

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 768-772

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With that, he grabbed his jacket and left the room.

Armond's absence from Murphy Corporation whilst he was in the hospital must have caused many issues.

I did not comment any further and merely wished him a safe trip. After he left, I took a seat beside the bed and waited for Nora to arouse from her sleep.

Half an hour later, Nora finally awoke from her slumber. "Scarlett, you are here!" She still seemed a little muddled, and her voice sounded raspy.

"How could you venture to the base all alone? It is a place covered in dirt and mud! I thought that you disliked getting dirty!" I asked and helped her into a sitting position.

"Would you trust me if I said that I did not head there alone?" she said and pinched her brows together.

"So, you met someone else last night? Was it someone you recognize?" I nodded and asked in shock.

"I wasn't exactly close with that person," Nora replied, "I have a feeling that I've met the person before."

"What is the situation?"

“Originally, I was picking some fruits at the yard. However, someone else was also present. I thought that he was someone working at the base. After a brief chat, he told me that he was more familiar with the other area and said that he could bring me to a place with sweeter fruits. Thus, I decided to trust him,” Nora said after a brief pause.

“So you followed him and ended up like this?” I facepalmed in frustration.

“I had no idea as well! Why would he want to harm me when I’ve never provoked him! It was the first time that I visited the base!” Nora replied innocently.

I couldn’t help but think of the past events. Maybe it wasn’t really a coincidence!

“Have you told Armond about this matter?” I asked her.

“I did.” Nora nodded. “He said that there were numerous workers at the base. It was normal for women to be preyed upon by those men.”

Although her words were true, the incident at the base had only occurred recently. Was that incident really a simple accident?

Seeing that further discussion of this topic would lead to no results, we decided to halt our talk.

When Tabitha and the others caught wind of Nora’s situation, they all dropped by to visit in the early afternoon.

“Tessa, we haven’t met since the last incident. I have some questions for you,” Nora called out when she saw that Tessa was present.

“What do you want to ask? Well, you could’ve called or talked about it in the group. Is everyone so busy?” Tabitha replied in confusion.

“Yeah, things have been hectic lately,” Nora replied with a nod of her head.

“What do you want to talk about?” Tabitha bore a serious expression when she noticed Nora’s solemn gaze.

“We are all friends who have experienced life-threatening situations together. Our encounters include the incident in Venria and Lavelian Village. If we were to break our ties, then something serious must have happened. Otherwise, we’d always offer a helping hand to each other, right?” Nora said as she locked gazes with Tessa.

Her last sentence was aimed specifically towards Tessa. Both Laurel and Tabitha nodded in agreement to Nora’s statement. “Yes!”

“Nora, get straight to the point,” Tessa said with a nod of her head.

“I’m puzzled. Didn’t you say that you were going to get the help that night? Where did the help go?” Nora replied.

I thought that Nora had forgotten about this incident. Who would have expected her to remember it?

In that split moment, her bold question left everyone stunned as they traded glances with each other.

“That’s right! I nearly forgot about this matter!” Laurel added as she turned to address Tessa, “When Scarlett fell into the hole with the three of us, you told me to stay behind with Scarlett and volunteered to get help. Yet, you disappeared and never returned. Where on earth did you go?”

Under the heavy scrutiny of everyone’s gazes, Tessa’s face turned ghastly pale. “I-I was too anxious and got lost!” she stammered nervously.

“You, of all people, should know better than to lie. When Scarlett was rescued, you were already in the tents. Are you sure that you got lost? You never called for help in the first place, did you?” Nora sneered.

“Tessa, is this true? Do you know how disappointed we were?” Laurel questioned her in disbelief.

“Aren’t you unscathed? Aren’t you safe? Why won’t you drop it?” Tessa snarled all of a sudden. Her ferocious gaze turned to me as she lashed out like a cornered beast.

“Is this how you see it?” Tabitha exclaimed agitatedly. “Tessa, are you joking right now? We see you as our close friend. Yet, you treat us like a bunch of fools. I can’t believe that you have the audacity to continue preaching about your so-called morals and values! You turned a blind eye when you could have called for help!”

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“Your actions are no different from a murderer!” Laurel added, “I genuinely thought that you got lost along the way! If Scarlett wasn’t rescued from the hole and got into harm’s way, would you have rejoiced over her injury?”

Tessa seemed to flinch in fear as everyone berated her endlessly. “How can you accuse me when you have no evidence? Are you pointing your fingers at me because of Nora’s claims? Can’t you think for yourself?” she rebuked fiercely.

“Alright, why don’t you explain yourself?” Nora challenged her.

“That night, I suggested seeking help after Scarlett fell into the pit. The plantation is huge! Besides, I was never good at directions. After I got lost in the wilderness, a heavy downpour began. When I returned to camp, I saw that you have returned. Due to my exhaustion, I decided to retire to my tent!” Tessa defended herself confidently.

Yet, Nora burst out in laughter upon hearing Tessa's excuse. "Why don't you tell me who brought Scarlett back?" she asked in a voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Who else could it be?" Tessa jolted in shock before she replied, "I heard your voice when I was in my tent. I missed the specifics of your return!"

Nora laughed humorlessly. "Earlier, you claimed that you saw us when you returned. Now, you are saying that you were in your tent when we arrived at camp and missed our arrival. Tessa, you are a hypocrite!"

"You..."

"Stop it!" I interjected, "It's no longer important!"

"However, what do you think would have happened if Nora did not find Laurel and me? The mountain is prone to landslides. If something happens, we would have been in grave danger. Have you ever thought about the consequences of your actions?" I asked Tessa solemnly.

Tessa hung her head in shame as she remained silent.

"Tessa," Tabitha called out, "I think it's best if we stopped contacting each other. Although I do not understand your actions, I cannot befriend a person with such malicious intentions. Let's pretend that we've never met! You should take good care of yourself!"

"Amongst friends, I understand that we should be forgiving. Yet, you've crossed the line this time. I've always regarded you highly! Today, I've finally realized your true colors!" Laurel added.

"Scarlett, you are using other people for your own sake again!" The mortification on Tessa's face shifted into fury. "How disgusting!" Tessa said as she swept a resentful gaze over everyone.

“You must be proud of yourselves! However, I’m not the villain here! Instead, Scarlett is the one that you should be accusing! Look at her! She has remained silent the entire time whilst everyone speaks on behalf of her!” Tessa cackled.

I scowled at her remark. How annoying! She is distorting the truth to her advantage!

“Leave!” Nora ordered coldly, “This is your last warning! You should stick to your own lane and stop your antics! If you don’t, there’s no guarantee that I won’t lash out.”

“Do you think that I’m afraid of you? You are nothing without your family’s help! How pathetic!” Tessa scoffed haughtily.

After her last statement, she left the ward without another word.

Nora would have leaped to her feet in anger if it weren’t for Tabitha’s restraint.

After Tessa’s departure, the mood around the room seemed to drop. After all, we had all experienced the same hardships. Tessa’s betrayal left everyone emotional.

As Tabitha and Laurel had matters to attend to, they decided to leave the hospital. On the other hand, I chose to remain and keep Nora company.

“Where did Armond go?” Nora asked when she realized his absence.

“After you got into the accident, all projects in Lavelian Village have been put to halt. He must have a lot to deal with because of these continuous incidents. I don’t think he can visit you so often,” I told her.

“That’s true. He hasn’t slept a wink last night! In addition to his workload, he must be under tremendous pressure!” She nodded in agreement.

“You should nurse yourself to health before taking care of him,” I advised her with a gentle smile.

All of a sudden, Nora turned to me with a sly gleam in her eyes. "Armond told me that you moved in with Ashton? What happened last night? Did the two of you sleep together?" she teased cheekily.

This woman had such a dirty mind! "How can you think of such stuff all the time! Are things between you and Armond smooth sailing?" I replied.

The topic of their relationship seemed to put a damper on her bright mood. "Would you believe me if I said that we are platonic lovers?"

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A little astonished, I said, "You've never gone to the hospital?"

"I've suggested it many times, but he always refuses." She shook her head. "He was alright in the beginning, but his condition gradually got worse. I thought it could be a psychological issue. However, I'm not familiar with his past, so I couldn't ask him."

"Well, you could try asking Linda. She's been working under Mr. Murphy for a long time. She should know something useful about Armond."

She hummed, deep in thought. "Do you think he might have been in love with a girl who later left him, traumatizing him and causing him to become unable to love? Why else would such a rich, handsome bachelor of his age still be unmarried and have no woman by his side?"

"Do you not count as a woman?" I raised an eyebrow.

"Um... I meant prior to me!"

“You should really consult Linda directly about this.” When trying to solve a problem, you had to start at the possible source of it.

Changing the topic to focus on me, she leaned in conspiratorially. “I take it things are going well with Ashton?”

I sighed. “I’m not too sure what I should do from now on, actually. So many unexpected things have happened. I continuously rejected Ashton and pushed him away because I think I’m not good enough for him. But I can’t deny the fact that I love him, and I miss him, and he will always be the first person I instinctively go to when I’m in trouble. I also know that no one on this earth will ever love me as much as he does.”

“You know what, Scarlett?” She rested her chin in one hand. “I’m envious of how persistent Ashton is towards you. I used to imagine what kind of man I would meet in the future. He doesn’t have to be wealthy or especially outstanding, as long as he’s truly, madly, and deeply in love with me. Too bad it didn’t turn out that way in the end. Although, to be honest, I know all too clearly that Armond may not love me a lot, and neither do I love him a lot. I’m sure the both of us understand that we’re expendable to each other.”

That was the first time that I had an insight into Nora’s perspectives on love. Her opinions somewhat surprised me but hadn’t been completely unexpected.

After a moment of silence, I spoke up, “I was lucky to have met Ashton. Even though I have been through a lot in the past several years, I’ve never since experienced the hesitation and aimlessness that I felt after first leaving Ashton. I think I can now confidently say from the bottom of my heart that no matter what, he and I are destined to be together.”

“That’s exactly why I envy you. I’ve never been in love. When my classmates started dating in middle school, I thought they were too immature and that I was too good to get myself involved with them. Everyone seemed to be falling in love with other people left and right at university, too. I guess it was fate that I never found anyone compatible even after graduating from university. I was so wrapped up in my own loneliness until I met Armond. He was the very definition of the Prince Charming that I’ve been

dreaming about all my life—wealth, power, and good looks! But now, I'm learning that maybe, just maybe, he isn't all that I made him out to be."

"You only think that because your relationship with Armond is progressing too smoothly," I reassured her. "You had a subconscious belief that dating such a great guy would bring about suffering and pain and hurt, but none of that happened. You just naturally and peacefully got together, and that makes it seem all the more unrealistic to you."

"That sounds about right." She nodded. "He's way out of my league. In the beginning, I've thought up countless methods to try and make him fall for me because I thought it would be a painstakingly long process, but I never expect things to happen so easily."

"Maybe it was because we got together so easily that I ended up thinking, if I met another handsome, fine man one day, I would eventually fall in love with him, and if he met another proactive girl who took the initiative to pursue him, he would eventually fall for her too. These thoughts just kept bothering me so much that my mundane daily life with Armond started feeling more and more like it was just a dream, with no sense of security nor belonging."

"Have you ever thought about whether he would stay with you if you weren't Channing Oberick's granddaughter?" I smiled softly.

"Of course he wouldn't!"

"So, you both understand deep down that you are actually the most compatible partners. The Oberick family has clout, and the Murphys have wealth. He knows that you're not like other girls. Other women may only like him for his fortune, but you didn't. You genuinely fell in love with him and think he's a good person, and you want to be with him. That kind of marriage is the most blissful, simply because you both like each other."

Tilting her head to one side, she was rendered speechless. After a long pause, she sighed, "Whatever. I can't wrap my head around this anyway, so I'm just going to stop thinking about it!"

Glancing up at the clock, she asked me, "Don't you plan on heading back soon?"

It was indeed getting quite late, but I didn't want to leave her alone in the hospital ward. "I'll stay with you tonight. What do you want for dinner?"

"What if Ashton gets mad at you for not going home?" She fretted instead, making me laugh.

"It's fine. He knows where I am."

I stood up and was getting ready to go downstairs to the hospital's convenience store when the door suddenly opened.

It was Armond, clearly tired and carrying a large plastic bag of food and various snacks in his arms.

"You haven't eaten yet, have you?" he said to me. "I've brought a lot to spare, so have some before you leave."

I was stunned at the sight of him. Did he rush all the way back here just so he could make sure that Nora is well-fed?

Nora's face immediately broke out into a bright smile when she saw him, tugging on my arm. "Don't go just yet, Scarlett! At least eat with us first!"

Armond nodded in agreement, taking out the items from the bag one by one. "Linda recommended me Northern City District's seafood, so I specially made a detour to buy some. I also got some soup for you."

He directed the last part of his sentence at Nora, placing the bowl on her bedside table before turning to me. "The seafood I bought is all fresh. Try some, Scarlett!"

I giggled, giving into their persistency and sitting down to have dinner with them.

The seafood lived up to my expectations. Nora stared at Armond's sallow face, inquiring worriedly, "Were you so busy today that you didn't get any sleep at all?"

He nodded. "The incident at Lavelian Village is getting out of hand, and the Fuller Corporation plans on holding a press conference for promotional purposes next month."

Clearly pitying him, Nora turned to me with puppy-dog eyes. "I think it's best if you stay with me tonight, Scarlett. That way, Armond can go home and rest."

That had been my plan in the first place, so I agreed easily. "Sure."

"There's no need for that," Armond quickly cut in. "I'll ask someone to set up an extra bed in here for me to sleep on tonight. I'd be so worried that I wouldn't be able to sleep if I went home, anyway."

After saying that, he glanced at me. "Besides, if you don't go back home tonight, Mr. Fuller might become even more stressed regarding the Lavelian Village project. If that happens, he'll make me work my fingers to the bone, and that just won't do!"

I wasn't sure how to respond.

"He's right." Nora nodded in agreement. "If you try to make Ashton happy, the situation might improve."

Then, turning to Armond, she clung onto his arm and fluttered her eyelashes up at him pitifully. "Though, I feel bad for making you accompany me... I shouldn't be putting you through such torture!"

I massaged one of my temples. Are these two being lovey-dovey on purpose?

Slowly munching on my food, I spoke up, "That works too, I guess. I'm almost done eating, so I'll leave you two to catch up with each other, okay?"

"I'll send you downstairs." Armond got to his feet.

Slightly taken aback, I glanced at Nora, who told me, "Go on, Scarlett! You don't have your car with you, right? He can help hail a taxi for you!"

I shrugged in response.

At the hospital entrance, I gave Armond a sidelong glance. "Do you have something to ask me, Mr. Murphy?"

He slipped his hands into his trouser pockets, his expression turning solemn. "I take it you've made up with Ashton?"

Why is he asking the exact same question as Nora did?

"I guess so." I smiled awkwardly. "Did you offer to walk me downstairs because you wanted to talk about that?"

"Of course not," he huffed. "Has Ashton discussed with you about his stance on the project?"

I blinked owlishly at him. After working together for so long, I knew what he was implying.

The Lavelian Village project was one that the Murphy Corporation had fought against countless other equally well-qualified rivals for. We could not afford to make a mistake, but there had already been several accidents since the project first started.

The project hadn't fully kicked into gear yet, either. Thus, Fuller Corporation had every reason to start from scratch and look for a new collaborator to cut their losses.

Armond was trying to find out Ashton's current attitude towards the whole issue through me.

"I'll find a way to pry some information out of Ashton," I promised him.

"Thanks."

After that, I hailed a taxi and headed straight home.

The sky was already dark when I reached the villa.

I thought Ashton would have returned home by now, but the entire place was dark, and none of the lights were on. It seemed that he hadn't come back yet.

Figuring that he must be busy at work, I went upstairs and entered the bathroom to wash myself up.

Left alone in the silence with only my thoughts accompanying me, my mind wandered to the project once more. I couldn't shake the feeling that something wasn't right, but I just couldn't place a finger on what it was exactly.

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I couldn't figure out a solution to my problems, even after wracking my brain.

After my shower, I sat at my dressing table to do my skincare routine. I was so lost in thought that I didn't even hear Ashton's footsteps when he entered the bedroom.

It was only when he suddenly picked me up in his arms that I was jerked back to reality, letting out a squeal of surprise. "What are you doing here?" I gasped. "When did you get back? You didn't make a sound at all!"

"I've been here for a while already. Didn't you see me in the reflection of the mirror you were staring at?" He sat down in my seat, placing me across his thighs as he tucked a stray lock of hair behind my ear. "What's on your mind?"

I sighed, resting my head against his shoulder. "The Lavelian Village project keeps running into problems. I'm in charge of everything, so can you blame me for overthinking it?"

He chuckled. "Everything that happened was out of your control. It won't do you any good to keep stressing out over it. Besides, you now have your hubby's money to use whenever you like. Who cares if you quit your job or end up having to pay damages?"

The stubble on his chin pricked my hand when I reached up to touch his face. "That's easy for you to say. One compensation claim is worth ten million. How many times will I be able to fork that amount of money out, hm?"

"As many times as you like." He grinned at me.

"You should really shave soon." Running my fingers along his stubble made the skin on my finger pads feel raw.

He hummed, one large hand sliding down to pinch my hips. "Will you do it for me?"

I nodded and got up, tugging him into the bathroom. "Armond wants to know what you think about the Lavelian Village project," I told him as I picked up his razor from the sink.

“That man is more meticulous than I give him credit for,” he lamented, wrapping his arms around me as he pressed my back up against the sink. “He employed my very own wife in his own company so that he could send you to sniff our information for him.”

I lathered some shaving cream on his jawline. My feet were getting tired of standing on their tiptoes to reach his tall height, so I made him sit down on a chair. Without thinking too much about it, I climbed up and sat in his lap, focusing intently on shaving his stubble.

“It’s not like that. No one expected that Fuller Corporation would award its’ project to Murphy Corporation. Besides, he’s just asking about your opinion, not sniffing out information.”

He made a brief sound of affirmation, unable to open his mouth and reply because of the razor near his skin. I could tell from his fond gaze that he was in a good mood today.

It was my first time ever shaving someone else, so my movements were somewhat clumsy. Thankfully, I hadn’t cut his skin, and I quickly handed him a warm towel to wipe off the cream after I was done.

He looked much younger and clean with a shaved jaw. I held his chin in one hand and turned his head from side to side, admiring my handiwork. “It looks good to me. I think I did well!”

The corners of his lips quirked up. I felt his large hand squeeze my hips as he spoke in a low, gravelly voice, “Are you trying to seduce me right now?”

My mind blanked. Upon realizing that I had put on nothing but a sleeveless negligee after my shower, my cheeks flushed red.

I’d been so concentrated on shaving his stubble that I’d failed to notice the compromising position I’d put us in when I climbed into his lap. His hand on my waist only served to make the situation appear even more suggestive than it really was.

“Get your head out of the gutter. I just genuinely wanted to help you shave.” I tried to get off of his legs, but he held me in place.

“Yes, and I just genuinely want to hold you in my arms,” he declared unabashedly.

Setting the razor aside, I circled my arms around his neck and looked him in the eye. “I think you should go take a shower and get ready for bed. I’m a little tired, and I haven’t slept well for the past two nights.”

He smiled humorously, caressing my cheek with one hand. Leaning in, he left feather-light hints of kisses on the corner of my mouth that felt ticklish.

“Ashton!”

Ashton let out a laugh and pressed his forehead against mine as he massaged one of my ears. “Fuller Corporation is planning to pull out of the project to minimize our losses as much as possible, and then let another company take over it. When that’s all settled, go back to K City with me, Scarlett. Okay?”

“But I want to see this until the very end.” I preened in his embrace, my eyes fluttering close at the relaxing motion. “I don’t want to go back to K City and become a spoilt wife who just waits for you to return home every day.”

“I never said that” he sighed. “You’re free to do whatever you want in K City. Didn’t you mention that you wanted to pursue a postgraduate education? You can try that, and if all else fails, you can come back to Fuller Corporation and take up your previous job. How does that sound?”

I pursed my lips. “But I can’t just give up on the project halfway through.”

“Sometimes, I really wonder if you’re a spy that Armond sent to bewitch me on purpose.” He shook his head, a little exasperated.

I raised an eyebrow, quickly taking the chance to climb off of his lap. “Go take a shower and sleep early tonight,” I huffed before exiting the bathroom.

There were too many suspicious things about the Lavelian Village project as if someone was causing trouble on purpose. Thus, I didn't want to return to K City without getting to the bottom of things.

I heard the sound of running water from the bathroom as I sat back down in front of the dressing table, resuming my skincare routine.

Soon after, Ashton came out, a towel wrapped around his waist. He furrowed his eyebrows slightly at the sight of me. "What's the use of all these bottles and creams?"