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Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1466

"Well, well... I've got to teach you a lesson since you don't know your place," Gabriella snarled resentfully. Then, she made a phone call.

"Quincy, it's me, Gabriella Ward. I need a favor. Don't worry, I'll reward you accordingly." Shortly after, she hung up the phone with her lips curved into a contemptuous smile.

"You want to go up against me, Joan Watts? I'm afraid you're still far from being my match!"

Joan glanced at her cell phone, only to realize that it was already past midnight. "Let's call it a day now. I'll work overtime again tomorrow, and I'll be able to wrap it up," she muttered to herself.

After mumbling that, she stretched before packing up. Then, she shouldered her handbag and left the office.

She had to go through a relatively short alley on her way back to her rented house. Nonetheless, she didn't really pay it much heed since she was used to taking that alley.

As it was the middle of the night, the alley was devoid of any life. When a gust of wind swept past, she suddenly shivered and pulled her clothes tighter against herself even as she instinctively quickened her steps.

The moment she reached the corner of the alley, however, she was abruptly startled. Three men were standing around the corner while puffing away, and their gazes were pinned intently on her.

All of a sudden, a sense of panic seized her. Oh God, I'd better not provoke these ruffians in the dead of the night! She hastily lowered her head and quickly walked away.

As soon as she had walked past those three ruffians, she wanted to breathe a long sigh of relief.

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"Why are you in such a hurry, missy?" But alas, one of the ruffians spoke in a heavy accent.
"Where are you headed to?"

"Missy, you're Joan Watts, yes?" the man who was obviously the leader of the ruffians drawled. He was none other than the person whom Gabriella phoned, Quincy.

"I-I'm not Joan Watts. You've got the wrong person," Joan hurriedly denied as she glanced at Quincy, who was as thin as a stick and had a vertical scar bisecting his face. Naturally, she could tell that these people were here to target her specifically.

"Regardless, you're still a pretty good choice to satisfy our desires first."

"Haha, that's right, Quincy. She must be pretty fun to fu*k since she's so beautiful."

Giving Joan no chance to escape, the three of them surrounded her.

Terrified by the situation that was unfolding before her, Joan could no longer think of any good method to deflect their attention.

Desperate, she started yelling at the top of her lungs, "Someone, please help me! Help!"

As she shouted relentlessly, she attempted to break out of the three men's confined circle.

However, she failed to do so with the puny strength she had. Instead, Quincy grabbed her shoulders.

"Haha, do you think all those scenes in TV series actually work? Go on and shout. We'll just see whether anyone will come to your rescue," Quincy drawled with a leering smile as he caressed her face.

"This is a really great job. Not only do we get to make a few quick bucks, but we're also getting to enjoy such a beautiful girl!"

By then, the ruffian on the left had already started tearing at Joan's clothes.

"No! Let go of me!" Joan wailed in despair.

"Actually, this isn't such a great job."

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A cold, hard voice split the air just when the three ruffians were just about to make their move on Joan, and it was none other than Larry, who had just rushed over.

“Who are you?”

The sudden voice startled all three of them.

“The person who’ll be putting you in the hospital!”

At the sight of Joan in tears, stark fury gripped Larry, and he sounded just like a devil who had come from hell.

“You? What a joke! Buddies, beat him up!”

Infuriated by his words, Quincy teamed up with the other ruffians to teach him a lesson since he was so impudent.

But just as Quincy’s words fell, Larry had already shot out like a cheetah and streaked over to him, grabbing his fist that was headed at his face.

Crack!

After the crisp sound of bone cracking, Quincy’s agonized scream pierced through the air. His arm was already bent at a ninety-degree angle before he had even realized it.

Having snapped his arm, Larry then bent forward without a moment’s delay to dodge the knife someone swung at his back even as he kicked out his leg with the momentum. In the next instance, another crack rang out, and the ruffian collapsed to the ground, howling and hugging his leg.

In just a few seconds, two ruffians were already defeated. Upon seeing the abysmal state of affairs, the other ruffian wanted to take off, but he was then sent sprawling to the ground with a kick from Larry.

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“Well? Spit it out! Who sent you? Otherwise, you’ll end up like the two of them!”

Larry’s voice was dripping with a bone-deep chill as he placed his leg on the ruffian’s body.

“I-I don’t know anything! I only know that it was a woman! I don’t know anything else!” the ruffian blurted without even thinking about it.

After all, the sight of his two buddies howling on the ground struck such terror into him that his heart was about to pound out of his chest.

A woman?

After pondering for a moment, the answer came to Larry.

Disregarding the ruffians, he then rushed over to Joan. When he saw her shaken state, his heart shattered, and he pulled her into his arms lovingly.

“You’re fine now. I’m here, so everything is going to be okay.”

Larry stroked her back gently, and his voice was a soothing tenor.

Hugging him tightly, Joan sobbed softly. A sense of security engulfed her at his solid and warm embrace.

“Let’s go. I’ll walk you home,” Larry murmured.

Only then did Joan realize that she had been hugging him for some time, and she swiftly released her hold on him. When her hands were empty, she instinctively clutched the hem of her clothes with embarrassment written all over her face.

“Thank you.”

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She didn't quite know what to say, so in the end, the many things she wanted to say all condensed into a succinct expression of thanks.

"Nah," Larry grunted in response. "Let's go."

Then, he took the lead and walked ahead of her.

When they arrived at Joan's house, he stayed for a while. After ascertaining that she was fine, he told her to rest well before leaving.

As his car sped off, his face was blanketed with a layer of frost.

The entire night passed in silence. When Larry went to work the next morning, he headed straight for Gabriella's office.

At that moment, Gabriella was spacing out as she contemplated how she should handle Larry's confrontation. In fact, she had already known about everything that had happened last night itself.

Besides panic, she also felt a hint of regret.

Damn it all to hell! It was such a great opportunity to teach Joan Watts a lesson, but alas, my plan was ruined by Larry's appearance!

"Gabriella Ward."

Gabriella jumped at the sudden voice. When she saw who it was, she forced a smile.

"Oh, it's you, Larry?"

She then promptly got up to entertain him.

"Last night, your best friend, Joan Watts, was ambushed by three ruffians in an alley."

Larry cut straight to the chase without wasting any time.

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"What? How did that happen?" Gabriella's face paled upon hearing that. Then, she queried, "Is she okay?"

"You should know the answer to that better than anyone else, no?" Larry retorted in a terse voice.

"What are you saying? How would I know about that?" Gabriella put up a calm front as she said that. "You've got to believe me, Larry!"

"I've already gotten the answer to the entire matter. Are you still planning on lying to my face? Gabriella Ward, if you've got the guts to do something, you should also have the guts to admit to it! Don't make me hate you."

Gabriella's pretentious expression repulsed Larry, so he didn't give her any quarter.

Upon seeing that the matter was already out in the open and feigning innocence would only make him despise her all the more, Gabriella bit the bullet. "Yes, it was indeed my doing! I've investigated your past with her thoroughly, and it was she who ruthlessly left you back then. In that case, what right does she have to seek you out again now? She's nothing more than a b*tch! I'm the one who truly loves you!"

"Shut up!"

It was glaringly obvious that Gabriella's play to his emotions had zero effect on him.

"That is not a reason to hurt someone else. If it happens again, my company will have no use of you!"

After saying that, Larry left without a backward glance.

"This is all on you, Joan Watts! I'll definitely get back at you for this!"

Intense hatred gleamed in Gabriella's eyes when she saw him whirling around and leaving so resolutely.

Thereafter, Larry went to Opulent Designs. Despite having suffered a severe blow from the incident yesterday, Joan was adamant about coming to work.

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She was working on the proposal when Larry arrived, and she hastily stood up at the sight of him entering her office.

"Y-You're here," Joan stammered.

"Yeah. How's the proposal coming?"

Larry didn't mention a single word about the incident last night as though nothing had ever happened.

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"It'll be ready to be handed over to Norton Corporation tomorrow after a bit of overtime tonight."

Joan's eyes were fixed on Larry. Everything that had happened last night was still vivid in her mind, and she remembered all that he had done for her.

"Submit the proposal to me the day after tomorrow. In the future, try not to work overtime anymore. It's bad for health."

Larry's voice was a tad cold and stiff, but Joan could still discern the smidgen of concern in it.

A burst of warmth instantly infused her, and she replied with a smile, "Thank you."

At the thought that the day after tomorrow would be the last time they were seeing each, a wealth of anguish weighed upon her.

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It was only when she was swamped with work could she control herself from thinking about him. Whenever she had a little free time on her hands, his image and every single detail about him would flood into her mind and occupy every inch of it.

I can't deny that I still love him deeply, but he already has a girlfriend, and she's my best friend during college. How could I be the third party who destroys their relationship? After having concluded this business deal, I'll leave.

In the end, she chose to run away from him.

However, no one knew whether leaving would actually be a relief or an agonizing torture.

Meanwhile, in the residence of the Ward family...

"Dad, is our family the biggest business partner of Norton Corporation?" Gabriella inquired sweetly as she massaged her father, Landon Ward.

"Yup. At present, the Ward family's biggest business partner is indeed Norton Corporation. But as Norton Corporation is the biggest company in Marsingfill, we're not their most important collaborator. Rather, we are the one depending on them in many aspects."

Landon had his eyes closed as he luxuriated in his daughter's rare show of filial piety.

"What's wrong, Gabriella? Why did you suddenly ask about business?"

"Ah, it's nothing. It's just that I really like Larry, and he has feelings for me as well. Will it be beneficial to our family and mutually benefit both parties if the two families join in marriage?"

Finally, Gabriella revealed her ultimate goal—to bind herself with Larry by making use of the excuse of uniting with Norton Corporation via marriage. In that case, no matter how much Larry Norton loves Joan Watts, he can't possibly go against his family's wishes!

"Hmm? You mean, Larry Norton is also enamored of you?"

As Landon looked at his fair and beautiful daughter, he felt that she wasn't lying to him.

"Yes, Dad. That day, Larry even kissed me." Shyness was written all over Gabriella's face.

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"Haha, this is indeed a good choice since you're both in love with each other, and joining in marriage is beneficial to us!" Landon exclaimed cheerfully. "I'll phone Finnick in a while and feel him out."

"Thank you, Dad! You're the best!"

Over the moon, Gabriella planted a hard kiss on Landon's cheek.

Shortly after, Landon made a call to Norton Residence.

"Hello, Finnick! It's me, Landon."

"Oh, it's you! Why did you suddenly ring me up, old boy?"

Larry's father, Finnick, and Landon were old friends, so they weren't all that restrained with each other.

"Finnick, there's a fantastic matter I'd like to discuss with you."

"Hmm? What fantastic matter are you speaking of?" Finnick asked.

"I heard that my daughter and Larry's relationship is really good, so I'd like to ask whether you're interested in joining in marriage."

Finnick was taken aback for a moment before he replied with a chuckle, "This is indeed a fantastic matter. You know what? Larry hasn't mentioned a single word to me! But Landon, Larry's mother and I don't really interfere in Larry's marriage. Why should we trouble ourselves with our children's affairs? Just let them be."

Hearing that, a bitter smile bloomed on Landon's face. "You're right. I was just eager to have even closer ties with you that I didn't consider that. In that case, I'll just let them be."

"Haha..."

At the side, Gabriella heard the conversation loud and clear. While resentment blazed within her, she herself knew that an arranged marriage was likely out of the question.

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It was the day Joan was going to Norton Corporation to submit the proposal, and she had made all the preparations early in the morning.

This was her third time standing at the entrance of Norton Corporation, and each time, her emotions were vastly different.

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Joan hesitated for a moment before she took a deep breath and entered.

Larry's office was open. Joan stood at the side of the door and stared at him, who was working away at his desk.

He is just as he has always been. Chiseled jawline, clear gaze, and a small frown as he worked intently...

Everything seems familiar, but...

Larry looked up when he sensed that someone was looking at him. That was when he caught Joan staring.

"You're here," commented Larry calmly. His voice carried a hint of excitement, but it was virtually undetectable.

"Yeah, I'm here to hand the report in," replied Joan softly.

"Oh, okay. Just place it on the table," replied Larry after being momentarily stunned.

Joan put the report on the table. She then stood there without saying a word. Larry remained quiet as he sat in his chair as well. The atmosphere in the room instantly turned slightly tense.

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“Mr. Norton, it was a pleasure to collaborate with your company. We wish that we can collaborate again in the future,” said Joan.

She grinned. I have to let go, regardless of how unwilling I am.

She then extended her hand politely. It seemed that she wanted to feel the warmth of Larry’s hand one last time.

The ridiculously polite tone and gesture that Joan made got Larry a little speechless. After some time, he stood up and shook Joan’s hand.

“Sure. I hope we’ll get the opportunity to work together again.”

Will that really happen? thought Joan with a bitter smile on her face.

“Well, I better not take up any more of your time, Mr. Norton. Goodbye,” said Joan.

She took one last look at Larry and smiled at him before she turned around and left the office.

Larry didn’t say anything. He simply watched as she left.

Joan’s life reverted to its calm and uneventful style over the next few days. She went to work like she had always done so, but her heart simply couldn’t stop yearning for him.

Someone dropped by her workplace on a random day. He wore a casual outfit and had a baseball cap on. He was handsome, and his smile seemed especially cheery.

He walked right up to the receptionist and smiled before asking, “Hello. May I know how to get to Ms. Joan Watts’ office?”

The receptionist answered the man politely.

“Thank you,” said the guy before he left.

“What is up lately? Why do handsome dudes keep dropping by to look for Joan? How I wish someone that good-looking would come look for me too...” mumbled the receptionist.

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Knock! Knock! Knock!

Someone knocked on the door to Joan's office.

"Come in."

Joan looked up. Her nonchalant expression instantly turned gleeful as she did so.

"Dustin! What brought you here? Come in," invited Joan excitedly as she stood up.

Dustin Silverman was Joan's doctor while she was getting treatment for her illness. They spent a lot of time together as they battled her illness, and Dustin eventually fell for Joan. He found her to be a sweet, kind, but sometimes clueless woman. Joan, on the other hand, regarded him as a great friend because he took good care of her.

The reason why Dustin came all the way to Marsingfill was to court Joan and get her to be his girlfriend.

For that, he specifically put in a request to be transferred to the place where Joan was staying. He did all that just to be close to her.

"Joan, how have you been?" asked Dustin as he sat down. He had a smile on his face the entire time, and it seemed like he was delighted.

"I was transferred to the city for work. Looks like we'll be seeing each other a lot again," said Dustin.

The two of them exchanged some pleasantries and chatted away happily. They were old friends who were catching up, so before they knew it, they had already spent a lot of time together.

"You're working now, so I better not disturb you. Let's hang out again once you're free."

Dustin's objective for visiting was to see how Joan was doing. He didn't want to overstay his welcome after seeing her, so he stood up to leave.

"How about I treat you to dinner after I clock off? Let an old friend treat you for traveling all the way over to her humble city," suggested Joan.

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Dustin grinned brightly after receiving that invitation.

“Deal, but I have to warn you, I will be asking for an expensive meal,” joked Dustin.

“No problem. It’s settled, then,” replied Joan.

The two of them smiled as they looked into each other’s eyes.

Meanwhile, Larry was troubled over the past few days.

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Larry’s mind warned him against looking for Joan again. She hurt me and heartlessly abandoned me. I have no reason whatsoever to go to her.

Anyone who had been hurt would not do the same thing that hurt them in the first place.

However, his heart kept yearning for her. It told him that he loved her so, so much. It didn’t matter what Joan did to him in the past. He was convinced that she didn’t have a choice.

Larry had been troubled by that issue for days, but he decided to follow his heart after debating endlessly with himself.

Since I’m still in love with her, I should just go all out.

With that thought in mind, Larry drove his car and hurried over to the office where Joan worked. She should be clocking off any minute now. Larry wanted to treat her to a meal and take the opportunity to talk to her. Maybe we can clear out all the misunderstandings or something.

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Larry lit up a cigarette as he waited in his car. He was bored because Joan hadn't shown up yet.

When he finally saw Joan's figure, energy surged through his body, and he jumped a little. He extinguished the cigarette and was ready to head over right away.

However, before he could, he paused. Wait, Joan's not alone. She's walking with another man!

"Dustin, what cuisine would you like to have?" asked Joan as she swiped on her phone.

"You decide. I'm good with anything," replied Dustin with a grin.

"It's not safe to walk while checking your phone. Let me guide you," offered Dustin.

After saying that, he held Joan's arm to guide her. Joan wasn't bothered by his gesture. She even smiled sweetly at him.

The two of them chatted happily as they walked down the street. Larry, on the other hand, was burning with fury as he sat in his car.

The way Joan interacts with that man makes them seem like a couple!

Larry almost lost control of himself upon coming to that conclusion. He was so angry that it felt like his rage would soon burn away all of his sanity.

He didn't spare any time to consider the situation. Stepping on the gas, Larry zipped his car toward the two adults immediately after.

Joan and Dustin were discussing where they might eat when they heard a noise behind them and instinctively turned around only to see a car speeding toward them.

"Dustin, watch out!"

Joan shrieked to warn Dustin.

The Lamborghini was practically touching Dustin's body when it screeched to a halt.

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Larry hopped out of the car and walked to Joan. He interrogated angrily, "Joan Watts, who is this? Why are you hanging out with him?"

Joan slowly recovered from the shock. When she saw that the driver was Larry, she huffed in an annoyed tone, "Larry, what kind of a driver are you? You almost hit my friend!"

"Friend? He's not your boyfriend, is he?" growled Larry icily.

"What does that have anything to do with you?" refuted Joan loudly, "Mr. Norton, our business deal has concluded, and that last bit of connection between us has been severed. What right do you have to butt into my private life?"

"Who is he?" demanded Larry once more.

He ignored Joan's words and insisted on getting an answer out of her.

"You don't get to care. So what if he is my boyfriend?" challenged Joan.

She was losing her temper as well, and she refused to back down.

Just then, Dustin wrapped his arm around Joan's waist gently and glared tauntingly at Larry. It was as if the former was declaring his territory.

"Please stop bothering Joan. She is not interested in you, and bothering her won't help your cause whatsoever!"

Larry saw how Dustin was holding Joan, and how she didn't seem to mind at all. That got Larry to give up interrogating her about the matter.

She has someone else with her now, and it no longer matters to her if I am here for her or not.

"Oh, so that's how it is... right, Joan? This is your boyfriend. You left me all those years ago because you fell for someone else too! Am I right?" demanded Larry. His eyes were burning with immense fury when he growled, "And to think that I assumed your hands were tied when you left. You truly disappointed me!"

Larry tried his best to control himself, but he still couldn't calm down.

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After howling and spewing insults, Larry got into his car and left, looking like a lone wolf with a broken heart.

Joan's heart felt like it was being shredded. She had repeatedly hurt him, so it no longer mattered if her hands were tied. I am not worthy of his love.

"Joan, are you alright?" asked Dustin in a concerned tone. "I held you because the circumstances forced me to do so. You're not mad about it, are you?"

Joan quickly wiped her tears away before she grinned and replied, "No, I'm not mad. Thank you, Dustin."

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