

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1023-1027

Chapter 1023

She looked at me with reddened eyes as she clasped her hands tightly together. "Scarlett, I can't turn back anymore. I won't involve Grandpa's men in this, but as long as he's connected to it, I'll do whatever I can to protect him."

I frowned but understood her obsession and calmly replied, "Okay. As long as you think it's worth it."

This marked the end of our friendship.

There was no use talking about it anymore.

As soon as we left the café and got into the car, Joseph said, "There're a few trucks below Imperial Hotel. Apparently, they're cleaning out the hotel's junk. They're moving stuff right now."

Taken aback, I hesitated for a while before I replied, "Let's go there now!"

He nodded and started up the car.

When we reached Imperial Hotel, four or five trucks were parked by the entrance, and there were several men moving things into the trucks. Thus, Joseph parked the car outside.

"Why are they suddenly moving all these? Where are they bringing them to?"

After watching them for a while, I noticed that they were bringing out tables, chairs, cardboard boxes, and white quilts. They seemed to be old items that the hotel did not want.

As I stared at the white quilts that had been loaded into the truck, I pondered for a moment before I asked, "Can you do something to make the truck with the quilts catch fire?"

Joseph was stunned for a moment, probably because he was thinking the same thing as I was. Then, he nodded. "I can!"

Subsequently, he called made a call and arranged for someone to tamper with the car.

Soon, a noise came from inside. We watched from our car as the truck started to catch fire, emitting smoke. "Make use of this messy situation and get someone to see if there's anything wrapped in the quilts."

Joseph nodded and spoke into his headset. Shortly after, he looked at me and replied, "There're weapons wrapped inside!"

"Call the police and the fire department. Also, get some men to surround the area. Don't let anyone get out." As long as this succeeded, Armond would be called to come back, therefore leaving him no time to deal with Ashton.

Shortly after that, I heard police sirens and the fire engines then arrived. As I watched the horde of men rush into the hotel, I was able to breathe a sigh of relief.

I turned to Joseph and said, "Come on, let's go and meet Dillan!"

However, Joseph did not drive and simply looked toward the front of the car. Following his gaze, I was stunned when I saw that familiar face. "Abe? Didn't he die in Moranta?"

Joseph was also taken aback and frowned.

Seeing that man hurriedly enter Imperial Hotel, I was about to get off and follow him in before Joseph stopped me. "Mrs. Fuller, wait in the car while I go down to check on the situation. Don't get out of the car no matter what!"

I furrowed my brows, but as soon as I thought of Ashton's words, I simply nodded and waited in the car.

However, not long after Joseph went in, I heard gunshots from inside the building. I instantly tensed up. What's going on? They're actually acting so savagely in this country?

I dialed Joseph's number, but it would not connect. Just as I wanted to get off the car, I hesitated. If I get down now, not only would I be unable to do anything, I'd also be putting myself in danger. But if I don't get off now, I wouldn't know anything about Joseph's situation.

In the end, I could only sit in the car and wait. Feeling helpless, I gave Boris a call for help.

His background seemed to be very noisy. As soon as he picked up, he asked, "What's wrong, Ms. Stovall?"

Listening to the flustered voice on the other end of the line, I suddenly had a bad feeling. "Boris, are you okay?"

He coughed for a while before he replied, "Mr. Moore and I were tricked by Dillan. We're trapped in his villa now, and the house is on fire. Mr. Moore has lung disease and the situation isn't looking too good right now!"

Panicked, I hurriedly replied, "I'll call for help right away. You should call the police!"

After I hung up, I got out of the car and hid beside it. I wanted to enter the hotel to search for Joseph, but there were constant sounds of fighting coming from inside. Since Abe was a fugitive, naturally, human life would not mean anything to him.

Before I even entered the hotel, I noticed two dead bodies beside the truck that was on fire. They appeared to be the drivers of the truck, which was still burning and could accidentally explode.

Luckily, not many people were around this area. When I still did not see Joseph, I started to get anxious. I wanted to give him a call, but again, the call did not get through. Soon, special forces soldiers had surrounded Imperial Hotel, which only made me more anxious. If they arrested Joseph, things would become troublesome.

However, if I entered then, I would be shot right away. I tried to call him again, and it finally got through this time. Joseph said anxiously, "Mrs. Fuller, are you okay?"

"I'm fine. Hurry and come back out. There're special forces outside Imperial Hotel now. My dad and Boris were tricked by Dillan and are trapped there right now, so we have to hurry over."

"Okay, but I can't get out right now. Imperial Hotel has a back door, so you should drive away first, and I'll come out to meet you." As soon as he was done, he hung up.

As I studied my surroundings, I noticed that the special forces were closing in on Imperial Hotel and quickly ran back to the car and started the engine. Suddenly, a man appeared and blocked the car. I barely stepped on the brakes in time before I hit him.

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When I raised my head to look at the person, I was stunned for a moment. "Danny, why are you..."

He hurriedly got into the car while bleeding and said, "Go now!"

Without thinking too much, I quickly drove out of the area and left the scene. Then, I looked at him and asked, "Why are you here? Are you still working with Abe?"

Due to the injury on his arm, he frowned as he looked at me. I continued, "I'll send you to the hospital!"

"You can't!" he shouted. He was already pale because of the pain.

A while later, I realized that if he went to the hospital then, the police would question him very soon. Since there was a shooting case in Imperial Hotel that day, even if Danny said he was not at the scene, his gunshot wound would still arouse suspicion.

Thus, my only option was to take him to meet Joseph first.

As soon as he saw Danny, Joseph's expression instantly darkened. The only thing he did not do was to take a knife straight to Danny's neck and ask him what exactly was going on.

Without too much delay, I gave Joseph a brief explanation then drove straight to Dillan's villa. The firefighters were already there when we reached, and Zachary had just been carried into the ambulance.

I looked at Boris and asked, "What exactly happened? Dillan actually set fire to such a huge villa?"

Despite it being in the suburbs, the villa was still worth tens of millions. What was he planning when he set it on fire?

Boris sighed and replied, "You head to the hospital to check on your father first. I'll take care of the rest."

We were indeed surrounded by many people, making it inconvenient for me to continue asking him questions. Thus, we headed to the hospital together as Boris suggested. The doctor concluded that Zachary had inhaled too much smoke but would be okay after resting for a while.

Joseph had to settle the matter with Imperial Hotel, and Boris was handling the issue with Dillan.

Meanwhile, Danny and I sat on the seats along the corridor for ages. After a long while, I said, "I know you are with Abe, so I won't ask too many questions. But considering that I have helped you today, can you tell me why Abe isn't dead?"

Danny's injury had already been treated by a doctor, and he was sitting beside me silently the whole time.

After a long while, he replied, "The man who died in Moranta wasn't Abe. Imperial Hotel is jointly operated by Abe and Armond, and the operating room in that factory you went to is also theirs. However, Armond had transferred everything over to Abe these past few days."

I frowned. "What do you mean?"

He looked at me as he said, "I know you've been trying to find evidence of Armond's illegal activities. Armond knows it too, so when you went to the village to find that family, he made a deal with Abe. They'd been doing business for so long that many of their things were old and damaged. Armond was worried since there was no way to openly get rid of them, but you gave him an opportunity. The things you managed to find out are all true. Armond wanted you to make them public since Abe would be punished in the end, not him."

I was taken aback for a moment, then asked, "Why does he think he can use Abe as he pleases?" They were both proud men, so things were definitely not as simple as just shifting blame.

"You probably don't understand Abe as a person. It's true that he's cruel and only thinks about profiting, but he actually treats his men very sincerely. After the issue in Venria was revealed, we were at a dead-end. We came over because Abe wanted to work with Armond so that his men could settle down. He would then help Armond clean up his mess."

I froze. "So right from the beginning, Armond purposely led me on to investigate this matter just so that when I finally exposed everything, it would put an end to all these dirty businesses."

He nodded in reply.

There was an unexplainable feeling of shock in me. From the beginning, everything that Armond did was to lead me to this point. He had taken the initiative to call me, revealed that there was an organ trade going on in A City, and even gave me his name card. His ultimate motive was to let me discover those dirty secrets and expose them.

I hesitated for a long while before I replied, "Was he also the one who planned everything that had happened to me at Imperial Hotel?"

Danny nodded. "He purposely used the child to provoke you so that you would become determined to take action on Imperial Hotel."

Does it mean he has planned the whole thing step by step, just waiting to lead me into his trap and eventually making me the person who would help him succeed in his plan?

At that moment, I did not know if I should laugh or cry. After all this time, I was just someone's puppet?

Noticing my grim expression, Danny pursed his lips slightly as he apologized. "Sorry!"

I shook my head, feeling a little tired. After dealing with the matter for so long, everything just turned out to be a well-planned conspiracy.

Just then, I thought of Ashton and widened my eyes as I said, "Danny, have you left Abe?"

He frowned slightly but did not answer me.

Without knowing his answer, I continued, "Can you head to Moranta and help me protect Ashton in secret? Since Armond had planned such a huge trap, there must be something else waiting for Ashton. Can you do that for me?"

Danny looked at me with a slight frown on his face and replied helplessly, "Sorry, I can't leave A City right now. Now that Mr. Abe's been arrested, Dante and I will be too. The police should be looking for me everywhere, so I can only hide around the city now and can't head to Moranta."

I laughed bitterly.

Everything was destined. I could not change anything as it was all already arranged for.

Ten days later, Abe had been sentenced to death as Imperial Hotel was found to have hidden weapons and had participated in the organ trade.

Brandon was also charged for being Abe's accomplice.

Cameron and Zachary had brought Summer back to K City, and Dillan's family seemed to have disappeared without a trace. There was no way we could find them.

Although things seemed to be over, I was not as happy as expected and was still angry. After toying with me, Armond had hastily ended everything just like that. I had lost my child due to my own stupidity, yet he was able to gain something and even managed to walk away unscathed.

However, I was no angel and would not just leave it at that.

On Thursday, I headed to the mall.

As an apology for not attending Tabitha's wedding while I was busy in K City, I had asked her and Laurel out to go shopping together.

Having not seen her in such a long time, Tabitha seemed to have put on some weight. After some careful questioning, I found out that she was pregnant.

Laurel joked, "It's indeed different when you become a mother. Your gaze has become so gentle. By the way, the customers have been asking when you'll be back for work ever since you stopped going to work. Isn't it a bit too early to be taking time off when you're only two months pregnant?"

Tabitha smiled slightly. "It's mainly my husband who's feeling uneasy about it. If I go to work, he'll be worried the whole day and will want to find me at work. In the end, he'll be distracted from his own job. Seeing that, I quit my job and stay at home, his parents will be there to take care of me, and that's a load off him."

Laurel's gaze was full of envy as she looked at Tabitha. "You're so lucky. Your husband's gentle and caring, and your in-laws are willing to take care of you. Look at me. I've been married for six years now, but it feels like I'm a widow. I've been raising my son alone too. Although my mother-in-law helps to take care of him, she always picks a fight with me. You don't understand how annoying things are for me at home."

Tabitha replied comfortingly, "As you said previously, you just have to accept life as it is! Your husband's starting his business now, so it'll definitely be tough on him. Aren't you also taking care of your son while you work for the sake of your family? If you persevere, I'm sure you'll be able to enjoy life later on. My husband's the same. He has it tough, so we try to understand each other and compromise. You can't just focus on the unhappy parts of your marriage and ignore the good part."

Laurel sighed as she looked at me. "How about you, Scarlett? How have you been these few months? Your husband's both rich and handsome, so you should be the happiest among us. Nora called me to complain some time ago, saying that Armond seemed to be ignoring her. You guys are already so rich, so why do you still work so hard to make money? You're not short on it anyway."

I smiled slightly and replied, "A lot has happened recently but I asked you guys out as soon as I had some free time. By the way, have you guys seen Tessa recently? I haven't seen her in a long time. I wonder how she's doing."

Laurel replied, "I met her some time ago. I heard she has adopted a five or six-year-old kid, so she's probably not intending to get married. Tessa's already thirty-six or seven, so it seems like she wants to live alone with the child in the future. But the last time I saw her, she was driving a Mercedes-Benz S-

Class. Apparently, she also bought a house a few days ago. Didn't she say that she was poor? Why's she suddenly able to buy a car and a house. Do you guys know what kind of business she's doing recently?"

Tabitha shook her head. "No, I don't really contact her. I'm not that interested in her affairs, so I don't really bother checking on whatever she bought or did."

Laurel paused for a moment, then said, "Tabby, you don't seem to like Tessa very much?"

Tabitha was a straightforward person who wore her heart on her sleeve. Thus, she shrugged and replied indifferently, "I neither like nor dislike her since we're just acquaintances. Anyway, we don't belong in the same world as her. I'm sure you know that she's overly ambitious. She probably sees us as mere passers-by who aren't significant enough."

I laughed lightly as I listened to their conversation. "It's okay, we're just having a casual chat and sharing some gossip. If you guys don't like something, you don't need to talk about it. I was just a little curious about where Tessa's adopted child came from. Is it even legally possible for an unmarried woman to adopt a child now?"

Laurel nodded. "I think it's possible as long as you meet the requirements. Apparently, a woman between thirty and forty who's unmarried and is doing okay financially is qualified. I think Tessa also mentioned that the child isn't an orphan. The child's mother died in a car accident and his father was sentenced to death because of some severe offense. Therefore, the child was trusted upon her."

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Death sentence?

I spent the rest of the afternoon chatting with Laurel and Tabitha, then returned to the villa.

I arrived to see Nora in the midst of moving out of the villa next door, much to my astonishment. She'd hired a bunch of professional movers who streamed in and out of the doorway toting boxes of various sizes.

Nora stood just outside the door supervising them, occasionally reminding them to be careful with her things.

I stood rooted to the spot in the yard, watching her. Nora saw me out of the corner of her eye and turned in my direction. Our eyes met, and I could see that hers were swollen and red with crying even at that distance.

What on earth has happened?

I hadn't much of a clue what had transpired and didn't suppose it was a suitable time to ask. I smiled at Nora embarrassedly, then stepped into the villa. Ashton was still stuck at Moranta fighting Armond. Cameron had originally extended an invitation to Summer and me to return to K City in the meantime. However, I was busy resenting Armond for having deceived me and in no mood for socializing.

I was vexed but was determined to try and accomplish something.

Back at the villa, I collapsed onto a chair in fatigue. At that moment, the doorbell rang.

I strolled over and peered out of the window. Nora was standing outside, patiently waiting for me beyond the gate of my yard.

I hastily walked out to the yard and beckoned her. "Do you want to come in?"

Nora shook her head. She replied glumly, "It's all right. I came over to return this to you." Having thus declared, Nora wriggled the bracelet that she was wearing off her arm, then handed it to me. Channing

had originally given me a matching set of bracelets. I'd given one to Nora and kept one for myself. They weren't worth much, but they were a significant token of my and Nora's friendship.

I looked down at the bracelet lying in Nora's outstretched palm, then looked back at Nora. "This bracelet belonged to your grandmother. If you're here to ask for it back, I'll return it to you. There's no need for you to return anything to me. I gave the bracelet to you in the first place because of the relationship between our families and because I believed that our friendship was genuine. I never thought that anything could ever come between us. I see now that perhaps I was wrong. Even if that's the case, I don't want your bracelet. I gave it wholeheartedly to you back then, and I don't intend to ask for it back even though things have turned sour between us. You can do whatever you like with it. Throw it away if you wish."

I turned to shut the gate without waiting for her reply.

Nora, however, stopped the gate with one swift motion. She paused, then said in a trembling voice, "Thank you, Scarlett."

I smiled faintly but said nothing. I had a rather accepting attitude towards friendships and whichever winding paths they ultimately took. I had never pursued anyone, accepting the eventual end of any relationship stoically. In the three years that I'd spent waiting for Ashton, I knew that despite how much I loved him, I would never fight for our relationship if he'd decided to give it up.

If I wasn't even ready to strive for the person I'd loved wholeheartedly, I won't be willing to chase after a friendship. Nora was presently entangled in her own difficulties, and I thought the best course of action would be to retreat and respect whatever decision she made.

Since Nora had evidently made her choice to part ways with me, there was no point dwelling any further. I thus chose to flash a bright smile at her and replied, "There's no need to thank me. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors."

It was an absolutely meaningless, patronizing phrase that I'd always loathed. I now uttered it with absolute sincerity, however. I did hope that Nora and I would each come to find our own happiness eventually.

It was truly goodbye. I would no longer continue journeying through life with Nora, but I hoped that my well-wishes would remain with her when I could not.

The metal gate closed with a steely clang. I exhaled, then walked slowly back into my villa. Just as I was about to head into the room to sleep, the doorbell rang a second time. I opened it to see Nora still standing outside.

Staring fixedly at me, she muttered, "Whether you believe me or not, I have to tell you that I was drunk that night at the Imperial Hotel. If I had known that he would have turned out to be so violent, I would never have dreamt of calling you. I never wanted to cause you any harm, not even once."

I looked at her and smiled as it was a relief. "I know. I never once thought of blaming you. Don't worry. Go on back."

I had indeed never blamed Nora for anything that had happened. I was merely wary that Armond had been using Nora as a pawn all along.

I was on the verge of swinging the gate back shut when Nora piped up. "Brandon's woman was bought over by Tessa. You should be careful. It's not safe for you to stay here alone."

I looked at Nora, bewildered at her sudden revelation. "Got it, thank you," I hesitated then added, "I'll be sure to take care of myself."

Nora hung her head, then turned and walked back to her villa.

I looked at her departing figure with a twinge of regret. Nora was never malicious. She'd simply made the mistake of falling in love with the wrong man.

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It had never occurred to me to spy on Tessa. I'd initially planned on meeting her in person but was worried about alarming her. If I confronted Tessa directly, there was a possibility that she would reveal everything to Armond. He would then make a move against Brandon who was vulnerable and at his

mercy now. The truth was Armond had no weaknesses so far. At the same time, he was cold-blooded and poisons filled his veins. Thus, he would want to ensure complete secrecy by sending Brandon to his maker to seal his mouth forever.

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Hence, I was resolved not to tell Tessa anything for fear that the information would simply be passed on to Armond. I was afraid that before I could even get around to persuading Brandon, he would already have died under suspicious circumstances in prison.

It wasn't difficult to uncover news about Tessa. We moved about in the same circles, after all. One could easily obtain any desired information with some effort. Nuthana Gardens was a newly-developed piece of property. Not long after it was completed, its prices skyrocketed, and it was now sold for at least ten thousand per square foot. An apartment of a thousand and five hundred square feet was worth around fifteen million. Tessa had neither a stable job nor a steady source of income and had no projects on hand. Her sudden wealth had naturally raised queries in both Tabitha and Laurel's minds. How could a village girl have acquired enough to buy both a posh apartment and a luxury car in just a few months?

Armond was clearly rewarding Tessa handsomely. What is Tessa doing for him that warrants such a hefty sum? I wondered. Armond wasn't a spendthrift character. I thought of what had happened in Moranta. A niggling thought arose within my mind. Has Tessa been part of Armond's numerous evil schemes?

I had no access to the residential area at Nuthana Gardens. It boasted tight security, and external visitors had no way of entering without permission from a resident. I could thus only observe discreetly from one of its exits.

It was the only method available but also the most labor-intensive. I waited an entire afternoon before Tessa's car pulled up at the entrance around four in the late afternoon. She drove a black Mercedes-Benz that was the latest model.

I watched as the car entered the basement carpark, then fished out my phone to call Laurel. I had intended on inviting her out along with Tessa. Before I could dial her number, however, my phone rang with a call from Ashton.

I picked up the phone. Ashton immediately demanded, "Why were you sitting out there for the entire day? Did anything happen?"

I was baffled for a moment. Then, I suddenly recalled that Ashton had arranged for a bodyguard to watch over me from afar. I giggled sheepishly. "It's nothing! I wanted to snoop on Tessa a little, so I waited outside her residence to see when she came back. The security here at Nuthana Gardens is way too tight, and I have no way of entering. So sitting out here was the best I could do."

Ashton was silent on the other end of the line for a while. When he next spoke, there was a note of resignation in his tone. "Scarlett, when will you finally remember that your husband isn't a poor man?"

Sensing my confusion, Ashton continued, "Nuthana Gardens' developer gave me a few units within the residence when it had been completed. I'm sending the key over to you right now. What are you investigating Tessa for, though?"

"She has adopted Brandon's child. I wanted to see if there was anything there I could use to win Brandon over," I replied. I'd already reasoned that Brandon's testimony would be the most damning weapon against Armond.

Ashton was silent for a while. Then, he said slowly, "Scarlett, don't interfere anymore in this matter. I've already made plans to handle this. Go back to K City and take care of yourself. If you're bored of that place, come over to Moranta."

I could detect undercurrents of meaning rippling beneath Ashton's casual manner. He seemed unwilling to tell me just what he'd planned. Exasperated, I fumed, "I'm going to stay in A City. Armond took all of us for a ride from the start. If I don't get to witness his conviction and imprisonment, I won't be able to rest."

Ashton sounded helpless. In a patient voice, he soothed, "It's not time yet. Don't rush into things. Just leave everything to me."

I bit my lip in frustration. Ashton was once again treating me with the same patronizing manner as he would a child. It made my blood boil.

I hung up the phone. Someone arrived shortly thereafter with the keys. I was still harboring resentment towards Ashton for his condescension earlier. I was in no mood to continue with the investigation any further that day.

With that, I turned and headed back to the villa.

I headed into the bedroom and flopped onto the bed, ruminating over the events that had occurred. I felt as if everything I'd done had been rendered worthless and grew even more infuriated.

Just then, a phone call came from Hannah, reminding me that I had to go to K City to attend her wedding. Amidst my busyness, I'd totally forgotten about it. I hurriedly replied to Hannah that I would definitely be there.

The wedding had been scheduled for two days later.

After much deliberation, I decided to head back to K City first. After Hannah's wedding, I'd immediately return to continue scrutinizing Tessa. I thus booked my tickets for the flight to K City.

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Hannah's wedding was to be held at Chandler's childhood home. The house was situated rather near K City's suburbs. It wasn't much of a drive away at all. Hannah had familiarized herself with the customs there. She had no intention of being caught by surprise by any rituals she hadn't prepared herself for in advance.

As she sat in a cafe in the city center, Hannah's radiant smile nearly filled the room. When she caught sight of me entering, Hannah looked overwhelmed with elation. She greeted me enthusiastically, then

fired, "Why did you stay in A City for so long? Chandler has been clinging to me so much lately. I haven't even been able to tear myself away to go shopping!"

I listened to Hannah's rapid prattle in amusement. "Wouldn't you want him to stay by your side every day? What's so annoying about that?"

Hannah pursed her lips. She grandly got to her feet and did a small pirouette. Noticing that all eyes in the cafe had immediately fastened themselves upon her, Hannah immediately sat down bashfully once again. "Did you see how fat I am now? I think Chandler's been stuffing me too much food!"

I guffawed, then stopped at the sight of Hannah's sober face. "Don't you think you look beautiful now? Even as another woman, I can't take my eyes off you!"