

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1648-1652

Chapter 1648

"Hold on." Just as things were going to go south, Quince raised his hand to gesture for him to halt.

"Why?" Lucas evidently could not read Quince's mind. "Can't you see that these people are toying with us?"

However, Quince grinned. His eyes were glued on Ashton as he enunciated, "As expected of the richest man in Chanaea. You're a good judge in both things and people. I will thank you on behalf of the organization for your goodwill, and we'll consider your offer."

After a pause, he cocked his head to the side and looked at me solemnly. "Regardless of whether we'll get to work together or not, we won't forget the benefits you have offered to us. Do wait for good news from us, Stovall."

With that said, he stood up and gave us a curt nod as a farewell before turning to leave. "We'll take our leave now."

Lucas was confounded, and it took him several seconds to snap back to his senses. "What the f*ck are you doing?"

Then, he spat on the ground before begrudgingly following Quince out.

The sounds of the sports cars' engines revved up outside, and soon, they disappeared into the dark. Finally, the night was peaceful again.

"D*mn those bast*rds!" John cursed as he sat back down on the couch. As he tidied his clothes, he grumbled under his breath, "That guy isn't gay, is he? He kept touching me. F*ck!"

It had been so many years, but still, he did not have a brain-to-mouth filter; he still swore relentlessly in front of the children.

I shook my head, exasperated, and pretended as though I had heard nothing. Instead, I quickly asked Summer, "Did they come after you before this? Why didn't you say anything to us?"

"It's fine, Mom." Summer seemed optimistic. "I'll have to deal with the club eventually, so I thought why not start now? However, I never thought they would come to the house. I'm sorry to have troubled you both." She held my hand.

The way Summer behaved was so sensible and courteous. That left me at a loss as to how I should close the gap between us. It felt like everything I said would be empty promises and nothing useful. I could only sigh inwardly.

"You're right to apologize," said Ashton suddenly.

Summer spun around. Like me, she never thought that Ashton would have actually blamed her for the situation. After a moment of contemplation, she lowered her head and softly said, "Sorry, Father, I'll do my best. I won't make the same mistake next time."

"Did you think that I'm berating you for not being able to deal with those two men?" Ashton's expression was grave, and his tone was icy. It was the same demeanor he had when he used to lecture Gregory.

Confusion was written on Summer's face. She frowned, but she did not reply to him.

Ashton stared at her for a while, and the temperature in the room dropped. Finally, he enunciated, "Mr. Cress."

Jared, who had been standing in the corner, stepped forward when he heard Ashton. "Yes?"

"Someone in M Country has contacted me and told me that they would like to invite you to be a lecturer in their university. You'll be treated well there, and I've agreed to it on your behalf. Your flight is tomorrow afternoon, so go ahead and make the necessary preparations for it," Ashton told him.

Jared frowned and fell silent.

At the same time, Summer tightened her grip on my hand.

Even I was taken aback by how Ashton was suddenly sending Jared away.

"Your silence is your agreement," Ashton declared. With that said, he uncrossed his legs, stood up, and went upstairs. "Say your farewells."

Soon, he disappeared behind the corner of the stairwell.

Only after he was gone, then did Summer let a reluctant look creep on her face. Quietly she asked, "Mommy, what did Mr. Cress do wrong to make Daddy mad?"

"Who wouldn't be mad?" John scoffed at the side.

When I raised my head to look at Jared, I realized that he did not have any other expressions than the usual one he wore. He still looked like the honest, mellow man he usually was.

However, Jared was not someone to be judged by his cover.

Maybe Ashton noticed something.

"Calm down." I patted the back of Summer's hand to console her. "Let me ask him."

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"All right," Summer answered gratefully. "Thanks, Mommy."

"Silly girl." I ruffled her hair like I used to do with Audrey. Right then, it seemed like we were intimate without the usual courtesy and distance.

After comforting Summer, I got up and went upstairs.

Before entering my room, something prompted me to turn at my shoulder. I saw a child's shirt disappearing behind a tall vase in the corner.

It was only a tiny part, but I immediately knew who it was.

Pretending not to see anything, I pushed the doorknob down and entered the room.

The living room was empty, and I heard the sound of flowing water coming from the bathroom. I strode over and leaned on the wall nonchalantly. Raising my voice to make sure he could hear it, I said, "Shaun is too curious. I think he was observing our discussion with Quince and the others."

Perhaps it was Audrey who told him to go outside, but I wasn't sure about that.

"Go on," Ashton's deep voice prompted.

I pursed my lips and decided to ask what was niggling on my mind. "Why did you send Jared away?"

After so many years, people had changed. I still remembered that I was the one who couldn't accept Jared, but Ashton insisted that his friend would turn over a new leaf.

Why did he change his mind all of a sudden?

Right after I asked him that, the door was pushed open with a click. Ashton walked out with a towel wrapped around his waist. He wiped his hair dry as he strode toward the living room. "There's no more reason for him to stay."

He then sat on the couch.

“But Summer is used to his presence,” I said, going over to him. Placing my palms on the back of the sofa, I told him about Summer’s thoughts.

At my words, Ashton froze briefly before turning to face me. He flashed an indulgent smile. “Even so, can’t you see what the problem is, Honey?”

I frowned in confusion. “What is the problem?”

In fact, Jared had spent more time with Summer than us. It had been proven that he meant well. There was no harm in letting him stay since Summer liked him.

“Come here.” Ashton patted the empty space beside him and gestured for me to go over to him.

I scurried over as told and gazed at him earnestly. “Can you say it now?”

Ashton gave me a smile as he placed his palms on my shoulders, forcing me to turn around. His hands roamed all over my tensed muscles.

As an aching sensation flared up on my back, I heaved a sigh of relief subconsciously. After spending the whole day at the hospital, I didn’t get enough rest. I had forgotten about that, but it didn’t slip Ashton’s mind.

“It’s easy,” Ashton answered as he massaged my shoulders in a skilled manner. Slowly, he revealed, “Never mind if Summer is used to Jared’s company. Didn’t you hear how they lied to us about getting in touch with someone like Quince?”

“Yes.” I nodded reluctantly, for Ashton was right. “I did miss that.”

People who read the international news would know how dangerous Quince was. Summer was inexperienced, and this wasn't Jared's forte, so they might've exposed their weaknesses to Quince without knowing it. If Quince and his men used that to blackmail them, they'd die a horrible death.

Ashton wanted to make an example out of Jared to teach Summer a lesson. He meant well, but his approach was too hard.

Summer has accepted Jared as her teacher since young. If we don't give him a chance and send him away, ignoring her wishes, I'm afraid Summer will just stay away from us.

"Why don't we give him a stern warning?" I suggested. "Let's not be this harsh. Besides, I don't think Jared will leave just like that."

As a woman, I was in the opinion that when a man had failed the woman who loved him dearly and gave him a child, he should spend the rest of his life with the child to make up for his mistake.

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After all, one could only learn from one's mistakes by facing them and shouldering all the consequences that followed fearlessly.

Ashton stopped massaging me. "He doesn't have a choice."

After a brief pause, he changed the topic. "Let me put it this way. If we're on the brink of death, who would you choose between me and our children? You can only pick one."

I thought he was insinuating something and immediately tensed up. Pulling his hands away, I turned to face him and replied firmly, "That day won't come again."

Chuckling, Ashton wrapped his arms around me and asked, "Just assume it did happen. Who will you pick? Me or the kids?"

Realizing it was a joke, I relaxed visibly. As I pondered about it, I swayed my body, causing Ashton to sway along with me on the couch. "I'll pick the kids. They are still young and have a long way to go. We're getting old now, so it doesn't matter if our lives end now. If something happens to you, I'll leave with you!"

Without knowing it, I had my arms wrapped around Ashton's neck like a koala bear. Winking at him, I tried to fish for praise.

My answer was satisfactory. Though I had picked the kids, we would end up together. There was no way he'd seethe in jealousy at my answer.

Ashton didn't seem surprised at all. "I thought the same, too."

The grin on his face widened as he explained, "That's the exact reason why Jared needs to leave. With him here, you'll never be Summer's top priority. Scar, my ranking in your heart doesn't matter. But those whom you prioritize should prioritize you too. That way, even when I'm no longer by your side, you won't be the children's second choice."

What's wrong with him? He's making me tear up. He is playing the bad guy and wants everyone to prioritize me. Isn't he afraid that the kids will detest him?

"But Summer will love you less for that."

As though he was coaxing a child, his voice turned gentle. “The person who gave birth to me and those who brought me up hated me. It doesn’t matter if someone else shares their sentiments. I just want you to be happy.”

“Why are you so considerate...” My voice was thick with tears. It seemed that a simple gesture would make tears roll down my cheeks.

“To me, that isn’t enough,” Ashton revealed with a long sigh. He tightened his grip and continued, “It was because of me that Jared had six whole years to take Summer away from you. I shall get back everything that belongs to you.”

I snuggled in his arms silently, not daring to utter a word. Even my breathing was controlled.

It took a long time before I could calm down completely. I decided to look for an appropriate way to clear the air between Ashton and Summer.

I was about to part my lips when someone knocked on the door. Knock! Knock!

“Come in.”

The door opened, revealing Summer, who walked in.

“Daddy, Mommy, are you going to sleep soon? Can we talk?” she asked carefully.

It was obvious why she was here—to help Jared.

Besides her own plans, this was the first time Summer took the initiative to help someone else. As her mother, I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

“Looks like it’s tough to repair our relations!” I stared at Ashton and whispered.

Though our family was usually harmonious and happy, if something were to happen, the kids knew they had to get their father’s approval first.

Calmly, Ashton removed his hands from my shoulders and straightened his figure on the soft. Parting his lips, he told her, “Come, have a seat.”

Summer nodded and came over to sit on the couch on Ashton’s left. After brief contemplation, she took a deep breath and looked up.

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“Daddy, Mommy, I was wrong for not informing you about the club beforehand. I should’ve asked for your opinions. I’m sorry for acting rashly. It was all my fault, so I shall bear all the responsibility. I promise you it won’t happen again,” she apologized sincerely.

It was obvious that she had learned from the painful mistake.

Nevertheless, one had to think logically. Summer was still young, so she could gain more experience in the future. Thus, that wasn’t Ashton’s priority.

Children were supposed to trust and depend on their family, and a family should go through all obstacles together, but perhaps the years of mathematical equations had worn away her emotions.

She could analyze a problem rationally and find the accurate answer easily, but she wasn’t experienced with the ways of the world.

Ashton was unfazed, and it seemed like he wasn't satisfied with her explanation.

He treated both Summer and Audrey the same, for he loved me. Though Jared used to be his best friend and was important to Summer, he couldn't bring himself to forgive Jared.

Summer and I waited for Ashton to speak. However, as the air turned awkward, it was obvious he wasn't going to say anything.

I didn't want to disappoint Summer. Before I could part my lips to say something, Ashton pressed down on my hand and frowned, signaling me to not cause more trouble.

"Now that you know your mistake, it's not too late for you to change. Mommy and Daddy trust that you can do better in the future," Ashton replied. It was clear that he wasn't about to mention Jared.

However, though it wasn't spoken out loud, his name resonated in everyone's heart.

Jared's name was like a rope hanging between the two of them. They were holding both ends, secretly tugging but refusing to be the first one to loosen their grips.

"Mm." Summer nodded. She hesitated, wanting to plead for her teacher's forgiveness, but Ashton's stern look had stumped her.

The silence was really tormenting. I couldn't take it any longer. Putting up an act, I stood up and headed for the wine cabinet. "Want a drink so you can sleep better tonight?"

"Sure," Ashton replied indifferently.

I took two glasses and uncorked a bottle of wine. Without looking at their figures in the living room, I said, "Summer is still young. I'll ask Mrs. Eriksen to prepare a glass of warm milk for you. You shouldn't be drinking wine."

"Got it, Mommy," came Summer's soft reply. I could barely hear her from where I was standing. Just like Gregory, she felt stressed out when facing Ashton alone.

Drinking wine was just an excuse to lighten the mood. Worried that the tension might heighten, I only poured a little wine before returning to them.

Just as I handed one glass to Ashton, Summer rose to her feet.

"I'm done. I shall take my leave now," she told us.

"Oh? That soon?" I was surprised.

Why is she leaving before stating her purpose?

Summer pursed her lips and smiled. "I'm a bit tired today."

I couldn't force her to stay. "All right, then. Go to bed if you're tired. You can wake up later tomorrow. Remember, we'll always support you. Don't be too hard on yourself. You've always been excellent, so there's no need for you to prove yourself, okay?"

"I know what to do. Thanks, Mommy. Good night!"

"Good night."

Having said that, Summer turned and walked out of the room before shutting the door lightly.

As though nothing had happened, Ashton swirled the wineglass in his hand slowly. The light shone on him, illuminating his lips that curved up slightly.

“You just hurt your daughter’s feelings, but you don’t feel upset at all,” I joked. Turning at my shoulder, I finished the wine in a gulp.

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Ashton reached out to take the wineglass from me before placing it on the coffee table out of my reach. Mirth shone in his eyes as he replied, “Why should I be upset? Can’t you see how delighted I am?”

“Delighted?” I repeated, dumbfounded.

Do all men think bullying girls is a way to show their love?

“Ashton, you should take lessons to learn how to be a good father.”

Summer was still a child, so he shouldn’t express his feelings and expectations to her as though she were an adult. His harsh actions might backfire on an adult, let alone a child.

“Seriously? I don’t have to learn how to do that,” said Ashton smugly. “Didn’t you realize Summer has chosen us?”

“Did she?” I couldn’t understand what he was talking about. “But neither of you mention Jared, right?”

“Yes, we didn’t.” Ashton looked up and sipped on his wine. His Adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed the wine. His lips stained red, he answered slowly, “Summer decided to stay silent when faced with a choice of defending Jared or go against us. No one urged or forced her to make that decision.”

He paused to study me momentarily as the smile on his lips broadened. “That means we are more important than Jared to her. Shouldn’t I be happy that she has prioritized us?”

I wasn’t sure how to react. His words seemed to make sense, but not at the same time. More accurately, it was a bet, and Ashton had emerged as the winner.

“If that’s the case, does Jared still have to leave?” I asked.

Ashton’s expression changed at my words. There was only less than a mouthful of wine in his glass, but he still swirled his glass stubbornly. It reflected his current emotions.

“Yes, why not?” Ashton stared ahead. “But I’ll do Summer a favor by sending him to the villa in the countryside. He can’t live nearby.”

His gaze turned sincere, and I couldn’t help but get anxious.

“After Marcus’ matter is dealt with, stop interfering in other’s business. Spend more time at home with the kids. They are still young, after all,” he uttered.

I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t touched. However, he was too sincere to make me take his words seriously. “Are you sure I’ll be spending time with the kids instead of the kids’ father?” I teased.

Ashton chuckled softly. “I’m just benefiting from the kids.”

As the new year was approaching, everyone seemed to be in a festive mood. The streets were lit up with decorative lights.

Yet, the hospital remained white as it had always been. The smell of disinfectant lingered in the air, and there was a depressing air about the place.

After making the preparations, I went to the hospital and asked for a wheelchair. I then wheeled the wheelchair to Marcus' ward.

From afar, I spotted Camelia at the door, observing the situation in the ward through the glass panel. I was surprised to see a smile lighting her face gently.

Sensing my arrival, she turned to look at me before her gaze returned to the skinny man in the room. "He's in great condition today."

"Really?" I smiled. Hopefully, we would only receive good news from now on. "Look, he's getting better. If something happened to you back then, you won't be able to see this."

Camelia lowered her gaze and said nothing, but the sad air about her was already gone.

I pressed on the door handle before halting in my tracks. Turning back, I asked, "I'm planning on bringing Marcus out so he can get some sun. Want to join us?"

Camelia shook her head instinctively. "No. He won't want me to join you both."

Perhaps that was what Marcus wanted. She was right to put the patient's wish as a priority.

However, I thought we shouldn't treat him like a patient. Perhaps he'd give us a surprise like what happened yesterday. Persuading Marcus to eat didn't work, but taking the opposite approach did the job.