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Never Late, Never Away Chapter 1686 - 1690

Joan asked, "Is he doing this for money?"

"It's obvious that he wants to acquire the branches. But now we're the prey, and he's the predator. Things don't look good for us, especially since we have no idea what he plans to do next."

"You can't even find out the IP address for the new email?" Nancy said as she frowned. She had not expected so many things to happen one after the other recently. It was getting harder and harder for them to move on.

Lines and lines of alphabets covered the screen on Caspian's computer. As he tapped on the keyboard, he said, "Yeah, this guy didn't even leave us an address this time..."

"Type softly! You're going to break my computer!" Nancy complained.

"I'm finding another route to get the IP address of this S person. I'm not trying to boast, but I'm the only one that can solve something this complicated..."

As Joan played with the little doll on the sofa, she noticed Caspian's extremely gloomy expression. Those who saw it would certainly unconsciously become fearful.

"What... What's wrong? Is there something wrong with the 'green channel?'" asked Joan.

Nancy had on a cocky expression as she said, "Huh, you've bragged too much, haven't you? Who was the one that said he could solve it? Aren't you embarrassed now?"

For once, Caspian did not refute Nancy's words and stared at the computer screen with a dull face. Realizing that the situation was not good, Joan put everything down and hurriedly walked over to Caspian.

"Did it really get blocked?"

"Huh? Did I seriously get it right?" Nancy instantly got nervous. Despite her harsh words, she still leaned forward into him.

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By then, small beads of sweat had already appeared on Caspian's forehead. He obviously felt helpless about the matter too.

Then, noticing that he had not moved in a long time, Joan said, "Caspian, check on Alpire Group."

"Alpire Group?" Nancy asked uncertainly.

"Nancy, you know them?"

She nodded. "Alpire Group's a joint venture between a local and foreign company. I've seen my dad's collaboration proposals before. This Alpire Group was on it."

Caspian's eyes lit up. He looked at her and asked, "Does that mean we can get more information about Alpire Group from your dad's contract?"

"Of course not!" Nancy's expression instantly became serious. "Once you sign a contract, it means you have to bear the legal consequences. If you leak confidential information of other companies, you'll go to jail! Also..."

Nancy then glanced at Joan and secretly shot her a look. As soon as Joan understood Nancy's meaning, she instructed Caspian to think of other solutions and hurriedly dragged Nancy away.

Outside the office, green, lush potted plants lined the corridor.

Joan checked her surroundings, and when she was certain that the area was empty, she said, "Okay, there's no one else now. Err... Was there something you wanted to say?"

However, Nancy was a little hesitant. "Actually, we don't have to avoid everyone. We only have to avoid Caspian..."

"Caspian? Why? Is it related to him?" asked Joan.

Nancy shook her head. "No, it's not..." After a while, she corrected herself. "Uh... Yes, there seems to be..."

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Upon hearing her words, Joan became more anxious. "What exactly is going on? Hurry and tell me. I swear I won't tell anyone!"

"Not even Larry!"

"Okay, I won't tell him."

Hesitantly, Nancy said, "I... I'll say it then! When you guys mentioned Alpire Group just now, there was something I didn't say. The Alpire Group's president's son was my ex-fiancé."

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"Your ex-fiancé?" Joan shouted in surprise.

Nancy immediately covered her mouth. "Hush! Caspian's right inside!"

Joan moved her hand away and continued, "Are you kidding me? Weren't you and Caspian always together? Why is there suddenly a fiancé?"

"I swear I have nothing to do with that person! I don't even know his name!" Nancy denied, then anxiously explained, "Look... He's my fiancé in name, but I don't know him at all and haven't even met him once. This marriage proposal was clearly arranged by my parents and born out of some business deals!"

"Wait, wait, wait... I'm kind of confused..." Joan's mind was in a mess.

Nancy then became even more patient and said, "Let me simplify it. Before I met Caspian, my family had arranged this marriage proposal for me. The man is the son of Alpire Group's president."

She paused, then continued, "You can understand it as an arranged marriage too. It's just that before both of us even met, our parents had already agreed to the marriage. They wanted to sacrifice our marriage and love for the sake of benefits to both families and businesses. In short, we have to marry someone we don't know at all."

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"I'd always thought I was fortunate because I met Caspian before I met him. So just like that, my family broke off the marriage proposal... Ever since then, my family has never cooperated with Alpire Group again."

Joan asked, "If that's the case, isn't it very clear? You had someone else in your heart, so you rejected the marriage proposal."

"It is because I rejected the marriage that I later found out that that man minded it a lot and has even threatened to terminate the long-term collaboration between our companies several times... I heard that he's a very proud person. Come to think about it, a person like him was rejected by someone he'd never met before. Imagine how angry he must have been!"

Nancy was suddenly worried. "This time, when I heard you guys say that this mysterious S was related to Alpire Group, I suspect that it is that person who wants to retaliate on me because of my rejection back then!"

"Huh?" Joan was puzzled. If that mysterious S was really trying to get back at Nancy, why did he have to go through Larry? Also, he had previously secretly taken pictures of herself and Dustin so that Larry would misunderstand and be wary of her.

Is S trying to take down everyone at once? First, it was Larry and me, then, it's Nancy and Caspian. He's really crazy.

"Joan, please don't tell others what I just told you, especially Caspian. I don't want him to overthink. If he found out about this, he'll definitely think that I'm cheating on him."

"What are you guys talking about out here? It's already been so long," Caspian said as he walked out of the room while crossing his arms. As soon as Nancy noticed him, she tugged on Joan's sleeve as a reminder not to talk about whatever they had just discussed. Joan secretly signed an "Okay" back to Nancy.

"Is there a new solution?"

Caspian shrugged helplessly. "Nope. I've tried all the solutions and found that there's no better choice." He then snapped his fingers in front of Nancy and asked, "Say, do you guys think that this guy could be an expert hacker?"

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Nancy flinched in fright, then forced a smile out. "If he's really a hacker, isn't it a little of an overkill to use his talents to only hide one IP address? If he wants to acquire those three branches, it'd be better to hack into the branches' computer systems. Not only will the internal information he obtains be more accurate, but it'd also be the most damaging for the company."

Joan rubbed her forehead and said, "Nancy, you just said that disclosing other companies' confidential information is punishable by law. If it's illegal to disclose such information, then hacking into others' computers is definitely a more serious crime."

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Caspian purposely put on a look of disgust. "Don't listen to her. Everything else about Nancy is good, except that she always lacks some brains whenever she's thinking about problems or is trying to do something."

Not to be outdone, Nancy quickly stepped forward and used a grappling technique on Caspian, pressing his arm against his back. "Who did you say lacks brains?"

When one's wife had a black belt in Taekwondo, even Caspian, who was well-trained in martial arts, had to bow down to her in respect. Rendered immobile by Nancy, he could hear Joan snickering by the side. Thus, he could only repeatedly apologize. "Me, it's me. I'm the ignorant one and also the one who doesn't use his brains..."

"Oh right, that S has already attacked three small companies under Norton Corporation. If he's aiming for the entire company, he'll take action soon!" Nancy then let go of her grip on Caspian.

Joan nodded. "I know. I'll tell Larry when I get back and get him to increase the security for the internal information of each branch," she said as she moved to pick up her handbag from the sofa. Just as she stepped out of the room, she turned back and added, "You guys have to strengthen your cybersecurity too..."

Caspian was confused. "We have to strengthen what? Isn't S's goal..." Before he could say the word "Boss," Nancy suddenly realized something and interrupted him. "It's better to take precaution anyway. As they say, play it safe. If S's target is all of Marsingfill's well-known companies, then my dad's company may also be invaded!"

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Recognizing that she made sense, Caspian stopped rebutting against Nancy. However, she knew that Joan's words were actually to remind her that if S's goal was to avenge the marriage, his next target would be her family's company.

Three branches under Norton Corporation had been acquired by multinational companies. Consequently, their stock prices dropped sharply that day.

Furthermore, there were endless discussions from everywhere in the stock market. Norton Corporation had always been one of the most stable stocks in the market due to its excellent business model and employee management. The recent acquisition was the first in thirty years for Norton Corporation.

As a result, Larry was extremely stressed by it. Other than his hatred for the mysterious Mr. S, he was also questioning his own management style.

Meanwhile, Jory was leisurely leaning back on the sofa with a cup of tea in his hands while watching the news. His smile got wider as he crossed his legs, and his black leather shoes clicked rhythmically in time with the news.

Gabriella had recently been going to Jory every two or three days. Ever since she attached the black device he gave her onto Joan's phone, she had often felt uneasy, feeling as though something was about to happen. Although Jory had said that nothing would happen to Joan, Gabriella was still flustered. Thus, she constantly ran over to Jory's office.

However, it was an office in name only. In reality, it was just a floor that he had rented in a building. Even though Gabriella had privately collaborated with Jory, he knew everything about her, yet she knew nothing about him, not even his name.

The first time she went to Jory's office, she realized that it was nothing compared to the office of a manager working under her father. Compared to the highly-paid, white-collar workers she had met before, Jory's office was so small that it looked a little pitiful. However, Jory knew how to enjoy life. Even though the place was small, he had decorated it very stylishly.

Every time Gabriella turned up, she would ask Jory the same question. "What exactly is the function of that black device?"

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Jory's reply was consistent every time. "You don't need to know. Anyway, it's already been installed. Even if it had any function, you can't change anything anymore."

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However, that day, Jory no longer dodged the issue with the same excuse. He stared at the large TV screen, ignoring Gabriella, who was standing to one side.

Following his gaze, Gabriella's attention was instantly captured by the words "Norton Corporation." It was a familiar name that she used to have deep connections with.

"Three branches of Norton Corporation were acquired by multinational companies, causing its stocks to plummet?" How is it possible that Norton Corporation's branches were acquired? Norton Corporation enjoyed a good reputation locally, and even foreign companies were trying to secure a collaboration with them. As Gabriella pondered, she did not realize she had just said everything out loud. Jory glanced over at her and could not help but sneer.

"Don't be ignorant. Larry's not a god, so why can't someone else rule his company?"

Gabriella took a few steps forward and asked with a trace of doubt on her face, "Is this related to you?"

Jory looked at her with his eyes full of arrogance. "Is it related to me? What do you think? Do you think that I can acquire those three small companies?"

"Are you kidding me? Do you think that Norton Corporation's branches are that easy to acquire? Even if you have a lot of money, Larry won't turn out this way just because of a small issue like poor management."

"Gabriella Ward, do you know why you were so stupid that you got kicked out of the house? Because you can never learn how to think and analyze situations. You'll never use your brain to think about the problems," said Jory lightly, purposely angering Gabriella.

As it happens, Gabriella was indeed angered by his words. He was mocking her with her past, yet she did not have anything to use against him. "What are you trying to say? Huh, how am I supposed to believe that you have the ability to acquire Norton Corporation? You're just someone who only knows how to make cynical remarks about others."

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She scanned her surroundings and deliberately smiled disdainfully, her eyes full of contempt. "Look at this place. Aren't you embarrassed to call this your office? Never mind Larry, this doesn't even compare to a manager's office in my dad's company."

Jory pressed the switch on the remote control, and the screen then turned black. He rose from the sofa and stood face to face with Gabriella. "Dad? Which one? Landon Ward? Why do I seem to remember that he'd announced to the public that he had severed ties with someone named Gabriella Ward?"

Jory was not someone who had a mature appearance. If he changed his outfit, he would look like a bright young man. However, the person in front of Gabriella smoked and drank. Although his smile should have looked brilliant, it looked sinister to Gabriella instead. Furthermore, his blunt personality made her feel disgusted.

"You..." Gabriella was so angered by him that she had forgotten what she wanted to say.

"Me?" Jory asked, pointing to himself. "Speaking of which, you keep coming here every few days. Don't tell me you want to get some benefit from me?"

Gabriella instantly froze, for he had seen through her intentions. Although a part of her purpose in going to Jory's office was to ask about Joan, the bigger part of it was to get money.

Whenever Jory took one step forward, Gabriella took a step back. However, she did not notice that there was a chessboard on the ground behind her. Consequently, when her heel stepped on it, Gabriella lost her balance and began to fall.

She did not expect that Jory would grab her and even place his hand on her waist. When he gently pulled her in, Gabriella fell into his arms.

Her curvy body pressed against his, and the touch of his skin on her wrist made her body heat up.

Jory's looks are not that different from Larry's. That was the only thought that appeared in Gabriella's mind. However, their auras were very different. Compared to Larry, Jory had an additional air of mystery and arrogance.

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If she managed to attract Jory, she and her kids would no longer have to worry about making ends meet ever again. They would probably not enjoy riches, but at least they would have more than enough to get by.

Since the man was hugging her right then, Gabriella figured that he probably had the same intention. Even though she had given birth, the woman was still confident of her looks and figure. With her alluring aura, she knew that she easily stood out among the crowd.

Gabriella traced her hands up and down Jory's arm and rubbed the back of his hand with her fingers gently. She noticed that Jory's eyes were getting hazier by the second as he stared at her lips which looked even more attractive with her peach lip gloss.

Even though a lot had changed over the years, the woman's confidence remained. As she pressed her body tightly against Jory, she was certain that no man would be able to control himself.

However, seconds later, Jory, who had a natural air of arrogance to him, regained his composure and retracted his hand. At once, he pushed Gabriella away, keeping a distance of one metre between them.

"Don't think of using those tactics you used to seduce other men on me. Not all men think only with the lower half of their bodies. Unlike others, I think with my mind," Jory said as he looked at the woman coldly.

Gabriella felt extremely awkward that things had not proceeded according to her wishes. In fact, she had not expected herself to touch Jory's hand. She thought that she was different from before, but it turned out that nothing much had changed. Perhaps, that was just her character. Or maybe, it was because she had suffered enough and desperately wanted her life to improve.

Jory was also surprised at his own restraint. In his younger days, he was unambitious, neglected his schooling and was known to be a womanizer. However, it all changed when a daughter from a rich family rejected his marriage proposal when he was eighteen years old. Consequently, there was a hundred and eighty degree change in his attitude. He stopped fooling around and became more motivated. It was as though he had made conquering the heart of that woman his life goal.

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Marriages of convenience were a common occurrence in the business arena. The coming together of two powerful families would allow ease of cooperation between the families. Both families would also be able to enjoy more resources and prosper together.

It did not make any sense for two strangers to marry each other. Marriages of convenience were way more impractical than flash marriages. However, that fate fell upon Jory. Even if he was physically repulsed by the woman chosen for him, he would not have any choice but to marry her.

But of course, Jory, who was eighteen years old then, did not think of it as a bad thing. It was simply to get married. To him, that meant that there would be one more person to entertain him. He was from a rich family and getting married did not mean much to him. As long as he wished, he could always continue hooking up with other women outside.

However, what he did not expect was that the other family ultimately chose to terminate all cooperation with his family and even rejected his marriage proposal.

Alpire Group was one of the top corporations in the industry. Furthermore, Jory's father was a reputable figure in the industry and many of the chairmen from other corporations treated him with due respect. Naturally, many would want to be united with the Synders through marriage. Combining forces with the Alpire Group would greatly boost any company's status in the market. It was definitely an opportunity that was hard to come by.

Advancing one's own interests were the priority for most in a capitalist economy. The happiness of their kids was of secondary concern to most businessmen. In their eyes, love was overrated and all marriage partners served the same purpose. Money was always more important.

However, there was always an exception. When the marriage proposal made by the Alpire Group was rejected, everyone in the company was shocked. The reason given by the other party was that Jory was unaccomplished and often bummed around, which made him incompatible with the daughter of that family.

That caused Jory's dad to feel utterly embarrassed. Even Jory himself was incensed. In fact, he had never felt that angry before in his entire life...

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