

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 196

Ashley prepared a limited edition Hermes bag for the charity auction.

After a thorough authentication process, the staff member said, "Alright, Ms. Miller. I've recorded your auction item. Please take a seat in the hall."

Ashley was still racking her brains on how to sabotage Vivian's auction when the staff finished identifying her designer handbag. Suddenly, a malicious smile flickered across her face as an idea popped into her mind.

She smiled courteously at the staff. "I admire your working attitude! How about we become friends?"

Meanwhile, Xavier was also present at the popular auction event. After greeting Finnick and Vivian, he rushed off to catch up with the others.

Other than Xavier and a few others, the faces in the hall were unfamiliar to Vivian.

On the contrary, most of them knew Finnick well enough to exchange pleasantries with him. Upon knowing that Vivian was his wife, they couldn't help but cast curious glances at her. Every second spent in the hall was getting more unsettling for Vivian. Sensing her anxiety, Finnick patted the back of her hand gently.

Finnick reassured, "You'll get used to these occasions. Don't worry, I'm here for you."

"Okay." Vivian certainly felt better after Finnick's encouragement.

Fabian hadn't taken his eyes off Vivian from the moment she entered the hall.

While he understood that Vivian was new to grand occasions like the auction event, he couldn't help but feel bitter at the sight of her leaning close to Finnick.

His heart throbbed painfully at the realization that Vivian's heart no longer belonged to him.

Fabian wanted to go forward and greet Vivian, but he couldn't find any excuse to do so as Ashley was keeping an eye on him.

When the auction was about to begin, Vivian rushed off to the toilet again because she was too nervous.

Finnick offered, "Do you need me to accompany you?"

Vivian shook her head in response and dashed off with her bag.

Before Fabian could follow her, Ashley turned towards him and said, "I'm leaving for a while, Fabian. It won't take too long."

He couldn't possibly go after Vivian when Ashley was heading in the same direction as her. Deciding that it wasn't a wise move to upset his pregnant wife, he stayed put.

When Ashley tiptoed into the restroom, Vivian just entered a cubicle and forgot her bag on the basin.

Ashley's initial plan was to rope in the staff members and destroy Vivian's diamond necklace, but she couldn't resist the urge to try her luck by following Vivian to the restroom.

It turned out that she was having a stroke of good luck that day. Vivian conveniently left her bag on the basin!

What else could be more perfect than this?

Careful not to make any noise, Ashley rummaged through Vivian's bag. Her face lit up with delight when she found an object that would surely embarrass Vivian in public.

Chuckling under her breath, she sneaked out of the restroom and made her way to the storage room before anyone could notice her.

Vivian only exited the cubicle after Ashley was long gone. When she opened her bag to get her lipstick, she realized in horror that her amulet was missing. Vivian's mother went to great lengths to obtain the amulet for her years ago. She had carried it with her in her bag ever since. How could it vanish all of a sudden?

After a frantic search, she poured out the contents of her bag. Her lipstick, tissue, phone, and keys tumbled into the sink, but she couldn't find her amulet anywhere else in the restroom.

Could it have dropped out of my bag in the hall?

Vivian rushed out of the toilet and ran into a man before she could see him. She felt a splitting headache from the force of the collision.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 197

"Ouch!" Vivian yelled instinctively.

"Are you alright, miss?" The man responsible for the cause of Vivian's headache asked nervously.

His mind couldn't quite comprehend what had happened. Brushing off the possibility that the woman might have thrown herself at him purposely to gather his attention, he helped her steady herself gentlemanly nevertheless.

The man studied Vivian carefully. The way her eyes sparkled warmly in contrast to her elegant dress desired him to look closer. The only thing that seemed off about the beautiful lady was the way her eyes darted around skittishly.

"I'm fine... I'm fine. So sorry for knocking into you." As Vivian leveled her gaze with the man, she fell into a daze.

How charming.

The man in front of her had all the perfect features that anyone could dream of. His nose was straight and finely shaped, and his lips were thin but rather elegant. The way his bright eyes adorned with long eyelashes shone was extremely captivating.

Vivian couldn't help but feel a little self-conscious in front of the man with ethereal looks.

The man watched with curiosity as she gaped at him with the weirdest expression he had ever seen. It was a combination of awe and amusement.

What a funny expression. I wonder what is on her mind?

"Miss, are you sure you're alright?" The man asked carefully.

Finally aware that she had been looking at him like an idiot, Vivian grinned sheepishly and answered, "I'm fine. It was nothing."

The man looked relieved. "Are you here for the auction as well?"

"Yes!" Vivian beamed. "I reckon that you're here for that too?"

"Yes." Sensing that Vivian was about to fall into a trance again, he quickly reminded her, "You seemed to be in a hurry a minute ago. Is there a problem?"

Vivian gave herself a mental slap. Damn it! How can I be distracted by a handsome guy and forget about my amulet?

She found it strange to be attracted to the man before her because she wasn't the type of woman to swoon over good-looking men. For some reason, she felt strangely familiar to the man standing before her.

"Oh, yes! There's something that I need to do. Thank you for reminding me!" Vivian replied hastily in an attempt to conceal her thoughts. "Please excuse me."

No sooner as she stepped forward, she felt her stilettos slipping beneath her as she hadn't really gotten used to wearing high-heels. Uh-oh.

Vivian yelped in fright as she lost her balance. Just as she thought that she was going to make a fool of herself in front of the public, Finnick rushed to her aid in his wheelchair at top speed and saved her from the embarrassment.

Phew... that was close!

Vivian felt her heart pounding rapidly against her ribcage. Grateful that Finnick saved her again, she whispered a “thank you” to him.

However, Finnick didn’t appear to hear her. Vivian turned around and noticed that he was staring daggers at the man whom she previously bumped into.

Instead of greeting one another, the two men remained glaring at each other after a long time. Guessing that they must have some bad blood between them in the past, Vivian asked warily, “Do you know each other?”

Only then did Finnick look away.

The man could see that Vivian and Finnick knew each other well, but he couldn’t make out whether they were on good terms or not. Eventually, he broke the silence. “It’s been a long time, Finnick. What a small world.”

Finnick didn’t respond.

The way he lamented “what a small world” implied his reluctance of meeting Finnick. Is he one of Finnor Group’s business rivals? Vivian felt perplexed because the handsome man before her didn’t look vicious in the least.

Ignoring Finnick’s aloofness, he stretched a friendly hand out to Vivian. “Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Benedict. May I know yours?”

Benedict. Vivian couldn’t help admiring his looks again.

Vivian took his hand and shook it gently. “Hello, Benedict. I’m Vivian, Finnick’s...”

Vivian was interrupted by Finnick’s abrupt cough before she could finish. “Alright, we should make a move. I believe the auction is going to start anytime now.”

Vivian gave Benedict a polite smile and waved goodbye to him.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 198

Just as they were about to leave, Benedict blurted, "She's your wife, isn't she?"

Vivian and Finnick turned around. Finnick glared at Benedict icily for a moment before replying, "Yes."

As Finnick turned around to leave, Vivian thought she heard Benedict snort. His words, however low, were audible. "She's not even close to Evelyn."

Evelyn?

Evelyn Morrison?

Vivian froze in her tracks. However, she was pulled away by Finnick before recovering from the shock.

Walking away, Vivian wondered what Finnick's relationship with Benedict was. How did Benedict know about Evelyn? Were they friends in the past? Did Benedict love Evelyn just as Finnick did?

When Benedict mentioned Evelyn earlier, Vivian glimpsed the hints of sorrow in Finnick's eyes. He must have missed her dearly.

She couldn't help asking, "Finnick, who is Benedict? Why do you dislike him?"

Finnick pretended that he didn't hear her.

Meanwhile, having executed her plan, Ashley went back to the auction hall and sat with Fabian at a few rows in front of Vivian's seat.

With Finnick and Xavier sitting beside her, Vivian could sense the hostility of the neighboring women's glances thrown in her direction.

Vivian allowed her eyes to dart around and noticed Benedict taking up his place at the row in front of her. He noticed her, too, and greeted her politely with a nod. Vivian smiled and nodded back.

Soon, the stage was illuminated by dazzling lights as the auctioneer was welcomed onto the stage.

The auctioneer made an official speech to welcome all the philanthropists and socialites. And with a booming announcement, the auction started. "Let the auction begin!"

Benedict's donation was the first to be auctioned. It was a fountain pen.

After a brief introduction by the auctioneer, Vivian finally got to know the mysterious man's identity. He was Benedict Morrison, the eldest heir of the Morrison family. Which meant that he was Evelyn Morrison's elder brother—Vivian realized in a shudder.

That explained his wistful tone when he mentioned Evelyn earlier.

The auctioneer continued, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is not an ordinary fountain pen. Please have a closer look at the diamond embedded in it. Specially customized, the jewel craftsmanship is of impeccable artistry. In loving memory of the late Ms. Evelyn Morrison, Mr. Morrison's younger sister, he has decided to auction it, knowing that his sister will certainly approve of the good that the price it fetches will do to the needy."

Both Xavier and Finnick frowned upon seeing the fountain pen.

Evelyn...

Finnick was soon lost in his own thoughts.

The pen was a gift from him to Evelyn on her twelfth birthday as an encouragement for her to get good grades in school.

Finnick remembered that Evelyn was so fond of the pen that she refused to let Benedict have a look at it.

Who knew that Benedict would auction off the pen after so many years?

Finnick's expression darkened.

Xavier murmured, "That's very cruel of Benedict."

Knowing Benedict's personality, Xavier guessed that he must have done that purposely to anger Finnick.

Having caught what Xavier muttered under his breath, Vivian asked him what he meant.

Xavier could see that Vivian was itching to know about Finnick's past with Evelyn. He whispered in her ear, "Finnick gave the pen to Evelyn on her twelfth birthday."

Oh.

Judging from the hostile look on Finnick's face, he must be angry and sad at the moment.

Vivian blamed Benedict in her heart. How could he not cherish his sister's belongings? Didn't he know how important the gift was to both Evelyn and Finnick? Or did he auction the pen just to piss off Finnick?

What is Finnick thinking about right now?

The auctioneer's voice interrupted Vivian's stream of thoughts. "Mr. Morrison, would you like to have a few words?"

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 199

Upon seeing Benedict walking toward the stage, the auctioneer beamed. "Let's welcome Mr. Morrison!"

The ladies sitting below the stage swooned collectively at Benedict's incomparable charm as soon as he went up the stage.

Glancing at Finnick's direction, Benedict began, "I believe that in times of need, helping the poor should be a priority, and that priority should come above all personal needs, which includes keeping the pen for myself as a memory of my dear sister. Knowing that she will gladly approve of my action today, I cannot tell you how much peace

and comfort that brings to me upon parting with this pen.

"

Rounds of applause erupted inside the hall.

After Benedict went back to his seat, the auctioneer announced, "Alright, let's begin with the auction! The minimum bid is a hundred thousand!"

The exquisite pen shimmered under the incandescent lights of the hall as if it had not aged with time at all. The nib was made of pure gold, thus making it perfect for signing with great flow. Imagine how impressive it would be to sign company agreements with the magnificent pen.

The audience began to bid.

"One hundred thousand!"

"One hundred and fifty thousand!"

"Two hundred thousand!"

The bidders seemed very intent on getting the fountain pen because it was the first item to be auctioned.

Finnick's clenched fists were sweating profusely. He had been doing a good job of holding his emotions in until everyone started bidding for the pen with excitement.

It was his! It could only belong to him! Finnick was sure that Evelyn would disapprove if her favorite pen was to end up with a stranger. He couldn't let it happen!

Uncertain of Finnick's next move, Xavier and Vivian turned to look at him.

Vivian was in a dilemma. She hoped that Finnick wouldn't bid for the pen, but that would mean that he didn't place great value in relationships.

Previously, Finnick got so furious at Vivian for merely admiring Evelyn's crystal necklace that he had been treasuring for years. What would Finnick do now that Benedict was auctioning Evelyn's pen!

The images of Evelyn's beautiful face flashed through Finnick's mind repeatedly. She was there, smiling lovingly and calling out to him with her angelic voice gently, "Oh, Finnick! I don't think words can describe how much I love this pen..."

Meanwhile, the bidding war was at its climax. No one was going to let the chance of getting the pen slip without trying.

"One million!" Finnick raised his paddle suddenly.

Everyone gasped. Most of the previous bidders gave up upon hearing the highest bidding price.

Three hundred thousand was already considered too expensive for the pen.

Determined to prevent Evelyn's beloved item from falling into a stranger's hands, Finnick joined the bidding eventually. It was just as Vivian expected. He couldn't forget her.

Although she had foreseen it coming, never would she have thought that it would taste so bitter.

He loves Evelyn more. All this time. It must be it.

She was too naive. How could she ever replace Finnick's childhood sweetheart? Not to mention that Evelyn was more beautiful and intellectual than she would ever be.

A quote she read somewhere resurfaced in her mind. Death leaves a heartache that no one can heal, and love leaves a memory that no one can steal.

Vivian didn't know what to think.

Just then, Benedict raised his paddle too.

“One million one hundred thousand!”

The crowd exclaimed. What is going on? Why is Benedict bidding against Finnick for something he donated? Maybe he’s regretting it. It’s his sister’s belongings after all!

Staring intently at the pen, Finnick raised his paddle again.

“One million two hundred thousand!”

By then, everyone was already mumbling among themselves.

Most of the attendees were upper-class socialites who knew about Finnick and Evelyn’s past, especially when the kidnapping and arson incidents involving both of them were given high coverage in the news at the time. Some of the people present who were long-time acquaintances of the Morrisons and the Nortons knew more about the fateful incident.

Back then, Finnick only survived because Evelyn sacrificed herself to buy time for his escape. She perished in the fire sadly.

Never Late, Never Away Chapter 200

Looks like some feelings are so deep it is just impossible to let go easily. His wife is sitting right next to him, and yet he is so determined to get Evelyn’s pen.

Benedict scoffed and raised his paddle again.

“One million three hundred thousand!”

Hypocrite. You don’t deserve my sister’s pen!

Finnick didn’t give up either.

“One million four hundred thousand!”

Vivian lowered her head, not daring to look at Finnick's face or the pen. Her bag suddenly became an interesting object to focus on.

Everyone was glancing curiously in Vivian's direction. Some of them pitied her for being outshined by Finnick and Evelyn's token of love.

How awkward she must be feeling now.

Dejected, Vivian's head sunk lower.

Worried that Vivian might walk away due to the intensifying stares, which would, in turn, draw more unwanted attention to Finnick and Vivian's relationship, Xavier hurriedly comforted her, "Don't worry too much, Vivian. It's all in the past. It's just a memory—a pen. You being Finnick's wife is all that matters."

Xavier's words only served to upset Vivian more. Vivian sighed quietly. What's with my luck today? First the amulet, and now the fountain pen. What's next?

Was it inappropriate for a man to bid for his childhood sweetheart's belongings in front of his wife? Even if it were, Finnick couldn't care less about it. By pursuing the bid relentlessly, he had put Vivian into a difficult position. But didn't she love him for his loyalty in the first place?

Vivian had never felt so conflicted in her entire life. She couldn't possibly blame Finnick for wanting to hold on to a precious memory.

Benedict raised his paddle once again.

"One million five hundred thousand!"

After a few seconds of utter silence, the auctioneer began to raise his hammer.

No! Finnick wasn't going to let Benedict get his own way. I must have it!

He exclaimed, "Two million!"

The day's auction event turned out to be more thrilling than anyone had anticipated. The crowd was cheering for Finnick and his eternal love for Evelyn.

The auctioneer looked exhilarated as he prepared to raise his hammer again. The auction was unlike anything that he had ever seen in his entire career.

Unable to conceal the excitement in his voice any longer, the auctioneer announced, "Going once, going twice, sold!"

Thunderous applause rumbled in the hall.

Benedict stared at the pen and sighed wistfully. Deep down, he knew that Evelyn would be happy to know that Finnick got her pen.

Nice one, Finnick Norton!

The next item to be auctioned was Xavier's ornament from Thailand. Gilded with gold and adorned with jade embellishments, the colorful handicraft was an exceptional masterpiece suitable for room decor. It went to a plump millionaire.

Ashley's limited edition Hermes bag, which she bought in France and got tired of eventually, was unexpectedly popular among the ladies.

When the handbag was sold at a high price, Ashley smiled smugly, feeling proud of her preloved item.

One by one the collections donated by socialites were auctioned off. Although the objects were equally exquisite and rare, the enthusiastic atmosphere during the diamond pen's auction was long gone. Even the auctioneer's voice drooped a little.

Soon, it was Vivian's item to be displayed.

The previous boredom of looking at general collectibles was instantly replaced by anticipation. Everyone was craning their necks curiously and wondering what Mrs. Norton donated. It must be something extraordinary!

The audience held their breath as the item was being presented.

When Vivian saw it, she was stupefied.

Impossible!

Why is it here?

Where is my diamond necklace? Shocked, Vivian was about to stand up when Finnick grabbed her hand and signaled her to stay calm.