

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1313-1317

Chapter 1313

I nearly jumped out of my skin at her sudden declaration. "Sure!" I giggled. "You're going to have to become really powerful so that you can protect not only yourself, but everyone you love, okay?"

"Yes, Mommy! I will!" Summer promised with all the passion and optimism in the world, as if she truly believed that she was going to transform into a superhero any moment now.

I just grinned at her, desperately wishing from the bottom of my heart that her wish would one day come true.

There was no mercy in this world. The only way you could protect everything you loved was by becoming stronger and stronger. I wasn't sure how much longer I could protect my kids for, so I prayed every day that they would be able to defend themselves after I passed away eventually.

After sending Summer home for Lois to look after her, John and I left to meet Jared.

We sat in the most obvious seat in the café. Just as the waiter was serving us our ordered drinks, the glass doors slowly pushed open, and Jared walked in.

Our eyes met, and I finally saw for myself how much he had changed since I last saw him.

His face had gotten much rounder, and he was growing an unkempt beard. His eyebrows had also been purposefully dyed light grey, probably in an attempt to mask his identity. If he hadn't headed towards us and sat down at our table without an ounce of hesitation, I would have never noticed the similarities between this man and the angular-faced, pretty boy that I used to know.

What quickly followed my feelings of shock was an overwhelming sense of disdain.

All Jared had lost after three years of being in jail was some of his physique and good looks, whereas Summer had nearly lost her life. Everyone else who had unknowingly gotten involved in his schemes and became sick due to chemical pollution had also had their lives ruined because of him.

God, you truly are unfair and unjust.

"It's been a long time," Jared broke the silence first. His voice was now low and gravelly, I spotted the vague hints of the cruel, cynical humor in his eyes.

I had been lied to and manipulated by him so many times before because of this exact innocent appearance.

"I wish it could've been longer," I replied curtly.

He hung his head in shame, smiling wryly in self-deprecation.

How could he laugh so casually even after committing so many evil acts? I couldn't believe that the past me had allowed him to interact with my daughter for such an extended period of time.

"I'm warning you. Don't ever come near Summer again," I growled out through gritted teeth. My fingernails dug into my palm as I clenched my fists at the memory of Summer's pained cries that resurfaced in my mind.

My rationality was telling me that I had to get rid of Jared from our lives, no matter what his intentions were.

He leaned back against the seat of his chair, fixing me with a calm stare. "Don't you think you're being too ridiculous? I'm her father. Does it make sense for me to not be with her?"

"No, you're not." Rage flared up within me like a wildfire. "She is Ashton's and my daughter. She has no relation to you."

"Oh, really?" Jared chuckled. "We'll see what the court has to say about that when I send both our DNA for a paternity test."

My heart dropped to the bottom of my stomach.

He had a point. After going undercover at Summer's school for so long, it would have been extremely easy for him to get ahold of a strand of her hair or a piece of her fingernails. He knew that he would be exposed one day, so he'd made prior preparations in order to legally be able to get near her.

Knock, knock. John's knuckles rapped on the tabletop to get Jared's attention. "You better watch your mouth," he threatened, his stare was aggressive. "This isn't J City nor the prison. There's no one to protect you here."

John had never been a kind man, and he could look so intimidating that children would burst into tears at the sight of him if he wanted to. But Jared seemed unbothered, turning his head to meet John's gaze head-on with a mocking grin. "I understand. You have endless connections at your disposal in K City, and you have the power to make anyone disappear off the face of the earth."

Chapter 1314

Even after three years, his unnerving smile made my breath hitch in my throat and my eyebrows knit together in disgust.

The rough, hard days of being in prison had failed to teach him a lesson in humility. If anything, he had come out even more unscrupulous and evil than he'd been when he first went in.

John hadn't expected his intimidation to not work on Jared, his face fell slightly and he became irritated. The two men just stared at each other while the tension around them grew thicker with every passing second.

Not wanting to waste any more time in Jared's presence, I spoke up, "Cut to the chase and tell us what you really want."

Only then did Jared turn to stare at me, silently pondering for a moment before saying, "I never wanted to be your enemy, Scarlett, so don't act so hostile towards me. All I want is to watch Summer grow up and correct my past mistakes."

"You're wrong. You became my enemy the moment you included Summer in your plot of revenge," I instantly retorted. "You've gone mad. What right do you think you have to sacrifice so many people's lives and happiness for the sake of one deceased person?"

He took a deep breath as his expression turned solemn. "I've already paid back everything that I owed those people while I was in prison. The Crest family is also doing their best to help compensate for anything that I've yet to make up for. Why is it your place to decide that I deserve the death penalty all because of that one mistake I made?"

"That's bullsh*t!" John blurted out. "The death penalty is exactly what you deserve! While you were kicking back and relaxing in jail for three years, Summer was in the hospital struggling to stay alive! And even if she's been discharged from the hospital now, she'll need to live on medication for the rest of her life! That damage is something that you'll never be able to compensate for!"

John had verbalized exactly what I was feeling. Summer had suffered greatly as a result of Jared's actions, both physically and mentally.

Jared looked slightly upset at that. "I didn't know back then that Summer was my child," he lamented, staring at John with a frown. "My heart hurts, too. All I want is one more chance with her. I promise that I'll never reveal to her my real identity, and that I'll never make her remember what happened all those years ago."

There was a brief pause. He held his hands on top of the table as he hung his head, staring at the ground. "I've also been going to therapy and counseling sessions recently. I'm aware that Summer has slowly learned to trust me, and that no one is more suited to be her private doctor than me. I'm confident that I can change her back into the innocent, naive child that she once was, if only you'll give me some more time with her..."

"No thanks," I cut in. I didn't want to listen to him go on. "Let me ask you. If Summer isn't your child, would you still be acting this way?"

I recalled very clearly how many children from families living nearby the chemical plant had fallen sick or had been affected in some way by the pollution from the plant. Even if Jared truly regretted his actions, Summer was not the only child that he had to compensate.

Jared looked surprised that I would ask such a thing, his eyes widened for a brief second. “There are no ‘if’ or ‘but’s about any of this. The fact that Summer is the flesh and blood of Macy and I is the truth. I can’t just give up on her. I know that you’ve started arranging for her to change school. If you’re willing to go to such measures to prevent me from seeing Summer, then I’ll have no choice but to take our paternity test results to show the court.”

There it is.

He’d finally shown his true colours after being all polite and nice, just like every other manipulative person I’d met before.

“Do you want to sue us? Go ahead and try!” John jumped to his feet, about to swing a fist in Jared’s direction before I frantically tugged on his shirt under the table, signaling for him to calm down.

Jared was completely undisturbed, not even flinching as he went on, “By the way, I forgot to congratulate you on giving birth to twins, Scarlett. I’m really happy for you, and I’m sure Macy feels the same way up in heaven. But you must be busy with taking care of two babies, especially after having gone through a divorce recently. Summer is at the age where she loves running around and causing mischief, so it’ll be a challenge for you to look after her as well. Why don’t you let me take care of her and lift a burden off of everyone’s shoulders?”

“What rubbish! The Stovall family has countless relatives available and willing to help take care of a child!” John rolled his eyes, breaking free from my grasp and standing up to tower over Jared. “Even if Letty and the maids are unable to look after Summer, she still has me as her uncle! And as long as I’m around, you will never be able to touch her!”

Chapter 1315

His sudden outburst of emotion had caused him to raise his voice, drawing the attention of the other customers in the quiet café.

If John went on like this, he might actually start a physical fight.

I glanced at Jared, who still appeared calm and composed. He hadn't taken John's threats seriously, or maybe this entire situation was completely within his control.

The rest of the café's patrons were made up of small groups of two or three people who would occasionally look over at us. They were just being a little nosy, but there was nothing particularly strange about our surroundings.

Was this the calm before the storm? I had no clue what tricks Jared had up his sleeve, but I knew one thing for sure—being too reckless might cause more trouble than we needed.

After having come to that conclusion, I reached up and pulled John to sit back down in his chair.

I forced a fake smile onto my face, softening my tone as I spoke. "You said you wanted to take this case to court, right? I'll happily agree to that, and I'll make sure we see this to the very end. As a lawyer, I can tell you definitively that you do have primary custodial rights as Summer's biological father. I also know that I have a huge disadvantage due to my marital status. I'm assuming your lawyer told you all of this, too?"

"So what if they did?" Jared shrugged, unlocking his clasped-together hands and spreading his arms wide in a motion of defeat. "I'm just a doctor; of course, I have to leave these sort of things up to a professional lawyer. I might as well let you in on a little secret—the country's best child custody lawyer has already accepted my case. I won't lose this time, Scarlett. I suggest you turn a blind eye and back off, and stop preventing me from seeing Summer again. If not, you can't blame me if you have to hear my lawyer reveal some particularly unpleasant things about you while in court."

I let out a cold scoff.

The mere mention of a “professional child custody lawyer” wasn’t enough to scare me off.

“I don’t know who your lawyer is, but I already feel sorry for them,” I fluttered my eyelashes innocently. “They won’t be earning their legal fees this time.”

Jared blinked owlishly at me. I could nearly see the gears turning in his head, wondering what I was up to.

Leaning forward with a laugh, I said, “I am sure you have not told the lawyer the whole truth if you’re feeling so confident in them. But of course, who would willingly admit that they nearly killed their own child? I can easily dig out Summer’s old medical records from the time she underwent surgery at the hospital, as well as your criminal history. And I can safely assume that everyone else who is suffering because of having worked at the Crest family’s factories will be more than happy to be my witnesses in court and testify against the evil, selfish piece of trash you are!

“Don’t even get me started on custodial rights! If you’re really Summer’s father, let me ask you this. Why did you bring her to the chemical plant even knowing that it was polluted, and cause her to suffer from an incurable disease? She trusted you, but you left her in such a desperate, painful situation! According to Article 261 of the Criminal Law, I can sue you for negligence and throw you back in jail where you belong!”

For the first time in my life, I felt that I’d been right in choosing to become a lawyer.

I hadn’t considered my words properly nor gotten my thoughts in order before I went on that rant, but I’d successfully recited the correct article effortlessly and rendered Jared speechless.

I secretly breathed a sigh of relief when he had nothing to tell me.

What had I been so worried about? Someone like him had long since lost the right to be a father to any child; thinking that he could take Summer away from me was nothing more than a far-fetched daydream.

Exchanging a meaningful look with John, we both got up from our seats.

I'd barely taken a few steps before stopping in my tracks, giving Jared a sidelong glance. "You can't always forget the past and start anew, Jared. You are so wrong to think that way; the truth is, you have to pay the price for your grave mistakes. This is my only and final warning to you—Summer is Macy's daughter as well as mine. She has nothing to do with you, so don't try and humiliate yourself any further. If I see you anywhere near her, I'll make sure to bring down hell upon you."

Chapter 1316

With that, I walked away and didn't look back.

He didn't follow us out; he had no reason to, nor did he have any need to. My attitude had been enough to make him come to his senses and realize that trying to claim custodial rights over Summer was a lost cause. If he dared piss me off, I would go to much further lengths to hide Summer away than just transferring her to another school.

While in the car, I snuck another look out the window at the café while John was busy buckling his seatbelt. "I have a weird gut feeling," I told him, frowning. "call some of your best men from the company's IT department over to the house."

He silently considered the idea for a moment before taking out his phone and swiftly tapping the screen several times. After that, he started up the car engine and drove us home.

Half an hour later, we arrived at the Stovall residence, where a group of five or six nerdy-looking boys wearing glasses and a similar style of checkered shirt were already waiting for us inside.

“Mr. Stovall,” they politely greeted, bowing in John’s direction.

John made a simple sound of acknowledgment, turning to face me. “The nation’s highest-ranking graduates in the IT field this year are all here. Just tell them whatever you need from them. They might seem a little dense, but they’re good at what they do.”

I nodded, stepping forward and cutting to the chase. “Have you all brought your laptops?”

“Yes, Ms. Stovall,” the guy in the corner called out loudly. His gaze was fixed on the floor, and I could tell he was nervous from how badly he was trembling.

The rest of them weren’t faring any better; some were clenching and unclenching their fists nervously, while some were hanging their heads. I gave John a questioning glance, as if to ask, “Are you sure these guys are the real deal?”

He only crossed his arms, proudly lifting his chin in the air as if anticipating my reaction.

His self-confidence left me with many suspicions, but I had no other choice except to trust him.

Clearing my throat and taking a deep breath, I announced, “I will send some information regarding the Crest family as well as the log in details and password to my personal account to each of your smartphones I want you all to spare no expense in investigating the Crests’ criminal history or finding out anything else that will give us an upper hand over them. Got it?”

“No problem, Ms. Stovall!”

The loud bark startled me, and I turned towards the source of the voice to see the boy from earlier staring at me intensely. His attitude had changed completely from before, as if a switch had been flipped.

After holding his stare for a few seconds straight, he suddenly lowered his voice and ordered, "Let's go!"

The rest of the boys instantly got moving, bowing before me before lining up and heading for the dining table where they had their laptops already turned on and ready to go.

In the blink of an eye, the room was filled with the furious, rapid clicking sounds of multiple keyboards.

Taking a step closer and leaning in, the once stiff boys were now all gazing intently at their screens, eyes slightly squinted as the tips of their fingers flew across the keyboard at inhuman speeds.

I nodded in satisfaction. I would have expected nothing less from John.

About ten minutes later, the guy closest to me ceased his actions and turned the laptop around to show me the screen. "It's all done, Ms. Stovall," he explained matter-of-factly. "All of the Crest family's finances have now been frozen. They will not be able to spend a single cent of it unless I remove the virus."

"Good work." I reached out and patted his shoulder in an act of encouragement.

The words had barely left my mouth when I heard someone yell, "Something's wrong! There's someone trying to rewrite our program, and they're doing it rapidly! Mine is getting destroyed!"

Everyone else instantly snapped out of their dazes and got back to work on their laptops. Their anxious expressions made even John and I feel slightly nervous.

In the following fifteen minutes, I witnessed what I could only call “utter defeat”.

The group of initially enthusiastic technicians was slowly being taken down one by one. First, their laptops were being controlled remotely, and then their firewalls were getting taken down, and so forth. In the end, I saw the laptop nearest to me completely shut down by itself, unable to be rebooted no matter what its owner tried.

Chapter 1317

“That’s impossible. How can such a small company possess such powerful technology?”

As though dealt a heavy blow, the boys scratched their heads in defeat. It seemed like these rookies were no match for the technology the other party used to stop us.

The Crests had compensated a hefty sum because of the incident at the chemical plant. Their business was affected later on, so they couldn’t possibly have enough money to hire computer experts or solve this crisis in such a timely manner and even retaliate against us. Based on the Crest family’s connections, there weren’t many who could be behind this.

“It’s not your fault.” I grabbed my phone after some thought and went to the garden in the backyard before speed dialing Ashton.

He answered within a second.

“What is it?” As always, Ashton sounded calm and confident, as though everything was within his control.

“Are you the one protecting the Crest family?” There was a hint of hostility in my voice as well as a trace of anger, and I was sure he could tell over the phone. “You knew a long time ago that Jared was released from prison, didn’t you?”

Besides Ashton, I really couldn’t think of anyone else who would be willing to shield such a despicable family like the Crests or have so much power and influence in J City, not to mention how they countered the computer experts John recruited in J City without much efforts.

I was angry because Ashton obviously knew about the terrifying things Jared had done in the past, but had the audacity to hide his release from me. If I knew about it earlier, Summer wouldn’t have been tricked by him again and innocently placed her trust in him.

Silence drifted across the line before Ashton replied in a low voice, “Jared won’t hurt Summer.”

What’s that supposed to mean?

I haven’t even mentioned Jared posing as a teacher to approach Summer. How does he...

Panic instantly engulfed me.

“Were you involved in Jared becoming a teacher named Mr. Cress?”

I was dreading his answer and unsurprisingly, it didn’t come, but his silence was enough of an answer.

“You’ve gone too far, Ashton!” I lost my temper. When I thought about all the days I felt so troubled I could barely sleep or eat, my eyes stung with tears of betrayal. “You’re not the one who’s having a hard time. Who gave you the right to forgive that man in Summer’s place? Jared is a master of deception. If something happens to Summer this time, do you really think we’ll get so lucky again to find a suitable donor to cure her?”

"I won't let any of this happen again." Ashton reassured in a firm tone, "I've met with Jared. We've been friends for decades. I can tell when he's lying, and he's not. He's a changed man now."

"So? Before what happened to Summer, wasn't he your best friend too? And then what happened, huh? Ashton, I never knew you were such a magnanimous and selfless man that you could even find it in yourself to forgive someone who crossed the limit!"

Ashton sighed in resignation and lowered his voice. "If that's the case, I deserve to die a thousand times over as well."

Words failed me all of a sudden and silence stretched between us through the phone.

In the end, Ashton was the one to break it.

"Letty, I love Summer as much as you do. You've also seen how happy she's become after interacting with Jared. She's slowly getting better. As parents, we shouldn't overprotect our children. She needs to get out there more and build her confidence to face the real world. Both of us couldn't get Summer to open up, but Jared succeeded. It's worth giving this a try for Summer's sake, right?"

Before I could respond, he powered on, "I know what you're worried about. I've arranged for people to watch Jared twenty-four-seven. If he so much as poses a threat to Summer's health and safety, they'll immediately lock him up. I promise you, he came back this time only to help Summer open up again. He doesn't have other motives."

I was beginning to suspect Ashton was born with some sort of supernatural power because just a few simple words from him seemed to put me under a spell, instantly quelling the boiling rage in me.

Truth be told, even if I disagreed, what could I possibly do? Faced with an opponent like Ashton, whatever tricks we used would be ineffectual against him because he had countermeasures for

everything we threw his way. For example, I had no idea that he paid such a steep price to employ such adept “watchdogs” for the Crests.