

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 673-677

Chapter 673

It was a complicated relationship, and I didn't think that I could explain it clearly within that half an hour.

In the end, I could only run from it.

There wasn't much to do when I first joined Murphy Corporation. Furthermore, Armond already had Linda as his efficient secretary. And that's why my job was relatively easy.

"Scarlett, you need to go through these documents and read the content of the contract. Then you'll need to arrange for Mr. Murphy's schedule for tomorrow." Linda gave me a brief instruction while looking at her mobile phone.

I couldn't help but ask, "Is something wrong, Linda?"

She nodded. "I'm going to pick up my daughter in a short while. I have to leave ten minutes in advance to beat the traffic."

I studied her appearance and felt that she didn't look a day over forty. "You have a daughter, but you still look so young. I wouldn't have thought that you have a daughter if you didn't tell me."

She looked at me and smiled. "I'm flattered, Scarlett. Thank you. I have to go now."

With her bag in hand, she left in a hurry.

Before I could pack my things, I saw a man in a black suit coming out of his office.

“Is there anything else, Mr. Murphy?” I instinctively looked at the time and noticed that it’s after work hours. This can’t be work-related.

He raised his brow and said, “Nora asked us for dinner. Let’s go together.”

I was stunned for a moment. “She invited you?” That’s really bold of Nora.

He nodded. “Let’s go.”

He was a man of little words.

After getting into the car, I started to wonder how Nora managed to get his number. I couldn’t help but ask, “When did Nora have your number?”

He raised his eyebrows and started the car. “We exchanged numbers at the airport.”

I was speechless.

She’s good. I’ll give her that.

When we stopped at the traffic light, I couldn’t help but think of Linda. So, I asked him, “Mr. Murphy, has Linda been your secretary for many years?”

He looked at me from the corner of his eye and answered indifferently, “She used to work with my grandfather. She’s a great employee, and that’s why my grandfather arranged for her to work with me.”

I nodded. That's obvious.

He raised an eyebrow. "Why did you ask?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just curious. Most secretaries are young and beautiful, but Linda is middle-aged and has a family of her own. That's why I asked."

He frowned before he sneered at me, "You've been reading too many romance novels. Being a secretary doesn't come with that kind of scandalous plot. To be a secretary is all about capability, not looks. Does that mean you see me as a pervert?"

I was stumped.

"Of course not." I shook my head.

He grunted and told me off. "Read more of non-fiction books."

Me? What the?

Was I being insulted?

At Zero Degrees' entrance.

Nora was dressed in a sexy short black dress and was wearing makeup. Because of her good figure, she was catching a lot of attention by standing at the door.

After getting out of the car, Armond threw his keys to the valet.

Nora greeted him with a smile. "Mr. Murphy, I'm surprised that you came. Thank you for showing up."

Then she turned to me with a charming smile on her face and said, "I thought Ms. Stovall said you couldn't come. So, why are you here? Unless this is part of being on-call?"

I rolled my eyes at her and ignored her teasing. Then I leaned closer to her and asked, "Why are you dressed to the nines? Are you planning to hook up with someone?"

"You read my mind." She smiled brightly, then she leaned closer to me and said, "I'm going for Mr. Murphy tonight. You can't have him, Babe. You're a married woman."

What more could I say? I looked at her and nodded. "Best of luck to you."

In fact, Armond was one of the most eligible bachelors around. Handsome and rich, he came from a prominent family. Ordinary girls would not have the chance to be up close and personal with him. This was definitely an opportunity not to be missed.

Nora booked a private room and proceeded to the second floor for entertainment. It seemed that tonight was going to be a full-blown party.

I was surprised to see Tessa in the private room. Instead of letting it get to me, I sat down and greeted her.

"It wasn't me who invited Tessa. It was Tabitha who did." Nora leaned closer to me and said into my ear. "I should have told Tabitha earlier not to invite her. This is so annoying."

I responded with a smile.

I thought a man like Armond wouldn't like to past his time in this manner.

But he didn't seem to be uncomfortable in such a scene. On the contrary, he was having a good time drinking and chatting with everyone. I, on the other hand, was a little confused.

Feeling a little hot from drinking, I got up and excused myself to the washroom.

At the sound of footsteps behind me, I turned around and saw Tessa following behind my back. I froze for a moment before asking, "Are you going to the washroom?"

She nodded and answered coldly, "Yes."

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Saying no more, I went into the washroom to wash my face. She was already gone when I came out.

Stepping onto the soft carpeted floor in the corridor made me have a newfound appreciation for all the familiar things in my life.

"Ah!" a voice rang from a few yards away. It was Tessa.

I took a few steps forward and saw Tessa leaning against a black-suited man. She appeared to have sprained her ankle.

The man was someone all too familiar, someone I had been missing for such a long time. Bumping into him under such circumstances rendered me a little speechless as my steps hesitated.

"Sir, can you hold me, please? I think I have sprained my ankle," Tessa said while wrapping her arms around Ashton's.

The man raised his eyebrow and there was a perceptible distaste in his eyes. But the bearing of a gentleman in him would not allow him to push away a damsel in distress, hence he shot a side glance at Joseph, indicating him to take over.

Ashton then distanced himself from Tessa and was about to leave when his eyes met with mine. Not knowing what to say to him, I subconsciously wanted to avoid a direct encounter with him.

I turned around and started running away from his direction.

His steps, however, caught up with mine in no time and before I knew it, his familiar scent filled my nostrils as he held onto me from behind.

Before I had any time to respond, Ashton pulled me into an empty private room.

Inside the dark room, the man's lips landed on mine in a desperate and domineering kiss.

Our pounding heartbeats were audible in the still air inside the room.

My back was pressed against the wall by him and I was out of breath as his passionate and fervent kiss had almost sucked out all the oxygen from my lungs.

After a while, he finally moved his lips away from mine.

His strong arms had stopped my attempt to break away from his embrace as he spoke in his low and coarse voice, "How much further do you plan to push me away?"

My heart ached immensely upon hearing that, but instead of replying to his rhetorical question, I didn't stop him from planting more punishing kisses on my body.

"People used to tell me that poppies are very beautiful flowers. But I've never seen it in my life until I came across a field of fully bloomed poppies in Venria. I still remember vividly what they smelled like.

It's true when people say that once you are addicted to it, you are addicted for life. Ashton, you're like my poppy," I uttered in the dark, feeling a little self-conflicted.

Ashton's breaths were heavy. I couldn't make out his features clearly in the dark, but I could almost imagine his expression.

"What were you doing in Venria?" His hands were still holding tight onto my back as he asked, as though the moment he let go, I'll make a dash for the door.

After failing to come to a reasonable response to the question, I opted for an ambiguous one. "I just did."

He might have frowned and asked tentatively, "To get away from me?"

I pursed my lips and offered no explanation. It's not the worst idea for him to misunderstand. Haven't I already vowed to stay away from him since I won't be able to promise him a future? It's better to suffer now than to live a long life of regrets.

The hand holding onto my back loosened a little as he asked, "Who did you go with?"

I couldn't think of a better way to reply to him than to turn his question around, "The question you should be asking is, who did I come back with?"

The air became frosty in the room as he now seemed to be a little stirred up.

"Scarlett, this is not how things should be between us. You know in your heart that we belong together. There's nothing that can separate us."

Pursing my lips, I pried open his hand on my back and said coldly, "Ashton, I don't love you anymore. I cannot imagine spending the rest of my life with you because every time I look at you, I'll be reminded of my baby who had died horribly. There's no way I can forgive you for taking away my only chance to be a mother. You're a constant living reminder of a past that's like a dagger in my heart. So, I beg of you, Ashton, please let me go."

His lanky figure staggered in the dark. I couldn't see his expression clearly, but his choked-up voice was enough to indicate his despair and sorrow.

Maybe that will finally make him let go.

"Is there really no other way?" his voice catching in his throat.

I sniffled, trying to hold back the tear that's welling up in my eyes. "No. There isn't. Ashton, let this go. Let us both search for where we really belong and find peace for our minds."

For the first time, my body literally hurt with each breath I took. It was as though all the nerves in my body were pinched at the same time.

Ashton smiled wistfully as he spoke, "Scarlett, what do you mean we both search for where we really belong? You think just because you can walk away like that, so can everyone else?"

Biting my lips, I refused to let him talk me out of it. I was fighting a strong urge to leap into his arms and tell him that I didn't want to leave him, not even one bit.

I finally left the private room and met with Nora and the gang.

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A few of them looked at me in confusion. "Are you constipated?"

No one but Nora was capable of making such a crass comment.

Rolling my eyes, I resumed my seat and replied, "I bumped into a friend that's all."

My reply seemed to have piqued her interests even more. "What friend? Is it a he or she?" Is he handsome?"

Oh dear...

Tessa's gaze fell on me; her lips pursed with traces of disdain.

I lost my appetite after taking a few bites when Nora suggested a karaoke session on the second floor.

Everyone agreed to her suggestion. After all, they did promise themselves to play hard after returning home from Western Europe.

The second floor was full of private rooms for karaoke with a big pool hall in the middle. Customers who did not fancy singing karaoke could spend time playing pool out here. I regarded this to be a very thoughtful design.

I was terribly tone-deaf and could neither sing nor dance. Tessa seemed to view karaoke singing in the same light. But it could just be that she didn't like it at all. For all that I knew, we both disliked the rowdy environment.

After spending some time in our private room, I excused myself to get some air.

But mostly because Nora kept shooting me looks to get out of her way so she could spend some private time with Armond.

Armond was usually distant and reserved. I couldn't help but suspect something was wired wrongly for him tonight to subject himself to such discordant singings by a few girls.

Outside the karaoke rooms, the pool hall was now filled with a few men in groups and maybe two or three women in between. Pool was not a very popular sport in this area.

After searching for a while, I found a bench on the side and sat down with my chin rested on my hands, spacing out.

Before long, a figure took a seat next to me. It took me a few seconds to turn around and realized it was Tessa.

We had had very few exchanges throughout the night; thus I was a little taken by surprise when she sat down next to me.

“Did you know the man from just now?” she asked coldly.

I tilted my head in her direction and realized she wasn’t even looking at me. Her gaze was falling right ahead at those playing pool in front of us.

The man?

When it finally dawned on me which man she was referring to, I pursed my lips and hesitated for a brief moment before I answered her question, “What about it?”

Tessa was fiddling with her hands as she spoke, “I believe in letting go of grievances among people. I can get over whatever had happened between us in Venria. But you have to remember that you owe me one.”

I was a little bewildered by her statement but chose to remain silent.

“Now that we’re all back to our home country and are going to remain friends, it’s not in anyone’s benefit if our relationship remains as strained as it is. Since we hang out with the same group of people and are bound to gather every so often, we might as well set aside our differences and spend time as real friends.”

I looked at her with my eyebrow raised, still puzzled by her sudden change of mind.

She misinterpreted my silence as disagreement and retorted, "There's no need to be arrogant, it's fine by me if you wish to carry on like this."

I thought for another moment and sighed. "Tessa, I think sometimes you're trapped in your own pre-conceptions. I don't see you as an enemy and I never have."

"Great! That means we're friends!" she exclaimed while holding out her hand. "Give me your phone."

She took over my phone and did a few maneuvers before handing it back to me. "I've saved my phone number and added my WhatsApp to your phone. Let's stay in touch."

Honestly, I was still a little befuddled. But since she was the one to extend an olive branch, there was no reason to shoot her down.

I nodded and kept my phone.

At that moment, I felt a warm glare in my direction. I lifted my head and met with Ashton's clear, dark eyes.

Was that a coincidence? Probably not so much, given we were dining in the same building.

Ashton seemed like he was here for business purposes. He was standing mere meters away, talking to a few middle-aged men.

The men followed the direction of his gaze and turned to me all at once when Ashton stopped short in their conversation.

They all appeared to be people of prominent status. Their stares started to make me feel uncomfortable and so I shifted my gaze from Ashton and looked elsewhere, pretending that we didn't know each other.

Tessa, on the other hand, was visibly more excited than just moments earlier. “You guys really know each other?”

“Just barely,” I uttered, thinking we should probably head back.

“Regardless, we should just go say hi!” Tessa was almost pulling on me.

I wanted to gently push her away, but she was stockier and stronger than I was, making it difficult for me to pry open her firm grip around my arm.

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As Tessa almost lifted me off the seat, I pushed her away with all my might in desperation. She then stumbled and fell onto the ground, causing the air to fill with momentary awkwardness.

She looked at me in resentment. “What are you doing, Scarlett?”

“I’m sorry, Tessa. I didn’t mean to,” I said apologetically, equally taken aback.

Just then, Ashton and his group of friends were already making their way toward us.

Probably because Tessa was in his way, Ashton shot a quick glance at Joseph, who helped Tessa up from the ground.

Out of politeness, Ashton asked, “Miss, are you alright?”

Looks of grimace instantly disappeared from Tessa's face as she stood up and replied softly, "Thank you. Scarlett and I were just talking about you. She said you guys are pretty close."

I frowned. When have I said that?

There were glimmers in Ashton's eyes as they fell on me. His voice was low and reserved as he spoke, "Have you eaten?"

I nodded at the common pleasantry. The way the group of men who continued to fix their gazes at me, however, was making me uneasy again.

A middle-aged, plump man who stood behind Ashton seemed to have picked up some cues as he spoke eagerly, "Well, looks like you're a good friend of Mr. Fuller's. What's your name, Miss? You should join us for karaoke."

It seemed like he had mistaken me for someone who might have a thing for Ashton.

I smiled faintly while shaking my head. "That's okay. I actually got to go. You guys should go ahead without me."

As I was about to leave, Tessa grabbed onto me, scanned the few people, and said, "It's not every day that we bumped into someone we know. Since Mr. Watson has extended his invitation to us, it'll be rude for us to say no."

This is Derek Watson?

My brows furrowed a little as I studied the portly man.

It would seem that Ashton had come to A City for business indeed.

A self-satisfied grin appeared on the man's face upon hearing Tessa's flattery. It was one to indicate words well said.

Ashton looked at me with his brows slightly raised to indicate his disapproval of Derek's comment earlier.

After spending so many years together, I knew him too well. Before he could respond, I chimed in with Tessa, "Ah, it's Mr. Watson. Please forgive me. It's an honor to meet you."

Derek let out a loud chuckle. He was so pleased with himself as though nothing else matters.

He then extended his hand to pull me inside their private room. My instinct was to avoid his hand, but Tessa had walled up my only escape route.

My senses were overcome with disgusts; my whole being was against the idea of being led into a room by a gross, fleshy man.

As my fight or flight response was about to lean toward the latter, I was pulled into a familiar, strong arm.

Standing firmly next to me, Ashton said in his commanding voice, "Let's move."

Everyone was startled and Derek's hand was frozen awkwardly in the air before he quickly withdrew it and let out an uncomfortable smile. "Haha, Mr. Fuller is efficient as always. Let's go."

As we walked away, I could not help but notice half of my body was enclosed by Ashton, the sight was more than suggestive to any outsider.

I tried to rub my arm from Tessa's excessive force just now when Ashton's deep voice rang softly, "What's the matter?"

Shaking my head, I simply said, "It's nothing."

Tessa was walking next to Joseph. Her chilly vision landed on me and Ashton.

If I didn't know why Tessa changed her mind and decided to befriend me earlier. Now it was clear as day to me.

With someone like Ashton, even the most esteemed socialite will surrender herself in his charms, let alone a commoner like Tessa. Besides, in her mind, despite her mediocre look and stubby build, she possesses the highest of self-esteem, not unlike those characterized by classic narcissistic personality. In her feel-good world, it'd probably take someone like Ashton to qualify for her matching prerequisites.

Inside the private room, a few of them ordered some alcoholic drinks and started to loosen up.

Before long, a few escorts arrived to keep the men company.

Joseph was a married man and had always steered clear of such regards. Ashton, on the other hand, pulled me over to sit next to him.

There were now about four to five men, each having a good time singing and dancing with the young and beautiful ladies.

While Tessa tried to keep her cool in a corner, Joseph excused himself to get some fresh air outside.

As for Derek, as much as he seemed like one who was inclined to self-indulge, he was here for business. Therefore, after a while, he got some of the girls to keep topping Ashton's wine glass and whispered something into Tessa's ear.

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Tessa then walked up to me and asked me to sing with her.

I was no idiot; it was clearly a business maneuver on Derek's part to use alcohol and pretty ladies as a social lubricant to loosen Ashton up in order to help their subsequent business discussion.

I did not like singing, and Tessa's incessant pestering was starting to get under my skin.

I finally stood up and said, "It's late, we should head back to Nora and Armond."

Tessa was momentarily taken aback, but quickly replaced her expression with a smiling face. "There's no rush. Let's have more fun here before we go!"

She then poured me a glass of wine before she continued to persuade me to stay, "Scarlett, since we are now officially friends, we should drink for it!"

This woman is just too calculative to be a good candidate for either a friend or a colleague.

But since the wine glass was already pushed into my hand, it would be rather rude for me to decline.

Before the glass touched my lips, a hand flashed before my eyes and took over the glass.

When I turned around, Ashton had already downed the glass of wine for me.

Before I snapped out of my bewilderment, Tessa said alluringly, "Mr. Fuller, are you trying to be a hero to the damsel in distress?"

The woman then looked like she tried but failed to mimic a seductive laugh. The result of which was somewhat disturbing, because, rather than a Cinderella, she now resembled a smiling Cruella.

“Mr. Fuller, I have known Scarlett a long time, but I have no idea she knows someone as charming as you. It’s such a pleasure meeting you today. Let’s keep in touch and maybe we can hang out sometime. Cheers to a new friendship!” It was the classic playbook for “How to get that guy”.

Ashton looked at me with his eyes darkened a little. I wasn’t sure what was in his mind when he took over a drink from Tessa and clinked glass with her. “Since you’re Scarlett’s friend, it’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Thank you for looking after Scarlett.”

Tessa was suddenly star-struck, for this seemed to be the first time Ashton had addressed her directly. “Ah, don’t mention it. Scarlett and I had been through life and death together, we’re friends for life now.”

Upon hearing this, Ashton was a little startled when he shifted his gaze at me quizzically. “Life and death?”

Biting my lips, I wished Tessa would just shut her big mouth.

Tessa, on the other hand, felt encouraged that Ashton seemed to be interested in what she said and happily continued, “That’s right! We were brought to Venria not long ago and had been through hell, almost losing our lives. We barely managed to escape unscathed from Venria and came back to the country in one piece. So, that’s how Scarlett and I have become friends.”

Ashton’s eyes grew increasingly inexplicable by the second. He darted a glance at Joseph who had just walked into the room.

While I still wondered what that was about, Joseph sat down next to Tessa and they started chatting away. Before long, they had exchanged phone numbers and added each other on WhatsApp.

That’s weird, I thought Joseph hates to social?

Ashton wrapped his arm around me, without caring so much about those around us. “Did you hide that from me because you didn’t want me to worry?” he asked in a lowered voice.

Pursing my lips, I replied flatly, "No."

His voice had assumed a resolute tone when he spoke smilingly in my ear next moment, "I don't know the meaning of freedom, so I will not let you go. Since you refuse to walk toward me, I'll walk toward you."

The man's profession had caused a sudden warm stream to flash across my heart. To conceal my emotions, I lowered my gaze and gulped down another drink.

"If you wish to torture me, you may continue so," I said while attempting to sound calm and collected.

His arm tightened around me. "Do you have to be like this?" his voice was croaky.

I pursed my lips and downed a few more drinks.

In the meantime, Tessa had attempted a few times to strike up a conversation with Ashton, but each time, her attempt was blocked by Joseph.

Finally, feeling fed up, she stood up and looked at me. "Scarlett, I think it's time to go back. Nora might be looking for us now."

I nodded, wishing she had said that a long while ago.

Before I could stand up though, Ashton's arm pressed against my shoulder as he turned to Joseph and ordered, "Send Ms. Dixon back."

An annoyance crept up Tessa's face as she spoke, "Mr. Fuller, Scarlett, and I came together. I think it only makes sense that she leaves with me."

"That's not necessary. I'll send her back later."

“I don’t think that’s very appropriate, Mr. Fuller. Scarlett is a married woman, I’m sure her husband will be worried if she’s back late. Please don’t make this difficult for me.”

Tessa’s rapid revelation of my private life had successfully attracted the gazes of a few people who had paid no attention to me. Everyone was now holding their breaths to see how things were going to pan out.

Ashton smiled playfully as his vision fell on me. “That’s good. Keep it up”

What the...

Seeing that Ashton was unfazed by her presumably new information, Tessa turned to me and smiled knowingly. “So, Mr. Fuller. Does this mean you’re already aware that Scarlett is married?”

“Hmm.” The man nodded. “Ms. Dixon, please get going.”

Upon hearing the ambiguous reply from Ashton, a menacing smile spread across Tessa’s face.