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When she heard the trembling in his inflection, it wrenched her own heart. Was he frightened by what she said? She realized then how much he did not want to part from her.

“Okay.” Vivian nodded as he held her in his arms. Her tears left a stain upon his shirt. Vivian felt the sense of bliss that she had been missing for a while.

“Today, I...” Vivian nudged and created some space with the intention of telling Finnick about her parentage, but the anguish on his face led her to pause.

“What is it?” he asked.

“It’s nothing.” She shook her head before she pulled him back in.

She expected that Finnick may not be able to accept that Evelyn had set her up at the moment, and it might be difficult to predict how he might take it.

It was hard enough for them to arrive at this point, so she did not want to get into another quarrel with him because of Evelyn. She supposed that this could wait.

Finnick did not press her on it either. He merely held her close and quietly basked in the tenderness that had eluded them for the longest time.

A few days had slipped by since.

Finnick and Vivian were able to get on amicably during this period. Even though he did not seem completely himself, he had not mentioned anything about aborting the baby, nor had they any further disagreements over that issue.

Vivian was moved by his steadfast acceptance. It also bolstered her resolve. She was committed to vindicating herself, as this was the only way Finnick would be able to fully accept and love this child.

This baby was what the both of them longed for, and deserved the best of everything. There was no way Vivian was going to let the child be born into this world deprived of fatherly love.

Vivian requested to go to the hospital to get examined this particular day. As she had not had her body checked since she was aware of her pregnancy, she was a little concerned for the baby's condition.

To be honest, Finnick felt no small measure of discomfort when he heard that. As conflicted as he might be, he was not about to let Vivian go for the prenatal check-ups by herself.

Vivian was heartened to see Finnick willing to make arrangements and accompany her personally in spite of his own struggles.

"It's done. The doctor will see us at two in the afternoon," he said as he hung up. "We'll head over to the hospital together after I get off work."

"I can go by myself if you have something to attend to." As much as she would like for his company, she was concerned about becoming a distraction, as he seemed to have his hands full at the company of late.

"That's okay. I can make myself available in the afternoon." He did not want to let her go alone. "You should rest up. I'm headed to the office."

"Alright," Vivian replied with a smile.

Finnick planted a kiss upon her forehead before he turned and left the house.

Vivian waited for the hours to pass at home. She was simultaneously anticipatory and a bundle of nerves as this would be her first time doing a prenatal. It was an arduous wait up till an hour past noon. Still, there was no sign of Finnick.

Just as she was about to ring him up to check in on him, his call reached her first.

"I'm so sorry, Vivian. There's an emergency meeting that I must attend, so I may not be able to go to the appointment with you. Would you be alright by yourself?" Finnick said apologetically.

"You go ahead. I'll be fine," she replied.

"In that case, you be careful."

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"I'll do that."

Vivian then hung up. Even though the situation was understandable, she could not help but feel a little disappointed.

After she tidied up a little, she left the house.

Just as she was awaiting a cab, a car rolled to a stop in front of her. Noah stepped out when the door opened.

"Noah! What are you doing here?" Vivian asked.

"Mr. Norton wanted me to send you to the hospital," he replied. "Shall we, Mrs. Norton?"

"Oh, alright." Vivian was buoyant over Finnick's thoughtfulness.

En route to the hospital, she noticed that Noah seemed a little distracted.

"Are you alright? You seem a little off," she asked.

"What?" He lifted his eyes to regard her through the rear-view mirror before he quickly averted his gaze. "I'm fine, Mrs. Norton. I guess I must be tired as things have been quite hectic at the office."

"I see." Vivian nodded. Finnick too had been starting early and returning late these past two days. "Please take care not to tire yourself out," she said.

"I will. Thank you for your concern." Noah then quietly turned his attention back to the wheel. His eyes betrayed the disquiet that stirred within him.

When they arrived, Vivian had Noah wait by the entrance before she went in by herself.

As Vivian had no prior experience, she had no idea what the procedure was for prenatal check-ups and simply named the doctor Finnick contacted to the administrative nurse.

After going through the records, the nurse ushered her to a room. "Wait here. The doctor will be with you shortly."

"Alright. Thank you." Vivian smiled politely.

Approximately ten minutes later, a middle-aged male doctor came in and looked Vivian over. "Come with me," he said before he turned to walk out.

Vivian had to move fast in order to keep up. This doctor came across to her as a little aloof. She was also under the impression that her attending doctor was supposed to be a lady. The thought of needing to lift her top in front of him later made her feel a little self-conscious.

The man ahead kept walking. Vivian soon found herself being led to an operation theater. She reached out to stop him. "Aren't I here for a prenatal, doctor? What are we doing at an operation theatre?"

"Could you be doing this for the first time?" he replied staidly.

"Yes." Vivian nodded.

"This is what we do, for starters. Just follow my instructions." He proceeded to bring in a few nurses who helped Vivian change into a hospital gown before they led her to lie in wait on a mobile ward bed.

Though Vivian had her reservations, she nonetheless did as she was told.

Before long, she was carted to an operating table. The doctor waiting by the side approached with scalpel in hand. The more she thought about it, the more she sensed something was amiss as she fought to sit up. "What are you doing?"

"Mr. Norton wants this baby gone," The doctor replied without emotion. He had the nurses restrain her and prepared to administer the anesthetic.

"What!" His words struck her like a bolt of lightning. Did Finnick not arrange for a prenatal? Why would the doctor want to abort the baby?

A sudden realization made her world fall apart. Finnick had been fooling her all along. Not only had he never accepted this baby, but he had also arranged to have it aborted behind her back!

She freed herself from the nurses' grasp with all her might and leaped off the bed before she dashed out of the operation theater, bare-footed. Vivian left a trail of tears behind as she took flight. She thought in despair why Finnick could have done this to her. Refusing to believe this, she felt that she must seek him out for an explanation.

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Outside the hospital, Vivian spotted Noah standing away from the car. Without regard for her own appearance, she approached and got ahold of him. "Tell me what's going on, Noah. Did Finnick really want to get rid of this baby?"

Noah was shocked when he first saw her burst out of the doors. He avoided meeting her eyes when she questioned him. His gaze was filled with guilt and a certain sense of helplessness.

"Yes." That took him some time to say.

That answer seemed to have sapped all the energy from her. Her hands fell away from him, and her eyes were filled with incredulity.

"How could this be? How could he lie to me?" Vivian muttered as she wept. "No, I don't believe it..."

Vivian's words were at odds with what she had already acknowledged to be true. Noah was Finnick's most trusted aide, so his words must reflect Finnick's intention.

To think that Finnick's affections and concern over the past few days were all mere pretenses. That he had this planned out all along. Vivian's heart felt like it was being rend.

Her face was awash with tears. She did not understand why there was a need for such cruelty. If Finnick could not tolerate the baby, he could have told her so and they could have amicably parted ways. Why was there a need for this deception?

"Grab her, quick!" While mired in her sorrow, Vivian heard a series of footsteps coming her way with haste.

When she turned in their direction, she saw those people who were about to operate on her coming out of the hospital in pursuit.

“Hurry, Noah...” In her anxiety, she grabbed onto Noah, hoping for him to take her away.

That was when she realized that it was Finnick who had Noah send her here, which meant he would definitely not help. For all she knew, he might even give those people a hand in sending her back to the operating table.

With that in mind, she relinquished her grip and retreated from him before she made a break for the other side of the street. She must not allow herself to get caught. She would not allow anyone to harm the unborn baby inside of her.

Noah’s fingers tightened against themselves as he watched her fleeing silhouette, his face consumed by contrite. “I’m sorry, Mrs. Norton. I’m so, so sorry...”

As he muttered under his breath, the phone in his pocket started vibrating. Contempt washed over his face when he saw what was on the display.

“How’s it progressing?” A woman’s laid back voice came through the other end.

“I’ve done as you’ve asked, now let my parents go!” Noah hollered into the phone.

The voice responded with a chuckle. “Relax. So long as you do what you’re told, you have my word that they’ll come to no harm.”

“You’d better make sure of that!”

“Rest assured that I will,” the person replied impatiently before she hung up.

The veins throughout Noah’s body pulsed as he gripped the phone tightly in his hand. Once his parents were safe, he vowed to make the woman pay.

As this was happening, Vivian sprinted along the street. She was in a state of dishevelment, still dressed in the hospital gown, with no shoes on. The so-called doctors and nurses were hot on her heels.

She turned the heads of passers-by who engaged in hushed commentary amongst themselves.

“Could she have escaped from an asylum?”

“What else could she be, being chased by doctors as well.”

“Shall we call the police?”

“Forget it. It’s none of our business...”

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Vivian vaguely overheard what was said, but their opinions were the least of her concerns. The only focus was to keep running. She could not afford to get caught and be sent back to the hospital cause her baby would be surely lost otherwise.

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The very thought of it put wind in her sails and she ran like she had never run before. Vivian had no idea for how long she kept at it, but she seemed to finally lose them.

Hunched over and taking in deep drawls, she glanced occasionally over her shoulders. It was only after she had ascertained that she had thrown them off that she was finally able to let her guard down.

As soon as she recovered, Vivian pulled out her phone with intention of calling Finnick to demand he explain why he did what he did.

Her eyes burned with fury as she dialed his number as she was working through her mind on how she was going to castigate him. He had gone too far, and he should expect no forgiveness from her this time.

For some reason, no one picked up even after a lengthy wait. Vivian cancelled and retried several times to the same effect.

Was he avoiding her calls now? Vivian resisted the urge to hurl her phone. When she thought about it, she figured that he must have gone and hidden himself after Noah reported her escape.

She stood by the road to simmer down before she hailed a cab.

He had to be home eventually. And when he did, she would be there waiting. This time, she would impress upon him that they would divorce if he could not accept the child. There was no need for him to resort to any more of these despicable means.

Vivian could not care too much about the injuries on her legs during her escape. She quickly made her way toward the house the minute she arrived, hell bent on confronting him should he be home already.

Never did she expect to find a pair of heels upon opening the door. Those looked awfully familiar. She worked through her memories and recollected having seen Evelyn wearing a pair just like this.

Is Evelyn in the house? What is she doing here?

Mystified, Vivian strode right through the doors. The sight that greeted her left her rooted to the spot.

Is she hallucinating? What was that strewn across the floor? Vivian's gaze followed the trail created by the stockings, shorts, a blouse amongst other articles of clothing which ended with some women's undergarments upon the stairs closest to the bedroom.

Whose clothing are these? Are they Evelyn's? Where's Finnick?

Vivian teetered on her feet as she pondered these questions. The room felt like it was spinning around her and her vision momentarily flirted with darkness.

Very quickly, she closed her eyes and kept them shut tight for some time while she steadied herself.

Inside, she prayed that these were just imaginings created when her anger messed with her head. They would disappear as soon as she reopened her eyes.

That was how she comforted herself before she slowly but surely did. However, nothing has changed. The clothing remained exactly where she found them.

She felt her body quiver when she raised her head toward the bedroom on the second floor. Could Finnick and Evelyn be convening inside? She refused to consider this but could not stop this notion from festering.

With great difficulty, she dragged herself toward the bedroom. One step after the other, Vivian had never felt her strides this heavy before.

As she edged closer and closer, she could already hear muffled voices emanating from within. Unwilling to get nearer still, her subconsciousness screamed for her to turn around. She shuddered to picture how she would react should she actually find them in there.

Her legs were seemingly defiant as it brought her ever closer to the bedroom against her will.

When she was finally in front of the door, she found it ajar. The sounds of a woman's sensual moans melded with a man's husky grunts were picked up by her ears with clarity.

"Haha... you're so good, Finnick... Ah.. Ah.. No... Stop it... Finnick..." The woman's voice pierced like needles upon Vivian's heart. Was that familiar voice not that of Evelyn's?

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Vivian felt a loud sound go off, as though something exploded off the top of her head.

Even a fool could guess as much what was going on.

But... this is impossible. Definitely impossible! It could not be Finnick. He would never subject her to a betrayal like this! She could not accept this as fact even if she heard it for herself.

The door to the bedroom was now within arm's length. She lifted her foot and began her advance. She refused to believe that Finnick was in there. She had to ascertain it for herself.

"Ah... Finnick... Don't..." The moment her hand came into contact with the doorknob, Evelyn's moans began to thump against her eardrums once more.

Vivian's body trembled uncontrollably when Evelyn cried out Finnick's name. It made her lose all courage to enter.

The man's gasping had her envisioning Finnick getting it on with Evelyn in their bed.

Her tear ducts finally let her down and left her vision clouded. Her heart bled, as though someone had carved it up with a knife. She felt the air sucked from her lungs.

He won't! He surely won't! How could Finnick had betrayed her with Evelyn, and in their bedroom, no less!

As much as Vivian did not want to believe it, hearing Finnick's name being called by Evelyn, over and over, gnawed at her.

The fond memories of the time they spent together flashed across her mind. It was as though she could see the many faces of Finnick in the same instant.

Him being smiling and doting; Him kissing her lightly upon the forehead; Him in righteous anger; Him holding her hand to assuage her fears; Him teasing her till she was red to the ear...

All of these Finnick suddenly became unrecognizable as they sneered and regarded her like a fool. She could almost hear them say, "What do you think you are, Vivian William? Did you believe I would stay by your side for life? Look yourself in the mirror and see if you compare to Evelyn. Why would I ever choose you over her?"

No! This cannot be!

The images conjured before Vivian had her so startled that she staggered and nearly fell over backwards. It was only when she steadied herself with the wall to her side that she realized it was only her own mind playing tricks on her.

Were the voices that she just heard an illusion too? A faint smile evoked upon Vivian's face before the voices from inside the room shredded the last remnants of her hopes.

"Slow down, Finnick... Ah... I love you... be gentler with me..." Evelyn's shameless moans left her completely crushed.

Vivian slid down against the wall until she sat slumped upon the floor. She could neither find the resolve to leave nor the courage to confront the truth which was beyond that door She could only sit there and let herself be tormented by Evelyn's cries of ecstasy.

Finnick not only failed to accompany her to the prenatal. He had colluded with the doctor to forcibly abort the baby inside of her. Instead of handling things at the office like he said, he

was in their home engaging in such unspeakable acts with Evelyn. The thought of these had Vivian on the verge of a mental breakdown.

Vivian bit down on her own hand so that she would not cry out loud. She still refused to believe that Finnick would be capable of doing this. This was not the Finnick that she remembered. The man she knew and loved would not have done this to her.

What if the man inside is not him? Only Evelyn's voice was heard after so long, but what of Finnick's? Perhaps it was someone else in there?