

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 146

Ever since Jenny told her about the kidnapping incident that happened years ago, Vivian had always wanted to ask Finnick for more information.

However, since it was a very personal and traumatic incident, she couldn't bring herself to ask him about it.

She did not expect him to open up about his past on his own accord. Does this mean that he is finally willing to open up to me?

Finnick grabbed Vivian's hand, intertwining his hand with hers as he looked at the tombstone. He blinked and asked, "I believe you know who she is, right?"

Vivian hesitated for a brief moment before nodding. "Yes, I know a bit about her."

"Then I suppose you have also heard quite a bit about the rumors of the kidnapping incident that happened ten years ago," said Finnick indifferently. "Especially about how I abandoned her to save myself..."

Vivian suddenly became nervous and was at a loss for words.

Finnick, on the other hand, remained calmed and even let out a faint smile as he said, "Don't be nervous. You can be honest with me."

After a moment of hesitation, Vivian finally uttered, "Someone did tell me that before, but I don't believe it."

Finnick's dark eyes flickered as he responded, "Why not?"

"I don't think you're the kind of person who would abandon anyone just like that. Moreover, she was your girlfriend back then," Vivian explained softly, then she looked at him with uncertainty and added, "Am I right?"

Finnick did not answer her immediately but looked at the tombstone and mumbled to himself instead, "Would I really not abandon anyone? Even I am not sure about it myself..."

Vivian was shocked.

Not sure?

What does he mean by he's not sure?

Finnick changed the topic and said, "Evelyn and I were childhood sweethearts. My family and the Morrison family have shared a good relationship for generations."

Vivian was astonished.

So Evelyn is part of the Morrison family?

The Morrisons, the Jacksons, and the Nortons are known as the three prominent families of S City, and their reputation has been around for generations.

So, it turns out Evelyn was an heiress.

Vivian let out a wry smile as she felt uneasy about her own status.

She was like a lowly peasant compared to Evelyn.

She suppressed her uneasy feeling and said, "What happened next?"

"I thought once we're of age, we would get married like a normal couple. No one expected that we would get kidnapped ten years ago," Finnick continued in his usual mellow voice.

Vivian already knew about this part of the story from Jenny. What she wanted to know was what happened after the kidnapping incident.

"We were locked up in a warehouse by our kidnappers, and they did not release us even after receiving our ransom. Instead, they drugged us and set the warehouse on fire." Finnick sounded calm, but Vivian could hear the furious undertone in his voice.

"Drugged?" she asked in shock as Jenny had not told her anything about this. "Did the kidnappers want to kill you because you saw their faces?"

"No," Finnick replied with a frown. "The kidnapers wore masks and gloves the whole time, and they left no evidence behind."

Vivian was dumbstruck by his answer.

Earlier, she thought that Finnick and Evelyn had seen what their kidnapers looked like, prompting their kidnapers to kill them because they were afraid of being identified.

But now that she heard Finnick's side of the story, she felt that the kidnapers had no reason to attempt murder.

Even though kidnapping and homicide are both criminal acts, they have a very different degree. If the kidnapers were in it for the ransom, why didn't they just leave the country immediately after getting the money? Why did they try to kill Finnick and Evelyn instead?

"Why did they try to kill the two of you then?" Vivian couldn't help asking out of curiosity.

Finnick's eyes flickered as though he knew the reason, but he didn't answer her question. Instead, he continued where he left off earlier, "I passed out immediately after being drugged but was awakened by the thick smoke."

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Vivian was shell shocked by now as she felt that Finnick's incident sounded eerily similar to the fire that happened to her last time.

Nevertheless, she didn't ponder on this thought very much, and she focused on what he was about to say instead.

How did Finnick manage to escape back then? Did he actually abandon Evelyn?

As Finnick stared at the tombstone, he continued his account, "When I regained consciousness, I noticed my hands were untied. On top of that, Evelyn was nowhere to be found."

This development shocked Vivian.

I always wondered how Finnick was able to free himself, but it turns out he was untied by someone else?

Most importantly, how did Evelyn disappear?

Vivian was not expecting such a development, so she asked, "Are you sure?"

Finnick narrowed his eyes at Evelyn and questioned, "You don't believe me too?"

"It's not that I don't trust you," she rushed to defend herself. Everything just sounded strange to her, and when she realized he had used the word "too," she continued, "Wait, there are others who do not believe your account?"

"That's right," Finnick said as he looked down. "I told everyone about what happened after I managed to escape, but no one believed me. Even the police said I was making up stories, so they stopped investigating my case after a while."

Vivian was dumbfounded.

She didn't expect this to be the "truth" that she had been searching for all this while.

She really wanted to believe what Finnick said, that he didn't abandon his then-girlfriend. As she racked her brains to come up with a reasonable explanation, she said, "Could it be that Evelyn left on her own, or was taken away by someone?"

Finnick answered, "When I regained consciousness and realized that Evelyn wasn't around, I searched the entire warehouse but couldn't find her. Seeing that my hands were untied, the only two possibilities I thought of was that she had left or that someone had taken her away after untying my hands. Later on, the police in charge of this case told me that wasn't possible."

"How so?" Vivian questioned.

"During her post-mortem, they found that she had indeed been tied up by a rope, and DNA analysis confirmed that it was indeed Evelyn. Moreover, the knife they found at the scene was the one used to cut the rope around my hands, and there were knife cuts on my hands," said Finnick.

Vivian was utterly astounded.

All evidence at the scene proved that Finnick himself cut the rope around his hands and escaped on his own, showing no concern for Evelyn.

However, he recalled otherwise.

Common sense would say that Finnick was lying to cover up the immoral things he had done.

“So, that was what happened back then,” Finnick concluded. He then turned to look at Vivian and said, “There are two versions to the incident, one based on my memory and the other based on the investigation. Which one do you believe, Vivian?”

Vivian was caught off guard as she did not expect Finnick to question her like this.

She looked into his dark and mysterious eyes which seemed to be calling out for her empathy.

Looking into his eyes, her heart ached for him, and she whispered, “I believe you.”

Finnick’s eyes flickered in response, and his lips twitched, he then said, “Regardless of whether you really mean what you said, I’m happy to hear your answer.”

Just then, Vivian suddenly knelt before him, bringing herself to his level on the wheelchair.

She held his hands and said earnestly, “I really mean it. I believe you like how you chose to believe me back then. No matter what the evidence points to, I choose to believe what you say.”

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Every word that Vivian said tugged at Finnick’s heartstrings.

He was completely touched, and he held on to Vivian’s hands tightly.

For so many years, no one had really believed him, not even his grandfather.

Even though he generally didn't care about how others viewed him, Vivian's opinion mattered a lot to him.

He would be deeply hurt if she too believed he had abandoned his then-girlfriend.

But to his relief, she put her trust in him completely.

Looking into Vivian's sparkling eyes, Finnick felt a sense of warmth in his heart. At the same time, a wry smile appeared on his face as he said, "But Vivian, sometimes even I don't believe myself."

"What do you mean?" she asked in surprise.

"When this case was being investigated ten years ago, I underwent hypnosis and psychological evaluation to prove that what I said was true. The experts concluded that I wasn't lying, but one of the psychologists mentioned that the trauma I experienced could have affected my memory. He said that my brain might have created a false memory because subconsciously, I did not dare to face the mistakes I made. Because of that, I somehow forgot how I cut the rope around my hands and abandoned Evelyn," he explained.

"How is that possible?" she asked.

Finnick has always been a confident and self-assured person. How could his brain possibly play tricks on him?

Finnick smiled bitterly and touched Vivian's cheek, he then said, "I didn't think it was possible either, but I was rather scared back then, to be honest. I was a lot younger then, after all."

Vivian was thunderstruck by his remarks.

That's right. We're talking about an incident that happened ten years ago, Finnick was just a child then. Such a terrifying incident would definitely have traumatized him.

But after a split second, she held onto Finnick's hands and said in an affirming tone, "No, even if it were ten years ago, I know you wouldn't do such a thing."

Hearing how determined she sounded, Finnick looked at her and smiled.

"Vivian, you can be so silly sometimes." He reached out to stroke her face and said affectionately, "You shouldn't trust others so easily, or you might be deceived."

"Even if that's true, I know you wouldn't lie to me," she responded. Right after she finished her sentence, she looked into his eyes and added, "Right?"

The corners of his lips curved upwards as he bent forward to kiss her forehead.

He then moved his lips downwards along her nose and finally gave her a soft, feather-like kiss on her lips.

"I would never lie to you, Vivian. But promise me you will always protect yourself first," he whispered.

Dazed by Finnick's kiss, Vivian suddenly raised her head and asked, "Protect myself?"

"Yes, that's right." Finnick's expression turned somber. "Do you know how scared I was when I heard about the fire a few days ago?"

Vivian froze for a second.

She had known him for quite a while now, but this was the first time she heard him say that he was scared.

Was he scared because he was worried about me?

Finnick gazed at her and continued, "Fire has taken the life of the woman I loved once. I do not wish for the same thing to happen a second time."

She looked at him in astonishment and disbelief.

The woman he loves?

Second time?

What is he trying to say?

Finnick's words were pretty straightforward, but Vivian felt that they sounded too good to be true. She didn't dare to ponder over it, let alone question him any further.

All she did was stare blankly at Finnick with her mouth wide open like a goldfish that was out of water.

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Amused by Vivian's silliness, Finnick burst out in laughter.

It was only then that Vivian came to her senses and immediately buttoned up her lips, ready to get up.

However, the moment she got to her feet, Finnick grabbed her hand and pulled her into his embrace.

Vivian slumped onto his lap, and before she could exclaim aloud, Finnick gripped her chin and pressed his lips against hers, muffling her gasps.

In contrast to their previous soft kiss, this was an imperious and possessive one.

He quickly parted her lips, raiding and marking his territory while his grip tightened as if he was binding her to him.

It seemed as though time had stopped. When he reluctantly let go of Vivian and looked at the woman who was flushing like a red apple in his arms, his heart melted. He whispered in her ear, "Vivian, thank you for believing in me."

And thank you for appearing in my bleak and despairing life.

...

Vivian took half a month's leave to recuperate at home, and eventually, even she felt guilty herself and pestered to return to work in Glamour Magazine.

After all, she had taken too much leave, so she was afraid of being laid off.

With Vivian returning to the magazine company after such a long while, everyone at work was very concerned about her health. Apparently, most of them had realized the past rumors about her were mainly misunderstandings. Therefore, they became excessively ardent toward her.

But of course, there was one exception—Shannon.

As soon as Shannon saw Vivian, she started with a twinge of jealousy, “Oh dear, Vivian the princess has come back to work? I thought your backer is so powerful that you could just make money lying in bed all day.”

There was only resentment in Shannon’s eyes when she looked at Vivian.

When she met Ashley at the mall the other day, she thought she could sabotage Vivian with help from Ashley. But it was unknown to her why Ashley left in a hurry after she tattled about Vivian and took no action afterward.

These princesses are truly hopeless.

Nevertheless, she had no means to deal with Vivian herself, so she was only all bark and no bite.

On the other hand, Vivian could not care less about Shannon, and neither did others.

Sarah took Vivian by her arm and told her excitedly, “Vivian, you know what? Legal action has been taken against the sweatshop we exposed earlier, and the workers have all gotten their wages back.”

“Really?” Vivian was delighted upon hearing the news.

These days, the workers had become disadvantaged, and it happened very rarely that wages could be redeemed unless the issue boiled over.

“Yes! In addition to that, everyone is complimenting us, saying that we should take the credit for revealing the sweatshop, and so we got awarded!” Sarah was getting thrilled and took out her phone to show Vivian her search results. “Something like a social contribution award. Even though it’s not something grand, it’s increasing the popularity of Glamour Magazine! Even the netizens on Twitter are saying that we’re the most conscientious media platform.”

Vivian was astounded.

Indeed, the magazine company had very little to do with the workers getting their wages back. Despite that, increasing popularity would contribute to advertisement sponsorships as well as the sales of their magazine.

“That’s really good,” replied Vivian with a smile.

“Right? Our Chief Editor said he’d foot the bill for a drink tonight! You must come this time. We won’t take no for an answer.” Sarah was grinning from ear to ear.

Surprised, Vivian asked, “He’s back to work?”

“Oh yes, it so happened that the Chief Editor also took leave the same time you did.” Sarah seemed to have thought of something and continued, “But he came back to work a week earlier than you.”

A perplexed look crept on Vivian’s face.

Fabian was more severely injured than me. How come he’s come back to work so soon?

Before she could ponder on it, Sarah tugged at her arm and said, “Vivian, you must come tonight.”

Vivian knew very well that she seemed rather like a sore thumb in the company for always skipping their group activities. Since it would be attended by a large group of people, there was nothing to worry about, so she agreed to go.

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After a day of work, Vivian finally saw Fabian coming out of the Chief Editor’s office with his face still covered with gauze.

Fabian was also stunned when he saw Vivian in the office, but he quickly announced right after that, “It’s time to leave! Let’s go to the karaoke club nearby.”

Cheering, everyone left the office together for the karaoke club not far away from their office.

Unexpectedly, when they went into the club, they saw a beautifully dressed girl waving at them at the door, calling, "Fabian, over here!"

Vivian was taken aback when she saw who it was.

It was Ashley.

Ashley looked very hot that day. She was dressed in a short waistcoat and a mini skirt, accentuating her hourglass figure, and all the male staff from the magazine company had their eyes fixated on her.

As soon as they walked in, Ashley came forward and took Fabian by his shoulder. Smiling brightly with her rosy lips, she said, "Fabian, I've reserved a private room. Let's go in with everyone."

However, Fabian furrowed his eyebrows when he saw Ashley. "Why are you here?"

"Wasn't it you who called and told me you would be gathering here? The more the merrier, so I thought I might as well join in the fun." Ashley grinned alluringly while her eyes swept across everyone. "I'm not unwelcome, am I?"

Dazed, everyone quickly replied, "Of course not! You're the fiancée of our Chief Editor. It's our pleasure that you could join us."

Ashley's smile widened as she turned to Fabian. "See? They've all agreed. You're not asking me to leave, are you?"

Given that there were so many people around and Ashley was indeed his nominal fiancée, Fabian couldn't reject her. He stole a nervous glance at Vivian who appeared undisturbed before he bit the bullet and went in with Ashley and everyone else.

All of them had been very busy at work. Since it was a rare chance to get together for entertainment, most of them were ecstatic, singing and drinking to their heart's content. However, Vivian was not interested in any of that, so she just sat quietly at a corner, drinking her juice and scrolling her Twitter.

After a while, she needed to use the washroom, so she left the room.

However, even before she reached the washroom, she noticed the smell of cigarette smoke. To her surprise, she found Fabian smoking in the corridor with a few cigarette butts lying on the ground around his feet.

Vivian frowned.

She clearly remembered that Fabian wasn't a smoker. So why is he smoking now?

But it was also clear to her that it was none of her business, so she quickly turned the other way to get to the washroom.

Nonetheless, Fabian had already seen her. He called out her name immediately, "Vivian?"

Vivian froze and had no choice but to turn around. "Mr. Norton?"

Right then, Fabian had paced near her, causing the cigarette smell to become even stronger. Vivian could not help but wrinkle her nose.

For unknown reasons, comparing to the faint cigar smell on Finnick, she found the cigarette smell on Fabian to be very displeasing. But she only frowned a little and asked, "Mr. Norton, is there anything?"

"How have you been doing?" Fabian looked down at her and asked out of concern.

"Much better now." Vivian took a few steps back, and only then did the cigarette smell fade a little.

Fabian noticed her movement and smiled wryly. "Why? Do you still despise the cigarette smell?"

Before Vivian could answer, he added, "Finnick smokes as well, but it seems you're not bothered."

Vivian did not intend to talk about Finnick with Fabian. She could tell that Fabian was already a little drunk, so it was all the more unnecessary to argue with him. Hence, she ignored his question and walked past him to enter the ladies' room.

This time, Fabian did not chase after her. Before Vivian went into the cubicle, she couldn't help turning back to take a look at Fabian. However, she found that he was leaning against the wall in despair, lighting up another cigarette and smoking even more heavily.

A stinging sensation erupted within Vivian's heart.

It was impossible for her not to feel anything seeing Fabian in such a downhearted state. Despite that, she knew very well that she no longer had the right to concern herself with his life.

She went to the sink in a daze and was about to wash her face when suddenly, one of the cubicle doors opened behind her with a bang.