

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1628-1632

Chapter 1628

Audrey and Gregory were ecstatic. "I heard that!"

"Me too! Daddy's the best!"

Everything seemed like it was finally falling in place, and our life would become peaceful once more.

My hopes were shattered two days later. That afternoon, Joseph entered our house with an anxious expression on his face, tipping me off that I had been too naive about our situation.

"Go on. What's wrong?" I was not in the greatest of moods at his arrival. My frustration grew at the problems that never seemed to leave us alone.

Sometimes, I wondered why people preferred havoc and chaos over a peaceful life.

"Nora met Shaun alone."

Surprised, I asked, "Alone?"

"Yes." Joseph nodded before continuing, "They even made sure to keep Ms. Audrey in the dark."

"That's..." I trailed off, sighing at Shaun's change of heart.

I had been relieved at his choice at the Hall residence, yet three days was all it took for Shaun to change his mind.

I guess children are less impervious to temptation.

I now realized that Ashton's earlier concerns were not wholly unfounded. Perhaps Shaun had never forgotten how he was abused at the hands of his previous adoptive parents, and he now saw an opportunity to exact revenge for his suffering.

Ashton remained calm in the face of Joseph's news. Rather expressionlessly, he flipped through the newspaper in his hand and sent Joseph off. "All right. You may leave now."

I watched Joseph's departing figure and pursed my lips in thought. Sometime later, I turned to Ashton and stated, "You don't seem surprised by the news."

"Should I experience a meltdown, then?" He looked as unruffled as before. The ghost of a smile appeared on his face as his eyes pored through the financial news as if it was some piece of juicy gossip. "If I were in Nora's shoes, I wouldn't let go of this opportunity either."

I shrugged and offered weakly, "But Shaun said no to them in the beginning." Frankly, I was curious to understand how Ashton viewed Nora and Shaun's covert acquaintance.

"So?" Ashton folded his newspaper and met my gaze. "To a businessman, anything can lead to a deal. The only obstacle is price and timing. Once the stars have aligned, anything is possible. Don't you agree?"

I grudgingly admitted the logic in his words, and I saw no point in arguing with him.

Instead, I forced a laugh and teased half-heartedly, "The people in the village are the ones scheming for profit. Shaun is just a kid, and we've given him a home. Things might not turn out as poorly as you expect."

"Let's make a bet." Ashton shifted into a cross-legged position and placed the folded newspaper across his knees. "I bet that he'll disappoint you in the future."

Shrugging, I accepted his bet. "Why not? Still, we can't really let him pass on news about our family to Nora. Isn't there a way for us to test him?"

"We're in no rush for that." He lowered his gaze slightly. Suddenly, his body stiffened as if he recalled something. Ashton tossed the newspaper on the table and straightened himself. Then, he turned to face me and adjusted his expression before stating somberly, "The results came out. Marcus' condition is critical."

He paused for a while before adding, "I still have a lot of sway in the matter. I'll be in full support of whatever decision you make."

Despite Ashton's upsetting news, I felt a lot calmer than when we were in the hospital. Perhaps it was because I was not in the presence of a thin and sallow patient.

"Is there hope?" I asked.

Ashton replied, "I've contacted the best experts in the world, and they'll arrive in K City in the next couple of days."

I nodded, confident in his abilities to handle such matters perfectly. I saw no need to question him further on the relevant details.

Camelia's advice suddenly surfaced in my mind, and I could no longer dismiss it as an exaggeration. "Will you come to the hospital with me tonight? I think a terminal patient needs encouragement more than anything else."

I seemed unusually serene and rational in the face of Marcus' deteriorating health. For the briefest moment, I imagined myself to be no different from the doctors who had grown numb to matters of life and death.

Chapter 1629

Ashton agreed to my request immediately. "Of course." He left the couch and went upstairs. "I'll make the arrangements."

For both our sake, we kept our conversation to a minimum.

Ashton was only human, after all. It was unreasonable and cruel of me to have him accompany the woman he loved while she grieved over another man.

Hiding my true feelings in front of Ashton took a considerable amount of effort because I had always felt comfortable in my own skin around him. In contrast, my interactions with Marcus were always ambiguous. Eventually, I developed an appreciation for the freedom I had in expressing my emotions around Ashton.

Ashton changed into a set of casual wear I had chosen for him in the past before we left for the hospital. The attire dimmed his usual imposing demeanor, and he looked a lot more relaxed and approachable.

I could not help but tease his appearance. "Are you sure you want to dress like a harmless man to face your love rival?"

"Am I?" Barely batting an eyelid at my joke, Ashton walked toward me and slung an arm around my shoulder, leading us out of the house. He added cheekily, "Haven't you noticed that we're wearing a matching couple's outfit?"

I lowered my gaze and realized the truth in his words. The laugh that was about to burst out of me suddenly caught in my throat.

Jealousy was natural during a meeting between love rivals, yet I worried if the sight of a couple's outfit might trigger Marcus and worsen his condition instead.

Absorbed in my thoughts, I felt a hand squeezing my shoulder. Ashton said casually, "I'm not so petty that I would rub my victory in a patient's face. Marcus would never wish to see me. I wouldn't be surprised if hearing my name shortens his lifespan by a few days. So, you're visiting him alone."

I pursed my lips, unsure of what to say.

Ashton had more to say. "But, I'm not that generous either, so I need other ways to manage my feelings. Putting on this couple's outfit reassures me of our feelings for one another."

His nonchalant tone made it seem like he was talking about someone else, yet I knew better than anyone else how outrageous Ashton behaved when he was jealous.

He was holding in his instinctive actions for my sake.

Love often meant doing things one sometimes despised for the happiness of one's partner.

A phrase in the Bible suddenly came to mind—love is patient. Ashton's behavior right now was the living embodiment of that sentence.

I barely had time to feel touched by his actions when he shoved me into the car.

We made our way through the hospital and came to the corridor outside Marcus' ward. Camelia and her child sat on a bench outside the ward. They looked so lost it seemed like their souls had left their bodies, leaving behind two empty shells.

I did not think it was possible, but they seemed even more haggard than before.

It was no exaggeration to say that one's illness could cripple the foundation of an entire family.

Camelia seemed astonished to see us, and a smile soon blossomed on her pale face. She stood up with her child to convey their gratitude at our visit.

We exchanged glances silently before I entered the soul-sucking ward alone.

Surprisingly, Marcus was awake. I knew he heard my footsteps, yet he did not turn around and eked out weakly, "Not again. If you really love me and want me to live a few more days, take the kid with you and marry someone else. Don't appear in my life again."

He sounded sickly and exhausted. The mean words Marcus had uttered lost their edge as they came out in spurts between his efforts to huff and catch his breath.

My gut told me that this was not the first time he had said such nasty things in a bid to push away Camelia and their son so he would not burden them with his illness.

Or perhaps his pride would not permit him to become the subject of pity.

I bit down on my lip as tears streamed down my face. Despite my best efforts to stop myself from crying out loud, some sniffles escaped me.

The ward descended into silence after Marcus' words, and he gradually turned his head to face me as he noticed that something was amiss.

Our gazes met, and I could tell that my appearance was torture to him.

I spoke as softly as I could while ensuring that Marcus could hear my every word. "If you don't want to see me under such circumstances, I can leave."

Chapter 1630

I could empathize with Marcus if he refused to be seen by someone he loved in a state ravaged by illness. His emotions were my priority, and I would respect any decision he made.

Marcus stared at me quietly for a long time until it felt like the time and space around us were frozen. His pupils barely moved, and he did not seem angered by my presence. Only the arrhythmic beating of his heart assured me that he was still alive.

I took his silence as tactful rejection. Maybe Marcus was not prepared to see me yet.

Mustering a smile on my face, I nodded my head a fraction to let him know that I was not upset by his decision.

I had just turned around to leave when he said, "I knew you would come. Please take a seat." I knew you would come. Please, sit.

The words rang in my head as I took a deep breath to push down the urge to burst into tears. I composed myself before returning to his bedside and taking a seat.

"How do you feel today? Better?" This sort of small talk felt rather cliché to me, yet it always seemed like the most natural thing to do.

"What would you like to hear? That I'm feeling great, or no?" Each word seemed to sap Marcus' energy, though he stubbornly maintained that self-deprecating expression on his face.

Who are you trying to impress?

I smiled as I tucked the blankets around him and teased, "You shouldn't concern yourself with my feelings at this point. You're the patient here. So tell me how you really feel."

Life felt like one of Shakespeare's ironic comedies. It was the most trivial of matters that often courted the harshest criticisms and the most heartless words.

Yet, when it came time to knock on death's door, one would wear a perpetual smile and assure everyone that everything was fine. It was as if living in denial could change one's fate, even though it was no more than an act of self-deception.

The facade intensified as one inched closer to imminent death. In a sense, lying was the only way to pull through the agonizing journey toward the end.

"I feel crappy," came his loud answer. It seemed to exhaust him as he added weakly, "I feel terrible, and everything hurts. It's so unfair."

I knew he was being harsh to vent his anger, yet I could not suppress the sorrow that rose in me. My hands paused in their motion, and I avoided his gaze.

"What are you scared of?" Marcus was heaving as he said this, and his warm breath fogged up his ventilator.

I tried my best not to reveal my emotions and shook my head. Instead, I coaxed him, "Nothing. You shouldn't be scared, either. I've tracked down the best doctors in the world, and they'll figure something out. You're Marcus White, for God's sake. You've cheated death more times than I can remember, and you won't go down so easily."

I paused for a moment before lifting my gaze. Nudging his elbow, I added, "Be a man and put up a fight."

He lowered his gaze slowly until it landed on the spot where I had touched him. The expression in his eyes did not change as he silently contemplated my words. A while later, he uttered, "Marry me, and I'll hang on. Otherwise, dying now doesn't make a difference to me."

"Don't be childish." I sighed and continued apologetically, "You were there at my wedding. Marcus, I'm living well, and I'm happy. Please stop being so stubborn and let go of your obsession. There's someone out there whose heart has always belonged to you but you haven't seen it yet."

Marcus' gaze grew hazy, and it was impossible to discern if he had lost focus or was paying attention to my words.

"I won't talk about this anymore if you don't want to listen to it. I'll be here every day to visit you and take care of you. Everything will be fine. Don't overthink things—"

"I want to marry you." Marcus raised his voice suddenly.

Shocked, I lifted my head and met his stubborn gaze.

He said coldly, "You can't refuse me. I ended up like this because of you. In a bid to control Ashton, the Halls initially planned to skip in vivo trials and use you as their guinea pig for their radiation trials. I offered to take your place instead, and this is the aftermath of their experiment."

Marcus began cackling pitifully after that, and despite the absurdity of his words, I could not find it in myself to hate him.

Chapter 1631

incurable. You owe me that, Scarlett."

I let his comment slide. It would be petty of me to argue with a patient.

The illness seemed to dull Marcus' intuition. He had not realized that I was no longer the meek and spineless woman who was all ready to forgive and forget.

The ward fell into a suffocating silence as he eventually registered my rejection. Marcus slowly lay down on the bed and stared blankly at the ceiling.

“I guess you won’t even spare a glance for me even if I sacrificed myself for you. My efforts were meaningless, so meaningless. I should just die right now.”

Marcus stopped speaking after that, his eyes glazed over with tears.

Some people resorted to telling white lies to appease a dying patient. In their eyes, it was a way of encouraging the patient to fight for their life.

Marcus was too smart to fall for that; plus, he knew me far too well. He would only scoff at my white lie or even see it as my pity, and that would only worsen his condition. Honesty was the best policy in this situation.

I simply could not agree to his demands and give him false hope.

Marcus was not the only person who loved me. I owed it to the people I loved to live well and not harm others in the process.

I sat in the ward for a moment longer. Unsure if the non-response was due to Marcus falling asleep, I decided to take my leave.

“Get some rest. I’ll visit you again tomorrow.” After I got up, I check his vitals one last time and grabbed my purse. I turned around and walked to the door.

Marcus’ hoarse voice rang out the moment my hand touched the door handle.

“Scarlett, don’t ever visit me again unless you change your mind and agree to marry me.”

I whirled around only to find him lying on the bed like before as if he had never woken up.

It was now clear that he had not fallen asleep. Instead of mumbling groggily, Marcus' words represented the emotional baggage that he had stubbornly carried around with him for over ten years.

I said sorry to him over and over again in my heart, yet I could not bring myself to utter an apology to his face. Like a coward, I pretended I had not heard a thing and left the ward.

Camelia practically jumped out of her seat when she saw me. Anxiously, she asked, "How did it go?"

She clenched her fists tightly as if the action would give her the strength to face any news I gave.

I dared not discuss my conversation with Marcus in detail. Instead, I merely shook my head and said, "It wasn't good." I felt wetness pricking the corners of my eyes.

Chapter 1632

I repeated myself, "It wasn't good."

Hope seemed to leave Camelia's gaze almost instantaneously. Her entire demeanor darkened, which suggested that this outcome had not been within her expectations.

And why wouldn't she be disappointed? She had made such a huge sacrifice by bringing the woman Marcus loved to his deathbed, yet he showed no sign of improvement.

All she wants is for her beloved husband to live. It's not too much to ask, yet no one can give her the answer she seeks or dissuade her from her mission.

Taking in Camelia's pale countenance, it was not difficult to tell that she had not been eating properly for a while now. After some coaxing, we managed to usher Camelia and her son to a nearby Chanaean restaurant.

Ashton ordered eight dishes, and the food arrived in quick succession.

Camelia remained in poor spirits. She turned to her child and said simply, "Let's eat."

With that, she picked up her fork and immediately got lost in her thoughts. She was so still that she resembled those living statues on the streets.

I sighed before filling the bowl in front of me with some soup. "You need to take care of yourself. If you fall sick too, who's going to take care of Marcus?"

Then, I stood up and placed the bowl in front of her child while coaxing, "Be a good boy and eat. You need to eat well so you can take care of your mommy." I started ladling some soup for Camelia in the meantime.

Thankfully, the boy had not inherited Marcus' or Camelia's trademark obstinance. He glanced at his mother before quietly picking up his spoon to eat.

When I returned to my seat, Ashton had placed a bowl of soup in front of my plate.

I smiled at Ashton gratefully. My gaze darted to Marcus' son several times as he ate, and I asked, "What's your name?"

“Tobias White.” He lifted his head to meet my gaze, and I noticed Marcus’ eyes on him. The only difference was the youthful innocence in his gaze.

“Tobias White,” I muttered to myself as my lips curved upward in a smile. “It’s a great name, fitting for a brave boy. You need to take care of your mommy and help her to stay strong, okay?”

“Okay!” Tobias nodded determinedly like a soldier accepting his battle summons. He seemed rather comical with his cheeks puffed from the food he had stuffed into his mouth earlier.

Camelia had done a great job of raising her child. Grudges between the adults did not stop Tobias from accepting the kindness of others.

I smiled in relief and tore my gaze from Tobias, just in time to see Camelia sighing deeply.

“Marcus’ situation will become utterly hopeless if you give up.”

I could not help but frown after saying those words. After the storm had passed, Marcus’ most reliable companions were now ironically Camelia and me.

This realization served as a timely reminder for me not to give up hope till the very end.

As time passed and more of our loved ones passed on, it suddenly became imperative to hold on to those still around us tighter than ever, regardless of past grudges or grievances.

Ashton seemed as calm as ever, though he placed a warm hand over mine, silently lending me some strength and encouragement.

Camelia smiled ruefully and uttered, "I wouldn't have waited till now if I was going to give up. I just don't get it. Marcus loves you so much that he was willing to put himself through hell for you. Why would he give up so easily over an illness? Where did his fighting spirit go? I thought someone as ruthless as him would be fearless as well, but I guess he's nothing but a coward."

I replied hastily, "Don't say that in front of your kid." Though I was disappointed about Marcus' situation, I refused to show my feelings to her child. Dejection was nothing short of a plague—contagious and deadly. What they needed now was hope instead of stewing in despair.

"Why can't I say that?" Camelia grew agitated all of a sudden. "He was the one who messed with me. He stole my heart and then cast it aside. I gave up everything because I loved him! When he was so sick he could barely care for himself, I stayed with him and nursed him. I've seen him in his best and his worst, and I'm his longest companion! I have every right to criticize him!"