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## Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1496

Landon's words moved Gabriella, causing her to realize that only her own family would truly care about her.

Holding that thought, her expression drastically changed when she recalled how caring Larry was toward Joan.

However, she recovered her composure quickly as she didn't want to lose her temper in front of Landon.

When she saw that her father was waiting for her response, she gathered her thoughts and explained to him what happened without any hesitation.

However, she left out one key detail. She only declared that she was in love with Larry but didn't mention Larry was in love with Joan.

Out of jealousy, she accused Joan of coming in between her relationship with Larry, and that Joan was the third party. Furthermore, Gabriella also claimed she was manipulated by someone else into causing the whole drama to unfold.

Throughout her explanation, she never admitted her role in the matter. All she did was blame her own impulse.

"Tell me, were you the one who went to the press about the matter?" Landon asked skeptically once Gabriella had finished.

"No, it wasn't me. All I did was scold Joan out of anger. I didn't expect the matter to escalate to such an extent."

Gabriella pretended to be in agony. "It's all my fault. If I hadn't made the wild accusations, this wouldn't have happened. I wouldn't have ruined our family's reputation and caused my good friend, Joan, grievous hurt. Dad, you should punish me for what I have done."

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When he saw how repentant Gabriella was and the tears that welled up in her eyes, Landon's heart ached for his daughter. He consoled her, "Gabriella, although you acted on impulse this time, it isn't entirely your fault. It's obvious someone has been using this episode to do harm to our family. Going forward, you have to remember to keep your calm and think before you act."

Evidently, Landon loved his daughter greatly. Not only did he believe Gabriella's words entirely, he even saw her as the victim and comforted her.

"I'll keep that in mind and won't repeat my mistake again, Dad," Gabriella promised as she smiled sweetly at her dad.

As long as my dad supports me, there's nothing for me to worry about, Gabriella thought smugly to herself.

"Gabriella, what happened to your face?"

When she looked up, Landon noticed the red print on her cheeks.

As she had returned home hastily, she forgot the mark that was left on her face. Now that Landon had noticed it, she was stumped by his question.

"Tell me the truth, who hit you?"

Landon was obviously angered. "Who dared to hit my daughter? Do they have a death wish?"

Despite feeling encouraged by her dad's support, she still pretended to be pitiful. "It was Larry's bodyguard that hit me. I wanted to apologize to Joan at the press conference but he didn't allow to me enter. Instead, he ridiculed me and even gave me a slap."

Tears streamed down Gabriella's cheeks as she related what happened to her father.

Regardless of whether it was done on purpose, her tears caused Landon to be outraged. "How dare a lowly bodyguard hit you. I will call Larry to complain right away!"

Just as Landon picked up the phone angrily, Gabriella quickly stopped him.

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“Dad, don’t. If you get into a quarrel with him, our family will be the ones to suffer. For the sake of our business interest, let’s just endure it for the time being.”

Although Gabriella made it seem like she was concerned about her family, she was actually worried that Larry would expose her lies once both men started arguing.

If that happened, the trust that she painstakingly gained from Landon would disappear, and she would fall into dire circumstances.

For the sake of her long-term interests, Gabriella decided to bear with her grudge for the time being.

When Landon saw how sensible his daughter was for prioritizing the interests of the family, he couldn’t help but smile in contentment.

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Landon clenched his jaw. “I’m proud that you’ve grown into such a fine and considerate young woman. Alright, we’ll tolerate the matter for now. Don’t worry, even if we don’t start a feud against Norton Corporation, I’ll still make them pay for harming my daughter!”

He then phoned someone and said, “This is Landon. Have we started our business collaboration with Norton Corporation? No? Good. I want you to cancel the collaboration immediately because I’m no longer interested in doing business with them. Compensation for breach of contract? Just pay it, then! I want them to know what happens when they upset us Wards!”

What Landon canceled was a long-awaited business collaboration with Norton Corporation. Ward Group’s sudden withdrawal was definitely going to cause Norton Corporation massive losses, but that was nothing compared to the severe damages that Ward Group would face.

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However, Landon was so consumed with avenging his daughter that he forgot to consider the consequences of his actions.

A second passed when he finally realized how grave a mistake he had made. His thoughts scrambled for a way to reverse his actions, but it was far too late now.

*Damn it. My blind rage has single-handedly shoved our family company into a deep grave. Unfortunately, this came as an afterthought.*

Standing next to him, Gabriella was extremely touched by his father's decision to defend her honor. Her arms coiled around his neck as she placed a grateful kiss on his cheek.

"You're the best, Dad!" Gabriella sang in a honeyed voice.

"Anything for my daughter." Landon's lips curled into an affectionate smile.

Unbeknownst to them, this incident would later become the catalyst for causing a major rift in their relationship.

Meanwhile, Joan had officially become Larry's fiancée now that she had accepted his marriage proposal.

She terminated her lease and moved into Larry's villa. This way, it was easier for them to share romantic and intimate moments in their own private little bubble.

Joan's eyes cracked open from sleep. She reached an arm over to Larry's spot but realized that he had already gotten out of bed.

She yawned and peeled her back off the bed, getting up to see what Larry was up to.

Soon enough, she saw Larry standing near the bedroom window. He stared blankly at the view outside with a half-burnt cigarette between his fingers, unaware that Joan had approached him.

Back when Joan had left him, he picked up smoking as a way of relieving stress.

This developed into a habit over the years.

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It was normally manageable when Joan was beside him. However, there were still times when he would gravitate towards a cigarette naturally, especially when he felt troubled or when Joan wasn't around.

"Larry," Joan called out softly from behind.

Once Larry heard her voice, he immediately put out his cigarette and turned to face Joan with a smile. "You're up early, why didn't you sleep in a bit?"

"I woke up and couldn't go back to sleep." Joan paused and scrunched her brows into a frown. "Larry, why are you smoking again? You know that it's bad for you."

"Force of habit." Larry's gentle gaze met hers as he apologized, "Sorry. I know how much you hate the stale smell of cigarettes."

Joan was well aware of Larry's smoking habits. She knew that he picked it up because of how she suddenly disappeared from his life back then, and the thought of this made her chest tighten with guilt.

She placed a hand on her belly and continued distressedly, "Larry, I know you started smoking because of me. Now that we're together again, will you please quit smoking? It'll be best for you, me, and our baby."

Obviously, there was no way Larry would refuse after seeing Joan's bright and hopeful eyes. Besides, Joan was pregnant with his child now. He felt a sense of dread as he looked at her swollen belly, feeling terrified of how smoking would negatively affect his child.

"Don't worry, I promise I'll stop from now onwards," Larry spoke with an iron-like determination as he wrapped his arms around Joan.

Laying against his chest cozily, Joan felt all fluttery inside. "Good, now you have to keep your word! So what happens if you don't?"

"Then you can punish me however you see fit," Larry chuckled at her adorable, cat-like smile.

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"I trust that you won't break your promise. After all, you have to set a good example for our children."

Joan's eyes squinted and her smile curved deeper as she teased Larry.

"An outstanding man like myself would never break promises," Larry complimented himself, to which Joan rolled her eyes.

Realizing that neither of them had breakfast yet, she asked thoughtfully, "What do you feel like having for breakfast? I'll make it for you."

"Hmm... anything?" Larry grinned slyly.

"Of course, I'm sure I can whip anything up."

Joan puffed her chest confidently, oblivious to the fact that she had fallen into Larry's trap.

"How about... you!" Larry's voice boomed while he scooped Joan up and carried her back to the bed.

Joan gasped. Her face burned a tomato-red once she realized his intentions. "Put me down, it's too early for this!"

"It's never too early to stretch your muscles. Don't you agree, Mrs. Norton?"

Playful laughter rumbled from Larry as he gently laid her onto the bed.

Desire clouded his eyes as he stared intensely at Joan.

Seeing this, Joan's heart thumped louder and wilder in her chest. She felt dizzy with shyness, but more so with anticipation.

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Larry crawled toward her slowly, towering over Joan as their eyes met. Their faces were so close that they could hear each other's heavy breathing.

Joan exhaled. Her warm breath tingled the fine hairs on Larry's face, driving him wild with lust.

He gazed affectionately at Joan before kissing her with an uninhibited passion. Soon, the temperature in the room rose as romance filled the air.

An hour later, Joan lay on Larry's chest panting while he stroked the strands of her pitch-black hair in contentment.

"Larry, what should we name our baby?" Joan's eyes rounded hopefully as she thought of the exciting years to come.

He was still combing his fingers through her hair but paused to respond, "Come now, silly. It's still too early to settle on a name. We should take our time to find the right one."

"Then, do you prefer a boy or a girl?" Joan asked him seriously.

"Either is fine, as long as they're our kids."

Neither Larry nor his parents were biased toward having sons over daughters. Hence, Larry would love his baby dearly, regardless of its gender.

"If it's a boy, he has to be as exceptional as his daddy; if it's a girl—" Joan trailed off as she fantasized about their future.

"If it's a girl, then she'll be as beautiful and as kind as her mother. However, she has to inherit her father's intelligence, that's not an option," Larry finished her sentence.

Joan smiled giddily at his compliment, but that smile dropped as soon as she heard that last bit he said.

"Hey! Are you calling me dumb?" Joan huffed at him.

"Well, if the shoe fits." Larry stuck his tongue out at her.

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"I'm gonna get you for this!" Joan said through gritted teeth as she pounced onto Larry.

As soon as she did, he grinned dangerously at her. She knew what was coming from the way he wriggled his fingers.

"N-no! Don't tickle me, don't you dare!" Joan roared once his fingers reached the sides of her waist. "You meanie!"

"H-hahaha, I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Please stop!" Joan begged as she squirmed around.

Helplessness filled Joan's exhausted body. If I knew it would end like this, I wouldn't have tried to tackle him.

After their tickle fight, Larry tensed as he brought up a serious matter.

"Joan, I need you to pack some clothes. We're going to visit your parents and tell them about our marriage, as well as ask for their approval."

Although Joan accepted my proposal, I still haven't gotten her parents' approval yet.

"Okay, let's go after breakfast then."

Joan instantly agreed because she had hoped to tell her parents about the good news as soon as she could.

"Aren't you worried that your parents won't approve of me or our marriage?" Larry questioned curiously after seeing how eager Joan was.

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“Why would I be worried?” Joan’s eyes sparkled with adoration at him. “I have the utmost faith that you, my boyfriend, is not some ordinary guy that they’ll reject so easily.”

Despite her confidence in him, she still felt the need to warn him to be on his best behavior.

So she added, “But don’t be too arrogant! My mom’s not too fussy, but getting my dad’s approval won’t be an easy task.”

Larry’s confidence soared as he bragged, “Relax. It’s like you said, I’m not some ordinary guy. I’m sure Mr. and Mrs. Watts will love me.”

“Wow.” Joan rolled her eyes as she pouted, “I compliment you once, and now you’re getting big-headed.”

Larry chuckled softly at her.

When Joan first met Larry’s parents, he insisted that Joan didn’t need to show up with a visiting gift.

However, now that it was Larry’s turn to meet her parents, he prowled at every shop in the mall for gifts. Even Joan couldn’t stop him.

“Okay, that’s more than enough. You need to stop!” Joan ushered, but to no avail.

Larry’s bodyguard, Caspian, had already made two trips to pack away the gifts into the car. Yet, he currently had various bags looped around his arms as he carried tall stacks of gift boxes.

“Just a little more.” Larry was unswayed by Joan. He continued to sift through gifts while ordering, “Caspian, take these back to the car. We’ll be done soon.”

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Caspian couldn't help but slump at this. "Sir, we should stop now since this seems plentiful enough."

"Oh? Caspian, are you incapable of transporting the gifts? or is it because you think you know better?"

Larry then shot a cold glare at Caspian, "Are you doubting my orders?"

"Never, Sir. Your word is the law." Caspian forced a smile. You're the boss.

Larry scoffed before his focus begrudgingly returned to the infinite display of gifts before him.

"This seems like a good amount, right?" Larry eventually mumbled.

"Yes!" Joan hurriedly linked her arm around his. "That's more than enough. Let's go, dear."

Dissatisfaction lurked in Larry's voice as he replied, "I guess this is it for now then. Caspian, make the payment with my card."

"Right away, Sir."

Despite carrying many bags and boxes, Caspian dashed without dropping a single item. He moved with haste, relieved that he was finally released from his shopping duties.

Larry realized just how much he had bought once all the gifts were piled into the car. It was as if brightly colored bags and boxes had exploded in the entirety of the car's trunk.

"Caspian, you'll have to take a cab back on your own."

It just wouldn't be right to bring my bodyguard along to visit my parents-in-law.

"Sure thing, Sir. I'll be off then." Caspian nodded politely.

He then turned and nodded with an equal amount of respect for Joan. "I'll take my leave, Ma'am."

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Caspian definitely felt like Joan was equally, if not more formidable than Larry. Hence, it was better to tread carefully than to cross her.

Joan was stunned for a moment before bursting into hearty laughter.

“Ma’am” was definitely an interesting title that she had never expected to be called.

Larry chuckled along, feeling pleased with her new title before waving for her to get moving. “Let’s head back.”

On the drive there, Joan snuck multiple glances at Larry to see if he was nervous. To her disappointment, Larry’s face remained gravely calm.

Larry caught onto her suspicious behavior and teased, “Are you staring at me because of my dashing looks?”

“Aren’t you nervous?” Joan blurted. I was such a nervous wreck when I first met his parents, so how is he not freaking out right now?

“What is there to be nervous about? I’m simply meeting your parents,” Larry hummed complacently. “Not everyone wets themselves as you did.”

At this, Joan pouted and focused on the passing scenery outside the window.

Once she wasn’t looking, the corner of Larry’s lips twitched subtly. Silly girl, there’s no way that I’m not nervous!

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Although Larry felt confident, there was still no saying if Joan's parents would approve of him.

Nevertheless, he plastered on a calm and collected expression, lest Joan mocks him.

The rest of the two-hour drive went by swiftly. Larry had been to her parent's place before, so he navigated the road well.

"Mom, Dad, I'm home!" Joan announced out of habit.

"Joan! You're back." Mrs. Watts came to greet her.

Seconds after, Mr. Watts paced out of his study and approached them too.

Mrs. Watts beamed brightly, but her smile faltered when she saw Larry standing next to Joan.

"Joan! Why didn't you tell me that you would be bringing a guest?" Mrs. Watts' panicked gaze darted back to her daughter. "I didn't prepare any refreshments or snacks!"

"Mom, it's fine. He's not some outsider," Joan giggled.

Not some outsider? Mrs. Watts stilled. Does that mean... he's her boyfriend?

The thought of this straightened Mrs. Watts' back. She then eyed Larry from top to bottom.

Not bad. Not bad at all. An approving smile grew on Mrs. Watts' face as she scanned every inch of Larry's appearance. He was tall and handsome, yet elegant and well-composed at the same time. All of this won Mrs. Watts over.

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Once both her parents had gathered before them, Joan announced proudly, “Mom, Dad. This is my boyfriend—Larry Norton.”

Larry took the chance to step forward and give a slight bow. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Watts.”

We’ve met before, Mr. Watts. Larry couldn’t help but wonder if the man remembered him as well.

Mr. Watts briefly smiled in acknowledgment of Larry’s greeting. Unbeknownst to Larry, Mr. Watts did remember him.

Joan’s boyfriend, huh? I’ll be the judge of whether he’s worthy enough to be with my daughter.

It wasn’t a lie when people say that fathers are their daughters’ first love. Mr. Watts had always spoiled Joan, and even to this point, he wanted the very best man for his daughter. So he examined Larry’s every move and every breath with extreme prejudice.

“Alright now,” Mrs. Watts said. She wasn’t as fussy as her husband when it comes to Larry’s worth. All she knew was that she really liked this well-behaved young man and approved him as her future son-in-law.

“Come in, Larry. You guys have a seat while I make you some tea.”

“Please don’t trouble yourself, Mrs. Watts.” Larry smiled before turning to Joan and said, “You go on in. I’ll bring over the gifts from the trunk.”

“Mm-hmm. You go ahead,” Joan replied in a singsong voice.

“Oh my! You didn’t have to bring gifts. Your presence is more than enough.”

Mrs. Watts’ lips parted into a wide grin.

She had hoped that her daughter would find a good man and settle down happily.

Now that Joan had formally introduced such an exceptional man as her boyfriend, Mrs. Watts’ face lit up with glee. She couldn’t contain the joy that warmed in her chest.

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In the following ten minutes, the Watts watched as Larry carried boxes and bags of gifts from his trunk over to the living room. They initially didn't think much of it, but as the minutes went by, Mr. and Mrs. Watts' jaws gradually dropped in shock.

"Joan, what's all this?" Mrs. Watts asked.

Joan shrugged helplessly. "I told him not to get so many gifts, but he kept insisting."

"Do you think that's the last of it?"

"Hmm, seems like it."

"Why is he still going, then?"

"Give him a minute. I'm sure he's almost done."

"Is that it?"

"I-I'm not so sure anymore."

The Watts' eyes widened in disbelief once Larry was done moving the gifts.

There was now a mountain-like pile of gifts that almost reached the ceiling in the living room. At this, Mrs. Watts twiddled her thumbs. "Did you guys buy everything in the mall?"

Larry chuckled before calmly explaining, "I wanted to get you guys gifts since it's our first time meeting. However, I didn't know what you guys liked, so I got a bit of everything. Once we get to know each other better, I'll bring over gifts that you prefer the next time I visit."

"That's very thoughtful of you, Larry." Mrs. Watts grinned from ear to ear, feeling more and more satisfied with her daughter's choice in men.

"But really, there's no need for gifts in the future. I'll be more than happy if you two visit us often. Don't you agree, darling?"

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