

In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 422

My prompt registered immediately. Ashton stood up and proffered a hand, suave and refined. However, his gaze lingered on Summer and Michael when he noticed them.

Michael seemed to be a late bloomer, at least in comparison to Summer. Both of them were five years old, but Michael appeared a year younger.

Ashton's expression darkened, but I waved it off. "What would you like to eat?" I directed my question to the children.

Summer seemed to be in a foul mood. While her eyes were still on Ashton, she replied, "Anything you make is fine, Mommy."

Michael caught sight of my injured ankle and suggested, "Let Daddy cook for us tonight."

This was nothing out of the norm, but Michael's words were piercing to Ashton's ears.

I offered no clarification. Instead, I looked at Colin and teased lightly, "Looks like it's your turn to show off your cooking skills tonight."

Colin could be rather tactless at times, and his ability to read the room was failing him at the moment. Though he was taken aback by Ashton's presence, he invited graciously, "Mr. Fuller, please stay for dinner with us. We cook with homegrown produce. You should try some."

Ashton masked his emotions and nodded, his eyes dark and unfathomable.

I glanced at the children and instructed them as usual, "Both of you pick some vegetables from the back garden. Summer, don't bully Michael, understand?"

Summer pouted but nodded obediently. "You're so unfair, Mommy. You always help Michael."

Amused by her childish accusation, I explained, "Michael is already shorter than you. If you continue to bully him, he'll never grow taller!"

“Okay, okay, I won’t bully him!” Summer picked up both baskets and told Michael indignantly, “Mommy says that I can’t bully you, so I’ll help you carry your basket, okay?”

Michael, the small gentleman he was, corrected Summer, “Daddy says that I’m a strong man, and strong men should protect girls. You’re not bullying me. I’m protecting you!”

The two children walked toward the back garden, bickering all the way.

I shook my head in resignation, but my lips curled upwards involuntarily. I had always worried that Summer would feel lonely, but seeing how Summer and Michael were closer than biological siblings put me at ease.

As I retracted my gaze, I felt someone’s eyes on me, snapping me back to reality. I turned to find Ashton burning holes in me with his scorching stare. A myriad of emotions flashed in his dark eyes.

Stunned by the intensity of his gaze, I blurted, “Please make yourself at home while I check if my help is needed in the kitchen.”

Long fingers wrapped around my wrist, pulling me back. His voice seemed to rumble in his chest as he asked, “Have you been well all these years?”

My heart skipped a beat at the simple question. I met his gaze and replied with conviction, “I’ve been good. These four years have been the most peaceful years of my life.”

Pain flickered in his eyes as he chuckled ruefully. “Yeah, you do look happy.”

I nodded slightly. "Make yourself at home while I help out in the kitchen," I repeated as the conversation ran dry.

"Can we be friends?" Ashton asked timidly, his voice helpless and distant. "I've tried numerous ways to numb out in the past four years, but my mind has been cruel to me. The more I try to forget, the clearer the memories become. It's all engraved in my brain. It's impossible to erase."

I heaved a sigh, wishing I had the right words to console him. I turned to look Ashton in the eye. "Mr. Fuller, you'll have to move on someday. I'm doing great here. Staying by your side only filled me with hate and resentment. It would break me. Perhaps it might have seemed like I had plenty of friends and family in J City and K City, but I was dying inside. There's no way I can come to terms with my suffering. R Province is my home. Here, I can be the person I aspire to be. I hope you understand my choice, Mr. Fuller."

Ashton held my gaze. His eyes were gentle yet pained, reflecting the conflicting emotions within. A loud silence fell upon us. Seconds ticked by before he finally spoke. "Fine!" The weight of a single syllable pressed down on both of us.

He left soon afterward. I exhaled heavily as I watched his retreating back. Everyone's biggest enemy is themselves.

I entered the kitchen to find Colin preparing the ingredients. He stilled when he saw me. "I can handle this myself. Go and keep Mr. Fuller company."

"I can wash the vegetables," I insisted.

He quickly declined when he glimpsed my ankle. "It looks swollen again. Go and rest!"

Colin could be stubborn at times. Realizing that I wasn't going to change his mind, I surrendered and returned to the yard where I found Joseph waiting for me, expressionless as always. His back was stiff, and his eyes followed me as I approached him.

“Mr. Campbell, is there something I can help you with?”

He handed me a plastic bag and explained, “Mr. Fuller told me to pass this to you. It’s medicine for your injury.”

“Please relay my thanks!” I accepted the plastic bag with a nod.

Joseph mirrored my action. He thinned his lips before divulging, “Mrs. Fuller, Mr. Fuller has been waiting for you. He knows well that he could have easily found you in the past four years if he wished to, but he’s afraid. He’s afraid that you still hate him and that you would push him away. So he’s been patiently waiting—waiting for you to let go of the pain... Waiting for you to come home.”

A faint smile played on my lips. Though heartfelt, Joseph’s words did little to sway me. “Help me thank Mr. Fuller,” I responded. “Please tell him that each person has their own path to take. There’s no need to stay entangled in the past.”

Joseph opened his mouth to reply but stopped when he heard the finality in my words. He sighed, perhaps in disappointment, and left.

The next day, my ankle had healed significantly. After dropping Summer off, I headed to the hotel.

At the entrance, I ran into Joyce, who was flanked by two burly men.