

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 71

Surprised, she turned around and saw Ashley who had just walked up the stairs, looking at her with an equally astounded face.

Vivian's heart started thumping.

What a small world! Must it meet Ashley here?

This boutique provided the best tailoring service in the city. Ashley had come to custom-make her outfit for the party on the weekend but had she expected to see Vivian, the cheapskate here.

"Vivian." In her pinkish-orange high heels, she click-clacked over to Vivian and continued, "Why are you here? Is this a place a penny-pincher like you should come?"

There was no one around so Ashley was even cockier than usual and every word she uttered to Vivian was as nasty as it could be.

Vivian's eyes flickered with a cold glint and before she could even respond, Noah stepped in front and spoke in a nonchalant tone, "Miss, please mind the way you're speaking to Mrs. Norton."

"Mrs. Norton?" Ashley was utterly baffled but she was discerning enough to recognize that Noah was no ordinary man so she restrained herself from lashing out again.

In the meantime, the salespersons working in the boutique had finished taking Vivian's measurements. To avoid having anything to do with Ashley, Vivian quickly spoke, "Noah, let's go."

With a nod, Noah glared at Ashley and escorted Vivian downstairs.

Seeing how Vivian had ignored her, Ashley stomped on the ground in rage, frightening the salesperson next to her who could only ask in a jittery manner, "Ms. Miller, are you ready to take the measurements?"

It was only then Ashley came to her senses and turned to the salespersons and asked shrewdly, "Hey, do you know who was the woman just now?"

Ashley was a patron of the shop so the salespersons were aware of her overbearing personality and afraid she would be displeased if they don't tell her the truth. Plus, there was nothing to hide about Vivian's identity, hence they replied frankly, "She's Mr. Norton's wife."

"Mr. Norton?" Ashley's eyes widened in astonishment. "Which Mr. Norton?"

"Mr. Finnick Norton of the Finner Group."

Ashley was so shocked that she stumbled and nearly fell to the ground.

Others might not know who Finnick was, but as Fabian's fiancée, Ashley knew who he was too well.

Finnick was Fabian's uncle and the younger son of the Norton family.

Ashley's face was drained of color and she could not believe what she just heard.

Isn't Vivian married to a penniless pauper who couldn't even afford a diamond ring? How does it turn out to be Finnick?

All at once, she could not care less about making any gown and rushed downstairs with her purse in her hand. She got in the car and bellowed, "Send me to Glamour Magazine right now!"

As soon as she reached her destination, Ashley dashed up to the floor where the magazine company was, and when the receptionist asked who she was looking for in a panic, she blurted out impatiently, "I'm looking for your Chief Editor, I'm his fiancée."

Upon hearing that, the receptionist immediately led the way for Ashley to Fabian.

Just as Ashley went into Fabian's office, Vivian, under the escort of Noah, had also reached the ground floor of the building where the magazine company was located in.

Immediately after Vivian arrived at the magazine company, she realized the atmosphere was unusually awkward.

Everyone was not busy working on their assignments and instead, gathered in small groups around themselves, excitedly discussing about something, to which she had no idea.

Seeing Vivian walked in, Shannon stood tall immediately and smirked, "Oh my goodness, Vivian. I'm surprised you still have the face to come back. Aren't you afraid of getting caught?"

Perplexed, Vivian frowned at what Shannon just said, and before she knew it, she was pulled to a corner by Sarah who whispered to her, "Vivian, do you know the Chief Editor's fiancée is here?"

Vivian was puzzled.

Ashley's here?

What is she doing here?

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Meanwhile, the air in the Chief Editor's office was exceedingly tensed.

Ashley was standing in front of Fabian's desk with her pupils enlarged in fury as she shrieked, "Fabian, why didn't you tell me that Vivian is your uncle's newly married wife?"

It was very much to Fabian's surprise that Ashley had found out about Vivian's identity. He was befuddled for a while but when he looked at the egotistical way Ashley behaved, an impatient gleam flashed across his eyes and he replied, "I didn't keep you in the dark on purpose. It was just not something I'd deliberately mention out of the blue. Besides, they'd also attend the party on the weekend. Wouldn't you have found out by then?"

Ashley got even more irritated when he mentioned the party.

"And you have the cheek to bring up the party on this weekend!" Ashley's pitch turned even more ear-piercing. "Have you ever thought about how devastated I would be if I suddenly saw Vivian at the party? And how should I even address her?"

Ashley had been spoiled by Harvey and Emma since young, as a result, she had always been very capricious.

However, in order to get along well with Fabian, she had been trying to restrain her temper for the past six months. Yet, she was in a state of frenzy this time and could no longer suppress her wrath.

All this was a result of her contempt for Vivian, especially when she realized how she thought she had shattered Vivian William, the person she despised the most in the world. Unfortunately, it turned out that Vivian had got on top of her and became Fabian's aunt; therefore, she needed to vent!

"Fabian!" She got angrier. "Tell me the truth now! Did you knowingly hide this from me because you still care about Vivian? Are you waiting to see me get embarrassed on the weekend!"

Fabian was extremely annoyed by Ashley but when he heard her last sentence, he regained his composure.

"What are you talking about?" With a scornful laugh and a ruthless beam radiating from his eyes, he replied, "It's still not time to tell who will be the one to feel embarrassed yet."

Though perplexed, Ashley had finally redeemed her cool.

She furrowed her eyebrows and asked, "Fabian, what's that supposed to mean?"

"Don't you think this is strange?" Fabian lighted a cigarette and started puffing on it. "How could the Norton family accept a woman like Vivian who had such a murky past two years ago?"

Ashley was still confused but right in the next instant, it suddenly dawned on her the implication behind Fabian's words and she was no longer irate. Instead, she became excited at once. "Fabian, are you saying that your uncle is still unaware of what happened two years ago?"

"He's aware." Fabian's face darkened unwittingly.

Again, Ashley was stunned. "Then why did he still..."

“The point is not about Uncle Finnick.” Fabian was increasingly irritated and he interrupted Ashley hastily. “It’s about my grandpa. For a veteran like him, virtue is what he values most in people. There’s no way for him to tolerate a woman with a stinking past like Vivian.”

Ashley was instantly pleased. “Well then, Fabian, what have you prepared?”

“I’m preparing to spill the truth about Vivian to Grandpa at the party this weekend.”

“That’s it?” A little disappointment crept on Ashley’s stunning face.

Fabian frowned. “What are you suggesting?”

Under the pointy glare of Fabian, Ashley laughed playfully. “I was simply asking.”

In spite of everything, Ashley was relieved after knowing that Fabian was going to come after Vivian as well.

Doesn’t that imply that Fabian has no more feelings for Vivian?

Even though it’s a shame Vivian managed to hook up with Finnick, but Finnick is just a cripple after all. And by disclosing that incident from two years ago, Vivian might just be chased out by the Norton family.

Ashley felt a lot better thinking of that.

Realizing that she had lost her self-control just then, Ashley was a little rueful and she went up to Fabian. She sat on his lap ingratiatingly, and said, “Fabian, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have lost my temper. Are you mad at me?”

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A strong scent of perfume drifted into his nose and Fabian grimaced unknowingly.

Ashley was undoubtedly adorable. Which was exactly why he had chosen her among so many other women.

However, since he returned to the country, he had become increasingly irritable with Ashley's temper and it felt as though she had become more overbearing somehow. Even her perfume smelled unpleasantly strong.

Unlike Vivian, regardless of whether it was when we were studying or now, there's always a faint fragrance on her. It was the shower cream she used, indistinctive, but always refreshing...

D*mn!

Why am I thinking of this woman again!

The more he looked at Ashley, the more peeved he got, so he pushed her away directly. "I still have a meeting to attend to. If you're tired, you can rest here for a while. Just remember to close the door when you leave."

With that, he stood up and left the office, completely disregarding the pale-faced Ashley.

Ashley clenched her fist tightly as she watched Fabian walking out of his office, and the fiery red fingernails of hers almost poked through her palm.

Was it an illusion? She felt that ever since Fabian met Vivian, he had become more distant from her.

Could it be that he isn't completely over her?

No!

It's impossible!

He was even ready to mortify Vivian. How can he still have feelings for her?

Wait a minute.

Is it possible that it's actually Fabian's plan to separate Finnick and Vivian so that she becomes single again?

When this thought emerged in Ashley's mind, her face turned even paler.

Sh*t!

No! There's no way I'm leaving Vivian with any chance of turning around!

Biting her lips, Ashley came up with a plot in her mind.

...

When Ashley left Fabian's office, the staff in the magazine company couldn't help but start another round of gossip.

"Oh my goodness! So that's the fiancée of our Chief Editor? She looks gorgeous and her fashion sense is fantastic as well." Sarah was astonished and exclaimed in admiration.

Vivian sat at her place; her gaze swept over Ashley and the gleam in her eyes darkened.

That's right. Ashley has always been very charming and her presence was just like a princess since young. She always looks stunning.

Comparing to her, I am just a nobody, always buried under her dazzling halo.

Shannon who was sitting on the side heard Sarah and sneered, "Of course, that's the distance between the legitimate fiancée and the third wheel. If I were you, Vivian, I would definitely back away."

Vivian shot a glare at Shannon and stood up abruptly.

Shannon nearly jumped with fright and she took a step back. "Vivian, wha-what are you doing?"

"Nothing." Looking at the paper tiger's frightened expression, the scornful curve on Vivian's lips deepened. "I'm only preparing to clock out."

With that, she grabbed her purse on the desk and left the office.

She was rather fortunate for when she came to the elevator, Ashley had already left, saving them from another awkward encounter.

As soon as she reached home and stepped into the house, she could smell the delicious aroma wafting from the kitchen, and she knew at once that Liam and Molly had returned.

She washed her hands before sitting down to have dinner together with Finnick.

Not knowing why, Finnick seemed bothered and did not have much of an appetite even being served with a table full of Molly's sumptuous cooking. He took some food for Vivian absentmindedly while saying, "I'm free this weekend. Let me accompany you to visit your mom at the hospital."

Startled, Vivian answered anxiously, "You don't have to do that."

Lifting his eyebrows, Finnick turned to look at Vivian. "Why?"

Vivian realized that her response was too curt and with embarrassment creeping on her face, she explained mindlessly, "My mom has just got a little better so she needs to rest well."

"I guess it's some other reason than that." It seemed to be crystal clear to Finnick. "It's because your mom doesn't want to see me."

Vivian's hand which was holding the cutlery paused midair and she moved her lips. "Of course not."

"Why not?" Finnick was very calm. "I could feel it. Your mom doesn't like me."

Vivian couldn't think of anything to refute his statement, so she replied clumsily, "It's not because of you. It's mom being mom. She doesn't like wealthy men."

Finnick was even more surprised.

He had certainly run a background check on Vivian's family and therefore, he was aware of the "mistress" or "third wheel" status of Rachel William.

Finnick did not say anything but Vivian seemed to be able to read his mind. She laughed bitterly and asked, "You know I'm an illegitimate daughter, right? You must be thinking how could my Mom dislike wealthy men after getting together with Harvey."

Finnick remained silent.

“The truth is, my Mom has never really been together with Harvey.”

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Suddenly, Vivian’s expression darkened. “My mom and Harvey were studying in the same university. Harvey always fancied her but my mom didn’t feel the same way about him. Nevertheless, Harvey’s feelings for her never faded even after he got married. In fact, he even drugged and raped her. That’s how I was conceived. Although my mom hated Harvey, she felt that I was innocent, so she decided to keep me.”

Finnick looked at Vivian as he had never heard about this from his previous investigations.

“Emma was jealous of the feelings Harvey had for my mom, hence she spread rumors everywhere. She accused my mom of seducing Harvey and declared that she was his mistress. As my mom didn’t have any connections in high society, there was no way she could defend herself. All she could do was to bring me up by herself while enduring the smear on her reputation.

As Vivian recounted the past, her fist clenched unwittingly while her eyes were filled with hatred.

She absolutely despised Harvey. Unfortunately, there was no way she could change the fact that he was her biological father.

Lowering his gaze toward Vivian, Finnick held up her clenched fist and gently pried open her fingers one by one.

Vivian was caught by surprise. She raised her head to look at him as she smiled awkwardly. “I’m sorry, did I lose my composure?”

“You didn’t.” Despite his calm facade, Finnick’s eye emitted a much gentler vibe than usual. “I’m happy that you are sharing all this with me.”

It really meant a lot to him.

In truth, it wasn’t hard for him to find out about the matter if he really wanted to. But, when Vivian related it to him personally, it carried a lot more weight.

Giving Finnick a puzzled look, Vivian couldn't help but laugh. "You really are one strange man."

Finnick responded with a faint smile without commenting.

True to her words, he did find himself acting increasingly strange ever since he got to know Vivian.

The next few days were calm and uneventful.

Finally, the weekend arrived and it was time for the Norton family's dinner party.

On that day, Vivian was up very early. However, the makeup artist and hairstylist had already arrived. After spending a whole day working on her, they finally completed her makeover.

As for Finnick, he was already prepared well ahead of time and waited quietly in the living hall.

Soon, he heard the crisp footsteps of walking heels. Raising his gaze, he was stunned when he saw Vivian walking down the stairs gradually.

The last time she wore a gown to see the Norton family, she had already surprised him once.

This time, he was even more astounded.

Vivian was wearing a rose-gold-colored full-length dress. The tapered cut of her dress accentuated all her curves while its bareback showcased the beautiful curvature of her back.

Her hair was tied in a bun while her makeup looked natural instead of being ostentatious, allowing her exquisite features to outshine.

Nevertheless, Vivian still wasn't used to walking in heels. Holding the edge of her skirt, she carefully descended the steps. There, she saw Finnick looking at her with glistening eyes.

Blushing bashfully, she asked softly, "How do I look?"

Just a moment ago, she too was shocked when she saw herself in the mirror.

She was a girl after all. Being dolled up and dressed in a beautiful gown was certainly something she looked forward to. However, ever since she was young, all she could do was watch Ashley enjoy this privilege. As for her, she could only wear a white T-shirt and jeans while watching Ashley mesmerize everyone else.

However, today was different. Finally, she knew that she too had the opportunity to look gorgeous.

Unable to peel his eyes off Vivian, Finnick laughed softly and didn't answer her question. Instead, he grabbed her wrist and gave her a gentle tug.

"Ah!"

Vivian could hardly maintain her balance in her heels. Hence, when Finnick pulled her into his embrace, she fell right onto his lap on the wheelchair.

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Both of them were so close to each other that a few strands of Vivian's stray hair touched Finnick's neck. Finnick circled his hands around her waist and whispered, "You look so gorgeous that I don't even dare to take you out with me."

Vivian was surprised to hear Finnick flirt with her given that he was a man of few words. She was speechless as she blushed unwittingly.

Finnick chuckled before wheeling both of them out of the villa and got into the car.

Once they settled in, the driver drove them towards the Norton family's villa.

Along the journey, Vivian couldn't help but feel nervous.

After all, she will see Fabian and Ashley later. Moreover, just the thought that there would be a lot of people at the party caused her to worry that she would embarrass herself.

Detecting the tension in her smile, Finnick seemed to have guessed what was going through her mind. He asked softly, "Are you nervous?"

"Yes," Vivian admitted. "I'm worried about embarrassing you."

"How can you embarrass me when you look so pretty?" Finnick let out a faint smile. "Have you attended a party like this before?"

"No." To calm her nerves, Vivian began to talk more. "But, I did work as a waitress at such events during my university days to pay for my tuition. At that time, I was envious of all those girls dressed in beautiful gowns. I even wondered if I would ever get a chance to attend a party like that someday."

Finnick chuckled in response. "So, I guess your dream has come true?"

"You can put it that way." Vivian laughed along with him. "After work, I would practice the dance steps I saw the ladies performed discreetly. So that when I have the opportunity to attend a party of my own, I could dance just as elegantly..."

Suddenly, Vivian realized she had said something wrong and stopped abruptly. After which, she looked at Finnick anxiously.

Damn it. I was being careless.

I have forgotten that he is a cripple in front of others and can't dance. What I did simply rubbed salt into his wounds.

In contrast to Vivian's anxiety, Finnick was calm and there wasn't the slightest change in his smile. He replied casually, "Is that so?"

Vivian no longer dared to say anything else and remained silent till they arrived at their destination.

Finnick slid out of the car before offering his hand to help Vivian out.

After carefully alighting, Vivian was astounded when she saw the villa in front of her.

It was a huge villa and there were many luxury cars parked right in front. Numerous handsome young men and beautiful women streamed out from the cars and entered the building.

Suddenly, Vivian was a little distracted.

So, this is the sort of party they are having. It looks exactly like those I saw on TV.

As she was dazed by the magnificence of the occasion, she let Finnick lead her into the villa.

Along the way, they met a lot of people who were mostly either members of the Norton family or their associates. As everyone was aware of his status, they were greeted politely with respectful smiles. "Mr. Norton."

Despite their cordial attitude, Finnick could feel the curious stares coming from everyone around them.

As for Vivian, she tried her best to ignore the stares and followed Finnick closely as they entered the villa.

Inside, the dining hall where the party was held was huge. Its decorations were luxurious yet tasteful. While Finnick led Vivian to the main table, she could see Fabian and Ashley from afar.

Fabian was dressed in a tapered grey suit and looked dashing in it. Meanwhile, Ashley wore a bright yellow full-length dress which made her look like a blooming flower.

"Hey, Finnick, you're here!"

The first to see Finnick and Vivian was a man who sat beside Fabian. He appeared close to fifty years old and had well-defined features. However, his eyes looked as if they had seen too much which made one feel uncomfortable.

Immediately, Vivian could guess that he must be Mark, Finnick's brother and also Fabian's father.

Mark quickly shifted his attention to Vivian and smiled knowingly at her. "This must be Ms. William. I've heard a lot about you. Come, please have a seat."

After Vivian settled down together with Finnick at the table, he began to introduce everyone there to her after which she greeted them one by one.

The first was obviously his grandfather, the elder Mr. Norton. Although Vivian had met him before, she didn't leave a good impression then. Hence, she knew had to do better this time.

The elder Mr. Norton snorted in response and hardly said a word.

Next, Finnick introduced her to Mark who scrutinized Vivian from head to toe, causing her to feel uncomfortable.

After that, it was Fabian and Ashley's turn. The moment Fabian laid eyes on Vivian, he was briefly struck by how beautiful she was. However, he quickly collected himself and maintained his frosty appearance.

As for Ashley, she was so overwhelmed by jealousy that she was unable to hide any of it from her face.

She did not expect Vivian to turn into such a beautiful swan. Vivian was so gorgeous that she had outshone Ashley who was supposed to be the party's center of attention.

Her jealousy didn't stop there. In fact, she was even more astounded by how dashing Finnick looked.