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Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1681 - 1685

Mister, I'm free today. I'll ask her out to a café later. After it's done, I hope you won't forget our agreement. May our collaboration succeed. Gabriella.

As he typed away with both hands, a line appeared on his phone screen at one: You may call me S.

Everything was in his control and was going to unfold just the way he wanted it. The corner of Jory's lips twitched up in an inconspicuous smile.

As the night fell, an attractive figure was sitting at a desk. Rubbing her temples, she picked the pen up and continued editing her design draft. For some inexplicable reason, something about this design felt off, yet she couldn't quite put her finger on it. Lifting her head, Joan glanced at the clock on the wall.

It was already midnight. The woman breathed a sigh. Because of Larry's disappearance, she had put her job aside for quite a while. Holding the pen, Joan couldn't find any hint of inspiration. Even the feel of the pen in her hand felt strange to her.

Later, Larry tiptoed into the room and placed a glass of milk on the desk. At the same time, Joan was staring blankly at the design draft, as if her soul had left her body.

"Hey! A penny for your thought?" He waved his hand in front of her eyes. Deliberately, the man plastered a scowl on his face and questioned, "Are you missing another man? Joan, how dare you!"

His voice broke her out of her reverie. She reached out to slap the back of Larry's hand. "Yes, I miss my dad." Looking at his unbelieving face, she replied patiently, "Okay, I'm working on my design."

Larry took the paper from the desk and studied it for a few seconds. Pursing his lips, he commented, "You did a great job! The design is impressive. What else do you need to edit?"

She hummed in response. The man leaned his face closer to her. "Do you want me to get someone to make some arrangements to commercialize your design?"

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“Are you kidding me? This design is just half-done. If you commercialize it now, you’ll suffer a great loss.” Joan tried to grab the design draft, which he was holding up.

He got hold of her wrist, pulling her closer to him. His warm breath was like a soft feather, brushing over her face lightly. “I don’t mind going into bankruptcy for the clothes you designed. If you’re worried about the sales, I’ll be your first customer. Once it’s launched, I’ll buy a hundred pieces and help you set a new trend in fashion.”

Cupping his face with her hands, she intentionally squished his cheeks, making his dashing face look like a bun.

“Larry, oh Larry, you used to be so domineering and aloof. Why did you turn into a comedian after running away from home?”

He reached out to pinch her plump cheeks as well. “Have I turned into a comedian? Besides, I’ve never been domineering and aloof. Could it be that I am...”

Joan quickly covered his mouth with her hand, forcing a smile. “No, no. You’re the most sensible and assertive man. Thanks for your support. It’s getting late. Why don’t you go to bed?”

Larry planted a kiss on her palm. His voice sounded rather coquettish. “No, I want you to go to bed together with me.”

“But my work...”

Before she could finish talking, Larry cut her off with a passionate kiss. Their slender figures reflected on the French window as the dazzling city lights flickered outside.

Other than the sound of the clock ticking away, the only thing they could hear was their hearts thumping hard. Their heartbeats were loud and clear in this quiet atmosphere.

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“It’s been a while since we last met.” Larry whispered into her ear, “Being apart from you makes me feel flurried and insecure... Joan, I’ve missed you so much.”

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Joan rested her face on his shoulder. The smell exuding out of Larry's body made her feel at ease. "Me too."

"Well then... Between your work and me, which one takes precedence over the other?" Larry teased her.

Joan chuckled and replied, "You."

Delighted, Larry put on a smug face and carried Joan onto his shoulders to give her a piggyback ride. "Then, let's go!"

The blueprints on Joan's table fell onto the ground as the two of them passed by. Joan pointed at the blueprints on the ground and yelled, "My blueprints!"

Larry dropped her off on the bed and covered her with a blanket. He then lay down beside her before uttering, "Who cares about the blueprints? You said so yourself just now that I'm more important, remember? Now, get some rest. Nothing should come before your health. As for the blueprints, you can look at them tomorrow!"

Joan was left speechless. Larry then gave her a warm and gentle kiss on the forehead before murmuring, "Good night."

With Larry sleeping beside her, Joan slept like a baby. It had been so long since she last had a good night sleep.

Larry even exhorted her to take a leave from work beforehand if she couldn't wake up on time the next morning. He said that he'll deal with the fine later.

After hearing that, Joan didn't even bother setting up the alarm clock for the next morning.

That being said, her tranquil slumber was still cut off short the next morning. She was woken up by a sudden call.

"Hello, who's this?"

"Joan? Do you realize what time is it now? You're late for work."

"Hello? Who exactly are you? Tell me now or I'll just hang up the phone..."

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Joan was still in a daze. She couldn't even hear the person on the phone laughing at her.

Gabriella raised her tone, "Don't you dare!"

Joan instantly sobered up upon hearing Gabriella's high-pitched voice. "You are..."

Although she recognized that it was Gabriella's voice, she refrained from saying her name out loud. It'll be bad if Larry heard it...

"It's me, Gabriella. I assume you're not coming to work today. Am I right? Or else you wouldn't have overslept..."

"Why did you call me?" Joan queried.

"I want to see you."

"What?" Joan was perplexed.

"I said, I want to see you. I'll be waiting for you at the place we last saw each other."

"You what? Hello?" Gabriella hung up the phone before Joan could say anything. Even though she was peeved, Joan abstained herself from saying Gabriella's name out loud. Meanwhile, Larry, who had just woken up, turned to her and asked, "Who was that?"

"Ah... That was Nancy. She invited me to have breakfast with her," Joan lied.

Fortunately for her, Larry didn't seem to notice anything amiss as he just went back to sleep.

Having arrived at the entrance of the café, Joan, who was still yawning, made sure to finish her yawn before going inside to avoid giving the impression that she had just woken up.

Gabriella was sitting at the same spot as the last time while waiting for her. There was a steaming glass of green tea on Joan's seat.

"Why are you so stingy? You ordered a glass of green tea for me while you yourself get to enjoy the luxurious coffee from Illurasia." Joan placed her purse on the table and sat herself down opposite Gabriella.

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Gabriella intentionally squinted at her before replying, "If I recall correctly, you ordered a glass of hot green tea the last time you were here. But if you want some coffee, I'll get you one immediately."

She then signaled the waiter to come over with a hand gesture. Seeing as such, Joan quickly reached out her hand to deter her from doing so. "No, it's fine. Thank you for the green tea. So, is there something urgent that you want to talk to me about?"

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Anxious, Gabrielle was stirring her coffee over and over again. That being said, she still looked gorgeous as usual. Her purple dress complemented very well with her slender physique. Despite having given birth before, her waist remained thin and slender. Moreover, her lustrous and curly hair further illustrated her charm and beauty. Biting on her lips, Gabriella was pondering on how she should convey her thoughts to Joan.

The black special device on her palm felt very hot as if it was burning her hand. The vivid memory of Jory looking down at her with contempt was suddenly evoked in her mind. The money that she had worked incessantly for was all that she could think of at the moment.

Disappointed, she even started ridiculing herself. Gabriella, why can't you be rational for once. Ever since I started getting jealous of Joan in college, everything went awry because of my precipitous actions. On the bright side though, at least I don't have to depend on anyone now. I can finally do what I want without being constantly fraught with guilt.

With that said, what I want to do isn't anything fancy or extravagant. My only solemn wish is to live a comfortable and unfettered life with my child.

Having pondered for some time, Gabriella blurted out, "Joan, do you hate me?"

Joan was caught off guard by her question. Every disaster that had befallen her in the past few years was mostly because of Gabriella. With that said, Joan definitely disliked her, but not to the point where she hated her. This was because Gabriella had already received the punishment due for all the awful things she did. It would be unfair for Joan to still hate her after that.

"I hated you before," Joan answered her question tersely. She then added, "But that aversion is slowly fading away now. Seeing as you progressively become more independent and hardworking, I'm quite relieved. If it weren't for all those things that happened in the past,

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you wouldn't have become who you are today. There was no way you would have taken the first step to make a change in your life."

"Truth be told, I've hated you ever since you decided to barge into my relationship with Larry. Everything bad that happened to me after that, I would always pin the blame on you. You were very mean to me back then. That being said, when I was in privation, you were the one who helped me out of it. It was ironic, wasn't it? After that, I tried my best to earn a living by myself and learned to be independent. Now that I'm back on the right path, I can't help but ask myself, have I been hating on the wrong person all this time?"

The sweet smell of the coffee from Illurasia went bitter as soon as it reached Gabriella's tongue. The bitterness reminded her of her life up until now. When she was young, she was revered as the little princess of the Ward family. After she grew up, a lot of people acted amicable toward her to get on her good side. But when her father disowned her, everyone that was so good to her before left her, including her husband. She and her child were forced out of the house and had to eke out a living on the streets.

"Don't worry Joan. I'll unequivocally pay you back the money that I owe you together with the interest. Here..." Gabriella pulled out a card from her purse and placed it in front of Joan.

Without a second thought, Joan returned the card back to Gabriella. She gave her an obstinate look before responding, "I don't want it."

Miffed, Gabriella swept the card over to Joan again and retorted, "Are you looking down on me, Joan?"

"This has nothing to do with that. I helped you because I wanted you and your kid to have a roof to live under. I didn't do it while expecting you to give me my money back together with interest." Since Gabriella swept the card too hard across the table, the card fell onto Joan's lap.

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Gabriella let out a faint smile and accepted the card back from Joan. "Okay then, if that's what you want. Remember, it's not that I don't want to pay my debt; it's because you insisted on giving the money to me. I'll accept your kindness quietly then. By the way, don't ever bring up my debt again. Consider the green tea in front of you as my payment."

Amused, Joan laughed out loud. "Is this some sort of super tea?"

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Unperturbed by Joan's joke, Gabriella was reminded of her objective—the special device in her left palm. She needed to focus on completing her mission.

She grabbed her phone that was out of battery which she had prepared beforehand and feigned a sad expression. "I want to call my friend and tell her the good news, but my phone died."

She showed the phone to Joan as she said that. Jory only instructed me to get my hands on her phone. Having known Joan so well, this method should work flawlessly.

As expected, Joan immediately lent her phone over to Gabriella after seeing the dead phone. "Don't worry, you can use mine."

Gabriella gave Joan a polite smile before heading to the bathroom with Joan's phone.

In the bathroom, she effortlessly opened the rear casing of Joan's phone. The black special device in her palm was soaked with her sweat as she was very distressed at the moment. Recalling Joan's kindness toward her, the overwhelming guilt almost persuaded her to throw away the special device and forget about everything.

The special device was sucked in once it came into contact with the back of the phone. It seemed like it was magnetized to the phone. After putting the rear casing back on the phone, the phone looked like it was never tampered with in the first place.

Gabriella then used Joan's phone to call a contrived number that she had prepared beforehand and let the call run for two minutes. After seeing the two-minute call appearing on the call logs, the vise that was gripping Gabriella's chest all day long finally loosened up.

When Jory handed over the black device to her, he didn't inform her about the function of the device. That being said, Gabriella didn't really care as long as she got her money in the end.

"Here." Gabriella returned the phone to Joan.

After finishing the glass of green tea, Joan gazed at Gabriella with her head tilted and queried, "So, what did your friend say?"

Gabriella faked a smile and replied, "She asked if I've courted a rich man. She said that she'll have to depend on me for goodies later on."

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Joan put her phone back into her purse. "Well, I should really go now. I'm really late for work. Bye."

Before exiting the café, Joan came back to Gabriella. "You're the one who's paying right? I'll forget about your debt after this."

Staring at the empty seat in front of her, Gabriella was filled with mixed emotions. She kept telling herself that she had no intention to hurt Joan. But in reality, she did all those bad things behind Joan's back knowing that it would potentially hurt her.

Gabriella opened her phone and sent a message to a saved contact named Mr. S.

"It is done. I'll meet you later in the afternoon."

Mr. S was quick to respond her message. "Okay."

Glaring at the message sent by Gabriella, Jory, who was assuming the identity of Mr. S, stubbed out his cigarette before sending an email to Larry.

"I hope you accept my challenge."

Three days later, Larry was analyzing an anonymous email that read, "I hope you accept my challenge." What's the meaning of this? Could this be the same person who was sending those sneaky photos? What is he up to now?

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1685

"Can I come in?" Joan was knocking on the door. "Would Mr. Norton please let me enter?"

Larry pinched his forehead and replied, "Half of your head is already inside. Just come in, will you?"

Joan was wearing a black chiffon skirt, paired with a white T-shirt. Her outfit made her look youthful and energetic. She blinked for a few times before uttering, "What? Are you busy right now?"

Larry looked tall and slender as he stood up. "My beloved Ms. Watts, what brings you here today?"

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Sitting on the comfortable sofa, Joan was in bliss as the soft cotton fabric of the sofa came into contact with her skin. "I came here because I wanted to see you. Is that not a good enough reason? Do you have time tonight? I've booked us a seat at a restaurant..."

Before Larry could give a response, the notification sound of a new email being received attracted their attention.

Larry quickly went to check out the new email received on his computer. Curious, Joan got up from the sofa and queried, "Who is it from?"

"It doesn't really matter. The email's not important," answered Larry. Joan walked toward him and uttered, "Is it a confession from one of your fangirls? Just tell her that you already have a wife!"

Seeing as Joan was already in front of the computer, Larry dropped the act and showed her the email. "See? It's just my weekly health report."

However, Joan was drawn to another email on the screen. She snatched the mouse from Larry's hand and opened the email from a sender named Mr. S.

"I hope you accept my challenge? What's the meaning of this!"

Larry scratched his head. "I didn't want you to worry. That's why I was reticent about this."

Joan rubbed his forehead. "Are you daft? We're a married couple. We face everything together. What's an email going to do to us?"

"Mr. S? Is that the same person who took sneaky photos of me before?"

Larry nodded. "I wonder what his scheme is this time around. That being said, I should thank him for sending your pictures to me. Because of that, we were able to reconcile..."

Suddenly, the noise of loud footsteps was heard at the door. The secretary was carrying a stack of files as she hurriedly entered the office.

"Bad news... Mr. Norton." She was panting heavily. "It's ok, you should catch your breath first," said Joan.

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The secretary was still in a panic. "There's no need. Mr. Norton, a group called the Alpire Group bought over three of our small companies."

"Bought over? Our small companies aren't cheap, you know? They are all outstanding companies. How could they have afforded them?" Larry looked rather confused.

Glancing at the email sent from Mr. S, Joan seemed to have figured something out. She turned to Larry and saw that he was glaring at the email too.

"Mr. S?" The two of them uttered in unison.

"I bet he has something to do with this!" Joan was livid just thinking about him. He tried to obstruct our relationship before this. What is he plotting now? What's this stupid challenge about? Is he making fun of us?

"This might just be his warning. Things will get crazier after this... I must instruct our branches to stay on their guard." Larry took a deep breath. "I doubt the other branches would be bought over that easily."

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