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“There was no one by her side back then, and I was the one who led to her demise. Hence, when she asked me to stay with her, I was in no position to refuse. I had no choice but to bring her home and take care of her.”

Not expecting this backstory at all, Vivian’s resolve was wavering. From Finnick’s explanation, it seemed understandable that he chose to stay with Evelyn back then.

Realising that her resolve was wavering, Vivian quickly gathered her wandering thoughts. So what? When Finnick chose to divorce me, it’s because I’m not as important to him as Evelyn.

Furthermore, since he’s already made up his mind to take care of Eve, and has been doing so for five years; why is he saying that he wants to pursue me again? What is he trying to do?

Upon that thought, Vivian started to struggle again. “Then, you should take good care of her forever. What are you doing now? Do you want to be a two-timer? Let me tell you this, Finnick. You can dream on!”

Finnick grabbed the railings tightly, not letting her escape.

“That thought has never crossed my mind before. I’ve always loved you, Vivian. The only reason why I took care of Evelyn for five years is that I feel guilty. I swear, I only see her as a friend. I initially planned to look for you at A Nation after Evelyn could accept the fact that she was crippled and could live independently again. However, I discovered that I couldn’t wait any longer.”

After a slight pause, he continued, “Vivian, I love you and no one else. In these five years, I have been missing you so much that I’m going crazy. Now, you’ve finally returned. Let’s get back together again, okay?”

From Vivian’s memory, Finnick was not someone who would be willing to confess his love so directly. With a personality like his, it was already good that he would smile at you.

Yet, she heard Finnick, who was bad at expressing his own feelings, declaring his love for her over and over again. To be honest, she was a bit touched.

Furthermore, she felt like Finnick's gaze was brimming with passion, almost overwhelming her. There was a look of love, regret, determination and pleading in his eyes.

Even though they were at the peak of their relationship five years ago, he had never looked at her in such a manner, as if he wanted to look into her soul.

This complex and emotional look in his eyes moved Vivian greatly. She had an urge to hug Finnick and lean against his chest, one from which she sought solace.

When Finnick noticed that familiar loving look in Vivian's eyes, he could not help but feel delighted. He wanted to kiss her rosy lips and express his longing for her.

Yet, he reminded himself not to be too hasty. Hence, he said gently, "Vivian, your miscarriage is all my fault. I'm sorry."

A hurt look flashed across Finnick's eyes. When Vivian lost her child, the pain she felt was probably comparable to Evelyn's. However, he was absent from her side.

Furthermore, it was partly his fault too. If he had protected her child well instead of feeling repulsed, the child could've been safely born into the world.

Unexpectedly, when Vivian heard him mention her child, the heartwarming feeling she felt earlier disappeared in an instant. A bitter feeling rose within her instead. She could not help but mock herself silently. The fact that the pain is gone doesn't mean that I've forgotten my lesson.

When she recalled the scene of the doctor walking towards her slowly with a speculum, a shiver ran down her spine. The feeling of helplessness, as if she was a lamb waiting to be slain, overwhelmed her again.

"No!" Vivian clutched her head in agony. She would never want to experience something like that again.

"What's wrong, Vivian?" asked Finnick anxiously as he grabbed her.

At that moment, he looked like the devil to Vivian. When he stretched out his arms, it looked like he was going to snatch her child away from her.

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“Get lost! Don’t touch me!”

She shoved Finnick away so forcefully that he staggered backwards before regaining his balance. On the other hand, Vivian took the opportunity to escape and run toward the cabin.

Little pumpkin! I want to see him now!

When she returned to the cabin, she saw Larry sitting on the sofa and watching cartoons on the television. Larry, who had always thought that cartoons were childish, was doubling over in laughter at a funny scene.

It was only then that Vivian’s heart stopped pounding so frantically. She would only be fine if Larry was safe and sound.

At that thought, Vivian hated herself for almost falling back in love for Finnick. He almost made her lose Larry, so she would never forgive him, no matter what!

“You’re back, Mommy!” When Larry turned around and saw Vivian standing at the entrance, he ran over to her excitedly.

When she carried him up, her heart melted. “Did you behave in the cabin? You weren’t mischievous, right?”

An exasperated look flashed across Larry’s eyes, making him look adorable. Whenever Mommy leaves my side for more than five minutes, the first thing she asks me is whether I’ve been mischievous.

“Mommy, I’m a good boy, okay?” protested Larry as he pouted.

“Okay, you’re the best.” Noticing Larry’s gloomy expression, Vivian’s heart ached and she quickly consoled him.

“I’m fine, Mommy. I’m not blaming you. I love you the most!” A bright grin spread Larry’s cheeks, shocking Vivian with his rapid change in mood.

“What did you do just now, Mommy?”

Actually, Larry wanted to ask whether she had met his father.

Not wanting Larry to insist on looking for Finnick if he knew he was there, Vivian flicked his nose and smiled affectionately. "I was at the dining room. After eating, I came back to keep you company."

"Did you see Daddy?" As he was a child, he did not know how to conceal his emotions. When he gazed at Vivian, his eyes were filled with excitement. "I saw Daddy at the dining room just now. Did you see him?"

Upon the mention of Finnick, a cold expression spread across Vivian's face. "Really? I didn't see him."

"But he was right opposite us. Did you really not see him?" asked Larry anxiously. Did my plan fail?

The only reason why I agreed that annoying Mr. Yates to come to this cruise is to create a chance for Daddy and Mommy to meet!

"I really didn't see him." Not wanting to discuss Finnick with Larry, Vivian quickly changed the topic.

Although Larry was still young, he could sense that Vivian did not really like his father. As he did not want to make her unhappy, he answered her questions obediently and stopped mentioning Finnick.

However, thoughts raced in his mind. Looks like there must be a misunderstanding between Mommy and Daddy. I must think of a way to solve it for them.

To prevent Finnick from seeing Larry the next morning, Vivian ordered a children's set meal and asked for it to be delivered to their cabin. After watching Larry finish his breakfast, Vivian left him with a couple of reminders.

"Larry, wait for me in the cabin like a good boy. I'll be back soon to accompany you. Promise me that you won't roam around, okay? Otherwise, I'll be worried."

"Okay, Mommy. I'll wait for you in the cabin and not go anywhere else."

"Good boy!" Smiling and stroking Larry's head, Vivian could not help but hug him again. Sometimes, her son was so sensible that her heart ached.

“Go quickly, Mommy.” Larry raised his head in Vivian’s arms and hurried her. Perhaps, she’ll meet Daddy today!

“Okay, I’ll leave now.” After kissing Larry longingly, she stood up and left the room.

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When Vivian reached the dining room, she could not help but feel glad for her foresight. As expected, she bumped into Finnick again. When Vivian saw Evelyn, who was sitting opposite him with a bright smile, a cold smirk played on her lips.

Yesterday, he promised with such confidence that he had nothing to do with Evelyn. Yet, they were now sitting together and having breakfast so intimately. Looks like a man’s words cannot be trusted, huh?

After scanning her surroundings, she spotted Hunter, who was waving at her. Hence, she walked toward him.

“Why isn’t Larry here with you?” asked Hunter, feeling concerned.

“He’s already eaten breakfast and is now in the cabin.” She lowered her head, drank the corn soup, and ate the dishes which Hunter had ordered for her. It was the first time she felt that he really understood her preference in food well.

“Vivian, are you interested in taking a yacht out to the sea today? It seems quite interesting,” invited Hunter. After what happened yesterday, he had decided to pursue her more aggressively.

“I have to go back and accompany Larry later, so I might not be able to make it.” Vivian rejected him as usual.

“You can ask someone to take care of him on your behalf. Nothing bad will happen.” Hunter was as insistent like before. “It’s so rare for us to have a chance to have fun outside. It’ll be a huge pity if we don’t go out to sea at least once, right?”

Vivian, who was planning to reject him again, raised her head. However, she coincidentally saw Evelyn wipe Finnick’s lips with a napkin. As Finnick’s back was facing Vivian, she could not see how his expression was like.

For some reason, fury started to rise within her and she had an urge to be reckless.

“Sure, when should we set off?”

Although she did not know why she agreed to Hunter’s invitation, that was what she wanted to do. In fact, she felt thrilled that she could take revenge.

“What about ten? I’ll see you at your cabin.” Hunter was delighted.

“Alright,” mumbled Vivian before returning to her food. The corn soup which she had enjoyed so much earlier suddenly tasted slightly strange, although she did not know why.

She finished breakfast emotionlessly before bidding Hunter farewell and returning to her cabin.

After telling Larry that she was going out to sea, she reminded him to wait for her obediently. When it was time, Hunter knocked on Vivian’s door. Still feeling worried, she reminded Larry over and over again.

Although she was starting to regret her rash decision, she could not bring herself to reject Hunter when she saw his bright grin. Hence, she could only steel herself and get onto the speedboat with him.

“How’s the view?” Hunter deliberately moved closer to Vivian and whispered into her ear.

Feeling repulsed by their intimacy, Vivian frowned and inched away from him. “It’s not bad.”

“What about me?” Hunter moved closer to her again.

“What do you mean?” A hint of impatience appeared in Vivian’s eyes.

“Vivian, why don’t you be my girlfriend?” Hunter cut straight to the point and took a step forward. He was so close to her that if he lowered his head, he could kiss Vivian’s lips.

Sensing Hunter’s breath puffing on her cheeks, she could not endure it anymore. She pushed him further away and took a few steps back. With a cold expression, she glared at him.

“Hunter, what benefits did Evelyn offer to you to make you help her?”

Larry had constantly been on Vivian's mind. She was blaming herself for acting so rashly and leaving him all alone on the cruise ship. Now that Hunter was behaving like that to her, she was in no mood to continue acting with him. Hence, she decided to be honest and upfront with him.

"You knew?" Hunter was taken aback when he heard her.

"Yeah," snapped Vivian impatiently. "So, stop acting and tell me directly. What do you want to do? Or in other words, what does Evelyn want you to do?"

Hunter quickly regained his composure after hearing his words. It's good that she knows. Anyway, I was planning to admit it to her a few days later.

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In the beginning, Hunter had agreed to help Evelyn on account of their long-time friendship. More importantly, when he first laid eyes on Vivian, he found that her sophisticated air appealed to him greatly. Since the stars have aligned thus perfectly, why not?

When Hunter had really gotten to know Vivian, he felt his curious attraction toward her growing exponentially. No other woman had managed to ignite such a feeling of warmth within him as she did. His attraction to Vivian quickly evolved into affection. Hunter had thus already resolved to be honest with Vivian about his intensifying feelings.

Now that she had found out about it of her own accord, it was a relief for him in some sense. He no longer had to fret over how best to confess his love for her.

"Yes, it was Evelyn who first asked me to pursue you. She wanted to stop you from getting back together with your ex-husband." Hunter admitted honestly.

"So I reckoned," Vivian replied coldly.

Vivian knew that Evelyn surely had her own motives for introducing other men to her. And it had turned out to be exactly as Vivian guessed.

"Vivian, are you angry with me?" Hunter asked cautiously. This was why he had agonized over confessing the truth of the entire matter to Vivian. He was terrified that in her fury, she'd cut off all ties with him, and he'd lose her for good.

However, Vivian's sense of fairness prevented her from heaping all the blame on Hunter. He was clearly only a pawn in this entire operation. She shook her head.

"There's no reason for me to be angry with you. You did nothing wrong, after all. This is between Evelyn and me. It has nothing to do with you," Vivian replied shortly.

"As long as you don't blame me," Hunter said, heaving a long sigh of relief. He turned a beaming face towards her. "It would have been most dreadful if you decided to cut off all ties with me because of this. If you did, I'd be crying in a corner right now."

Vivian did not return Hunter's smile. Her face remained blank.

She certainly wasn't planning on doing anything to Hunter, but that didn't mean that she didn't find him despicable. In fact, Vivian had always found playboys like him to be rather loathsome.

Even though she was determined not to have anything to do with him, Vivian couldn't resist saying scornfully, "Have you ever heard of the word 'revenge'? Aren't you afraid of getting your comeuppance when you toy with women's feelings like this?"

Hunter merely smiled.

Strictly speaking, he hadn't led anyone on. Relationships required the cooperation of both parties involved, after all. Hunter had never bullied any woman into doing anything they weren't willing to do. His relationships were mostly a cooperative effort, with both parties reaping individual benefits.

He could never explain that to Vivian, of course. She would detest him even more and assume that he was making up more excuses for himself.

Looking at Hunter's hapless smile, Vivian felt a tinge of guilt for sticking her fingers into matters that were not hers to interfere with. As long as she didn't get entangled into one, Hunter's messy affairs were his own business.

"Don't waste any more time on me. Nothing can happen between us," Vivian declared. "You can decide if you want to tell Evelyn what transpired between us today. Also, please tell her that she doesn't have to resort to such underhanded tricks in the future. No one else thinks as highly of the man she likes as Evelyn herself does!"

Wasn't Finnick the one Evelyn wanted? What a joke! Did she think that anyone else would be interested in a phony like that?

"Sorry, perhaps you should tell Evelyn that yourself. I don't plan on telling her about what happened here today," Hunter said, shrugging casually.

He was secretly pleased. From what Vivian had resentfully spat out, Hunter gathered that she had no intention of rekindling any romance with her ex-husband. Hunter was yet another step closer to his conquest. He had no plans of giving up on Vivian just like that.

"Why not?" Vivian regarded Hunter with suspicion. Hunter had been co-conspirators with Evelyn. There was no way that Vivian would believe anything he said in its entirety.

Looking at Vivian's defensive posture, Hunter sighed helplessly.

"Vivian, I swear that everything I say is the truth. I admit that I got closer to you in the beginning because of Evelyn. But after getting to know you, I realized that I'd genuinely fallen for you. Why else would I have confessed everything? I hope you can find it in your heart to believe me."

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"Is that the truth?" Vivian asked warily.

"I'll swear on my honor," Hunter replied, raising his right hand in the air as if preparing to take an oath. His face was unusually solemn.

Looking at his serious expression, Vivian recalled the tenderness he had shown her all this time. She decided to take a leap of faith. After all, it's still better to have one more person on my side than against me.

Vivian then flashed hunter a sunny smile. "Thank you."

It was for the best that Evelyn wasn't aware of her scheme's collapse. Otherwise, her devious nature would have resorted to other machinations.

From day one, Vivian had always treated him rather brusquely. This was the first time that she'd actually smiled at Hunter. He was momentarily transfixed by it.

Thump! Thump! Thump! The throbbing of his heart echoed thunderously in Hunter's ears.

With Hunter gaping at her thus, Vivian felt slightly discomfited. Her smile quickly vanished. "Little Pumpkin's waiting for me. I've got to head back soon," she hurriedly said.

"Oh, sure!" The spell was broken when Vivian spoke, and Hunter could feel his face flush from embarrassment.

As he crossed over to the captain's seat, Hunter was inwardly cursing himself for his foolishness. Hunter thrived in surroundings full of women. He'd therefore never anticipated that a single smile from Vivian would set his heart aflutter.

At the same time, he was delighted. Hunter couldn't even remember the last time he had felt moved by any woman. It felt both novel and exciting.

The speedboat hadn't traveled far, and they were back at the cruise ship in no time.

As they approached the cruise ship, however, Vivian felt a growing sense of uneasiness. Something was amiss. It was noon, and there should have been all sorts of noise and laughter coming from the deck. Instead, not a single person was in sight. The entire cruise ship was blanketed in unusual silence.

"Do you feel that something's off?" Vivian turned towards Hunter, asking doubtfully.

"What's wrong?" Hunter stopped the speedboat and examined the cruise ship. "It seems..."

Before he could finish his sentence, an ear-splitting bang sounded from the cruise ship.

"Ahhh!" This was followed by countless shrill screams.

Hunter and Vivian looked at each other with a mix of panic and fear. What on earth's happening on board?

"Good heavens! Have they run into pirates?" Hunter recovered his wits quickly.

Hunter had heard that pirates targeted cruise ships for the sheer number of rich and wealthy people that were bound to be gathered on board. However, he never expected to have the misfortune of running into them that day.

Hunter's first instinct was to turn the speedboat around and steer off in the opposite direction, engines blazing. However, Vivian clung to him doggedly, refusing to let him do so. "Little Pumpkin's on that ship! I can't leave him. Let me board!" she begged.

"It's too dangerous now. We have to leave quickly and get the police over here," Hunter seized Vivian, who was trying to board the cruise ship. "If you go up like this recklessly, you might not even be able to avoid being killed, much less save Little Pumpkin!"

"But I can't abandon him just like that!" Vivian's face was etched with distress and fright. "Let me go up first. You can call the police afterward."

Hunter felt torn upon hearing Vivian's declaration. He hesitated.

"Get us over there now! I'm definitely going to board. Stop wasting time!" Vivian had worked herself up into a frenzy, her voice breaking into a sob. What if Little Pumpkin is already in danger right now?

"I'll go with you," Hunter said firmly. How could he, as a man, allow Vivian to risk danger all alone?

Hunter carefully moored the speedboat and tentatively boarded the cruise ship with Vivian.

The sight that rose before their eyes was not unexpected. The passengers were all kneeling in the main atrium, hands on their heads. A gunman stood before them menacingly, waving his pistol in the air to accentuate his threats.

However, Vivian could clearly see that the hand he was gripping the gun with was trembling. The pirate's fierce expression had not quite managed to mask the fear in his eyes. Clearly, this was no seasoned veteran.