

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1523-1527

Chapter 1523

Audrey hugged the clothes to her chest and entered the fitting room.

As soon as she left, Ashton and John shot each other withering glares, then turned to face different directions.

I was greatly amused by this scene. Indeed, everyone had an Achilles' heel.

After staying to make sure war wasn't about to break out again, I spun on my heels and walked toward my target destination.

When women shopped, we always struggled with indecision, and it was this syndrome that profited many luxury brands. Faced with two sets of clothing with styles that were both to my liking, I made the mistake most women made.

Something that obviously could have been solved in one minute, I used nearly ten minutes. In the end, I decided to just grab both sets.

When I went back to the others, everyone was standing by Audrey's fitting room door, discussing about separating ways to search for me.

I broke into a small jog and called out, "I'm back, I'm back."

"Well, finally. For a second there I thought you lost your way," John said jokingly.

I shot him a deadpan look before bringing the clothes over to Gregory. Holding out one in each hand, I asked, "Which one do you like?"

Gregory's eyes flashed with pleasant surprise, but he recovered very quickly. Glancing at Ashton who was beside him, he shook his head and rejected, "I already have a lot of clothes."

It's obvious that you like it, kiddo.

Ignoring his protests, I stacked the clothes and stuffed them into his arms, then gently pushed him into the fitting room. "How's that the same? These were handpicked by me. You must try them on. Be a good boy and go on in. I'll wait for you outside, okay?" I coaxed.

With the clothes in hand, Gregory took two steps, then looked over his shoulder to gauge Ashton's reaction.

I quickly stepped in between the two of them, blocking them from each others' views, and advised solemnly, "This is between you and me, okay? You don't need anyone else's opinion. Understood?"

At this, Gregory's obsidian eyes lit up. He hugged the clothes to his chest and nodded vehemently. "Mm. Understood!"

Flashing a smile at me, he happily entered the fitting room.

Soon, he emerged in a white two-piece casual suit.

Relieved, I exhaled inaudibly before stepping forward to squat down in front of Gregory, carefully examining every inch of his body.

Luckily, Gregory was a miniature version of Ashton. Hence, everything looked like it was tailor-made for him.

"Now this is what a boy your age should look like. Usually, you either wear your school uniform, or just like your dad, you strut around in formal attire, which is ridiculously boring, if you ask me. From now on, wear the casual clothes I pick for you when you're at home, okay?"

Gregory's eyes curved into crescents as he nodded happily.

As expected, which child wouldn't look forward to receiving clothes selected by his own mother?

I merely said those words to coax a child, but my casual remark was taken seriously by the man behind me.

The next second, a cleared throat carrying a hint of warning sounded.

Of course I knew that it was from Ashton. With my back still to him, I raised a brow but pretended not to hear him.

John, however, never let go of the chance to make a dig at him. "Finally, someone who has a point."

The children couldn't grasp the meaning behind his words. Hence, the topic ended there.

After paying for the clothes, we set about our journey home.

When the elevator came to a halt at the underground parking lot, I moved to step out but was stopped by Ashton.

Audrey took two steps and realized that we weren't following, so she tugged Summer to a stop and asked in confusion, "Mommy, aren't you coming back with us?"

Before I could answer, Ashton beat me to it. "Wait for us in the car. Your mother left something in the mall. I'll go with her to get it back."

"I didn't..."

I had only managed to say two words when Ashton stepped forward to press for the elevator. Hence, I could only swallow back my words.

Chapter 1524

Only when the elevator door closed did I speak. "I only brought one bag here, and it's obviously still in my hand. What did I leave behind?"

Ashton calmly watched the increasing numbers displayed in the elevator, but as though he hadn't heard me, he gave no reaction.

Hence, I followed behind him in silence. Soon, we returned to the luxury store area in the mall, but this time, Ashton stopped at the men's section.

Don't tell me... He wants me to buy new clothes for him just like how I did for Gregory?

While I was still trying to figure it out, Ashton had already strode in.

Ashton's face was like a pass for ordinary citizens to hit the jackpot in K City. As soon as he stepped through the entrance, a salesperson immediately guided him to the most luxurious area of the store. Each clothing here was designed by world-renowned fashion designers and was one of a kind.

Of course, the price was one of a kind as well.

After giving some recommendations, the salesperson was about to start promoting. "Mr. Fuller, would you like our professional stylist to help you select?"

"That's not necessary," Ashton flatly refused before turning to face me. "You choose."

"Me?" I pointed at myself in bewilderment. "Are you sure?"

Children's clothes were matching overall, so it was quite impossible to go wrong. But Ashton was constantly under public scrutiny, so I wasn't confident in selecting his clothes for him.

Ashton shoved a hand into his trouser pocket, his expression turning serious. "My dear wife said that my clothes are ridiculously boring. To make my wife happy, of course I'll have to follow her wishes. If I continue wearing those boring clothes, I'm worried that she'd lose interest in me sooner or later. How can I bear for something like that to happen?"

Ah, I see what this is. As usual, he's being all petty about it.

But why did he make it sound like I'm going to divorce him if he doesn't change his clothing style?

The sales manager's eyes widened at me in shock, probably not expecting to receive two explosive news back to back in such a short period of time.

I could almost imagine what she was thinking. The richest man in the city stepped off his pedestal to grace them with his presence and even brought the wife he married in secret with him.

However, the customers who visited luxury stores were of high social standings, so such things were not all that uncommon. The salesperson's expression swiftly went back to normal and she started to flatter me. "Mrs. Fuller, do you need me to give you some recommendations?"

Thanks to Ashton, my "strong independent woman" and "perfect" image couldn't be more obvious, so of course I would feel embarrassed if there was someone watching.

"It's fine. I can handle it myself."

With that, I dived straight into my task, selecting two sets of moderately casual clothes even though I wasn't really sure what I was doing. The clothes were of the same color tone as Gregory's, so they could somewhat be considered a father-son matching outfit.

Ashton had a perfect figure, so he didn't need to try them on. After asking the salesperson to take his measurements, the bill was settled in a haste and I left right after.

And why was I in such a hurry?

It was because I was the one who paid for it!

Although Ashton had quit his job at Fuller Corporation, he wasn't at the point where he couldn't afford to pay for his own clothes, but when the bill came out, he played the dumb card. "How could I have money? I always spend whatever amount you give me, isn't that right, Honey?"

As soon as those words left his lips, not just the manager, even the staff who were getting the bill for us looked at me strangely. This was practically a public execution.

From then on, I swore to never go shopping alone with this man again!

Drawing in a deep breath to calm myself down, I forced a smile and took out John's card. "Settle the bill."

The staff took the card and swiftly swiped it, then returned it to me with both hands. "Here's your card, Mrs. Fuller."

"Mm." I accepted it calmly and decided to play along on a whim. Stealing myself, I reminded them, "I assume you know where to send it?"

"Don't worry. It's easy to search for Mr. Fuller's residence," the manager replied with an ingratiating smile.

I nodded in satisfaction and walked off without looking back, not even bothering to check if Ashton was following behind.

Once I was certain that the staff could no longer see me, I quickened my pace toward the elevator.

Pressing the button, I darted in the moment the doors opened and inhaled sharply when they slid close.

Phew.

He's obviously the one who should feel embarrassed for living off his wife, but why does it feel like I'm the social outcast?

Chapter 1525

I couldn't help but feel indignant.

Right before the elevator doors closed, Ashton caught up with a gloating smile playing on his lips.

I rolled my eyes at him and refused to speak throughout it all.

As soon as the elevator stopped, I stepped out without hesitation, went to the car, picked Audrey up, and sat inside.

"Mommy, what did you leave behind?" Audrey asked innocently.

Her question left me even more exasperated. I'm pretty sure I left my dignity behind.

“Nothing.” The last thing I wanted to do was recall the reactions of those store employees. Hence, I hastily changed the topic. “Let’s go home now, okay? I’m exhausted and don’t have the energy to talk anymore.” I purposely inserted a whine in my tone.

“Mm, okay!” Audrey got down from my lap and sat obediently. Mimicking the way adults spoke, she instructed Joseph, “Mr. Campbell, you may drive now!”

Ashton bent over to get into the car just in time to hear Audrey’s words, casting her a wounded expression as he settled down in his seat, as though saying, “Don’t you want your father anymore?”

Audrey stuck out her tongue at him and cheekily hid behind Summer, pretending to ignore him.

At that moment, how I wished I was sitting in the same car as John. At least there, he would expose the “true colors” of this sly and shameless man.

Previously, he intentionally let Ashton believe that he was the Stovall family’s live-in son-in-law just for the fun of it, but I ended up getting the short end of the stick.

No, I have to find a way to cure him of his unhealthy tendency of living off his wife!

Fully absorbed in coming up with a solution, I didn’t realize we arrived home until after a good few seconds.

After passing through the gates, I noticed several trucks parked in the yard, seemingly here to transport large items.

But the workers were making their way out, so I surmised that they were already done with their work.

The service was excellent as they made sure to avoid coming when there were many people at home, so as to prevent accidents.

But when I returned to the bedroom on the second floor at night, every trace of happiness was wiped from my face.

We were only out for a day, but Ashton's master bedroom had been expanded to double its original size and was currently connected to the bedroom next to his.

Most importantly, the bed in the room was replaced by an excessively enormous one. If it wasn't for the elaborate linen, one might even think that it was a communal bed stolen from a dorm.

I stood by the door, completely dumbfounded. Later on, when Audrey came over and saw the large bed, she instantly bolted in and flopped onto it with her slippers still on. "Wow! There's a big, big bed! We can sleep with Mommy and Daddy now!"

Behind me, Summer and Gregory helplessly watched the scene before them. Similar to me, they had grimaces on their faces.

Audrey was probably the most innocent and ignorant one in this family, who was also easily satisfied.

After letting her roll on the bed for a while, Summer walked up and tried to persuade her. "Audrey, we haven't seen each other for so long. Why don't you sleep with me tonight, hmm?"

But Audrey suddenly sat up from the bed and came up with a mischievous idea. "Okay! Summer, Greg, Mommy, and Daddy will all sleep here!"

Summer was nonplussed and could only sit beside the bed to reason with her. "Audrey, you're a big girl now. You must learn to sleep on your own instead of clinging to Mom and Dad all the time, understand?"

Audrey shook her head. "But other kids get to sleep with their parents. I want that too. I like Mommy and Daddy. I don't wanna sleep alone..."

Children were difficult to reason with, and were also easily hurt. As they spoke, Audrey's eyes became red-rimmed and her head drooped as she sobbed softly.

Of course my heart couldn't take it when I saw this. Rushing forward, I comforted her. "Alright, alright. You don't have to leave, okay? You can sleep here with me. You're still small, so you can sleep on your own when you're older. Don't cry anymore, hmm?"

Audrey accepted my offer immediately, sniffing before returning to being all smiles. "Thank you, Mommy! I love you the most!"

Who could have resisted those large, tearful eyes of hers?

My mouth lifted into a smile. Then I told Summer to take her siblings to wash up while I, too, prepared for bed.

After all, we were out for an entire day. Tired, I took a hot shower.

Half an hour later, I opened the bathroom door and was surprised to see Ashton there. At that moment, he, Summer, and Gregory were huddled together and talking in hushed tones, which greatly aroused my suspicion.

Chapter 1526

The memory of how he'd put me on the spot at the mall resurfaced in my mind, and my expression soured. "What are you doing here? The kids and I were just about to go to sleep."

Abruptly remembering how he'd changed beds without even asking me, I quickly added, "Don't think that there's space for you just because the bed is bigger now. You'll take up Summer's space if you sleep here. If you really want to be a 'good father', then go back to your study and sleep there!"

With that, I whipped around only to meet Audrey's sad, puppy-dog stare.

As if having expected my reaction, she sat by the bedside with watery eyes and looked ready to burst out into tears at any second.

I took a deep breath to steel myself, not waiting for Ashton's response before I caved. "Fine, fine. Stay if you want. I'll take the right side and you take the left side, and the kids will sleep in the middle. Just try not to get too cuddly."

Audrey threw her hands in the air and whooped in excitement, rolling over to lie down in the middle of the bed. She reached out and patted the empty spots to both her sides, calling out loudly, "Greg, Summer! Come on! Time for sleep!"

Upon hearing that, Summer and Gregory both got up from the sofa and headed towards the bed.

I'd expected them to sleep right by where Audrey was telling them to and thus take up most of the center of the bed, separating Ashton and me.

At first, they did exactly that, obediently taking off their shoes and crawling into bed to sleep next to their younger sister.

But as soon as I laid down next to them, Summer got up and moved towards the far right side of the bed.

Audrey instantly noticed this, whining and tugging on Summer's clothes. "No, here! Sleep here with me! Summer!"

Summer, likely drained and jetlagged, didn't budge an inch no matter what Audrey did.

In the end, Audrey had no choice but to get up from her own position as well, stubbornly squeezing in between Gregory and Summer and falling asleep there.

When I eventually opened my eyes, I instantly realized that there was now a sizeable distance between me and Gregory and jerked awake.

Pushing a hand against the bed to prop myself up, I wanted to reach over to correct their sleeping positions before a heavy weight pressed down on my body.

In the blink of an eye, I was suddenly trapped in Ashton's embrace.

"You're crossing the line, Ashton!" I struggled to break free from his arms.

His warm, sleep-addled voice sighed into my ear, "Quiet. The kids are asleep."

I glanced at the kids out of the corner of my eyes. It was true; they'd immediately fallen asleep and were even snoring lightly, but there was still a risk of waking them.

Giving up, I whispered harshly, "Don't even think about trying anything. The kids will be able to see and hear it all."

“Is that so?” He huffed.

One of his arms let go of me, reaching behind him and fumbling around for a bit before pulling out a remote.

Holding it in front of me to make sure that I could see it, he pressed a large, red button on the remote control.

There was a small beep sound, and I felt the bed move under me. The mattress split into two, my side pulling further and further away from Gregory and the kids until I was nearly ten feet away from them.

The surprises didn’t end there. I was just about to ask Ashton what was going on when the floor in the gap between our beds opened up, a thick steel wall rising up from the gap. Within seconds, the bedroom was completely split into two separate spaces.

I opened my mouth, but nothing came out.

Dear God, Ashton. Scientists and engineers didn’t spend all their time designing this type of modern technology for you to misuse it in this way.

He gently pushed me down onto my bed and lifted himself up to hover over me, the fire in his eyes burning more intensely than it had before. “They won’t be able to hear us now,” he smirked.

As the saying goes, “absence makes the heart grow fonder”, and he seemed determined to prove his fondness for me after being apart for six years.

The sun was already high in the sky when I woke up the next day. The room had returned back to its original layout, with the two beds joined together and the steel wall nowhere to be found. I was also dressed in my pajamas as if everything from last night had all just been a fever dream.

A hand massaging my sore waist, I left the bedroom and walked down a quiet hallway. I looked out of a window and spotted Summer in the distance, having brought her siblings out to the backyard to play.

Chapter 1527

The two sisters looked to be having more fun out there while Gregory and the housekeeper were hiding under the shade, completely in their own little world as they fiddled with some miniature laptops like usual.

Hearing a commotion coming from the study, I tore my gaze away and headed there.

I stopped at the doorway. Ashton and John were acting strangely civil with one another as they stared intently at the painting bought from Nathaniel's art gallery yesterday.

The painting was being displayed on an easel in the center of the study. John sat in an armchair off to one side, occasionally sneaking interested glances at the artwork.

Ashton, on the other hand, was standing right in front of the easel. His expression was completely serious and his gaze was sharp as he reached out to feel the texture of the painting, as if he would be able to understand the artist's emotions that way.

It took a while for them to notice my presence, Ashton's eyes softening in mirth when he saw me. "You're awake."

“Mhm.” I entered the room, sitting down on a chair beside John. “Why were you so insistent on buying this painting? What’s so special about it?”

I eyed John as I spoke, curious about the answer.

“We should take the chance to visit while the older relatives have returned to the country,” John randomly said instead, changing the topic. “It’ll be easier since everyone’s in one place; I don’t have to run here and there.”

On the surface, his words sounded like he was being considerate of other people, but I could detect a hint of sorrow in them.

After all, he hadn’t seen Emma in a long time. He had every right to feel frustrated.

Ashton didn’t react much, but I spoke up, “I think that’s a good idea. We’ll do as you say.”

A reunion with Emma and Drew might be just the thing to lift John’s spirits and prevent any further friction between him and Ashton.

As expected, my brother quickly sprang into action and grabbed his phone off the table, dialing someone’s number as he made to leave the room. “Ask your guy to explain everything to you,” he reminded me before walking out.

Does he think Ashton doesn’t deserve to be called by his name?

I looked exasperatedly towards Ashton, who didn’t seem at all perturbed. The corners of his lips quirked up as he helped me to my feet and led me to stand in front of the painting.

He gently lifted my right hand and guided it to touch the surface of the canvas. The rough, uneven texture of the dried oil paints under my fingertips added yet another layer of vibrancy to the artwork.

Perhaps it was because I lacked an artistic intuition, but I couldn't feel any emotions rise within me even while observing the painting at such a close distance. After a short pause, I awkwardly pulled my hand back. "I'd rather you just tell me outright. I don't have any talents in art, so I have no idea what you're getting at."

His eyes narrowed slightly. He turned around and picked up a single banknote, mysteriously pressing it into my hands.

"Am I supposed to absorb some sort of power from your wealth?" I joked. "Is this going to help open up my third eye or something?"

"Possibly," he answered. "Feel it thoroughly, and then maybe you'll understand the profoundness of this painting."

Is he pulling my leg? Without thinking twice, I crumpled up the banknote into a ball in an act of defiance, acting as if I was going to chuck it at him.

But the moment my fingers properly closed around the ball of paper in my hand, a sense of déjà vu came over me. My movements froze mid-air, and I slowly unclenched my hand to take a closer look at the note.

Is this a coincidence?

The texture of the banknote was the exact same as the texture of Nathaniel's oil painting.

"Tell me what's on your mind," Ashton drawled out.

I snapped awake from my daze, reaching out and touching the oil painting again to make sure that I wasn't hallucinating. "Are you trying to say that the canvas used for this painting is the same paper used to print this note?"

Anyone who had studied law before knew that the entire process of making banknotes, from designing to printing to being made available for public use, was a very strictly monitored process. No matter how high your position was or how much influence you had, no one was entitled to privately own the original material for these banknotes.