

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 1683-1687

Chapter 1683 It Is Tough Being a Parent

I did not manage to go far before a sense of intuition made me turn my head. The sight that greeted me was one that had my chest clench tightly. Summer was on her knees in front of the tombstone, her thin frame shaking as she sobbed uncontrollably and helplessly.

It was painful to see her like this, and I could feel my own tears threatening to fall. Unable to bear the sight a second longer, I turned and walked away with haste.

Once I was in the car, Ashton instructed Joseph to stay behind with Summer. "Make sure she's okay," he told him. "She's your boss now from today onwards."

Joseph looked surprised for a second before inclining his head respectfully. "Of course. Not to worry, Mr. Ashton. Ms. Summer is safe with me."

Ashton nodded, giving his subordinate a grateful pat on the back. The gesture conveyed all that he had to say to the man.

Without further ado, Ashton got into the driver's seat and ignited the engine, driving us away.

I leaned my head against the window, staring listlessly at the rapidly receding view. A part of me wondered how long it would be until my next visit to Macy's grave.

If Macy were here, she'd probably be disappointed in me. I closed my eyes wearily. She lost her life because of me, yet I've failed her. I didn't take good enough care of her only daughter. Even after all this while, Summer doesn't feel a sense of belonging to the family.

I knew that Summer must have wished to go back to the way things were before she found out that Jared was her biological father. Regardless, she could not help but put her walls up and distance herself from us. Knowing my daughter, doing so must have hurt her more than it did us. My heart ached at the thought.

Ashton had been peering at me time and again from the rearview mirror. I ignored him, still somewhat annoyed by the heavy-handed approach he had taken earlier when it came to Summer.

"Are you mad at me?" He broke the silence a while later.

I was not about to continue giving him the cold shoulder now that he gave me an opening. "Why didn't you tell me if you knew Summer might have found out about her identity?" I blurted out in not exactly the friendliest tone. "You could've discussed it with me. Maybe there could've been a better way to do this."

He could be brisk and unyielding all he wants in his business dealings, but he shouldn't have used that attitude on Summer. She's family, for crying out loud.

Ashton frowned. Wordlessly, he steered the car to stop at the side of the road before turning to look at me.

"Letty," he sighed, "I wasn't thinking much then beyond trying to protect your feelings."

I frowned in confusion. "I don't understand. You know that I always place the children as my priority. If you were trying to protect my feelings, then you should be nicer to Summer all the more. What you said to her was way too harsh."

He fell silent, and I could tell that there was a hint of guilt that flashed across his eyes. "You're right," he said at last. "I overreacted and should have handled that better. I'll find a way to make it up to her."

It's tough being a parent, but at least he's trying. I relaxed slightly and let the matter drop. "What should we do if Summer really decides to leave with Jared?"

"She won't," Ashton confidently said as he started the car once more and resumed driving us back home.

"And why is that?" I asked dubiously. After that whole tense exchange he had with Summer earlier, I was less certain in his ability to make her want to stay with us.

My husband spared a glance at me from the rearview mirror. "Don't worry," he said with a trace of a smile in his voice. "Just leave everything to me. I'll handle this."

I raised a skeptical brow. Strangely, that did not assure me in the least. If anything, it only made me worry more. I offered a silent prayer to the heavens, hoping against hope that this man would not make things worse.

Ever since then, Summer had stopped coming back to the Fuller residence, though to my knowledge, she was still doing a perfectly good job running the club in what I had guessed as an attempt to use work as a distraction.

Chapter 1684 The Lucky Coin

Since I did tell my daughter that she could take time to think things through, I could not very well pester her to come home without breaking my promise. Fortunately, I had Joseph as my source of information. He told me Summer was doing relatively well, and my worries eased slightly after that.

New Year's Eve rolled around, and the city was awash in festive colors and lights. High-spirited, Audrey and Gregory had decorated the house with banners and balloons, and I could not help but think how much nicer it would be if Summer were here to celebrate the new year with us.

Audrey noticed the distinct lack of her sister when it was dinner time. Though it was not unusual for Summer to come home late, it seemed to have occurred to Audrey that she had not seen her sister at all for the past few days. "Mommy, Daddy, where's Summer? Is she coming back soon?"

I did not have the heart to tell her that there was a chance she might not see Summer ever again, so I tried to change the subject. "Hey, Audrey, do you see those puddings over there on the table?" I pointed at the tray of mini puddings I had baked earlier. "Mommy made them. I hid a single coin in one of them. Whoever found it while eating the pudding will have good luck for the whole of next year!"

"Really?" Audrey's eyes sparkled in excitement, and she made a beeline to the puddings at once. "I'm going to look for the coin now!"

"What are you going to do? Eat all of them by yourself?" I laughed, teasing.

She pouted. "Greg and Shaun will help me," she said stubbornly, looking at the latter for affirmation. "You'll help, right, Shaun?"

The subject of her pleading quietly took several puddings to his plate and started cutting them open one by one.

Happy with Shaun's compliance, Audrey targeted her twin brother next. "Greg, I need your help too," she wheedled. "I really want the good luck coin!"

Her brother shrugged, seemingly heedless of her plea, though I caught him taking several puddings as well and poking them with his fork.

I bit back a laugh. She has them wrapped around her little finger.

As the coin seeking continued, an unexpected and unwanted guest arrived.

"Happy New Year, my friends!" Lucas announced as he walked into the dining room.

He gave a low, impressed whistle at the table of food. "Wow, that's a feast if there ever was one. Hey, is that chocolate pudding? I love chocolate puddings!"

Without preamble, he reached to take one of my mini puddings and popped it into his mouth. A second later, however, he frowned as he bit into something with an audible click.

He removed the item from his mouth, the frown morphing into a smirk when he saw what it was. "Oh wow, it's a coin. Am I lucky, or what?"

I shot him a glare. "Maybe it's a bad penny. Just like a certain someone here."

Affected by neither the look I gave him nor the loaded meaning behind my words, Lucas shrugged and pocketed the coin.

It was then that Audrey broke into tears. "I didn't get the coin!" she wailed. "I won't have good luck next year!"

Lucas raised a brow. "Seriously? It's just a coin," he said dismissively before reaching into his pocket and handing the coin to her. "You can have it. Happy now?"

"No!" Audrey refused to take it and managed to pull an impressive glower for a child her age. "You're a bad man!"

"Hey, I'm a guest, all right?" Lucas said indignantly. "Didn't your parents teach you to be on your best manners in front of guests? Don't act all rude."

Chapter 1685 The Bad Penny

Upset, Audrey cried even harder at his words.

You're the one acting all rude! As much as I wanted to snap at Lucas, my priority was my daughter. I immediately went over to comfort her. "Shh... It's all right," I said gently, pulling the sobbing girl into my arms. "Mommy and Daddy will give you all of our good luck, okay? Everything will be fine."

Meanwhile, Lucas had already taken a seat at the table, appearing completely at ease in someone else's house. The nerve of that man was astounding.

Ashton's expression was one of frosty anger and contempt. "It's a family dinner, not a party," he bit out. "Outsiders are not invited. Get out."

Before Lucas could reply, another voice came from the doorway. "Come on, Fuller. Don't be such a wet blanket. It's the holiday season! The more, the merrier."

It was none other than Quince, who had a woman hanging on his arm. She was in heavy makeup and dressed in a little red gown that showed off all of her curves.

The pair came closer, and bile rose in my throat when I finally got a good view of the woman's face. Rebecca Larson.

There was no mistaking it. She seemed to have gone through another round of plastic surgery since we last met, but I could recognize that pair of eyes anywhere. No matter how much her facial features had changed, those eyes still burned with the same hatred toward me.

Many people had come and left in my life, but this woman? She simply stuck around like a persistent piece of gum on the bottom of my shoe. I scoffed internally. A bad penny always turns up.

"Long time no see," Rebecca said with a cordial smile, all harmless and ladylike. It was enough to fool an oblivious person into believing we were on good terms.

Not nearly long enough. I stopped myself from retorting and rolling my eyes at the pretense she was putting up.

Just as I was about to ask all of them to leave, however, one of the maids hurried over with an uncertain expression. "Mr. Fuller, Madam, we have more guests coming."

This was immediately followed by the sound of footsteps and the appearance of Nathaniel and Nora.

Ashton and I shared a look of aggravation. Both of us were probably thinking of the same thing: Way to ruin our family dinner.

“Festive occasions are meant for family and friends, am I right?” Nathaniel said, smiling brazenly before turning to the maid. “Could you get us a drink, please?”

The maid looked at me and my husband for a cue. When we offered no objection, she mumbled a quick assent and headed toward the kitchen.

Nathaniel and Nora took their seats opposite me, heedless of the strong “get out” vibes coming from Ashton.

My husband’s expression grew progressively darker with each passing second.

After several moments of terse, awkward silence, Quince, who seemed to have noticed the tension between Ashton and Nathaniel, was the first to speak up. “Hey there,” he introduced himself to the latter, “I’m Quince, a friend of Fuller. Nice to meet you, man.”

I knew what he was thinking—the enemy of my enemy is my friend. If those two were to form an alliance against Ashton and me, they could stir up some real trouble.

Unfortunately, there was nothing much we could do since we did not exactly have anything on Nathaniel to flush him out of our lives, nor were we able to take down the Skull gang at the moment.

To my surprise, however, Nathaniel completely ignored Quince. The former continued to sip from the champagne flute that the maid brought over, seemingly in a world of his own.

Chapter 1686 The Type To Forgive And Forget

Ashton glanced at his younger brother. I knew he, too, was wondering just what game Nathaniel was trying to play.

Having received no response, Quince's smile slipped off his face. Sulking, he took a gulp of drink and slammed the glass on the table in a display of displeasure.

Rebecca immediately sidled up to him. "Mr. Quince, forget about that guy. Here, let me have a drink with you," she said, throwing a flirtatious smile at the man and raising her glass at him.

Placated, Quince's expression eased.

Meanwhile, Nathaniel placed the champagne flute on the table and turned to look Ashton in the eyes. "I love new year's eve," he drawled as if he was only making small conversation. "It's such a great occasion for new and old friends to gather, isn't it? Speaking of, I happened to run into an old friend of yours today, Ashton."

The latter said nothing and merely narrowed his eyes. The icy aura around him, however, spoke volumes about what he thought of the other's remarks. Under normal circumstances, the dark look was enough to shut a man up instantly, but Nathaniel remained unfazed.

"Aren't you curious as to whom it was?" he asked my husband with an expression of picture-perfect innocence. "Well, I know you'd want to meet him, so I took the liberty to invite him here. You aren't going to blame me, are you, my dear brother?"

"Out with it," I snapped, sick with his baiting. "Who else is coming here today?"

Nathaniel smirked, eyes flashing behind his glasses. "Ah. My apologies. I should've known that you'd be more eager to meet that friend, Scarlett."

He glanced at the doorway and called out, "You can come in now. Scarlett doesn't seem to be holding a grudge."

A grudge? What is he saying? I followed his line of vision and saw a man in his fifties stepping inside hesitantly.

Dressed in plain and unassuming clothes, the man bent his head in a subdued manner. "M-Mrs Fuller. You look well..." he mumbled timidly.

"I'm sorry... Do I know you?" I asked, bewildered.

While I had no idea who this man was, his face seemed to have rung a bell for Rebecca. She regarded him with a pensive look. "Have we met somewhere before?"

"Oh, you don't remember? This is Mr. Roger Melton," Nathaniel told me. "Back when the Fuller Corporation was expanding, Mr. Melton's company, Vista Sun Corporation, was the first to be acquired by your husband."

Okay, so what? Fuller Corporation has acquired countless companies over the years. I certainly don't know all of them. Not to mention that the mergers and acquisitions don't even fall under my jurisdiction. How am I to know who this so-called Mr. Roger Melton is?

At my blank expression, Nora chuckled, though it was not a kind sound. "Well, Scarlett, you really are the type to forgive and forget, huh? I'm impressed."

The mocking tone had me frown in vexation. She used to be a straightforward and open character. It was as if her sarcasm grew in direct proportion to her antagonism toward me.

I ignored her and instead turned to Ashton for a clue of the man's identity. He usually had an eidetic memory. I was certain he would know who that man was.

My husband sent me a soothing look before his gaze turned steely on the rest. "Vista Sun was already on the decline back then. It was only a matter of time before it would be flushed out of the race. If anything, the acquisition helped their business."

In a way, what Ashton said was true. Times were changing, and businesses that could not keep up would inevitably fold as they lost their competitive edge to others. As a business leader, Ashton was only doing what he had to do to ensure the survival and growth of his own company.

Chapter 1687 A Wet Blanket

Roger Melton looked ashamed. "Mr. Fuller is right," he said ingratiatingly. "My company was already struggling. Even if it weren't taken over by Fuller Corporation, it would be snapped up by another corporation. The fault was on me; I didn't manage my business well. But I didn't realize it at the time and went on to commit a mistake that I'd come to regret even till this day..."

He fell to his knees, expression wild with desperation and remorse. "Mrs. Fuller, please, I'm so sorry for what I did to you back then! I'll do whatever you want, but please don't go after my family. I'm begging you!"

I was becoming more bemused by the second. "Hold on... I'm not even sure what you did. What did you do that has you begging for my forgiveness?"

Roger faltered. "I-I can't say it..." he mumbled in apprehension, refusing to look at me in the eyes.

I raised a brow. Thinking that he was being unnecessarily melodramatic, I could feel what remained of my patience quickly evaporating. "If you aren't even going to elaborate, then please kindly leave."

As if it's not enough that all these people are here to ruin the dinner I'm having with my family. I now have a random man begging for my forgiveness for something I have no recollection of!

I motioned for the maids. "Escort this gentleman out, now."

Two of them stepped forward at once and tried to drag him away.

Roger appeared even more panicky than before. He broke free of the maids' hold and fell once more to his knees. "No... Please don't turn me away, Mrs. Fuller! I'll talk..."

He took a deep breath before continuing. "It's true that I didn't manage my company well back then, but my employees were loyal to me, and I had hopes of toughing it out with their support. But Fuller Corporation took an offensive approach and orchestrated a hostile takeover, and I was forced to sign over my company in less than a month. I was resentful, so my friend suggested that I find some way to take revenge. I wasn't thinking clearly at that time and actually did what he said, which was to hire some thugs t-to—"

"Shut up!" Ashton roared.

I snapped my attention to him. What's going on?

Roger's mouth clicked shut at once. A tense silence descended upon the room. From my peripheral, however, I could see the corners of Nathaniel's mouth curling upward into a small, satisfied smirk. Was it his goal all along to bring Roger here to spite Ashton?

"I'm only going to say this once—you need to leave, now," Ashton said in a calm voice, but there was a tempest brewing in his eyes.

"I..." Caught in a dilemma, Roger cast alternating glances at me and Ashton.

I was about to ask my husband to let the man finish his story when Rebecca spoke up. "We're all waiting to hear what happened next. Don't be such a wet blanket, Ashton." The way she spat out his name told me that all of her love for him had warped into hate.

Smiling, she walked up to Roger, who was still kneeling. "Come on, let's hear it then. What did you do to Scarlett? I'm dying to find out if she's really the type to forgive and forget."