Larry put on his clothes and said.

They had booked an entire café for the confrontation.

Caspian, Nancy, Jory, Larry, and Joan were there early as well.

If it wasn't for Nancy holding Caspian back, the man would have hurled a fist at Jory.

—Jory, aren't you going to explain yourself?|| Caspian threw daggers at the man before him, trying hard to suppress the urge to throw a punch at Jory.

—Explain? Caspian, it seems like you do not understand love at all. There is no logic in love, only feelings. And Caspian, Nancy simply doesn't feel that way about you. Why don't you just do her a favor and let her go?|| Jory cut to the chase and said. He was right. Every moment with Caspian was excruciatingly unbearable for Nancy while every second with Jory was spent in bliss and contentment. It was a difference between night and day.

—You don't have the right to butt your nose in our business, Synder!|| Caspian smacked the table in exasperation.

Jory sneered at Caspian who was opposite to him.

—My goodness, who is that? The café is fully booked? Did you guys buy this place or what?||

All of a sudden, Gabriella showed up at the café with a woman and mocked the group.

Caspian was stumped at the sight of them.

The woman whom Gabriella brought along was the woman whom Caspian had slept with.

—Why are you here?|| Caspian cast a dubious look at the woman.

Gabriella looked at Caspian, then back at the woman behind her, and an evil smirk flashed across her face.

The others were dumbfounded by Gabriella's presence as well. Nobody had expected that

the woman would show up here. But what they did not know was, Gabriella was actually the mastermind behind the elaborate plan.

—I couldn't contact you. I'm really afraid that you'd just abandon me,|| the woman behind

Gabriella said sheepishly before she rushed to clutch Caspian's arms.

Nancy was flabbergasted at the sight before her.

One look at Gabriella, and Larry knew that nothing good could happen when that woman was around.

—Didn't I ask you to stay at the hotel? Why are you here?|| A frisson of annoyance fled across Caspian's face.

Larry's face fell at the events unfolding before him. He knew that things were not as simple as it appeared to be. Larry knew he had to stop things from spiraling out of control.

The man gave Joan a look, and she immediately knew what he meant.

—Nancy, my stomach hurts. Could you accompany me to the hospital?||

Joan clutched at her stomach and appeared to be in agony.

—Huh? Joan? What happened to you? Why would you have stomachache all of a sudden?||

Nancy rushed to Joan's side.

—Maybe I ate something wrong yesterday. Could you accompany me to the hospital?|| Joan

looked at her friend expectantly.

Nancy turned around to look at Caspian, then at the woman who was clutching Caspian's hands. Then, she hurriedly steadied Joan out of the place.

—Hey, why are you guys leaving? The good show's just about to start. Don't leave...||

Gabriella chided.

A good show? Larry snickered at her words.

You've arranged all of this, haven't you?

—Nancy, please take Joan to the hospital first. Let us deal with this on our own.|| Larry looked solemnly at Nancy.

Nancy turned to look at Joan, to which she replied with a firm nod.

—Okay, I'll take Joan to the hospital,|| Nancy muttered in a low voice.

—Hey, Nancy, don't leave just yet. Your husband has some explaining to do... How could you

leave right now...|| Gabriella was obviously trying to sow discord between the couple.

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Gabriella was indeed a troublemaker who couldn't bear to see other people happy.

—Nancy, you have to believe in me and Larry.|| Joan grabbed her friend's hand to reassure her.

The two women did not linger and headed out of the café.

—Okay, we need to lay everything on the table, be it Nancy or Caspian. I think you guys are

well aware that now is no time to bicker. We need to come up with a solution to sort out

this mess. Violence will get us nowhere,|| Larry spoke up with a stern look on his face.

Caspian turned to look at Jory, then back at Larry.

He believed in Larry. He's like a big brother to me.

—How do you plan to sort this out, then?|| Jory asked as he sipped on his coffee.

All of a sudden, Larry dragged Caspian to one side and looked straight into his eyes.

—Caspian, what happened between you and Nancy? Is there any way you guys can go back to the way it was?||

Caspian lowered his head, the glint in his eyes turned dull.

The look on his face was a roaring statement. Of course, Larry caught onto his friend.

—Okay, Caspian. Do you know what love is?|| Larry asked.

—Love is when you hope to see the woman you love finds happiness.

You will be happy if

you see her smiling...|| Larry explained.

Caspian knew what his friend meant, he just did not know how to express himself.

—Larry, I'll listen to you,|| Caspian said suddenly.

Larry patted his shoulders and gave him a slight smile.

He was relieved to have someone like Caspian as his best friend.

—Caspian, if you wish to see Nancy happy, then you should let her live the life which is

possible for her to find happiness.||

It was clear as day what Larry was trying to say.

—And you've been framed for the affair. It's not Nancy, it's Gabriella. As to why she's doing

this, we'll talk when we get back,|| Larry said in a hushed tone.

Caspian clenched his fist tight.

—Mr. Norton, how do you have the heart to worry about other people when you haven't

even solved your own problems?|| Gabriella said derisively.

She still remembered that Larry had sent her to the hospital after she was drunk, and how

he had ruined her carefully thought-out plan.

—I will deal with my own problem. There's no need for others to worry about me,|| Larry retorted coldly.

Jory sat aside and transfixed his gaze at Caspian. He could not care less what happened between Larry and Gabriella.

—Mr. Synder, Caspian is like a brother to me. But he is Nancy's husband, at least as of now he still is. Don't you have a bit of explaining to do about that woman?|| Larry snapped as he pointed at the woman whom Gabriella brought along.

Jory eyeballed the woman and snickered in response.

—What does it have anything to do with me?||

A cold glint flashed across Larry's eyes.

—Nothing to do with you? To my best knowledge, Caspian has a very high alcohol tolerance,

but he was so drunk that he had sex with the woman that night. I think Gabriella should

know about this better than anyone else,|| Larry said as he cast a sideways glance at Gabriella.

Yes, I'm involved in this, but what can he do? His company is in turmoil, and he already has

enough to deal with. Yet, he still has the time and energy to clean up after Caspian. Is Larry

out of his mind?

With the thought in mind, Gabriella fumed with fury.

Actually, Larry was not even sure if it had anything to do with Gabriella. However, he trusted

his instincts. That was the reason he asked Joan to take Nancy away.

—Why should I know anything about it? I didn't do it.|| Gabriella denied Larry's accusation.

Jory cast a glance in the woman's direction, thinking that things might not be as simple as

he thought they would be. Given how Caspian felt toward Nancy, it was very unlikely that he

would cheat on her. The only possibility would be that he was framed by someone else.

—Good. We're going to find out if it has anything to do with you,|| Larry snickered.

What is he up to now? Gabriella could not help but wonder as she looked at the man before her.

He has nothing against me. Only the woman and I know about this.

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Ding! Larry's phone pinged.

It was a video sent by Joan.

The video clip clearly showed Gabriella meeting up with the woman, and everything that happened in the hotel.

—This is the truth,|| Larry said as he handed over the phone to Caspian. So, I was drugged that day.

I was framed all along.

—Now it's clear that Caspian had been set up by someone. As for what happened between

Nancy and Jory, well, I think you guys know more than I do,|| Larry said as he looked in Jory's direction.

—What did you say? Caspian was framed?|| Nancy widened her eyes in disbelief as she looked at Joan.

—Yes, given how Caspian is, it's impossible that he would cheat on you. Nancy, Caspian really loves you. Aren't you going to reconsider?|| Joan looked at Nancy with a worried look.

She was not worried that Jory might mistreat Nancy, because she knew that the man loved her. However, she just could not bear to see Nancy and Caspian getting divorced.

A family was falling apart just like that. Nobody would have liked to see that happen.

—Joan, there is really no love between me and Caspian, but it's different between me and

Jory. We are in love. A marriage without love is just an empty shell, and nobody is going to

be happy.|| There was a hint of sorrow in Nancy's eyes.

Even though she was disheartened to part ways with Caspian, Nancy knew there was no

point keeping up with a marriage that simply didn't work anymore.



—Okay, since you've already thought this through, I'm not going to say anything further. I

just hope that you don't regret your decision in the future.|| Joan patted Nancy's shoulders

and decided to just support and respect her friend's decision in the matter.

Not long after, Caspian and Nancy got a divorce.

The two of them were no longer a couple, but they stayed friends.

Even though Caspian's thing was settled, everything remained a mess in Larry's company,

and that left him feeling more and more anxious as days went by. Joan felt her heart ached

when she noticed Larry being tense all the time.

—Larry, don't you have a better way to deal with this?|| Joan asked as she lay in the man's embrace.

—Alpire Group had taken over the subsidiary company of the Norton Corporation. Unless

they are willing to hand it back to me, I really don't see another way out of this,|| Larry sighed.

Joan's face fell after listening to him.

—Joan, I will be really busy recently. Why don't you take some time off and head overseas?||

Larry carefully regarded the woman in his arms.

He knew she wouldn't agree to it. She would have chosen to get through this hurdle

together with him. However, he really could not find the time to deal with everything at

once. The problems at the company had already taken a big chunk of his attention and

time, and Larry knew he would not have the energy to deal with other things, not especially

if anything should happen to Joan. He thought that it might be better for her to take some

time off rather than him ignoring her from being too swamped with work.

Joan lifted her head to look straight into the man's eyes, and she caressed his hair gently.

—Okay.|| Joan nodded her head.

Did she just say yes? Really?

—I will go find you as soon as the matter at the company has been dealt with, and then we will go on a trip together.|| Larry looked lovingly at the considerate woman.

Joan knew he was just coaxing her. She knew there were a lot of uncertainties about resolving his problem at work. However, she believed that her man would pull it through like he always had. Even though Gabriella coveted him, Joan believed that Larry was a loyal man and that he would not just abandon her. She knew he was between a rock and a hard place. Larry just didn't want me to worry about him.

Joan started to pack after they had planned everything out.

—Joan, are you really leaving?|| Nancy cast a curious look at her.

—Yes, Larry is really busy these days. I don't want to weigh him down.||

Joan managed an awkward smile.

How she wished she could help him out with the company matters.

Joan lifted her head to look at the sky, and a wave of helplessness washed over her.

Only Larry, Nancy, and Caspian knew that Joan was heading overseas. As a result, Dustin and Jory were kept in the dark about the matter.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1798

Chapter 1798 Why Are You Here

After Joan had gone overseas, the house felt empty to Larry every time he went home.

Hence, the two of them would be engaging in sweet-talking on the phone for over two hours every day, just like any other couple in a long-distance relationship.

Moreover, they had endless topics to talk about.

Not long after, Dustin had gotten the news on Joan being overseas and gave the latter a call.

—Where are you right now?|| Dustin asked in a low voice.

—Why are you looking for me?||

Joan thought it was better for her to keep some distance from Dustin, lest Larry might overthink.

The distance made the heart grow fonder, but also more space for each of them to feel insecure.

—Nothing, I'm just asking. How are you doing lately?|| Dustin asked. Joan found his questions odd. She hung up the call after brief exchanges. Who knows what is on the man's mind?

Ding...

Dustin looked at the caller ID, and picked up right away.

—I've figured it all out. You can head there right away. Joan is there alone because Larry is busy with work.||

Dustin was overjoyed to hear the news.

So Joan was all alone. Does it mean that I'm finally getting my chance?

Dustin hurriedly packed his luggage and booked a flight overseas.

Larry, if you're too busy to take care of her, then let me do the job. A wicked grin flashed across his face.

Meanwhile, Joan was laying on an armchair and enjoying the sea breeze. Sometimes, enjoying a little sea breeze was enough to make one feel contented and blissful.

Ding...

Joan cast a glance at the caller ID, and tossed her phone aside.

Despite her ignoring her phone, the calls just kept coming in.

Joan picked up her phone and put it on the speaker phone out of frustration.

—Joan, I'm hurt right now. Could you come pick me up?|| Dustin said deliberately.

Joan panicked.

What's the matter? Why is he hurt? And why is he calling me?

—You should go to the hospital if you're sick,|| Joan said as a matter-of-factly.

What is he calling me for if he's hurt? Besides, I'm not even in the country.

—No, I just got off the plane, and I can't walk. Please come pick me up,|| Dustin replied.

What did he mean by he just got off the plane? Is he... here?

—No, Dustin. What do you mean? Where are you right now? Did you say you're just getting

off a plane?|| Joan thought her ears were playing a trick on her.

—Joan, could you stop with the nagging? I'm really hurt and it's so painful. Just come pick me

and my luggage up.|| Dustin pretended as if he was in a lot of pain.

Joan was a kind-hearted and innocent woman. Naturally, she was deceived by Dustin's

words.

Joan rushed to the airport, and yelled his name out loud, —Dustin!

Dustin!||

—Hey, Joan! I'm here!|| Dustin waved at the woman with all his might.

Finally, I get to see her again. It's okay that you refuse to tell me where you are. I can figure

it out on my own.

—How are you? Where are you hurt?|| Joan rushed to the man's side.

Dustin could no longer hold it in and burst into a chuckle.

Joan knew that she had been deceived once again when the man broke into a chuckle.

—Dustin, do you think this is funny?|| Joan was getting mad.

However, she was mostly surprised seeing him there. She had not told him her whereabouts

and was befuddled that he could still find her nevertheless.

—Hey, why are you here?|| Joan asked.

—I'm here on a holiday. I've been too busy recently, and I need to take some time off.|| Dustin

replied coolly.

Isn't the timing too convenient for him?

What will Larry think if he knows about this?

Joan's face fell at the thought.

No, I cannot possibly let Larry know about this. Otherwise, I'm never going to hear the end

of it. I should just stay away from him.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1799

—Okay, now that you're alright, just find yourself a place to stay. I'll get going first.|| Joan

turned on her heels to leave.

—Joan, where are you staying?|| Dustin asked warily.

I'm out of my mind if I tell this man where I'm staying.

—Just, someplace. Alright, I have something on. I need to leave.|| Joan turned around to leave right after.

It was time for her and Larry's daily phone call. Even though they were physically apart, the distance was not a problem for them to keep in contact with each other every day.

This has to be love.

However, deep down, Joan felt like there was something wrong somewhere. She just did not know what it was. Waves of insecurities would just hit her with no apparent reason sometimes. It all started after she had gone out of the country.

—Larry, are you eating properly? You've lost weight,|| Joan teased as she looked at Larry on the screen.

—No worries. I'm alright. What about you? Are you doing alright then?|| Larry stared longingly at the woman on his screen.

—I'm doing good. The air is really clean out here. This place is really suitable for a vacation.

I'm always out for the sea breeze,|| Joan said mischievously.

Joan would only show her carefree side to Larry, as she knew she could be herself in front of him.

—Larry, be honest with me. Are women chasing after you while I'm gone?|| Joan asked deliberately.

He was Larry Norton after all. Tall, handsome, charismatic, gentleman, all in all – the perfect wholesome package. Women flocked to him like bees going after honey. Besides, she was not by his side, and those women might start getting some ideas, especially Gabriella. The woman was coveting Larry more and more, even after being rejected multiple times by him.

—No, there are no women. There is only one woman, however, and it's you.|| Larry grinned.

Larry had not even thought about another woman after getting together with Joan.

—Okay, it's getting late. You have to get some sleep.||

The two of them uttered good night to each other after a few brief exchanges.

Joan would always be the one to hang up first because Larry could not bear to hang up on her. However, Joan did not hang up today. She wanted to see what the man was up after saying good night to her.

Joan could see from the screen that Larry had turned to another side and started to flip through a magazine.

Her lips curled into a contented smile when she saw the man's gentle and humble manner.

He's still my Larry. My handsome, charismatic man.

Joan felt her life was complete with him.

Her face beamed with a delightful smile.

She hoped that she would be able to live the rest of her life with the man, never to be separated from him.

—I'm done washing up. Larry, it's your turn.|| A woman's voice rang the second Joan tried to end the call.

What is happening right now? Why is there a woman's voice coming from his end?

Joan looked at the screen, frantically trying to search for some clues. Alas, a woman's face appeared on the screen.

—Larry, what are you looking at? It's already so late, stop. Let's sleep earlier.|| A woman in a sleeping robe circled around Larry's neck.

Joan recognized her. It was Gabriella.

However, why would Gabriella appear at their home, and why did Larry let her in? Besides, she was wearing a sleeping robe. And... And she circled around Larry's neck?

Thunderstruck, Joan felt her brain going blank.

—Larry, you should wash up now. Come, let me help you.|| Gabriella was about to unbutton his shirt.

Joan could no longer continue watching and closed the video.

## Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1800

Were my eyes fooling me just now?

Joan suddenly felt tears brimming in her eyes.

She had not expected that Larry would cheat on her as soon as she had gone overseas. No

wonder he would always be the one to say good night first every day.

So had he been together with that Gabriella all this while? Did he and Gabriella already...

Joan stopped herself from going further down the rabbit hole. She was afraid that she might

not be able to accept the bitter truth.

The woman desperately hoped that her eyes had played tricks on her just now. There was

no Gabriella, and the woman was not circling her arms around Larry's neck.

At the same time, Gabriella broke in a cackle at the sight of the tablet not far from her.

—Gabriella, don't go overboard and just leave after you're done changing!|| Larry shrugged

her off and continued to flip through the newspaper.

—Larry, do you really hate me so much?|| Gabriella asked indignantly.

She did not consider herself beneath Joan Watts. In fact, she was prettier, had a better

figure, and was smarter than that woman. Why did she get to keep Larry while I had to

suffer the man's contempt?

Needless to say, Gabriella felt indignant at her fate.

—Do you want to know why? Let me tell you because Joan always knows what she's after,

and she's not going to stoop to despicable ways to get what she wants despite that! As for

you, you are not even worthy to be compared to her,|| Larry spat out his words in despise.

Gabriella was infuriated.

—Oh, you think she's so innocent and pure! Do you think she's serious about you? Then what

about that Dustin guy? Larry, don't be deceived by her!|| Gabriella said aloud deliberately.

She wanted to slander the woman, and for her to disappear from his sight forever!

—Gabriella, are you done? Who gave you permission to put on the sleeping robe? Change into your clothes and get lost!|| Larry did not even bother to lift his head and said.

Is he asking me to leave? Don't you know it's already late now, Larry? The woman should have seen me circling my arms around Larry's neck. I'm sure that she's not that generous to let other women touch Larry like that. Actually, she was just coming in to change out of her wet clothes because of the heavy downpour.

—You should leave now,|| Larry threw a frigid look at Gabriella and said. The cold, hard stare sent chills down her spine.

He would never treat Joan like this.

You're overseas right, Watts? Why don't you stay right there forever? A contemptuous look filled Gabriella's eyes.

—Larry, it's raining heavily out there, and I didn't bring an umbrella. Why don't you just let me stay the night here...||

—No, you need to leave!|| Larry slapped the woman with a blatant rejection even before she finished her sentence.

Larry Norton, I'll make sure that you regret your ruthlessness today! Bang! Gabriella slammed the door shut behind her.

Meanwhile, Joan stared blankly out at the darkness outside, akin to the abyss in her empty heart.

Maybe my eyes had fooled me just now? Joan kept repeating that statement in her head,

over and over again, reluctant to believe that Larry would cheat on her. Why is Larry cheating on me? Why would he treat me like that?

Joan finally managed to close her eyes after a long, long time.

The next day, warm sunshine filled the room as Joan stretched out her body. She opened her eyes slowly.

Ring... Joan peered at the caller ID, and it was Larry.

—Hello?|| Joan sounded weary on the line.



—Good morning.|| Larry gave her a morning kiss through the phone. However, her mind was filled with the images of Gabriella hugging Larry. They chatted for a bit before they hung up. After Joan had gone overseas, they would call each other in the morning, and again at night. Unknowingly, it had become a habit between Larry and Joan.