

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 61

Vivian only remembered now that she had left the spaghetti Bolognese she made for lunch at home as she left in a hurry yesterday.

She figured that Finnick must have eaten one of them and kept the other in the fridge.

Vivian felt embarrassed. She perched on her toes and tried to reach for the serving of spaghetti Bolognese in Finnick's hand. "You don't have to eat the leftovers from yesterday. Since I'm here, I'll make you something fresh."

Seeing Vivian struggling to get ahold of the spaghetti, Finnick only writhed his lips. Instead of lowering the plate of pasta in his hand, he bent down to face Vivian.

Vivian was shocked by Finnick suddenly moving so close to her. She lost her balance and tripped over. Fortunately, Finnick was quick to react. With one scoop around her waist, he pulled her back upright.

"Be careful," Finnick muttered under his breath. "No need to make me anything. I really like your spaghetti."

For some reason, Vivian blushed at Finnick's words even though they were nothing special. Perhaps it was because of his deep and husky voice.

"If you like my spaghetti then let me make you more." Vivian was afraid that Finnick would notice her queasiness and lowered her head. "Leftovers are not healthy to eat."

"It's not like I eat leftovers all the time." Finnick slowly let go of Vivian's waist and popped the spaghetti into the microwave. "I don't want to waste food, especially since you made it."

Vivian knew she wouldn't win Finnick in banter and backed off. She watched as Finnick remove the heated spaghetti from the microwave and ate it slowly.

Finnick looked elegant while he was consuming the plate of spaghetti. Even though it was just homemade food, he acted as if he was eating a Michelin three-star meal.

"Hey," Vivian, who sat opposite Finnick, spoke hesitantly with her two hands clasped together. "I will try to pay you back the money for my Mom's surgery and medicine."

Finnick's eyes narrowed at Vivian's words. He was in the middle of twirling a few strands of spaghetti into a ball.

"Vivian." Finnick swallowed the food inside his mouth and uttered with his deep voice, "Did you forget the promise you made me yesterday?"

"Yesterday?" Vivian was stumped. Then, she suddenly recalled what Finnick was talking about. "Oh, you mean the promise I made to come to you if I ever need help?"

"Yep." Finnick shifted his gaze to Vivian's face. "I thought we are close enough for me to help you?"

Finnick's eyes were like scalpels that could dissect Vivian's mind right away. At that moment, Vivian felt as if she was standing naked in front of him. She replied shyly, "It's not that I don't think we aren't close enough. I just don't like owing others."

Vivian bit her lips determinedly as she tried to keep her head cool.

At that moment, Finnick was a friend to her. Still, Vivian could not let herself be indebted to others.

Finnick kept what he initially wanted to say to himself when he saw the conviction in Vivian's eyes.

"If you really want to repay me..." Finnick's eyes shifted to the spaghetti ahead and had an idea. "It's okay if you don't pay me the money. I am in no need of it anyway. You can repay me in some other ways instead."

"How else can I repay you then?" Vivian was flummoxed as she couldn't figure out what Finnick needed. He was a man who had everything.

"Food." Finnick gave Vivian a terse answer. "If you really want to repay me, just cook for me."

Vivian gaped her eyes. She couldn't believe her own ears.

"Huh? That's all you want?" Vivian was dumbfounded. "But my cooking isn't that great."

Vivian admitted that her cooking was only mediocre at best. Her cooking was a far cry from Molly's excellent cooking.

Finnick is such a picky eater. Why will he want me to cook for him?

"What's wrong?" Finnick arched one brow. "Do you not want to cook for me?"

"Of course not," Vivian replied in a hurry. "But my Mom's hospital bills cost sixty thousand. How many meals do I have to make to cover that?"

"What do you think?" Finnick threw the question back at Vivian.

Vivian was at a loss for words.

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Even at a regular restaurant, a meal would only get as expensive as a few hundred. Vivian was pretty sure that she needed to make at least a hundred meals to repay her debt.

"Around a hundred?" Vivian replied warily.

Finnick was entranced by the seriousness on Vivian's face as she mulled. Unwittingly, he smiled a little. "Alright, a hundred meals it shall be."

"Then what do you prefer?"

"I don't know," Finnick replied slowly. "Just cook whatever you are best at."

"No, that won't be fair to you." Vivian thought that she had to cater to her client's needs if each meal costed around six hundred as she had calculated. "The number of dishes that I know how to make are very limited. How about I show you what recipes I have tomorrow? I'll let you have a tester of those recipes too."

"Alright then." Finnick's lips curled up even more.

The next day, Finnick had a meeting early in the morning although it was the weekend. When he left home, the sun was barely visible in the sky.

After waking up, Vivian got a few recipes from the internet and started to work on them.

From her few days of observation, she noticed that Finnick liked his food spicy. Thus, she decided to try out the recipes for beef chili, buffalo wings, and sriracha grilled tofu.

After working her sweat off for an entire afternoon, Vivian was finally done with the beef chili. She took a picture of it and sent it to Finnick on WhatsApp to see whether he liked it.

Inside the meeting room of Finnor Group.

The managers from each department were taking their turns to report their results.

“That sums up our outcome for this quarter.” The middle-aged man wiped the sweat off his forehead as he spoke with his heart in his throat, “Are you satisfied with it, Mr. Norton?”

Finnick’s slender fingers flipped through the documents in his hand. There was a bleak expression on his face. “Do you really think I’ll be satisfied with this kind of results?”

Everyone was covered in cold sweat.

“M-May I know what is the problem?”

“Everything,” Finnick spat bluntly before tossing the document back at his employee. He uttered without an expression on his face, “Redo.”

The whole room fell silent.

That was Finnick Horton. His disability did not impede his career ambitions. His sharp decision-making skills and accurate judgment were what transformed into a powerhouse.

“Yes, Mr. Norton!” The middle-aged man trembled as he returned to his seat with the document. Just as the next manager was about to make his report, someone’s phone sounded.

Beep!

The crisp notification ringtone broke the silence of the room.

Everyone's face was as white as paper. They exchanged glances with each other in anxiety.

Who's so daring to not put their phone on silent during a meeting?

As everyone was still trying to read each other's expression, Finnick nonchalantly looked at his phone screen that lit up.

The WhatsApp message that came in seconds ago was from Vivian. She sent a few pictures.

Finnick swiped across the screen to unlock his phone. He saw the few dishes Vivian made and also a message from her.

Which one of this would you like?

At the end of the sentence was a quirky emoji.

Inside the meeting room, everyone realized that the phone that beeped earlier belonged to Finnick and not anyone else.

They exchanged a glance with one another in disbelief.

Finnick was a workaholic. He only used his phone for work purposes. Everyone was thrown off by the fact that such a man was checking his WhatsApp in a meeting.

Before everyone could recover from the shock, something even unbelievable happened.

Finnick's thin lips were curled upwards.

Everyone caught Finnick's slight smile and felt as if they were struck by lightning. Their eyes widened in astonishment.

Our tiger boss is smiling?

Many of them in the room had been with Finnick since the day the Finnor Group was founded but never had they seen their boss smiling.

Meanwhile, Vivian was still busy with her cooking in the kitchen. She was completely oblivious about the explosive impact the pictures she sent had caused at Finner Group. After flipping through a few recipe books, her phone beeped.

She hurriedly checked her phone and saw that she received a message from Finnick: All of them.

Vivian thought to herself, Tsk, how greedy! Vivian writhed her mouth and ate the last piece of buffalo wings she made earlier. She was going to make Finnick a fresh batch later.

At night, when Finnick returned home, he was greeted by a tableful of scrumptious dishes. He peeped inside the kitchen and saw the dainty woman still busying herself.

It was an ordinary scene in any household, but to Finnick, it was oddly comforting.

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"You're back?" Vivian noticed Finnick Norton and scurried out of the kitchen. "Hurry up and clean your hands! I think I made too much. Just finish whatever you can. If you can't finish them, I'll pack them up into a bento for you to take to the office."

"It's fine," Finnick replied as he settled in his seat. "I can finish it."

Vivian did not trust Finnick's words. The amount of food on the table could feed more than four people. There were only the two of them in the house.

It was soon proven that Vivian had underestimated Finnick's capacity. For some reason, he seemed to have a voracious appetite that day. Finnick wolfed down everything Vivian prepared.

Vivian was stupefied. She had had many meals with Finnick before but this was the first time she saw him eating so much as if he was a champion at an eating competition.

The next day was Sunday. Vivian spent the whole day researching recipes and preparing food for Finnick.

Soon, it was Monday, and Vivian had to go to work.

Vivian used to enjoy going to work, but ever since Fabian became the Chief Editor, going to work was like jumping into the fierce waters of the Nile river, except that she was drowning in work instead of water.

As soon as she sat down, Lesley Jenson, the senior editor at Glamour Magazine strode to her in a rush. "Vivian, I have to interview someone this afternoon. Sort these documents out for me ASAP and send it to the Chief Editor's office."

Vivian received the documents and furrowed her brows. "Hey Lesley, I have to prepare for tomorrow's interview later in the afternoon. Is it okay if you pass this to someone else to work on?"

Before Lesley could even reply, Shannon's voice came out of nowhere in an abrupt manner. "Vivian, is it me or have you been acting funny lately? Pfft, don't act as if we don't know your relationship with Mr. Norton. For whom are you putting on that act?"

Vivian was taken aback by Shannon's sudden rebuke. She knitted her brows at the girl who was on the same rank as her in the company. "Shannon, what are you talking about?"

"Huh, what am I talking about? Looks like someone here doesn't want to admit it." Shannon sneered and slanted her eyes at Vivian. "You think all of us are blind?"

Vivian wanted to defend herself, but she noticed her colleagues were peeking at her as she unwittingly swept her eyes across the room. Those eyes were filled with suspicion and derision.

Vivian could feel herself stung by a million needles.

She was very familiar with the glares that she received. They reminded her of the unfriendly stares her lecturers and classmates on campus gave her for an incident that happened two years ago.

Vivian bit her lips. She didn't know what to say. Thus, she sat down and swiftly finished organizing the files she was tasked with. Then, with everyone's attention on her, she strode to Fabian's office and knocked on the door.

"Come in."

Fabian's languid voice came behind the door. Vivian pushed the door ajar and walked through it.

Fabian zoned out for a few seconds when he saw Vivian. The latter hurriedly placed the organized documents on his table. "Mr. Norton, here are the documents you asked for. If there's nothing else, I'll take my leave."

As soon as Vivian was done speaking, she turned around and headed for the exit. But before she could reach the door, Fabian's metallic voice rang out from behind.

"Vivian, stand where you are."

Vivian halted in her steps unwillingly. Without turning her head around to face Fabian, she asked monotonously, "Mr. Norton, is there anything else I can help you with before I leave?"

"What's with that attitude?" Fabian's tone grew even colder. He sauntered to Vivian and questioned her, "Are you avoiding me?"

"Yes," Vivian answered straight to the point.

For some reason, Vivian's frankness stirred up rage in Fabian.

Yet, when Fabian saw the lack of vigor on Vivian's face, his tone softened as he figured she must have been taking care of her mother. "Vivian, how's your mother?"

Fabian was not fond of Vivian's mother who was somebody else's mistress. Nonetheless, he still respected her as Vivian's mother, since he had met her a few times when he was dating Vivian. He only asked about her well-being out of courtesy.

Fabian's question caught Vivian off guard. The light in her eyes wavered a bit, but she soon got back to herself. "She's doing fine. Thank you."

Fabian noticed the tension in Vivian's expression and hesitated before he spoke, "I heard that you are in need of money for your mother's medical bills. Have you seen the text I sent you..."

"Mr. Norton," Vivian didn't wait for Fabian to finish his words before she interjected. "If there's nothing else, I'll get back to work."

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Vivian marched out of Fabian's office before the latter could make a reply.

Only when she reached the corridor outside did she pause to sigh.

Vivian wondered what had gotten into the mind of Fabian. Not only did he stop shaming her, but he was asking about her mother's well-being.

Vivian discovered that no matter how viciously Fabian talked her down, he still cared for her, and Vivian wasn't very comfortable with that.

Vivian made up her mind that she was better off treating her ex-lover as stranger.

Now that Vivian was done with Fabian, she went to Sarah to ask her out for lunch.

Meanwhile, Fabian froze in his original spot as he watched Vivian leave his office.

At that moment, he wasn't even sure how did he feel about Vivian.

Fabian thought he despised that woman with an unreadable mind. But last week, when he heard that she was only trying to get money for her mother's illness, he was overridden by remorse.

Having dated Vivian for so long, Fabian knew how important was Rachel William to Vivian.

It prompted him to send a message to Vivian on WhatsApp asking her whether she needed money.

However, Vivian didn't reply to his text.

Does she already have enough money? Did she get it from those boy toys of hers?

Fabian felt like he was going to lose his mind. The thought of Vivian sleeping with other men for money infuriated him.

He could feel a slow rage brewing within him. He loosened his tie in frustration and stomped to his desk. He dialed in a number on the phone. "Help me look up which hospital is Rachel William in."

Fabian was enlisting the help of the Norton family's men who were incredibly efficient. A few hours later, they called Fabian and informed him about Rachel's whereabouts.

Half an hour after the phone call, Fabian came to the First Hospital in S City with a bouquet of lilies.

Fabian's eyes gleamed when he found the private ward Rachel was in.

He knew that there was no way Vivian could afford to pay for a private room in the hospital with the soaring medical fees nowadays.

Which guy is helping him?

Damn it!

Fabian repressed the rampant thoughts in his mind and knocked on the door. A frail voice of a woman came from inside. "Come in."

Fabian entered the room and was stunned by the sight of a pallid and skinny woman on the bed. "Ms. William..."

In his memory, Rachel was a gorgeous woman who attracted men wherever she went. She was so pretty that Fabian didn't find it a surprise that she was a mistress.

But right now, he almost could not recognize the woman in front of himself.

"Fabian?" Rachel was also astounded by Fabian showing up at her door. The next instant, glee crept onto her face. "It's been a long time since I last met you, Fabian! You look even more charming than you were! Have a seat!"

Fabian sat down next to Rachel and started a conversation with her. Rachel was always fond of Fabian whom she claimed to have 'come from a humble background'. As they chatted, Rachel unknowingly brought up the past.

"Oh, you were so nice to Vivian back then!" There was a hint of regret in Rachel's eyes. "Sigh, who knew the two of you couldn't make it till marriage. Imagine the surprise I had when I woke up from my two-year coma and found out that Vivian is married to..."

Fabian's ears perched up right away when he heard Rachel's words. His face twisted as he intervened, "Who did Vivian marry?"

Rachel was dumbfounded by Fabian's question. "Wait, you don't know who married Vivian?"

"I have just returned from abroad not long ago," Fabian slurred through his words. "I haven't heard anything about her marriage."

"Oh, I see." Rachel's eyes lost their shine. "Hmm, it's so hard to believe that there's still someone who doesn't know about their marriage given how famous Vivian's husband is. Perhaps, he purposely tried to keep it low-key."

Rachel's words got Fabian worked up. He frowned and questioned, "So who is Rachel's husband?"

Rachel thought Fabian was just genuinely curious about Vivian's life. She answered tactlessly, "Don't you know? It's Finnick, the president of the Finner Group. He's also from the Norton family. How come you don't know anything about it? Honestly, I am kind of worried."

Rachel blabbered on, completely unaware of how pale Fabian's face was at the moment.

Finnick?

Vivian's husband is Finnick?

"That's impossible!" Fabian blurted out loud. He jumped up from his seat. "You must have mistaken! How could Vivian have married Finnick?"

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Rachel didn't expect such a dramatic reaction from Fabian and was taken aback. Still, she continued as if she could relate to Fabian, "Yeah, I was equally as shocked when I heard about Vivian's marriage to Finnick. Sigh, what were you doing back then, Fabian?"

Fabian could no longer continue the conversation with Rachel. He ran out of the room and sped all the way back to his office.

Meanwhile, at the magazine company, Vivian and Sarah were eating the sandwiches they bought in the pantry. While Vivian ate, she was scrolling her phone for recipes to make for Finnick. Her friend Sarah glanced at her from time to time as she munched on her sandwich with a blank expression.

"Shoot your questions, Sarah," Vivian said with her eyes still on her phone. She already noticed earlier that Sarah had something on her mind.

Sarah's face flushed red at once. She replied gingerly, "Oh, it's nothing big. It's just that there have been these rumors going on in the office about..."

"About me and Fabian?" Vivian raised one brow.

"It's more than that." Sarah bit her lips and mustered her courage to continue, "Okay, so Shannon and I saw you getting off a luxury car just a few days ago. That time, everyone was already saying that you have a special thing going on with the Chief Editor. Then, Shannon also added that she has a few friends from Z College who said that..."

Vivian felt her heart skip a beat when she heard the word 'Z College'.

It was the reason why she left H City for the bustling Sunshine City. She really needed to leave her bad rap behind to start a new life.

But to her mishap, no matter where Vivian went, her past would be brought up.

Vivian finished the last bite of her sandwich and laughed light-heartedly. "What did they say about me? That I pimped myself out for cash? Or that I was dating Fabian back on campus?"

Sarah was surprised by Vivian's bluntness. Her expression became even more awkward as she hurried on to answer, "Vivian, never will I think that you are that kind of person!"

Vivian was touched by Sarah's kind words. "Thank you so much for believing in me, Sarah."

After lunch, Vivian headed back to her office. Right away, she could spot a few of her colleagues talking about her.

Vivian merely put on a carefree smile.

Two years ago, she could never have survived such slanders and insults. But now, she was bulletproof. She knew that she couldn't do anything about it and decided to just ignore them. Vivian was aware that she did nothing wrong.

At this thought, Vivian sunk into her seat and started to prepare for tomorrow's interview. Out of the blue, a loud bang came from the office door as a silhouette bolted past.

Vivian raised her head in puzzlement and saw Fabian's contorted face as he strode in her direction. He growled, "Vivian, see me in my office now."

Vivian furrowed her brows. She wanted to reject his request, but she didn't want to blow up the ticking timebomb in Fabian.

Everyone in the office was now staring at Vivian with an even muddled expression dawned on their faces. A reckless Shannon showed up and snorted, "Wow, what was that? Is Mr. Norton trying to rekindle his old flame with you? Pfft, leave that poor man alone. You were the one who cheated on him back then. Don't toy with his feelings anymore."

Vivian glared at Shannon before striding off to Fabian's office.

Upon entering Fabian's office, Vivian could see Fabian pacing in front of his desk.

It was a familiar scene to Vivian. Back in college, Fabian would always pace in his room whenever a stressful situation was coming up.

"Mr. Norton," Vivian took the initiative to speak after reading the mood in the room. "What's the matter?"

Fabian halted in his steps and glowered at Vivian. He uttered through his teeth, "Vivian William. Oh, pardon me. Perhaps I should call you Vivian Norton instead, now that you are married to Finnick."

Vivian could feel the world around her fade out as blood drained from her face.