

When There Is Nothing Left But Love Chapter 918-922

Chapter 918

“You didn’t say that the last time,” Justin finally managed uncertainly. He looked immensely vulnerable, his heart having been promptly ripped to shreds before an entire crowd.

Stella looked at him coldly. “What else did you want me to say, then? I thought I’d refused you obviously enough. Couldn’t you tell?”

At that, Justin hung his head, deflated. Even the vibrant bouquet he’d brandished confidently before now hung crumpled before him. Justin had bitterly wrung it in his despair. “Why? Is it because I’m not rich enough? Or that I...”

“It’s none of those reasons! I don’t love you. It has nothing to do with your money or your abilities at all. I don’t love you, pure and simple. You can go now. I’m begging you, please don’t embarrass me like that ever again, OK?” I’d only ever been exposed to the sunny, endearing side of Stella. Thus, I was rather startled to see that she was capable of such harshness as well.

I dragged Ashton with me out of the lobby, then sighed longingly. “After so many years at university, no one has ever confessed their love to me so grandly before. It only works if the person you’re proposing to love you back, of course. But I rather like this heady rush of emotions and romance.”

Ashton’s grip on my arm tightened slightly. “What do you like?”

Glancing at his sober expression, I laughed. “I like the impulsive, romantic ways of these youths. Since we’ve gotten older, I haven’t been feeling many strong bursts of emotions. Life doesn’t seem as exciting anymore.”

Upon that, Ashton pulled me to face him. Gravely, he asked, "Are you tired of me because I'm old?"

Is Ashton approaching menopause? I wondered wryly.

I smacked my forehead in exaggerated frustration. "I didn't say you were old. I meant that I admired youths for their wholehearted and energetic approach to life. I've been motivated to live my days in the same way, rather than always dragging my feet around. Ugh... Stop twisting my words!"

Ashton waggled an eyebrow at me. "What wholehearted and energetic things do you plan on doing?"

Instantly, I became speechless at his words. I should have known better than to talk about things like romance with an old pedant like him.

After a while, I laughed a little too brightly. "Let's not dwell on such things! It's getting late, and John should have already arrived. We shouldn't make him wait."

I then wrenched my hand away from Ashton's steel grip and forcefully terminated the conversation.

A question lingered in my mind, however. Stella's blushing, rosy face resurfaced in my mind, and I couldn't help but ponder. Does Stella already have someone she loves? Is that why she rejected Justin?

At that time, John had indeed already reached the restaurant and was midway through his meal. Looking at the half-eaten dishes spread out over the table, as well as the nearly empty bottle of wine, I cried ruefully, "Mr. Stovall, you're really getting more and more impolite."

John looked at me in amusement and sniggered. Then he called for a waiter to bring another round of dishes. "I had to fill my stomach first before the sight of you two behaving all lovey-dovey made me nauseous."

I shook my head wordlessly at John, then sidled into the seat opposite him. "How's Uncle Louis?" I asked.

John shrugged. He filled Ashton's glass with wine, then answered, "There's no concrete evidence. His superiors are biased against him. Uncle Louis has always lived an open, honest life. All the ammunition that those green-eyed monsters have against him are their own baseless rumors. There's nothing for them to uncover. Uncle Louis should be able to return within a few days."

I nodded. The waiter laid out another round of dishes, and we tucked in eagerly. Ashton and John fervently discussed the state of the market between glasses of wine. I had planned on asking John about his relationship with Hannah but refrained as Ashton disapproved of gossip.

Midway through the meal, I rose to go to the bathroom. When I emerged from the stall, I heard a woman's voice saying, "Don't you pity Rebecca? Her ex-boyfriend got stolen from her, and now her current partner's cheating on her. She's really unlucky!"

Another voice answered, "I don't know about that, but I heard Mr. Quinn's woman used to be with Mr. Crest. Clearly, Mr. Quinn isn't too picky. After all, he's even willing to accept his friend's hand-me-downs! It's strange, but there you have it."

"That's right. Don't forget, Rebecca was tossed aside after Mr. Fuller got tired of her too. These rich people have no morals at all. They treat women and clothing alike, to be used and then cast away."

I furrowed my brow, looking over at those two women airily gossiping away. Judging by their elaborate outfits and appearance, they were probably socialites. I wasn't part of that circle and naturally didn't like to concern myself with their affairs.

Yet, I was bothered by what those two women had just said.

Mr. Crest? Jared?

Had he ever taken a woman for a ride? Who was it?

No one came to mind. However, Joe was practically groveling at Rebecca's feet, so deep was his affection for her. Having gotten this opportunity to prove himself to her, why had Joe ended up offending her instead?

Bang! My deep reverie was abruptly interrupted by the sound of a door being flung open. A woman dressed entirely in black strode out from a stall.

I automatically looked up, then started in surprise.

Kristina? Isn't she in W City? Why did she come back?

Our eyes met. A glimmer of hesitation appeared in Kristina's gaze before she looked away. Sauntering towards the sink, she asked icily, "Don't you think it's a joke?"

Chapter 919

I was momentarily taken aback by Kristina's sudden confrontation and grasped for a reply. Finally, I said, "I'm not a fan of getting involved in other people's drama."

Kristina sniggered. She dried her hands and leaned against the sink, her arms akimbo. Gazing intently at me, she scoffed, "Don't act so high and mighty. You were clearly eavesdropping. If you want to laugh, go ahead. I don't care."

Nonetheless, I merely clenched my jaw and turned away. I had nothing to say to Kristina.

Seeing that I was planning on ignoring her, Kristina raised her voice and challenged, "Haven't we been friends for a long time, Scarlett? Why are you in such a hurry to leave? Since we've bumped into each other, let's spend some time catching up. How can you walk off like that? By the way, how's Jared's daughter doing? He's been in prison for a while now. His daughter should be missing him quite a bit."

I frowned, then turned and stared Kristina down. “Kristina, I don’t know what your outlook on life is like. I know, however, that we’re not the same. Since you’ve already found someone, please live out the rest of your life peacefully. Stop interfering in others’ business! Besides, Summer is my daughter. Jared isn’t good enough for her, and neither are you. If you do anything to her, I guarantee that you’ll spend the rest of your life miserable.”

Kristina threw her head back and guffawed. “Are you threatening me now? I’m not interested in Summer. I was merely trying to be kind and remind you that things aren’t that simple. I thought Jared would confess everything to you at least, but it seems now that he fully intended on keeping you in the dark. If that’s the case, I’ll keep my mouth shut as well. It seems that no one appreciates it.”

At that moment, I could hear the edge in Kristina’s voice. Bemused, I asked, “What do you mean by that?”

However, Kristina waved my concern off dismissively. “Nothing! I’ll be off then. See you around, Mrs. Fuller!”

She then sauntered off with a clack of her high heels. I remained rooted to the spot, gazing after her absently. Though unwilling, I had to admit that what Kristina had said threw me off slightly. I was still taking our conversation apart and puzzling it over in my head as I slowly exited the bathroom.

In fact, I was so utterly occupied with my thoughts that I didn’t notice Ashton waiting out in the hallway. Walking straight into his arms, I gave a loud yelp, but it was already muffled by his broad arms and chest encircling me. I then looked up at him in a slight daze. “Why are you here?”

Ashton reached out and brushed my hair aside tenderly. “I was worried that something had happened to you, so I came over. What’s wrong? You look shellshocked.”

I shook my head vigorously, partially to clear the thoughts that were clamoring in my brain. “It’s nothing. I ran into someone I know. Let’s go back and continue with dinner!”

After that, I yanked Ashton back in the direction of our table. As we walked past a private room, there suddenly came the sound of glass violently shattering. Ashton and I both froze and peered in. Seated around a table was a group of middle-aged young people, as well as one familiar face.

I gaped at Ashton, then whispered tentatively, "Is that Joe?"

Ashton pressed his lips into a thin line but said nothing.

We were just in time. As we watched, a woman with her back towards us vehemently slapped Kristina, who was sitting beside Joe. It sounded like the cracking of a whip. At the same time, Ashton and I instinctively winced from the sound of it.

Kristina, however, showed no discernible sign of weakness. She merely gave a dry laugh and gazed back at her assailant defiantly. Her hands moved to clutch Joe's arm as if holding onto a trophy.

This move clearly enraged the other woman even further. She raised her hand in the air, prepared to deal a second blow.

"Isn't this exciting? Mr. Quinn, how's your food?" Unable to witness this any further, I charged into the room with Ashton in tow.

At the sound of my voice, the entire room turned towards me. The face of Kristina's attacker was now visible. I realized, perturbed, that it was Rebecca.

Rebecca's eyes widened slightly when she saw Ashton beside me, then hurriedly composed herself. She now rearranged her features in a pitiful expression, looking every bit like a defenseless victim. "Ash, why are you here?" Rebecca whined.

Ashton glanced at her, then announced curtly, "To eat." With his brows furrowed, he looked at Joe, then at Kristina, who was still holding onto Joe's arm tightly.

"What's going on?" Ashton demanded.

Joe said easily, "We're having a meal together. It's nothing much."

"What do you mean, nothing much? Joe, just be honest with me about what you're planning to do. Don't make me sick by flirting with all these other whores," Rebecca retorted, her voice trembled with barely suppressed anger.

Kristina was not one to be beaten. She bellowed at Rebecca, "You'd better watch your mouth! What whores? And how much better do you think you are?"

The two women looked strained, and they were ready to fly at each other. At that, I bit my lip and said calmly, "That's one hell of a meal. You'll have the entire restaurant in here at the rate you're shouting at each other. Mr. Quinn, don't you think you're airing your dirty laundry a little too publicly? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

Chapter 920

Rebecca glared menacingly at me. "Ms. Stovall, since when did you become such a busybody?"

"Go home and argue!" Ashton broke in icily. The steely look that he fixed on Joe was frightening. "You may think nothing of these women, but spare a thought for the Fuller and Quinn Corporations."

Joe gritted his teeth, palpably displeased. "Enough. Can't I even eat in peace now? Damn it!" He shook off Kristina's hands violently, then immediately got up and stalked out of the room.

The others around the table had been shrinking down in their seats ever since the conflict began. Subdued, they now quietly filed out and dispersed. Rebecca had dashed out in chase of Joe, whereas Kristina alone remained in the private room.

I tugged at Ashton's sleeve and fretted for a moment, then turned to Kristina. "Don't get Joe riled up. You know better than anyone why he allows you to get close to him."

Having dispensed that word of warning, I then made to leave with Ashton. Kristina's next question, however, halted me in my tracks. "Why are you helping me?"

I glanced over my shoulder at Kristina, then replied, "I'm not helping you. It was meant to be a reminder." Joe's feelings for Rebecca weren't to be sniffed at. No matter what had happened, Joe had remained steadfast by Rebecca's side without considering anyone else. It was obvious that Joe was making ruthless use of Kristina to make Rebecca jealous.

At that moment, Kristina's smile looked more like a grimace. "It doesn't matter," she said bitterly. "Money is all that matters to me. Whatever happens between Joe and Rebecca is none of my business."

I shrugged, then replied shortly, "Good luck, then."

It was none of my business either. As a matter of fact, I had done more than my part in even mentioning the facts of the matter. Whether Kristina was receptive towards what I'd said was no longer my concern.

After all that drama, Ashton and I walked out of the private room and back to our table. John must be wondering what on earth we've been up to! I mused inwardly.

"Jared sent Summer to a factory in the suburbs. You can check, but I don't suppose Jared was planning on that child surviving. I don't know what he did to her there. Who knows what kind of scars that experience left behind?" Kristina's voice rang out from behind us.

A shiver ran down my spine. I whipped around immediately, but Kristina was already strolling off into the distance, bag in hand.

Then I turned to Ashton, distressed. "When you found Summer back then, did you notice anything strange?"

Ashton shook his head. "I'll send someone to investigate. Don't worry."

I nodded, but there was already a tumult of uneasiness stirring up within me.

Meanwhile, John saw that Ashton and I had slowly approached the table and slide back into our seats. Pursing his lips, he complained, "What on earth were the two of you up to? Didn't you come here to eat with me? Was the lack of intimacy really that unbearable?"

Ashton ignored him. Taking stock of the empty plates on the table, he asked me apprehensively, "Is there anything else you'd like to eat?"

I shook my head. "I'm not hungry. We should leave soon."

John, on the other hand, was outraged at having been ignored. "Can the two of you stop tormenting me like this? Is there a need to hurt my feelings in this manner? Didn't you come out to chat with me? Or am I here to serve as an audience for your relationship?"

Frustrated, I turned to John and shot back, "What's going on between you and Hannah?"

John lowered his gaze, then muttered thickly, "Nothing much." He clearly wished to evade both my question and the topic.

After that, I instantly turned back to Ashton and said briskly, "Let's go home then."

Just as the two of us had gotten to our feet, John clamored noisily for us to sit down. "Hey, are the two of you even sincere about meeting me? Shouldn't you behave as if you're interested in me, at least? How can you just get up and walk off like that? Both of you look like you just came here to do your business and left!"

I was a little offended by John's choice of expression. Somberly, I told him, "Mr. Stovall, can you be a little less crude?"

John chuckled. With a resigned air, he said, "Fine, I'm tired of watching the two of you act all lovey-dovey anyway. I'm going back home to sleep off my meal."

With that, Ashton and I hurried off in haste. Kristina's announcement had unsettled me, and I was terrified of something happening to Summer. Ever since she had returned to K City, Summer seemed to be in a state of near-constant illness.

"Do you think Jared would really hurt Summer?" I asked Ashton. I didn't think anyone could bear to hurt their own child, but Kristina's accusations had taken root in my heart.

At that time, Ashton was paying the bill for our meal. When he was done paying, he replied slowly, "Let's wait for the results of the investigation. We can bring Summer to the hospital for a thorough examination in the meantime."

I nodded feebly. Then, a thought struck me like a bolt of lightning. "Should we visit the prison and ask Jared himself?"

Ashton didn't speak. Instead, he fixed me with an unfathomable gaze, his dark eyes seeming to pierce through me almost.

Upon his burning gaze, I looked away. However, I chanced upon John drawing himself up in the distance. He'd clenched the two hands that had been hanging by his side into fists. The man looked absolutely incensed.

"John..." I was about to call out, but Ashton silenced me with a sharp yank. He motioned for me to keep silent and follow after him as he stepped forward.

I only noticed the pair facing John when we arrived next to him. I recognized the woman even though a considerable amount of time had elapsed since I'd last met her. She wore a pink jacket with leopard prints that contrasted nicely with her creamy skin.

Chapter 921

“Hannah!” I shrieked. I fastened my gaze on the man she was clinging to. He was tall and attired in a black down jacket. That man wasn’t exactly handsome, but his height and confidence imbued him with a magnetic aura.

The five of us engaged in this stand-off without anyone speaking for a while. I sneaked a peek at John and noticed that his face had grown thunderous and his eyes wild. After a long while, John spluttered, “How long has it been?”

Hannah looked unaffected as she casually replied, “A few months.” Those words, and all the enormity of their meaning, hung in the air between us.

John suddenly gave a loud snort. Flashing her a scornful look, he asked, “Why?”

“There’s no reason why, John. All relationships must come to an end somehow,” Hannah said breezily. Her manner seemed entirely frivolous.

Hearing her response, John hung his head. He seemed to be laughing at the sheer absurdity of the situation as his shoulders shook uncontrollably. Undoubtedly, he was unable to restrain himself any further as his emotions swelled within him and burst out in a torrent.

Without hesitation, John lunged forward and punched the other man hard in the face. Due to the pure impulse of his move, however, John’s blow did not land as well as he had probably hoped it would.

I expected Hannah to cry out in indignation or beg for mercy, but she remained unflappable. She merely crossed her arms and retreated. It was as if she was a mere spectator of the fight rather than its motive.

Meanwhile, Ashton drew me behind him protectively. We, too, watched on without intervening.

It was only when it seemed that John was on the verge of beating the other man to death that Hannah finally spoke.

“Let him go, John. If you’re still mad, take it out on me. He doesn’t know what’s going on at all,” she said with an aggravating coolness.

John paused and looked at her savagely. His eyes were bloodshot. However, he simmered down and slowly walked over to Hannah. “What do you want?” he asked with difficulty.

I had always known that John was in love with Hannah. He had his demons, and to him, Hannah had always been a place of refuge from the rest of the world. I suppose John had always firmly believed that Hannah would never leave nor betray him. In his mind, Hannah was the lighthouse that would always be waiting patiently back at the shore for him to sail home.

Yet John had forgotten that people were terribly fickle beings. He had made Hannah wait for him for too long a time. She was a woman, after all, and needed a man to love and care for her. After some time, Hannah had finally grown weary of being left out in the cold.

Hannah looked at John. She either did not notice the melancholy in his eyes or merely refused to see it. Exhaling deeply, Hannah said, “Kiki belongs to the Stovall family, so I won’t take him with me. The villa and the car are both under your name, so I’ll return them to you. As for everything else, let me keep them. I’ll take them as a reward for staying by your side all these years.”

Hannah let out a deep breath, then laughed mournfully. “There isn’t much else. Other than Kiki, we don’t have any other common possessions. At least the legal side of things won’t be too complicated. If you don’t have time or energy to care for Kiki, I will. However, you’ll need to pay child support. I won’t ask for anything else from you.”

It was heartrending to see a relationship reduced thus to the stark, bare-bones of assets and payments. There was nothing left to say between John and Hannah. Even goodbye felt redundant.

John’s emotions had gradually subsided. He then merely replied, “We’ll talk about it when we get back.”

Without waiting for Hannah's response, John walked heavily towards his car. He started it and drove off without a second glance at anyone else.

Ashton and I remained where we were. As for Hannah, she watched as John's car gradually vanished in the distance, then turned towards the man sitting on the ground. "Are you all right?" she asked nonchalantly.

The man softened and patted Hannah's arm reassuringly. "I'm fine."

I stared at them, lost for words. After a while, we simply turned and walked away.

Feeling heavyhearted, I remained silent even after we'd gotten back to the car and driven off.

"Don't worry. I've sent someone to follow John. He'll be fine!" Ashton said reassuringly beside me.

I looked at him, then replied shortly, "I'm not worried about John. It's Hannah I'm concerned about. She was clearly in love with John. Why did she suddenly decide to give up their relationship?"

Ashton rested one hand on the steering wheel, his elbow on the door of the car, a picture of placid serenity. With an air of wisdom, he philosophized, "Autumn doesn't arrive in the middle of spring. And when it does, the leaves on the trees don't fall all at once. Perhaps Hannah was made to wait for too long and lost hope in the relationship."

I bit my lip and turned away. Unbeknownst to Ashton, I was no stranger to that feeling.

I'd drifted off to sleep on the drive back, and Ashton had picked me up and carried me straight into the bedroom. I opened my eyes blearily to look at Ashton, who was getting undressed and ready to shower at the side of the room. "I don't know what's happening to me lately," I moaned. "I get drowsy very quickly and feel rather weak."

Ashton froze at my offhand remark, his hands arrested in the middle of taking his shirt off. He lowered them slowly and turned to me with a peculiar beam on his face. Delighted, he proclaimed, "We'll make a trip to the hospital tomorrow!"

Chapter 922

I found Ashton's reaction rather bizarre and asked, "Why go to the hospital? It's not that big of a deal."

Ashton sauntered over to my side and looked fondly down at me. "Everyone should go for an annual medical checkup. I think it's been about a year since you last went for one."

I nodded absently, then lay back down on the bed. Since Ashton had left the bed to me, I sprawled happily across its entire width while sighing in satisfaction and comfort.

It was the beginning of winter, and the temperature in K City had plummeted sharply. Ashton was insistent on sending me to the hospital and was up and about early in the morning. I'd been disturbed from my sleep by his bustling about and sat in the living room still yawning, half-awake.

That morning, Ashton had poured out some cereal for both of us. "Would you like some chopped nuts?" he asked, popping his head out of the kitchen.

I nodded, my eyes teary from the multiple yawns I'd just unleashed. "Sure."

It was a cold, misty morning. I couldn't help but shudder at the thought of stepping out into the frigid air and made a mental note to myself to don a few more layers before leaving.

Ashton emerged from the kitchen with the two bowls of cereal in hand. He placed them on the table, then added, "Would you like some pancakes as well?"

I sneezed, then sniffed at Ashton, “No need. I’ll just have the cereal. Since we’re going to the hospital, why don’t we drop by my Mom’s place and bring Summer along? We can get her checked out at the same time.”

Ashton agreed. “Let’s eat, then!”

Without another word, I slurped the cereal noisily. Ashton gave me a look, then chided, “Can’t you eat a little more gracefully?”

I felt thoroughly humbled, like a child who had just received a smack on the wrist.

Just then, I recalled that Nora was back in K City, so I reminded Ashton. “Nora’s back in K City. We should bring her out for a meal to catch up and play the host. Besides, I don’t feel too safe leaving her to Armond.”

Ashton nodded, then replied, “All right. Ask her over to stay, then, or arrange for her to stay in a hotel. It isn’t safe anyway for a woman to be wandering around K City alone.”

“Armond won’t hurt her, will he?” I asked anxiously. Ever since the incident at the warehouse, my opinion of Armond had been totally turned on its head. I was thus a little wary of whether Nora could be entrusted to him.

Noting that I had finished my cereal, Ashton nudged his bowl of cereal over to me. “You’re hungry, aren’t you? Eat up!” he encouraged.

I felt a sense of warmth within me. Actually, I wasn’t that hungry, but I ate the rest of the cereal with pleasure anyway.

I’d actually wanted to probe more into the matter, but Ashton forbade me. “We can talk later. Finish your breakfast first.”

Ashton had always been rather traditional this way. He firmly believed we should be focused on gaining nutrients rather than information during meals between the two of us.

With that, I nodded docilely, then finished the rest of the cereal before me.

After breakfast, I dawdled a little all the way to the door, putting on my shoes slowly in the hallway. Ashton had gone ahead to start the car. Just then, my phone rang shrilly in my bag. I fished it out only to see Mrs. Brooks' name flashing across the screen. I answered, "Mrs. Brooks!"

Before she could even speak, I felt a rush of woe over the phone. Mrs. Brooks gave a long sigh, then said, "Mrs. Fuller, Renee passed away last night. She said she wanted to be buried with her mother. I brought her back to K City with me today. I don't have any close friends or family, and you were probably the one who showed her the most affection in this life. If you have time to spare, Renee's grandfather and I would like to invite you to her funeral."

My mind went blank. Ashton had already driven the car out to the front. However, I remained in my seat, staring ahead blankly as my head throbbed.

Ashton leaped out of the car and ran up to me, puzzled. "What's wrong?"

I hadn't hung up the phone, so Mrs. Brooks' voice drifted over the line, fearfully asking, "Mrs. Fuller, are you there?"

"I'm here," I snapped. I was choking up and struggled to get the words out of my throat. With a frown, Ashton eyed me as he placed an arm around my shoulders.

"Renee will be buried at Woodhills. She said she wanted to lie next to her mother," Mrs. Brooks declared through her tears, her voice hoarse. She'd evidently spent the past few days mourning.

I made a small sound of acknowledgment. Heartbroken, I drew in a deep breath and said, "All right. We'll come over in a while, Mrs. Brooks."

“Thank you, Mrs. Fuller,” Mrs. Brooks sniffled in a low voice. We then ended the call somberly.

When I placed my phone back in my bag, Ashton squinted at me with obvious disquiet in his eyes.
“What happened?”

I paused, then said brokenly, “It’s Sasha’s daughter, Renee. Her grandparents did not continue her treatment and brought her to Turlen instead. Renee passed away mid-journey, and her body will arrive in K City today to be buried.”

Ashton frowned. After a moment of silence, he suggested, “Can we go over after we’ve visited the hospital?”

I shook my head. “Let’s go to the airport. We’ll accompany them all the way to the cemetery.”

Ashton agreed after some deliberation. “OK, I’ll come with you.”

The news of Renee’s sudden departure had stupefied me. I’d always held out the hope that as long as she endured this present suffering, she’d eventually recover.