

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1323-1327

Chapter 1323

Ashton chuckled softly, obviously delighted by my subtle expression of jealousy. While I wasn't paying attention, he swiftly dropped a kiss on my ear, then let me go and backed away.

My cheeks burned all of a sudden and I quickly reached up to cover my face with both hands. Seeing the gleeful look on Ashton's face, I shot him a dirty stare and snapped, "Don't laugh!"

Technically, we're still not on speaking terms!

The corners of Ashton's mouth quirked up slightly, but it vanished quickly and he returned to being serious. "I have to constantly be on my guard in front of outsiders and it's really exhausting. Do I have to suppress my feelings in front of my wife too?"

I adjusted the shawl around my shoulders and gave him a flat stare. "Is there a difference? I mean, you're an ace when it comes to keeping secrets after all, Mr. Fuller. I'm sure one more won't make much of difference."

Ashton's brows furrowed. "Are you still mad about the matter regarding Jared?"

I curved my lips into a smile and moved to the sink to touch up my makeup. "I think you should really keep an eye on your buddy. That talk about a paternity test makes it seem like he's prepared to sue me for custody."

Ashton had a resigned look on his face when he heard that. "Jared explained to me about all of this. He never expected that you'd find out so soon. The night his identity was found out, he saw the school transfer application and knew that you were trying to prevent him from seeing Summer. He panicked. That's why he used the stupidest method there is to stop that. In fact, he isn't aware of this, but I'm sure you are. Since he has a history of harming his child, he'll never be able to regain custody."

Sometimes, I honestly felt that Ashton had a way with words. Everything he said was scarily persuasive.

Although I still stood by my belief that Jared could never change, Ashton's words still struck a chord in me. "Maybe. Only time will prove which of us is right."

Seeing me relent, Ashton took long strides forward and wrapped his arms around me from behind. Leaning his head casually on my shoulder, he buried his face into my hair, inhaling long and deep. As though feeling revived, he tightened his arms around me.

"The party outside is in full swing, but here you are, hiding in the washroom, indulging in a secret rendezvous. Is this really okay, Mr. Fuller?" I teased him.

Ashton was undeterred, shamelessly nuzzling my neck as he whispered, "I don't know when I can finally fall asleep with my wife in my arms again. I just wanna imprint your smell into my mind."

It was impossible to resist a man with such a breathtaking look, especially when he was behaving like a clingy little puppy. Pursing my lips, I let him have his way. "There's more to Bryson than meets the eye. Check his background and see if he's a friend or foe."

"Mm..." Ashton grunted in a low voice. He was leaning his entire weight on me as if he was asleep. I wasn't even sure if he heard what I said.

Looking at our reflection in the mirror, I was suddenly hit with a sense of unease.

We've been together for a decade. Since when did we have to sneak around for something as simple as a hug?

Although reluctant to part, we had been away for far too long. If we didn't get back to the party, people would begin getting suspicious. After adjusting my attire, I left the washroom first.

Coincidentally, Thora and Herman were walking toward this direction.

I abruptly paused in my steps. If I were to continue going forward and Ashton came out soon after, those two shrew people would definitely know that we met just a while ago.

Right then, I heard the door opening behind me. The sound of Thora's heels clicking on the ground also drew nearer. Without hesitation, I swiveled around.

After confirming that the two people behind had seen me, I walked confidently toward Ashton and without warning, forced him against the wall. Grabbing the collar of his shirt, I rose on my toes and kissed him smack on the lips.

For a moment, I could hardly believe what was happening. I'm forcefully kissing a man!

What's more, it's in front of an audience!

Oh God, help me! This is so embarrassing!

Most importantly, because of my lack of control, I clearly heard the muffled sound of Ashton's head hitting the wall when I kissed him.

At the same time, the footsteps behind, a blend of heels and leather shoes, stopped abruptly.

Mission accomplished! It's time to retreat!

Sensing the murderous gaze burning a hole through my back, I instinctively wanted to move away, but Ashton suddenly latched onto my bottom lip and spoke in a voice only the two of us could hear. "We need to make sure it looks real, only then will the audience buy our act."

Chapter 1324

This man is clearly taking advantage of the situation!

But since I had already set the ball rolling, I couldn't back out so soon. Closing my eyes, I steeled myself, prepared to go all out.

Drawing a sharp breath, I raised my hands to cup Ashton's face and kissed him more passionately.

I could feel him smirking against my lips, obviously satisfied with my enthusiasm. In the next second, he suddenly reached out to push me away.

Of course, it was just an act and he didn't actually put any force into it. I pretended to stumble two steps backward before standing firm.

The carefree expression on Ashton's chiseled face morphed into impatience as he straightened his coat. Then, he chided, "Scarlett, I've already made it clear to you that I no longer have feelings for you. You're out to make my life difficult, aren't you?"

We probably succeeded in making Thora and Herman believe that Ashton truly resented me.

Meanwhile, I was caught between laughing and crying. The glee in Ashton's voice was tangible; he was obviously happy about that bonus kiss.

You're enjoying this very much, aren't you, Ashton?

Since I was the one who started it, I had to see this to the end. Hence, I continued playing along and said, "You're not the only one who has a say in this relationship. As long as I still have feelings for you, you can forget about freeing yourself from me."

Ashton narrowed his eyes a fraction, pretending to look like he was at his wits' end as he scanned me up and down. Due to my in-depth understanding of him, I could easily detect the delight in his eyes.

Hearing our conversation, Herman taunted, "I have to say, Ms. Stovall. You really aren't like other women."

Only then did I turn around to look at them, feigning innocence as I replied, “Mr. Trivett, what a coincidence. We meet again.”

Herman looked at me, then at Ashton. Stuffing both hands into his pockets and straightening his posture, he said in a mocking tone, “Yes, a coincidence it is, but this is the male washroom. Isn’t it a little too appropriate for someone of your status to approach a man like this, Ms. Stovall? After all, you have the Moores and the Stovalls’ reputations to consider, no?”

“Exactly, I’m someone who has the Moores and the Stovalls backing me, so who would dare to say anything about this? Besides, this is between Ashton and me. It’s really none of your business, is it? You saw it too when we kissed. He still has feelings for me.”

Pausing briefly, I turned to Ashton with a smile. “Admit it. You still can’t get over me. Let’s find a time to remarry and get the formal procedures settled, hmm?”

I knew that Ashton liked how I was currently gazing at him, like I only had eyes for him.

After staring at each other for a few seconds, Ashton turned his face away and adjusted his cuff links. He had a grim look on his face and his eyes were hooded, but there was a hint of anger in them. “Seeing as you’re the mother of my children, I’ll let you off the hook just this once!”

With that, he walked away with an impassive expression, never once breaking stride, not even when he passed by Thora and Herman.

After Ashton’s departure, only the three of us were left in the hallway.

Since the act was over, it was time to withdraw myself from the scene. Smoothing out my attire, I prepared to head back as well.

However, just as I was about to brush past Thora, her hand shot out to block me.

Turning my head to her, I perceived the unsightly look on her face, seemingly p*ssed off.

“Ms. Ziegler, is there something you want to say to me?” I boldly raised a brow at her.

“Of course.” Her voice was biting cold. “As a woman myself, I really pity you. You have failed to make your man stay, but now, you’re even clinging to another woman’s man. Have you no shame?”

Although she didn’t like me before, she was never so blunt with her words. It seemed like the kiss Ashton and shared earlier had really provoked her.

I continued behaving barefaced. “Shame? If I can get back together with the person whom I love, no amount of sacrifice is worth mentioning, not even if it means trampling on my dignity.”

Thora’s eyes narrowed into slits as she gnashed her teeth. “It’s all wishful thinking on your end. Ashton may not feel the same. Besides, a man of his stature deserves someone better. The fact that the Stovalls didn’t even properly seize a small business like Pitcoin already shows that you’re beneath me. Do you think you’re worthy to be my opponent?”

Chapter 1325

Somebody’s finally revealing her true thoughts.

As expected, after the anniversary party, Thora had already taken the liberty of labeling me as a self-centered and selfish person. She was convinced that someone like me wasn’t worthy of Ashton, let alone fit to be her opponent.

It was too bad that things didn't always go well for overconfident women.

I turned to face her fully, making sure to level my gaze with hers before flaunting in a lackadaisical manner. "Perhaps I'm not as good as you when it comes to doing business, but capturing a man's heart may not be your strong suit. I only need to curl my finger at Ashton and he'll come back to me sooner or later. When that happens, it won't just be a simple kiss. But you've reminded me of something. Losing the Pitcoin business opportunity is indeed a shame. If that's the case, you should guard the gem in your hand, lest you slip up and allow someone the opportunity to snatch it away..."

With that, I flashed her a meaningful smile and spun on my heels to leave.

Behind me came Herman's concerned voice. "Ms. Ziegler, are you okay?"

Thora, however, didn't respond.

Only then did a smug smile tug on my lips.

Perfect. She's not even showing her business partner any courtesy. I knew that Thora's competitive streak had been triggered. To gain an upper hand over me, she would undoubtedly push Ziegler Investment to go all out in the Pitcoin business.

And this was exactly what I wanted.

Back in the main hall, Ashton was already surrounded by business moguls. He discreetly glanced in my direction. After our eyes met, he visibly relaxed and focused his attention back on socializing.

Meanwhile, I noticed that Emma and John were quarreling in hushed tones a short distance away before the former stormed over.

“...unreasonable!” Emma’s chest heaved with anger as she put down the empty flute in her hand and grabbed a glass of red wine from the tray of a passing waiter. Then, she tilted her head backward and took a huge sip.

Just then, John strode over at an unhurried pace. He didn’t even bother stopping her. Instead, he lowered his gaze and acted like this didn’t concern him.

Upon sensing his presence, Emma shot a vicious glare at him. However, it was like punching cotton because John remained unfazed.

“What’s going on here?” I arched an eyebrow, curiosity filling me.

“Ask him!” Emma spat and I could feel the anger radiating from her. John flicked his eyes at her before shifting his face away, maintaining that unbothered look on his face. It seemed like he had no intention of explaining the situation whatsoever.

Emma looked like she was about to pop a vein, so I hurriedly stepped in to play peacemaker. “John, can’t you be nicer to Emma?”

To my exasperation, John’s expression remained as calm as a millpond, as though he didn’t hear a thing I said.

Seeing as he was being so difficult, I gave up talking to him and tugged Emma slightly off to the side. Only then did I ask in a soft voice, “What did you guys argue about this time?”

Emma wasn’t ignorant or spoiled. During such occasions, she would always make sure not to do anything that would humiliate John. But earlier, her face was completely devoid of warmth. Anyone could see that the reason the husband and wife got into an argument was because the former had done something unacceptable.

After exhaling a long breath, Emma calmed down enough to explain, “Recently, I planned to start a company with some friends and was looking for investors. This banquet was the perfect opportunity and I finally got the chance to rub shoulders with several business owners with extra cash on their hands who also happened to be interested in our project. I was this close to clinching the deal. They already agreed to sign the contract tomorrow, but John appeared out of nowhere with this ridiculous scowl on his face and ended up scaring them away!”

I winced with embarrassment and glanced fleetingly at John. Did he really do something that lame?

“John went overboard this time, that’s for sure, but why didn’t you mention that you want to start a company before? Besides, if you’re looking for investors with more money than sense, isn’t John the perfect candidate? Wouldn’t it be great to start a company together as husband and wife? I’m sure your business would flourish.”

“Him?” Emma shot him a sidelong glance filled with disdain before scoffing. “Yes, John has the money, but he’s not without sense. Besides, he’s never shown an interest in the things that I like. He will never invest in my business... Forget it. I guess today’s just not my lucky day. I’ll look for some other investors.”

Chapter 1326

“Actually...”

Ding, ding, ding!

Just when I was about to resolve the conflict between them, the emcee, who was standing on the podium, tapped a spoon against his glass in front of the microphone. Hence, I could only swallow back the words at the tip of my tongue.

“Today is Mr. William Queen’s seventieth birthday. May the coming years bring even more happiness and good health to him. Now, let’s invite his son, Mr. Bryson to come up and say a few words!”

With that, Bryson went up on stage as the guests applauded.

“Thank you to all my friends for coming to celebrate my father’s birthday today. There’s nothing really great about me, but one thing about me that hasn’t disappointed my family is my ability to make money. Despite that, my father still worries about me, so I wish him a long life full of happiness and good health!”

“What a filial son!”

The emcee expertly hyped up the atmosphere and the hall immediately erupted with thunderous applause.

Right then, a figure flashed below the stage and walked directly to the emcee. After whispering a few words, he passed a square wooden box to the emcee and swiftly stepped off the stage.

The podium was quite far from my position, so I couldn’t see the person clearly, but he looked vaguely familiar to me. I just couldn’t put a finger on where I had seen him before.

Soon, the emcee spoke into the microphone again. “Ladies and gentlemen, it seems like you’re all very lucky today. Ms. Thora Ziegler knew that Mr. Queen Sr. likes antiques, so she specially searched for a very precious item to present as a birthday gift to him. The gift is currently in my hands. Everyone, please take a look!”

The emcee held the box with both hands and opened it in front of the guests. Following that, the cameraman in charge of recording the event aimed the lens at the box. In the next second, the antique inside the box was displayed on the large screen behind the podium. It was a Turlen bead.

The emcee gazed at the item in his hand and didn't forget to explain excitedly, "If I'm not mistaken, this is the earliest bead found in ancient Turlen and it's worth more than two hundred and fifty million! Last year, after the auction in M Country, a private buyer kept it as a collection and it hasn't emerged since then. What a surprise to know that it was, in fact, Ms. Ziegler who bought it! This is truly remarkable!"

This emcee was considered rather knowledgeable. To me, it was merely a bead the size of a finger. I never expected it to be of such great value.

Most importantly, the bead's price provided some food for thought. Two hundred and fifty million seemed to have a strong interrelation with the lawsuit.

The guests present had seen their fair share of the world started discussing among themselves in hushed whispers.

"Isn't it obvious from the price that the Zieglers are settling things peacefully with Bryson? Perhaps this gift can resolve the conflict between both families."

"This was completely out of my expectations. Here we were, waiting to see that woman make a fool out of herself, but it looks like she came prepared."

"True. If she didn't, the company she established on her own would be crushed. Since she publicly presented the bead as a birthday gift, there's no way Bryson can reject it. It seems like he won't be able to get his revenge anymore."

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Thora Ziegler is really something. After swindling him out of two hundred million, she's compensating him with a measly amount of fifty million. Remind me not to get on her bad side..."

Most of the discussions were about the same, with many of the guests aiming hostile and mocking remarks at her, but at the end of the day, they were just envious of how well she played her cards and wished they could master the ability of defeating someone without lifting a finger as well.

Amid the animated discussions, the strain in Bryson's smile as he stood on stage was evident, but like everyone expected, a son would never make a scene at his own father's birthday banquet. Very soon, he regained his composure. Gracefully accepting the bead from the emcee, he studied it casually before nodding, making sure to plaster a satisfied look on his face.

Just when everyone thought that Bryson was going to begrudgingly accept Thora's indirect apology, he closed the wooden box, took the microphone and walked off the stage. Stopping at the nearest table, he picked up a bottle of whiskey and poured three glasses full before facing the crowd with a broad smile.

"Ms. Ziegler." Bryson easily found Thora among the crowd. Subsequently, the spotlight fell on her and the people around her. "I really don't know how to thank you for such an extravagant gift. Why don't I offer you three toasts as an expression of my gratitude? I wonder if you'll accept, Ms. Ziegler?"

Chapter 1327

"Wow, I never expected Bryson to pull such a trick. At least he's doing right by us men."

"The glasses are filled to the brim. Wouldn't drinking all three burn a hole right through the stomach? Isn't he a little bit too savage?"

"What do you know? Let this serve as a lesson for that conniving woman!"

"Hmp! You guys don't know yet, do you? To kickstart her business when she first established her company, she'd already damaged her stomach from too much social drinking. She won't merely suffer from drinking these three glasses of whiskey, she'd probably lose her life! I never expected Bryson Queen to be such a ruthless man!"

I was bewildered by all the gossip, wondering which part was true and which was false. However, when I noticed Thora remaining motionless after a long time, I surmised that the larger part of it was true.

Just like when Bryson received the gift on stage, Thora was caught between a rock and a hard place, hesitating to agree to drink the glasses of whiskey.

In a world where power and money were supreme, both sides would never be able to truly end their dispute if they didn't put down their egos and apologize.

At that moment, everyone's eyes were focused on Thora as they waited for her response with bated breaths. The air seemed to freeze and except for the faint static sound coming from the microphone, the entire hall was quiet.

Finally, after a good ten seconds, Thora's expression changed subtly and she walked toward Bryson. Without a word, she polished off all three glasses of whiskey.

The guests couldn't help from gasping aloud. Even Bryson was taken aback, probably not expecting her to be so cooperative.

After downing three glasses of whiskey, Thora didn't look too good, but things didn't seem to be as exaggerated as the gossiping crowd made it sound. Under the hollers of the emcee and the guests, she even shook hands to make peace with Bryson.

Everyone was naturally happy to see their harmonious interaction. Soon after, Thora and Bryson returned to enjoying the banquet.

I kept my attention on Thora the whole time, but the crowd was too thick and I lost sight of her in the blink of an eye. Later on, Emma informed me that she had already left through the back door.

Not long after Thora left, Bryson brought a cheque over to me, his body reeking of alcohol.

“Ms. Stovall, today’s a day of celebration. This is my reward to you and Brooklyn. Take it.”

With that, he stuffed the cheque into my hand.

Looking down, I saw one hundred and fifty million written on it. Although I knew Bryson was loaded, this still came as a shock.

The lawsuit was mainly to demand for a compensation. According to the law, up to thirty percent of the compensation could be collected as the attorney fees. Even if Bryson paid us the hundred million as promised, it would already be considered excessively generous. Hence, adding another fifty million was really unsettling.

“Mr. Queen, isn’t this a bit too much?” I protested.

“Nah, it’s not. The two of you have helped me so much, Ms. Stovall. You both deserve this. Besides, we already agreed on this. The extra amount belongs to you. Please accept it.”

Since Bryson insisted, I had no choice but to temporarily accept it and get Brooklyn to handle it later.

Nothing worthwhile came easily. Since I accepted something that didn’t belong to me, I would indefinitely have to pay a price. Although Bryson didn’t look like he was laying out a trap for me, there was no way to be completely certain. Hence, I thought it wouldn’t hurt to keep my guard up for the time being.

Right then, John interjected, “Mr. Queen, well-played just now. That woman is probably hooked up to an IV drip at the hospital now, huh?”

“Huh? What do you mean, Mr. Stovall?” Bryson asked in confusion.

“Didn’t you know that Thora’s stomach can’t handle alcohol?” John squinted with suspicion.

“What? Is that true?” Bryson’s face instantly fell. “I had no idea!”

He was momentarily stunned before slapping a hand on his forehead and saying dismally, “Jesus! I simply wanted to do things the way we do it at home. To the Queens, an apology isn’t an apology until alcohol is involved. If I knew about this earlier, I would never have asked her to drink!”

John smirked and patted him on the shoulder. “It’s fine. Serves her right anyway. There’s no need to feel guilty about it.

“That’s not right. Okay, you all enjoy the party and I’ll make a trip to the hospital. Sorry for leaving so soon. I hope you understand.”