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After pondering for a while, Noah agreed with the solution Evelyn proposed. As long as Mr. Norton and Mrs. Norton never meet again, they will never clear up the misunderstanding between them. It's great that no one will find about that incident, but...

Thinking about Finnick suffering from his longing for Vivian, Noah wanted to punch himself in the face. I betrayed Mr. Norton before to ensure my parents' safety. Now that I'll have to cover up the mistakes I made, am I going to betray him again?

Finnick trusted Noah completely and hid nothing from the latter. With these thoughts in mind, Noah felt his conscience pricking at him. I'll have to pay for my sins one day.

Also, Mrs. Norton believed me, so she never suspected anything from that incident.

And this is how I repay their trust for me?

Lowering his head, guilt was written all over Noah's face. Evelyn could tell what he was thinking. He must feel sorry for them.

She let out a sneer in her heart. Eagles don't catch flies. What can he achieve being so indecisive? No wonder he's still an assistant after so many years.

"What do you think?" Evelyn snickered while trying to stop him from backing out. "Noah, do you think Finnick will spare your life if he found out about it?"

She paused for a moment and looked at the man's tensed expression. Smirking, she continued, "You've been working for him for so many years. I bet you know the consequences. Not only will you lose your job, but you'll also be blacklisted by the entire finance industry. Think about your parents. Do you want them to suffer with you?"

Noah gripped his fists tightly as he admitted Evelyn's words had indeed hit the nail on the head. She had exposed every single worry I had buried deep in my heart.

That's right. I don't care whatever happens to me, but I can't let my parents suffer.

"What are you trying to do to Mrs. Norton?" Noah glared at her with hostility.

Although Noah was worried about his parents, he couldn't get himself to help Evelyn with heinous deeds. If she went overboard, he wouldn't agree to help her.

Suddenly, the woman snapped, "She's not Mrs. Norton! They were divorced, so you're not allowed to address her that way!"

It had been five years. Why can't I replace Vivian's position in Finnick's heart? Even Noah thought of her as Mrs. Norton. This title belongs to me!

Evelyn smiled viciously, as hatred filled her eyes. "I don't care if you're one of the Williams or Morrisons, Vivian. This time, you won't be able to escape."

In the meantime, Vivian was annoyed recently, and it was all because of Hunter.

Didn't he say he'll stop assisting Evelyn? Not only did he call me over and over again, he invited me out frequently.

The reasons he gave were of all sorts: Today, his friend opens a new restaurant and gives him a voucher; tomorrow, he asks me to help him pick out a present for his mother's birthday; the day after tomorrow, he asks me to become his partner for a gathering...

What a joke! He has tons of women to choose from.

Slowly, Vivian felt something was wrong. Did I give him some wrong signals? Maybe he misunderstood there was something between us.

Later on, Vivian was firm in rejecting Hunter's invitations, as she felt nothing toward him, so she wanted to put a line between them. However, the man never stopped calling.

Buzz! Buzz!

Hearing the vibration of her phone, Vivian turned her head impatiently with a frown on her face, reluctant to spare it any attention.

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Buzz... Buzz... Buzz...

Silent ensued for a while before the phone started to vibrate again.

Are you done? Vivian grabbed her phone and roared, "Didn't I tell you I don't have time for this? Can't you understand human language? I said no, and no means no!"

"What's wrong? Why are you so angry? I haven't even said anything." A familiar woman's voice sounded from the phone, and this shocked Vivian.

Never did she think the one that called wasn't Hunter but her best friend Peggy instead.

"I'm sorry, Peggy. I'm really sorry." Vivian apologized hurriedly and explained, "I didn't know it was you. I thought it was... I'm sorry."

"Alright. I know you, so don't worry." Peggy chuckled and teased, "Who is the idiot that made you so angry?"

Vivian grumbled, "An annoying person. Let's not talk about him. Is there something you need from me?"

Peggy explained, "Do you remember the journalist club we joined during college? The members are organizing a gathering. Do you have time?"

"Ah. I see, but I..." Vivian was conflicted.

When she was in college, she got along well with the club members initially. However, everyone started talking behind her back when Ashley framed her for working at a nightclub. The matter got worse when they boycotted her, and she quitted the club as she couldn't endure the judgmental looks from the club members.

It was until now she still remembered the scoffs and mockery she suffered from her fellow schoolmates. The pain was carved into her heart.

With those painful memories in her mind, Vivian smiled bitterly. "Peggy, you know I don't get along with them. I don't feel like meeting them, so I'll pass."

Peggy tried to convince her into joining the gathering. "Oh, it's okay. They found out about the truth and wanted to apologize to you. Come. Just do it for my sake. We haven't seen each other for such a long time! Don't you miss me?"

Being her friend for so many years, Vivian couldn't reject her after hearing her whine. "Alright. I'll go, but you must stay by my side. Otherwise, it'll be awkward."

Peggy's delighted voice sounded from the phone. "No problem! I promise I'll never leave your side."

The image of Peggy's cheeky expression surfaced in Vivian's mind, and this made her smile.

After confirming the time and venue of the gathering, the women chatted away. Their conversation was endless as they had many topics to talk about, from Vivian's experience of her life overseas to having children, to exchanging experiences between mothers. It went on for over two hours before they hung up reluctantly.

On the next day, Vivian arrived at the venue on time. The gathering was held at the Wonderlake Hotel located beside her college.

She called Peggy when she reached the hotel lobby. Soon, a woman in a red dress came downstairs.

When she saw Vivian, she was stunned for a while before giving Vivian a bear hug. "Vivian, I miss you so much!"

Vivian teared up and hugged her back tightly.

With tears in her eyes, Peggy let go of Vivian and smiled. "They said the food in A Nation is unhealthy, but you look so beautiful that I almost couldn't recognize you. Did you lie to me? Did you go to Koandria instead?"

Pfft! Vivian couldn't help but burst into laughter from Peggy's words. Wiping her tears, she urged, "Alright. Let's go upstairs now. Everyone's waiting for us."

"Sure." Peggy nodded and dragged her to a private room upstairs.

Once Vivian stepped into the room, all eyes were on her.

Everyone was staring at her in awe and disbelief. Who is this beauty exuding a glamorous and noble aura? She was nothing more than a woman with delicate figures in the past!

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“What’s wrong? Have you all turn mute after seeing beautiful women?” Seeing the shock in everyone’s eyes, pride swelled in Peggy’s heart.

However, she knew Vivian was uncomfortable with the stares, so she hurriedly cooked up a joke to divert their attention.

When they heard Peggy’s words, they came back to their senses and greeted Vivian happily.

“Vivian, you’ve become such a beauty after these years.”

“That’s right. You got me shocked just now. I almost couldn’t recognize you. It seems like puberty did you well.”

“Vivian, I heard you are the heiress of the Morrison Group. What splendid news! Please give us support in the future.”

“Of course. Vivian always remembers her friends.”

Vivian had become more tactful over the years, so she could interact with them just well. At the same time, everyone’s impression of her changed.

However, some women disliked her. They hid in a corner and gave her scornful looks. “She’s just lucky. How dare she act all high and mighty!”

Someone chimed in softly, “Yeah. It’s so obvious that she’s trying to look good in front of us. Everyone knows what she did in the past.”

Although there were some hostile comments toward Vivian, the atmosphere in the private room was lively while Vivian behaved modestly.

However, she faltered when a man showed up.

“Oh? Fabian! I never expect you to come. Long time no see!”

Raising her head, Vivian saw a familiar yet strange face and was stunned.

Ever since she returned from overseas, this was the first time she met Fabian, and her emotions were in a complete mess.

The man's features never changed, but he seemed much more mature as compared to the man he was five years ago. Wearing a navy suit, his upright figure looked even slender while he gave off an imposing aura, overwhelming others with his presence.

When Vivian saw Fabian, their memories of the past overwhelmed her.

She saw Fabian and herself from five years ago smiling happily at her. It was as if they were in the simplest and most beautiful relationship.

Then she thought of Fabian's dilemma. However, everything ended along with Ashley's death.

Is this the magic of time? It kept our identities unchanged but changes us from within. At least that's the case for us.

Now that she thought about the past, she could face it with a smile.

The moment Fabian stepped into the room, he caught sight of Vivian. Awe flashed across his eyes and was soon replaced by his longing for the woman.

He couldn't even keep track of the times he dreamt of her. When he woke up from his dreams, her figure was still imprinted in his mind, be it during their school days or when they started working.

Realization soon dawned on him. She's not by my side and she doesn't belong to me anymore.

He didn't dare to ask for more than just seeing her.

It had been five years. After such a long time, she finally stood in front of him. It was no longer just illusions and this time, she wouldn't fade away.

Fabian wanted to go to Vivian so badly that his heart pounded furiously against his chest, as if it was excited to see its owner reunite with her.

To his dismay, other schoolmates surrounded him and blocked his view. Due to etiquette, he could only exchange customary pleasantries with them to avoid being rude while he himself didn't know what he was saying.

It was as if his body and soul were separated. He appeared talking to his schoolmates, but his soul had flown to Vivian's front, looking at the woman he had longed for.

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He was aching to go over and ask her how she'd been these past few years and whether she was doing well.

After finishing up the business he had here, Fabian quickly walked over to give his heart what it wanted.

Vivian felt a little panicked at the sight of Fabian approaching. After all, she hadn't prepared herself to meet him. Her eyes betrayed her uneasiness, but she chose to stand still.

It was going to happen sooner or later anyway.

Vivian was no longer the same weak girl from before. She was going to learn how to face her hardships.

"Long time no see," Fabian said softly as he looked into Vivian's eyes. His voice was pressed low as if he were terrified that speaking any louder might scare her off.

His heart had been racing at a mile a minute before, but it miraculously calmed down in front of her. He said those four words with ease as if they had only seen each other yesterday.

"Long time no see," Vivian echoed with a faint smile. "How have you been?"

"What about you?" Fabian deflected, his eyes betraying his concern.

"I'm doing well. There's a roof over my head and food on my plate, so I'm practically on cloud 9." The atmosphere between them seemed to be relaxed, so Vivian felt comfortable enough to make a joke.

"Is that so?" Fabian forced a bitter smile. He wasn't sure if he was supposed to feel happy or sad about that. "That's good."

He decided to keep his own thoughts to himself. After all, there was no need to guilt trip her about his own issues.

"Thanks," Vivian murmured with a nod. The conversation faded off since she didn't know how to continue. Fabian wasn't like those other classmates. She couldn't exactly make small talk with him like she could with the others.

Fabian didn't seem to be trying to continue the conversation either, so the two of them fell into silence. Luckily, once Fabian came to his senses, he finally broke the awkward silence.

"Should we go outside?" Fabian suggested. "It's pretty noisy in here. I wanna go take a look around the school since it's been awhile. I wonder if they made any changes."

"I-" Vivian hesitated. After all, she and Fabian used to date. Going out alone with him was probably not a good idea. There were so many people here that rumors might start flying around.

"Aren't we still friends?" Fabian said casually, managing to get rid of Vivian's worries.

"Alright. Give me a second, I'll let Peggy know."

Vivian walked toward Peggy, who suddenly picked up Vivian's hand in concern and shook her head subtly.

"I'll be fine. I'll be back soon," Vivian consoled Peggy, patting her hand softly.

Vivian was so adamant that Peggy could only let her go.

She wasn't exactly worried about Vivian's safety. She knew Fabian wasn't that kind of guy. However, everyone at the gathering knew about her and Fabian's previous relationship. Who knew what they would start talking about if they saw the two of them going off alone.

As expected, after the two of them left, the surroundings started filling up with chatter.

"Isn't Vivian married? Why's she still heading off with her ex-boyfriend all alone? Could she be thinking of having an affair?"

"That's old news. She got a divorce five years ago. Rather than having an affair, I think she's relighting an old flame."

"Fabian is still a bachelor right? Why would he be going after a once-married woman?"

"Enough! They're just going out as friends. What's with all the judgment? Also, is there a problem with being divorced or something? It's not a crime!" Peggy finally said loudly, unable to bear the gossip everyone was spreading.

The gossips who had been clamoring around immediately shut up with reddening faces. They shot a glare at Peggy, but a sharp glare from her put them in their places.

Outside, Vivian and Fabian had reached the school field. The two of them felt a little nostalgic at the sight of their old hangout.

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"Do you remember this place? Last time when we came here for P.E, there was a girl who confessed to her crush here."

Fabian started laughing halfway through telling the story. That had really been a legendary story back then.

Vivian giggled at the memory. "How could I forget? That girl was all dressed up in a wedding dress too, but she got so nervous after confessing that she didn't realize that her skirt was lit on fire from the candles around her. I even remember how the guy reacted, too..."

The two of them looked at each other and laughed, trailing off.

After a moment of silence, Fabian suddenly asked, "Vivian, are you still in touch with Finnick?"

Vivian's expression immediately darkened at the sound of Finnick's name and her voice dropped a few degrees. "Not for a long time. Why are you asking?"

"I just couldn't figure out why you two would break up. Could you tell me what happened?"

"Why do you want to know?" Vivian moved away slightly, starting to look much more cautious. Did Fabian ask me out alone for a different reason?

Also, why did he even start wondering about that stuff in the first place? Could he have known about Larry? He may not be on good terms with Finnick, but he is from the Norton family after all. Could it be...

She couldn't help but start to worry. She wasn't sensitive per se, but she automatically got worried whenever Larry was involved.

Fabian felt hurt at the sight of Vivian's sudden caution. So we can't even trust each other anymore? He simply asked because he was curious, but she had reacted so strongly. How ironic is this!

"Vivian, do you have no trust in me anymore? Am I just some manipulative, sly jerk to you?" Fabian said in a low, disappointed voice.

Vivian's gaze immediately became apologetic at the sound of Fabian's distress. He's right. He was just asking out of concern since we haven't met in such a long time. Why did I react so strongly? He's not going to try and harm me like Evelyn did.

"That's not what I meant. I just wanted to know why you asked me about Finnick. I wasn't suspecting you- I mean-"

The more Vivian tried to explain herself, the worse it sounded. She decided to just apologize. "I'm sorry, Fabian. I shouldn't have reacted like that. I just-"

I just don't want to be hurt again. Evelyn had set up so many traps for her and watched as Vivian fell into each one. It had taken forever for her to finally learn her lesson. Even though she was now more alert, it came with a large dose of paranoia.

Fabian relaxed at the sight of Vivian's apologetic gaze. At the same time, he was thinking, She's right to be cautious. If she wasn't at least a little paranoid, who knows what she might have gone through all those years of being on her own.

"It's alright," Fabian said with a comforting glance at Vivian. "Relax. I no longer have any hope of us getting back together, so don't worry about me plotting to ruin your relationship with Finnick either. In fact, I'd rather the two of you be happy together forever."

At first, he had been under the impression that Finnick and Vivian weren't dating out of love. That was why he tried time and time again to win Vivian back. He had seen how much Finnick was willing to do for Vivian five years ago and knew he was really in love with her.

Perhaps Finnick was the only one who could make her happy as her one true love. Since that was the case, he was more than willing to wish them well. As long as Vivian is happy.

Vivian lowered her head at the sound of Fabian's words. She only spoke again after a long time in a low, discouraged tone. "Things aren't going to get better for us anymore."

"Why?" Fabian couldn't understand why Vivian sounded so hopeless. "What exactly happened that year? How could you two just leave each other like that?"