

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1528-1532

Chapter 1528

"Maybe it's a total coincidence," I rambled on. "There's so many types of paper in the world. Maybe they just feel similar."

He laughed out loud. "I haven't even gotten started on the many possibilities, but you're already jumping to Nathaniel's defense. Are you really trying to patch up our relationship with the Hall family for me?"

"Not exactly." I walked over and sat back down, placing the banknote on the desk. "This is a minor problem; we don't need to make a mountain out of a molehill. All I want is to get our plans over and done with so that our family can spend the rest of our days happily. There's nothing wrong with being a little selfish and keeping out of other people's business as long as it doesn't involve the safety of our family."

"I'm just concerned that if the country is thrown into danger, it'll be hard to ensure the safety of our family as well," he said lightly, masking any and all emotions.

It wasn't that I didn't understand the point of view he was speaking from. Any other person with such a high-ranking position like him would find it hard to stay neutral in this sort of situation, and the Fuller Corporation was currently the nation's largest chain of estate brands. After becoming a billionaire, Ashton had gotten involved in an increasing number of other industries and countless deals regarding money. He only had so many chances to turn a blind eye.

John soon returned, leaning against the doorway as he gave us both a meaningful stare. "Hook, line, and sinker."

At that exact moment, Ashton's phone started ringing. It had to be Nathaniel.

But when he picked up his phone and checked the screen, Simone's name was clearly displayed as the caller.

He answered the call and put his phone on loudspeaker before casually saying, "Hello?"

"Ashton! How could you not inform us that your in-laws had come back? You're lucky your dad has connections and managed to get someone to go pick them up, or else they might think that we were being impolite! But never mind about that; hurry up and bring the kids over, and let's all have a reunion dinner!"

There was a lot of background noise coming out from the speaker. It sounded as if the two families were getting along quite well.

And with that, the call ended.

We all exchanged confused glances with each other and at the phone.

Had we guessed wrong? What if Nathaniel wasn't the one trying to cause us harm, but the Hall parents who had been watching over the whole situation since the beginning?

Ashton quickly gave us our answer.

He slipped the phone back in his suit jacket pocket, buttoning it back up. "Using other people to do your bidding prevents your own hands from getting dirty."

He left the study, and John followed him out shortly after. I had no other choice but to trail behind them, the only one left dazed and confused.

I had gotten into the car when the realization suddenly dawned upon me: Nathaniel had woven Mr. and Mrs. Hall into his scheme! What a manipulative, calculative asshole.

What on earth does Nathaniel want?

There was no time to wonder about that. They were all enemies, and there was no guarantee that Mr. and Mrs. Hall would be easier to handle than Nathaniel.

Ashton appeared extremely calm and composed, keeping his head held high as he gripped my hand in his. "It doesn't matter who we have to deal with first. Let's just be grateful that Nathaniel made the decision for me."

No one could have expected that a reunion after six years would turn out this way.

At the Hall residence, everyone was sitting on the couches in the living room, casually chatting with each other.

Even though I had seen them through video calls before, Cameron was still excited when she laid her eyes upon me. She nearly got to her feet and came over to us, but Zachary held her back, effectively preventing our planned "emotional reunion scene" from happening.

Ashton held my hand as we walked over towards them instead, bowing his head humbly. "It's been a while, dad and mom. Uncle Louis, too."

The "dad and mom" he was referring to was Zachary and Cameron respectively, completely ignoring Nicolas and Simone beside them.

I'd expected an immediate conflict to occur, but Nicolas surprisingly took everything in stride as he grinned at us. "It's good to see you back!" he bellowed, patting the empty spaces next to him on the couch. "Dinner is starting shortly after, so have a seat."

"Where are the kids? Did you bring them?" Simone looked around for Audrey and Gregory, glancing at the entrance and then us.

I wanted to make up some excuse, but Ashton beat me to the punch. "There's no need to bring the children into the adults' matters."

Chapter 1529

There was no beating around the bush. He wanted to have a proper discussion.

When Ashton brought me home last time, he'd made sure that Nicolas was aware of his intentions. Nothing much had happened to either side recently except for that incident with the researcher that Nicolas had hired.

The faked calm atmosphere from before instantly turned tense.

We were the guests, so naturally, Nicolas was in a much more awkward position as the host of this little get-together.

But he maintained his kind façade, chuckling, “Their arrival was so sudden, and you have children at your house, so we were worried that they might not feel comfortable there. I’ve already invited them to sleep at our place during their stay here.”

“There’s no need for that,” Ashton cut in. “The presidential suite at The Jade is permanently reserved for me. That should be more than enough to accommodate them.”

The corner of Nicolas’ mouth quirked up slightly in contempt as his eyebrows furrowed together. It was obvious to anyone that he didn’t think highly of Ashton.

After a brief pause, he spoke up. “Young people these days. Your children have already grown up, and yet you still haven’t learned to respect your elders? The trip here from M Country was more than ten hours long; do you want to see them go through even more trouble? Besides, your parents-in-law live so far apart from us that we’ll need to make sure to keep in contact with each other from now on. It’s decided that they’re staying here. I’ll take good care of your wife’s family, so don’t worry too much.”

“And what if I won’t let them stay here?” Ashton asked, his tone sharp and dangerous.

“That’s up to you,” Nicolas shrugged. “If you’re able to take them out of here, then I can’t say much. Although, I will remind you: these fellows here are quite old and frail. If anything happens when you leave with them, don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

“Are you implying that you’ll make them stay here by force?” I had grown sick of his mask of kindness.

Chanaea was no place for him to be dogmatic.

Nicolas gave me a sidelong glance, the disdain in his eyes from before still there. "As Ashton's wife, you should at least call me 'father'. Did the Stovall family nor the Moore family teach you such basic manners? Or did you forget to respect your elders after a six-year-long nap, Scarlett?"

He didn't need to elaborate any further for me to realize that he already knew my true identity.

Ashton's efforts to make the Hall family think that I was nothing more than another expendable replacement for Scarlett had all gone to waste.

That single word had been enough of a warning.

He was determined that he would win against Louis because he knew that I was Scarlett, and he knew that Louis, Cameron, and Zachary were the best bargaining chips he had against Ashton and me.

Although, a small part of me felt fortunate that Nicolas wasn't targeting my three children instead.

The tension in the air was so thick you could have cut it with a knife. If anyone said one wrong word, it might trigger a full-on screaming match.

Just then, the housekeeper entered the living room and bowed. "Dinner is ready, Mr. Hall, Mrs. Hall."

The imminent crisis was instantly averted.

Each keeping their own emotions and burdens to themselves, everyone slowly gathered around the dinner table.

Ashton and I both didn't speak during the entire meal.

As for Cameron and Zachary, they'd already agreed beforehand that if Nathaniel wanted to take them away by force, they would not resist. Naturally, that plan had not changed, even if the person making them stay was Nicolas instead of Nathaniel.

The Hall couple seemed completely fine on the surface, starting and continuing one topic after the other just as they'd perfected before. Cameron and Zachary also participated in the conversation, effortlessly picking up wherever the other couple would leave off.

In the end, Cameron could only cling onto my arm as we stood by the roadside right before we were about to leave. She went on a long, emotional tangent, following the script accordingly.

Ashton looked back over his shoulder as he was opened the car door, coldly warning Nicolas, "I hope you'll follow through with your promise and treat Letty's family well. If not, I will bring down the entire Fuller Corporation with me to my grave."

We came as three people, and we returned as three people.

Even though this was all a part of Ashton's plan, I couldn't help but feel anxiety prick at my heart as I watched Louis' and everyone else's silhouettes slowly grow smaller and smaller on the horizon.

Chapter 1530

Noticing my unease, Ashton reached out and pulled me into his arms, handing me an anti-anxiety pill. "Your family will not be harmed in any way. I promise you that."

Ashton was not someone who made promises lightly, let alone make a promise about something he had no confidence in. Knowing that helped ease some of my stress.

“Let’s not get too ahead of ourselves,” John glanced at us through the reflection of the car mirror.
“Looks like we have a long night ahead of us.”

The sentence had barely left his mouth when lightning struck outside. The trees on both sides of the road were shaking violently due to the strong wind as the deafening sounds of thunder filled the electric air.

This was not going to be a normal night.

After arriving home, I quickly washed up and put the kids to sleep before putting on a warm coat, heading downstairs to the living room.

John and Ashton were both already there. The former was resting his chin in one hand as he sat on the sofa with a gloomy expression, while the latter’s back was turned to me as he stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling window. Every time there was lightning outside, the sudden flash of brightness would cast a striking, lonely shadow of Ashton on the floor.

So they haven’t gotten any updates yet.

Waiting was always the hardest part of doing anything.

If all went well, Ashton’s men would find Nicolas’ secret hideout tonight and ambush it.

If not, a sleepless night like this one would likely be our daily routine for many days to come.

Nothing happened for the entire night. My body was starting to display signs of fatigue, but my brain was still fully alert.

The darkness outside eventually turned into light, and the rain turned from a heavy downpour into a faint drizzle.

John, unable to sit still, abruptly got to his feet and pulled his coat on. "I'm going to pull the Hall residence apart brick by brick if it's the last thing I do," he declared, heading for the door.

This was what we'd agreed on when putting together this plan: if an accident happened, we would go all out and not hold anything back anymore.

But that was merely the backup plan. If we really did take matters into our own hands now, Nicolas might team up with the police and we would end up being the ones at a disadvantage. That's why we wanted to avoid taking last-resort measures as much as possible.

"Let's wait for a while longer," I called out, stopping John in his tracks and glancing at the clock. "There's still half an hour left to the time limit we gave them. Maybe there was a delay because of the heavy rain."

"I don't have the patience for that," John grumbled but stayed where he was. He seemed deep in thought for a second before finally looking at Ashton, letting him make the final decision. "You came up with this idea. You tell me: are we still going to sit around doing nothing?"

He wasn't explicitly blaming Ashton, but I could hear an undercurrent of frustration.

I doubt he'd meant to direct his anger at Ashton; after all, our relatives were in danger, and we were all growing desperate.

I trusted that this version of Ashton whom I'd reconnected with after six years was no longer the man from before: a cold, nearly robotic person who was willing to sacrifice anyone and anything in order to achieve his ambitions. John's impression of him, however, was still stuck in the past.

I opened my mouth in an attempt to defend Ashton when I suddenly heard his deep voice speak up from behind me: "I'll go with you."

The time limit had been set in place by us to ensure that we'd be able to bring our relatives back home safely by a certain time, even if the plan had failed. Before the time limit was over, any action we took that the Halls might notice would risk hurting the very people we were trying to save, thus setting us back.

But Ashton had just agreed to go out and take that risk with John.

He glanced over at me, picking up a thick blanket and draping it over my shoulders. "Go upstairs and try to sleep," he whispered, his voice soft and husky. "I promise that I'll bring back your parents and Uncle Louis home safely."

Parting with a reassuring smile, he let go of me and walked towards the door.

Even John was surprised by Ashton's response, frozen in shock for a second before quickly following on his heels.

The two of them passed by me and headed for the staircase. At that exact moment, the ringing of the phone broke the long, tense silence of the past few hours.

Chapter 1531

John wasted no time in pulling out his phone and placing it next to his ear. He listened intently, his expression slowly growing solemn.

"What is it?" I hurriedly asked.

He gave me a sidelong glance, nodding. "The mission was a success."

I felt myself let go of a breath that I hadn't realized I'd been holding, and Ashton's eyebrows finally stopped furrowing together.

Ashton himself was very aware of how selfish his methods had been, and had been working on improving himself to become a better person.

Last night had been a test. If he failed, he might have lost the courage to continue staying by my side. Only succeeding would be enough to prove to himself that he'd changed into a true man that would do anything to protect me and my family.

Ashton sighed deeply, as did I. Our eyes met and we exchanged relieved, wry smiles.

"Now that everything's done and settled, I'll go over to pick them up. You two recently recovered from being sick and stayed up through the whole night; hurry up and go upstairs to rest."

John got ready to leave after saying that, but Ashton grabbed ahold of his arm. "Joseph will take care of it. Emma and Drew will be arriving this afternoon, and are you sure you want to meet them while in this state?"

"Emma?" John blinked owlshly at him. "What are you talking about?"

Ashton let go of his arm, heading towards me. "I arranged a private flight to M Country for them two days ago," he told him over his shoulder. "They should already be on the way here as we speak."

John and I wore mirrored expressions of surprise. "You'd made preparations that early on?"

Ashton wrapped an arm around my shoulders, his eyes shining humorously. “A family reunion would be incomplete without even a single family member, after all. Besides, my dear brother-in-law seemed extremely temperamental as a result of not being able to see his wife and child for a long time. So, I did this all for the sake of maintaining the peace at home.”

John squinted at him, raising an eyebrow. “That sounds very much like a complaint.”

“Was I wrong, Honey?” Ashton shrugged and turned the focus of the conversation towards me.

“Uh...” How am I supposed to respond? John was glaring at me icily from the other side of the room, while Ashton, mere inches away from me, was trying his best to look as pitiful as possible.

Looking between them both, I groaned and squirmed out of Ashton’s arms. “I’m getting sleepy, so ask me later after I wake up,” I waved them off, yawning as I dragged my feet upstairs. “I’m leaving the three kids to you guys. I want a good sleep, and I won’t tolerate anyone who comes to disturb me! Bye!”

Ashton trailed behind me, jokingly threatening, “You heard her! Letty said that she’s leaving the kids to you, so I’m going to go up and accompany her. She won’t be able to sleep well otherwise.”

“Hey! The both of you— What do you think you’re doing?” John chased us all the way to the staircase, shaking his fist at us as Ashton ascended the stairs three steps at a time. In the blink of an eye, John was left staring at an empty staircase. “I’m the president of a company, not your babysitter!”

His complaints echoed in the hallway and all around the living room.

It might have been the weekend, but children’s biological clocks were always accurate to a tee. Much to John’s dismay, he could only get about three hours’ worth of rest before he had to wake up to take care of the three kids.

I grew drowsy the moment my head hit the pillow, only vaguely registering the mattress shifting under me as Ashton laid down on the bed as well. Too tired to give any sort of reaction, I sleepily mumbled out, "We'll be okay from now on out, right?"

"Yes." He pulled me into his arms, burying his face in the crook of my neck. "Sleep. Arrangements have already been made for Uncle Louis and the others to rest somewhere else nearby. I'll wake you when they return."

His words acted like a sedative, instantly calming any leftover adrenaline rushing through me. Surrounded by his warmth and familiar scent, I drifted off to sleep.

When I came to, the bedroom was peacefully quiet. It seemed that I was the only one left at home.

Chapter 1532

Thinking that Ashton had left to handle the issue with Nicolas, I headed downstairs to make a phone call.

It was only when I arrived at the living room that I saw him and the kids all sitting on a sofa, each one of them as quiet as a mouse.

My husband was holding a tablet, probably working. Gregory was having online classes with earphones plugged in, while Summer was reading a thick book. Even Audrey was keeping herself entertained by sitting down at a table and practicing her handwriting.

There was something amiss about the entire scene.

Ashton was the first one to notice my presence, putting his tablet down and walking over to place a kiss on my forehead. "You're awake."

"Mhm," I nodded. "You guys...?"

Audrey immediately jumped up at the sound of my voice, loudly announcing, "Mommy! Daddy was being mean and didn't let me talk!"

Summer quickly reached over to tickle her little sister in an attempt to get her to shut up. "That's because you were being too noisy and woke Daddy up! It would be bad if you woke Mommy up too, you tiny monkey."

"No, I didn't!" Audrey argued through a fit of giggles, scrambling away from Summer's hands. "Uncle John said—"

Realizing that she was about to expose her uncle, she instantly stopped herself short and pursed her lips together.

Of course, I wasn't that easily fooled by a kid who wore her heart on her sleeve.

"How long did you sleep for?" I asked Ashton.

"Daddy woke up early in the morning and helped Audrey wash up," Summer interrupted before he could say anything.

Doesn't that mean that he'd taken John's place and only slept for three hours?

That realization tugged at my heartstrings a little. Just then, John walked in from outside, meeting my knowing gaze and then taking a look at Audrey.

He awkwardly shuffled towards the other side of the living room, mumbling in a small voice, "Don't blame me. Audrey's your biological child, so she ran to find you guys as soon as she woke up. I couldn't have stopped her even if I tried."

I hid a laugh behind my hand. "So you went back to sleep and left Ashton to take care of the kids alone?"

"She's your daughter," he shrugged. I couldn't argue with him on that, and it seemed like he was going to stubbornly defend himself to the very end.

I had no choice but to try and make Ashton go upstairs to rest for a while longer. "Go take a nap or something. You haven't slept well these past few days."

Even though the day before had been because of...

I didn't let myself finish that thought. Regardless, we were no longer in our young adult life; we'd grown old and needed sufficient sleep.

"I'm used to it," Ashton laughed. "I've been surviving on three or four hours of sleep for the past few years. Don't worry about me."

My expression soured. He must have had a rough time while being the Hall family's cash cow for so long.

Noticing that I was upset, he reached up and gently massaged my stiff shoulders. "I'll have plenty of chances to rest in the future," he reassured. "But I want to handle all our current problems before anything else. Next time, you'll be free to determine when I sleep and how much I sleep."

"You swear on your life?" I couldn't stop myself from smiling.

“Of course! I would never dare to lie to my precious wife in front of her brother and our kids.”

“Bleurgh. I can’t watch this anymore,” John shivered exaggeratedly, causing the kids to sneak glances at us and giggle.

I let out a hopeless sigh at the kids’ amused expressions. What kind of little monsters were they going to grow up into with such a drama queen for an uncle?

“That’s it,” John clapped to gain the children’s attention. “A whole morning of being under your fascist dad’s strict rules is more than enough. Put down your homework and go out to the garden to play.”

“Yeah! Uncle John is the best!”

Audrey instantly jumped to her feet, dragging Gregory along to the side door that led to the garden. Laughing excitedly, Summer followed closely behind them.

A six or seven-year-old child was usually at the peak of their mischievousness, but thankfully, we had Summer to help decrease some of the worries we had about the two younger kids.

As soon as they were out the door, John’s face turned solemn. “Nicolas and his wife are being held in a basement. What are we going to do with the remaining Hall family?”