

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 369-373

Chapter 369

I felt his body stiffen up. Without allowing him respite for a response, I continued. "When I got married to you, I thought the world of you, like the prince that every girl deserves. It was a blessing, and I will always treasure what we have. That is why I have made my peace with whatever you did with Rebecca all those years ago. I thought that if I were by your side long enough, you would be able to see the good in me and treat me better. But it's been three years."

"Yes, you're attentive to me now. But let's be realistic. This feels worse than when you ignored me. I'm so tired of this. Whenever I think of you, all I could think of is to escape. The love I have for you is nowhere near enough to keep me going down this path with you. For that, and everything else, I am sorry."

The atmosphere in the room was cold with solitude. He didn't speak. The silence was desolate.

After a long while, he spoke. "What would you like me to do to make you stay?" he asked quietly.

I was momentarily startled and didn't know what to say.

Taking advantage of the moment, he flipped me around so that we were face to face. "Scarlett, I'm trying very hard to save our marriage here. Tell me, what do you want?"

We locked eyes again. I felt exhausted and closed my eyes. I didn't feel at all like replying.

Yes, the problem was with me. I was crazy. I didn't know how to tell him what was wrong with me, because whenever we ran into the tiniest of obstacles, we would fight like cats and dogs until both of us were drained.

I knew that divorce wasn't the solution, but I really didn't know what is.

"Ashton, I..."

"I know. Whatever you want to do in the future, just let me know ahead of time. You can go on managing affairs of the White family, just don't get yourself in too deep. Other than that, you can do whatever you like. We'll have better days ahead. Stay with me, Scarlett, will you?"

I never knew he was capable of speaking with me this calmly. His tone was full of pleading and compromise.

As if from the start, our thoughts had been different. I wanted to run whereas he wanted to stay and fix things.

I didn't speak; I felt awful. It was a restless night. Perhaps because I was mentally occupied, or maybe I felt lost.

I awoke naturally the next day. Upon opening my eyes, I found Ashton looking at me with a smile on his face.

"What is it?" I asked, startled.

"Have you thought about it?" Ashton lowered his gaze, his eyes dark as a stormy sea.

I felt strange.

I suddenly recalled my encounter with the herbal remedy, I had the suspicion that this discomfort had something to do with that.

I debated with myself for a moment, and got up and went into the bathroom. The doctor advised that in conjunction with the herbal remedy, I should massage myself and see if anything comes out.

I turned on the shower and got in. While I rinsed myself, I pressed my breasts gingerly. It felt strange; I must have done something wrong. No milk emerged, but it hurt like hell.

Ashton entered at a moment when I was pumping myself in desperation. I almost fell over from his sudden appearance.

He was silent for several moments in shock at my antics. "What're you doing?" he demanded.

I...

Can I be straight with him and tell him that I'm trying to induce lactation?

I grabbed my towel and wrapped myself up. I threw a casual glance at him and replied, "Nothing, I'm just taking a shower."

That excuse was so lame!

Ashton looked disbelieving. He blocked my path as I was leaving. "Tell me now or I'll ask Jackson," he threatened as his eyes narrowed.

I...

"Summer is Macy's baby. She was premature and because she had not had mother's milk, she has been sickly and frail, so that's why I'm..." I blurted out in a rush, not even completing my sentence. But he understood.

Ashton bit his lip, looking abashed. "So you were thinking of feeding her yourself?"

"What else do you need to do?" He sighed, looking resigned.

We were all adults. Anyway, I had delivered a baby before. I looked at him and said, "When I gave birth, I still had milk of my own. After that, when I lost my baby, I didn't have to feed. Which stopped the prolactin secretion."

"So is that why you were trying by yourself?" Ashton frowned, looking slightly unhappy. "What did you eat yesterday?"

"Some herbal remedy which would induce lactation," I replied truthfully.

"The doctor said, coupled with massages and other methods..." I bit my lip and left the sentence hanging.

"Massage and other methods?" Ashton chuckled. "Self-massage? And how would you carry out the other methods?"

"If you have something you'd like to say, spill it," I retorted angrily.

He fell silent at that.

After a long while, I said, "The child was premature and is very frail. Without the milk of a mother, she looks like a newborn despite being three months old. Ashton, I grew up as an orphan and my grandmother raised me. It was a blessing, but now that Grandma and Macy are gone, this child is now my responsibility and I will do my best to protect her."

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I did not know how to love, or even how to receive love, but I did know that it meant to treat them well.

Love is the reason why I was considerate on his behalf. I felt this way for this child. All I could do, I would do for her, and do it well.

Ashton looked at me thoughtfully. "And what about me? Am I even somebody important in your life? All Marcus left for you are regrets. What about me? Does it make a difference to you that we are married?"

I knew perfectly well what Ashton wanted. He wanted me to need him and hold him in my heart.

The light in the bedroom was dim, but his eyes appeared strangely bright. We stared at each other; I was at a loss for words.

After a long while, Ashton let go of me and stepped back a few paces dejectedly. He smiled sarcastically to himself.

"Good for you, Scarlett." He turned to leave, but I reached out and grabbed his arm.

I had things I wanted to say to him from my heart, and almost instinctively, I blurted, "I want more than anybody else to place you first, but I'm afraid that if one day I find myself unable to leave you, you'll be the one to leave."

He turned back and looked at me with a penetrative gaze. "Was that why you neglected my feelings? Out of all the people in your heart, you chose to hurt only me?"

I shook my head and felt terrible about the pain in his eyes. "No, I've never meant to hurt you. I just don't feel secure. I'm afraid that you would leave me and not want me anymore."

Ashton was startled. His slim frame stiffened as he pulled me in for a tight hug. "Don't be silly," he whispered huskily in my ear.

We hugged for a while, with my head on his chest. "No matter how badly we fight, we should never threaten to leave each other, alright? Scarlett, I will never let you go, and I'll never divorce you."

I said nothing. I was stupid for not knowing how to be married.

It was the end of the year. Most of the staff in the company were on leave, but Ashton was still here.

Mrs. Eriksen did not celebrate New Year's with us, so it was only me and Ashton left.

I brought him over to Glenwood. Nick was still hard at work as his company did not allow leaves, and Jackson was busy caring for Summer.

When he opened the door to me and Ashton, he froze in surprise. Swiftly, he rearranged his features into an expression of serene indifference and reported, "Summer just fell asleep."

I nodded and entered. "Was she alright last night?"

"Yeah, not too bad," he replied as his gaze fell on Ashton and quickly looked away.

I recalled his incident at the college and attempted to make introductions. "This is Jackson, my friend from college. You should be acquainted with him."

Jackson glared at me. Turning to Ashton, he smiled apologetically and said, "Mr. Fuller, nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you too," Ashton responded.

Ashton exuded a cold and unfriendly presence; I found him unapproachable. After introductions with Jackson, he left to visit Summer.

I tugged on Ashton's arm and followed Jackson to Summer's bedroom. She had her milk formula and was fast asleep.

Ashton looked stunned when he saw Summer and raised his hand as if to caress her, but pulled back on second thought.

I guess all men are like that. They don't know how to deal with newborns.

Jackson brought Summer's dirty clothes to the laundry room. "Do you plan on taking the medicine today?" He turned to me and asked.

It was an awkward moment. I looked away at Summer's underfed frame and nodded. "Yes."

He stole a glance at Ashton and saw him watching the child too. Jackson raised his eyebrows and departed the room, leaving behind me and Ashton.

He was transfixed by Summer. After a long while of staring at her, he asked, "Is she Jared's?"

I did not expect him to ask this. "No..." I jumped and shook my head.

I sensed his inquiring gaze and lowered mine. The words that came to my lips went unsaid.

"Does Jared know?" he went on as he stroked Summer's cheek with one long finger.

"No, he doesn't," I replied. As Ashton probably guessed everything at this point, I had no reason to hide it from him anymore.

He nodded and watched as Summer smiled in her sleep. It was a pretty sight. “We’ll let Mr. Kane make the preparations, and then we’ll register her. Since it’s the New Year, we could take her back to my family and let them meet her.”

Ashton noticed that I didn’t respond and frowned. “What is it?” he asked.

“Nothing.” I shook my head, but my heart was filled with a warm glow.

“Thank you, Ashton!” I said after a brief pause. Caring for Summer was something I had to do, and it really made matters easier for me that he decided to think of her as his own.

Jackson prepared the herbal remedy for me. It was a big bowl of dark liquid, and it made my stomach turn just looking at it. But it had to be done.

I pinched my nose and gulped it down. Almost by reflex, Jackson handed me a lozenge. “The doctor said that you need to massage yourself along with the medicine, and an adult should test it out.”

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He said it as a matter of fact, and it slowly dawned on him how inappropriate it sounded. Jackson glanced embarrassingly at Ashton and promptly left the room.

“It’s not good to take so much of that, you know,” Ashton said.

I grunted in agreement, as my gaze fell on Summer. “I want to visit the hospital in a while.”

“I’ll accompany you.” Ashton volunteered.

I wanted to reject, but Summer chose that moment to wake up and cry loudly.

I wasn't good with comforting infants and did not dare lift her up, so I scrambled out to fetch Jackson.

He was in the kitchen. He did not know how to cook so he employed a housekeeper. He heard Summer too and was on his way over.

"She must be hungry," Jackson said as he grabbed the milk bottles.

I followed close behind. He suddenly stopped in his tracks and I ran right into him.

"Jackson, you..." I clutched my nose which seemed to have received most of the force from the collision. He and I were both stunned.

When we returned, we found Summer already in Ashton's arms, tiny and frail like a newborn.

Summer stopped crying. She stared adoringly up at Ashton with her large unblinking eyes.

Jackson was surprised. He strode over and gave the bottle to Ashton. "She should be hungry, try feeding her," Jackson said as he let out a cough.

Ashton sat down and coaxed the bottle to Summer's lips with tenderness.

Usually cold and haughty, he couldn't have been more different than when he sat there with the baby in his arms. I was at a loss for words, and thought privately to myself at how very sweet and lovely it was, but also pretty funny.

Jackson had no words to spare and promptly exited the room.

I walked over to Ashton's side and watched Summer drink vigorously, with her eyes still latched onto him. "When did you learn to feed babies?" I asked him.

And such a small one at that.

He looked up at me. "When you were pregnant," he said simply.

"When was that?" I was completely clueless.

He pursed his lips but did not speak. He said as he gazed back down at Summer, "Let's take her back to Peakville Estate. Jackson and Nick have their hands full with their own affairs. We can't burden them with her."

I was taken aback, for I had not considered that. For a moment I did not know what to say.

He sighed at my silence. "At Peakville Estate, you would have plenty of time and help, as I would be hiring a couple of housekeepers. You would be able to calm your thoughts and spend time with the child too. When Mrs. Eriksen comes back next year, she would be there to help you, as she has plenty of experience with young children."

He looked me in the eye. "Would you agree to that?" he asked seriously.

I nodded without realizing it. When I had regained my wits, I shook my head. "I need to ask Jackson and Nick. They have been caring for the child for so long, I couldn't just leave with her. They've grown attached too; I need to consider their feelings on the matter."

Ashton nodded but didn't object.

Nick came home for lunch at noon. He brought over some fruits as well. At the dining table, I noticed that he looked vastly different from the time I first met him.

Back then, he was a carefree and boisterous fellow from a rich family with no thoughts about the future. In the span of six months, he became more reticent and considerate, as he spent most of his time caring for other people besides himself.

He noticed that I was studying him. "What is it?" he asked.

"Are you going back for the new year?" The Harrisons were not a powerful family, but they owned a lot of property. Cameron, his mother, was responsible for expanding the family wealth. Though she had an heir, Cameron never considered for him to inherit the wealth.

Nick tidied up the cutlery and froze slightly at my question. "Go back where?" he asked sullenly.

I was embarrassed and did not know how to respond.

The rest joined us at the dining table. Nick turned to Ashton. "You two should bring Summer to the Registration Office and register her," he said.

I couldn't help looking at Ashton to see how he would respond to that.

"Jackson and I have no business officially raising her," Nick said placidly. "You two are a legally married couple. It's easier for you to follow along with the procedures to adopt her."

Jackson was startled, but at Nick's words, he fell into thought.

Ashton grunted in approval and cast his eyes on Summer. "I'll deal with this as quickly as I can," he assured Nick.

Nick nodded. "My mother would like to invite all of you for a meal," he informed after a pause.

Cameron?

I was startled. "All of us?"

Rebecca was her daughter. Though it was a while ago, the fact that I'd hurt her and made her famous for the wrong reasons remained vividly on everyone's minds. Cameron was willing to invite me for a meal after all that?

Nick nodded. "You and Ashton as well."

I glanced at Ashton instinctively. He nodded his consent as well.

After lunch, we parted ways. Nick made his way back to the office while Ashton and I took Summer for registration.

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I brooded for a good long while. "Isn't Nick Cameron's biological son?" I asked Ashton, breaking the silence.

It was obvious how much Cameron loves Rebecca. But she treated Nick completely differently. She was negligent and dismissive of him.

Ashton started the engine. With his eyes on the road, he grunted in acknowledgment. "When Nick's father married Cameron, his birth mother had already passed away from an accident. He was in his early teens when Cameron became his stepmother."

Early teens. He was old enough by then. Nick did not feel much affection towards Cameron as well.

“Why did Cameron invite all of us for a meal?” Logically, I would be the last person she wants to meet.

At a red light, Ashton pulled the handbrake and turned to me. “Are you still feeling a grudge?”

“What grudge?” I was startled.

“Towards Cameron and Rebecca?”

I bit my lip and glanced towards Summer, who was fast asleep. “Life is long, we have to move forward one way or another,” I answered evasively.

It wasn’t possible for me to stay where I was. The matter with Macy and the child was out of my control. What was within my control was the ability to make my peace with it.

Furthermore, Rebecca and Cameron weren’t doing so well themselves.

The process of registering for Summer was surprisingly easy. It was credited to Ashton’s influence within J City. He had good relations and decent financial capabilities. He must have pulled some strings to get the matter resolved for us without them asking us too many questions.

Ashton glanced over at my household register and smiled. “There’s a third member of our little family.”

“Has your Household Register always been at R Province?” He suddenly frowned.

I nodded. “When we got married, Grandpa told me to move it over here. But I was thinking of Grandma. She would be left alone if I did that.”

Ashton raised an eyebrow. “Didn’t you and John create your accounts together?”

I shook my head. "When his father sent him to us, he was almost a grown man. The Stovalls found him at Grandma's and took him away. I think his registration was created by his father under the Stovall name."

Ashton narrowed his eyes. "The Stovall family is influential in K City. Have you ever thought about why John's father chose your grandmother out of all the other families?"

"It could be due to the circumstances at that time," I replied, nonplussed. "It was twenty years ago, who could remember?"

He frowned and carried Summer to the car. "A lonely old lady in a forlorn county town was somehow acquainted with the heir apparent of the Stovall family from K City, and a famous merchant in J City. Scarlett, don't you think that this is an astonishing coincidence?"

I thought hard about Grandma knowing old Mr. Fuller in the past. I did think that it was a coincidence. When she brought me out of R Province, she told me that old Mr. Fuller was an old friend of hers.

I did not think much of it at the time. Looking back at it now, however, it did seem strange. Grandma spent her entire life in a tiny county within R Province. How on earth did she come to befriend a man from a powerful family in another city?

The more I thought about it, the more it gnawed at me. Now that Grandma was gone, I couldn't find out about their connection.

"There's no use in investigating about the past. Forget about it. It's cold outside, let's hurry up and bring Summer home," Ashton said.

I directed my thoughts towards the plan of moving with Summer to Peakville Estate. She may not like the sudden change, so Jackson and I agreed to have her at Peakville Estate by day and at Glenwood at night.

After a hectic day, we got home late to Peakville Estate.

I was rather tired. When the car pulled up and I threw open the door, Ashton appeared to lift me up in his arms before I had the chance to react. He carried me all the way into the villa.

After several moments of startled silence, I said, "Ashton, let me down. I can walk on my own."

I was dreadfully thin after giving birth. Ashton didn't seem to exert himself overly much when he carried me.

At the door, he shot me a sly look that plainly said he had no intention of letting me down. "Open the door!" he commanded.

I reached out and scanned my thumb. The front door swung open. He carried me past the living room and straight into the bedroom on the second floor.

He dropped me on the bed and climbed on top of me. It was intimate being in his arms.

We were all adults. Naturally, I knew what was coming up next, but I felt a little awkward all the same.

"Ashton..."

At the sound of his name, he looked at me with his dark eyes. "Never leave me again for any reason," he said hoarsely, his Adam's apple shifted seductively. "You must know that you're my wife. You can depend on me for any problems you have. Please think of me whenever you run into any difficulties. Only me!"

I felt my eyes shift dreamily. "Thank you, Ashton."

He nuzzled his face close to my ear and chuckled. "No need to thank me. Let's get practical."

He laughed again at the surprised expression on my face and pulled me into his arms. "You're too thin. We'll get you started on a nutritious diet tomorrow onwards, or people will start talking about how I'm starving my wife."

I bit my trembling lip. I had in my heart appreciation for that man which I did not truly know how to express.

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He held me even tighter. "Tomorrow we'll bring Summer over to live with us."

I nodded, not quite knowing what to say.

Ashton seemed exceedingly warm and gentle that night. I'm not sure what caused it, but I couldn't quell the suspicions that arose in my heart.

I woke up the next day and found no trace of him next to me.

He was already dressed and stood by the window. "Why don't you sleep a little while longer?" he said as he turned to me.

"Are you going out?" His clothes were prim and he was in a splendid mood; even went out of his way to style his hair. He looked even more dashing that way.

Ashton came closer and pecked my forehead. "I'm leaving to fetch Summer," he informed me. "Just trying some clothes to see if they're a good fit."

I laughed involuntarily. "You're just picking her up, why do you need to dress so formally?"

And did his hair.

He chuckled and passed his necktie to me. "I'm a father now. I have to look good for my daughter."

I tied his tie neatly for him. "She's only three months old, what impression are you hoping to leave?" I giggled.

He bent down and examined his tie. "How does it look?" he asked happily.

There was nothing much I could say but nod.

I stretched and was prepared to get up from the bed when I was struck by a sudden bout of intense pain. I stared at him in a fury. "Ashton you b*stard!"

He was taken aback at my outburst. "What is it?"

I pursed my lips and was about to get out of bed when he scooped me up in his arms. "I'm sorry, I'll be more careful next time."

I glared at him again as he carried me into the bathroom. I washed my face and brushed my teeth, as I was still held by him.

"Ashton, if you're going to do this again, we'll sleep in separate beds," I said.

He raised his eyebrows and put me down. "How about what you did?"

I froze in surprise. What have I done?

He bit his lip in a terrible attempt to keep from smiling and looked at me knowingly. It was a while before I noticed a patch of white fluid on his shirt.

To my horror, I realized that it was my breast milk! My face grew red hot. "I... I didn't ask you to carry me!" I stuttered.

"Noted. I'll be more careful next time," Ashton said as he smiled wickedly.

I...

"That's fine. As long as you keep feeding Summer, it won't be uncontrollable like this. It's normal for women who were recently pregnant. By the looks of it, Summer would have more than she needs," Ashton said as he took off the soiled jacket.

I ignored him. After I shoved him out of the bathroom, I proceeded to clean myself up.

When I got dressed, I found Ashton downstairs preparing breakfast.

"Have some breakfast before going!" he called out when he saw me.

"Let's go now," I declared as I picked up my purse. I was in no mood for breakfast.

Ashton felt helpless at my petulance. He scooped up two boiled eggs and handed them to me. "Eat them in the car."

He then grabbed his keys and left the house with me.

Throughout the journey, I was reluctant to speak to him. "I found two housekeepers," he said, in an attempt to break the awkwardness. "Give them a go, and if you think they're not a good fit, we'll find new ones after the new year, okay?"

“Alright,” I said, and lapsed back into silence.

I could sense that Ashton was looking for ways to remain conversational with me. “When we get Summer, we’ll drop by the hospital.” He tried again.

“For what?” I asked, in spite of myself.

He raised his eyebrows and smiled. “You don’t plan on undergoing treatment every time you feel discomfort?”

I...

“How would you treat this sort of thing?” This was a psychological problem, not a physiological one.

“All illnesses can be treated. It depends on the doctor.”

After a pause, he continued. “Furthermore, you’ve been losing sleep. It won’t do to let this problem drag on.”

“It’s been much better recently,” I retorted in an effort to defend myself. He wasn’t aware that I had trouble sleeping when I lost my child. But it’s been much better since I knew that Summer is coming to live with us.

He bit his lip again, barely suppressing his amusement. “If every night is going to be like last night, are you planning on wringing me dry?” he asked, with a mischievous glint in his eye.

I...

I looked up at him and said in a level voice, “If you don’t come on to me, how would I wring you dry?”

“When did you become this confused?” Ashton frowned as he held the wheel.

As he said that, he took my hand in his and kissed it. "If your reaction has slowed down, and if it's happened multiple times, it won't heal up as well. You still need to visit the hospital in the future."

I stared at him defiantly. "If you didn't touch me, it wouldn't have happened!"

His gaze darkened. "So your plan is to deprive me to death?"

This man and his filthy mouth. How could he say such wicked things!

"That's fine by me too. If you're dead, Summer and I can inherit your money and we wouldn't have to worry about anything for the rest of our lives." I was in a huffy mood.

"You wish!" He stopped the car at a red light. Taking the opportunity, he bit me on the hand, hard.

It felt like a punishment.

He raised his eyebrows at the two eggs still clutched in my hand. "Hurry up and eat them."

