

# In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 431

Basically, all the gossips revolving around Nancy was related to Ashton. Anyhow, the magazine did not publish his front profile blatantly.

He was looking at Nancy with his back at the camera. It seemed like a photo taken during an event.

Obviously, the reporters did that to boost the sale of the magazine.

“It’s all nonsense,” he said abruptly.

Startled by his words, I withdrew my gaze from the magazine and looked at him. “What did you order?”

“A family bucket, ice-cream, hamburgers, coke, and French fries.” Summer was thrilled!

I frowned. “Can we finish them?”

She sulked. “Mommy, I can only eat this once a month. I must satisfy my cravings.”

Ashton concurred with her logic and it made me upset. “Summer, eating and working are the same, don’t bite more than you can chew. When you can’t finish it, you waste money. When you can’t deliver a promise, there’s a price to pay and you might even lose the person you love. Do you understand?”

A crease formed between Ashton’s brows. “She’s only four!”

“It’s the same even if she’s a year old. There’s no need to wait until she’s eighteen to understand the principle that she can learn now.” I might have sounded harsh, but I strongly feel that these are things that Summer needs to grapple with at an early age.

He sighed and indicated for us to wait at our table.

Summer seemed to have realized she over ordered. She kept silent for a while and then approached me. “Mommy, I’m sorry. I won’t do it again.”

I nodded. My eyes were fixed on Ashton as he walked toward us.

He put the food on the table and told Summer, "Eat whatever you like and enjoy yourself."

She waited for my approval before digging in.

I did not have much appetite. The big screen caught my attention. It was still broadcasting the videos of Nancy promoting the jewelry.

"Whether it's Rebecca or Nancy, to me, it's all for show. If you mind, I won't bring along a female companion to any social events." He sounded firm.

I heaved a soft sigh. "You don't need to do that. I've found my life's goal and I know what I want. You don't have to worry about what I think."

He grimaced. "So, you're mad at me?"

I denied because I did not care. "Regardless of who you're with, these are just tactics used by the media to entertain its audience. They can do that at our expense, but we shouldn't dwell in it."

A warm smile settled on his face. "I'll cook tonight."

I chuckled.

"Huh? Didn't we plan to dine out tonight? Are we still going for a movie later?" asked Summer with a greasy mouth.

Her reaction made us laugh. Ashton cleaned her mouth and replied gently, "Whatever you say."

Summer made the call for the rest of the outing and the day seemed so perfect.

When we returned home, it was already late. The exhausted Summer fell asleep on Ashton.

Maybe we walked too much the entire day. My previously injured foot started throbbing painfully.

Post injury effects?

Ashton sent Summer back to her room. When he got out, he saw me pouring hot water into a bucket. Without hesitating, he took over and tested the water temperature.

Seemingly, the water was too hot. Thus, he added some cold water. Thereafter, he untied my shoelaces, intending to wash my feet for me.

I blocked his hands and refused. "I can do it on my own."

He was adamant. "The old injury hasn't healed completely. Apply some ointment after soaking your feet in the hot water."

As he spoke, he immersed his long fingers into the water.

Some fates are inextricably intertwined. I can't seem to get rid of him.

He helped me massaged my ankle. "There must be many happenings going on in K City. You've been staying here for a long time. It's time to go back."

He lifted his head. "Are you asking me to leave?"

"It's a suggestion."

He kept quiet as he continued to massage my ankle attentively.

It had almost been two weeks since he came to R Province. I know how busy it could get at Fuller Corporation. He was always seen engaging in virtual meetings on his laptop and settling a lot of documents.

Even so, the heart of Fuller Corporation was in K City. Clearly, his stay in R City would never be a viable long-term solution.

I was so used to having three meals a day and managing major and menial tasks in the yard. Therefore, I was reluctant to live with him in K City and surrounded by the hustle and bustle.

It may seem that his subtle intrusion into my life has portrayed a harmonious union between us two. It's actually just an illusion because he will leave ultimately.

It was a starry night. I could not fall asleep as I pondered over Summer's future.

I knew better than anyone that she didn't belong in R Province. I might have found my peace and my pace of life, but she was only a child who needed exposure and a better environment to learn and enrich her life.

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Although I loved being in R Province, I should never affect Summer's future.

With a buzzing sound in my head, I lay on the bed, unable to fall asleep. Overthinking things was giving me insomnia.

I got up for a glass of water and admired the gorgeous moonlight.

Standing in front of the window looking out at the scenery, I was lost in my thoughts. This journey of life seems too long. It's not easy to live from day to day peacefully.

The next day, as much as he was unwilling to, a few phone calls forced Ashton to leave.

"I'll be back as soon as I settle the matters in K City." His gaze mesmerized me. Why is this man always so charming?

I nodded. "Take care and drive safe!"

Without saying goodbye, I sent him off.

As his car sped off, I went back to the yard and fetched my phone. The notification caught my eyes.

Death at Fuller Corporation's construction site four years ago. Family of the deceased child hasn't received any compensation after three years of postponement.

It was difficult to ignore the leading headline.

Four years ago?

Death of a child?

I recalled reading the news back then, but had no idea how Ashton eventually settled the matter.

It has resurfaced again. It's apparent that someone is trying to find fault.

Could it be Jared or the Moore family?

I stopped thinking about it since it had nothing to do with me.

In the absence of Ashton, both Summer and I returned to our tranquil life.

At the hotel, rumors about Colin and me had been brewing. Some even had the impression that we lived under one roof.

I did not mind it since it was untrue. If I did, it would only add to my worries. Thankfully for the relationship I had with Louis, most staff did not portray any malice or hostility.

Some wanted to butter me up. Then again, with a personality like mine, it was hard for people to get close to me.

It was payday in mid-August.

Colin passed me the pay slip and said, "You should treat me a meal."

Looking at my salary which had doubled, I agreed. "Anything you want to eat? My treat."

Somebody heard our conversation and chimed in, "Since it's on you, you can't just treat one person, can you? Scarlett, you should celebrate your promotion with all colleagues."

"That's right. I'm dead bored. I haven't been out for two months."

Colin just smiled and did not make any comment.

I suggested, "Shall we all have dinner and drinks tonight?"

"Wow, sounds like a plan!"

The young girls were over the moon. Feasting and having fun were their weekly themed activities.

When the frenzy died down, Colin laughed at me. "With a total salary of eight thousand, you'll be left with nothing after treating over twenty colleagues to dinner and drinks. Dinner will most probably cost one or two thousand, excluding the expenses at the bar."

I grinned. "It's okay. I don't spend much anyways. Let's just hang out and have some fun as long as everyone's happy."

"All right. I'll let my mom look after Summer and Michael this evening in case we get home late. What do you think?"

I agreed.

The restaurants in R Province were relatively cheap. I found a big one and made a reservation for two rooms on the first floor.

A few colleagues were busy ordering food while someone teased me, "This must be the best restaurant in R Province since it's picked by Scarlett. An average expenditure per person here is about two hundred. How generous of her!"

"Indeed. Half of your pay will be gone after this meal."

Someone else added, "Why are you worried? Ms. Stovall doesn't depend on her salary alone, so why should you feel bad for her?"

It was Joyce. Without saying anything, I smiled as they continued placing orders.

There was no need for any introduction since everyone knew one another. Chats were heard immediately when all sat down together.

Someone asked, "Scarlett, do you plan to settle down in R Province? Or are you here temporarily?"

I answered, "I haven't decided."

"I heard that the two young heirs of Fuller Corporation in K City and White Corporation are locking horns in the corporate world. They both plan to get support from the Stovall family. Scarlett, can you share some inside news with us?"

Their topic could never go beyond gossips. "I only stayed in K City for three years, so I'm not too familiar with all the happenings there."

Joyce had always been in the limelight. Conversely, she was no longer the center of attention without his father's backing.

She jeered. "You want to hear something interesting? I recall Ms. Stovall having a four-year-old daughter. I wonder why a person born with a silver spoon like you would run all the way to a rural province and hide with a child. May we know why?"

That was a massive piece of gossip.

Instantaneously, everyone fixed their eyes on me curiously. "Scarlett, we've not heard you mention anything about the father of your child."

I took a sip of the wine and pursed my lips. Right then, the waiter served us food. I quickly changed the topic. "All of you must be starving. Let's dig in."

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I don't like to gossip about others and I don't like to be talked about either, especially when the topic is brought up intentionally by Joyce.

People from a small province may be kind-hearted, but due to too much free time on their hands, they tend to be very nosy.

A topic like this should either be clarified or forever kept under wraps. There's no way I can clear the air right now, so I can only choose not to mention it at all.

Seeing that I had no intention to explain further, they did not pursue the matter. The dinner ended pleasantly around nine o'clock.

As the host, I had promised everyone to hit the bar for some drinks. I could not go back on my words.

We went to a bar in the city center.

It was quite crowded. We picked a good seat on the first floor and had a great view of the stage performance on the ground floor.

The latest songs were being played on the screen while three men, who seemed to be in their thirties, were performing a soundcheck.

After ordering some drinks and snacks, we continued yammering on. The place was not too noisy but very lively.

With flashing lights and the upbeat music playing in the background, men and women danced merrily and bobbed their heads to the rhythm.

Colin sat beside me. He leaned over and asked, "Is Ashton Summer's father?"

His unexpected question stunned me. I looked at him; we both smiled.

Adults would let it slide, and we both left the question unanswered.

It was quite dull to just sit and drink, so we ended up playing some games. Colin did not touch a drop of alcohol because he had to drive.

I was not a big fan of drinking games. After a few rounds, I lost quite a bit and had to down a couple of glasses.

Feeling rather tipsy, I saw a bouquet of flowers appearing in front of me.

At that moment, everyone was observing me with anticipation.

A boy in his early twenties introduced himself. "Hi, I'm Matthew. Can we be friends? You're the nation's sweetheart, Nancy, right?" His bashful expression could be seen even under the dimly colored lights.

I froze for a few seconds. "I'm not Nancy. You're mistaken."

He was quite persistent. "How could it be? You are Nancy. Although you look slightly different without make-up, your beauty is ethereal. You just stand out in a crowd!"

Hmm.. how should I put it? It's great being young and reckless.

I thought about it for a while and came up with an idea to debunk the boy's perception. I showed him my identification card. "See, I'm not Nancy Goldstein."

He scrutinized my photo with disbelief. "You both look alike."

I replied politely, "There're indeed many doppelgangers in this world."

Blushing, he presented me with the bouquet. "This is for you, Ms. Stovall. You're very pretty. I don't think I'll ever see Nancy in person within my lifetime."

With that said, he left.

The group of colleagues started clamoring for attention. "Scarlett, you really look like Nancy, especially your eyes. I was also mistaken when I first met you."

I let out a faint smile in response.

It seems like I have a lot of look-alikes. In the past, people said I resembled Joyce, and then it was Cameron. Now, I'm apparently a twin of a top celebrity.

"Don't take it seriously. Beautiful faces are mostly similar," said Colin as he switched the glass of wine from my hand to a glass of fruit juice.

I was not bothered. "It goes to show that I'm quite good looking."

It was a harmless joke after all. The effects of the alcohol started to kick in and I felt a little dizzy. After footing the bill, I left with Colin.

He drove me home. "Let Summer stay with my mom tonight. I'll take her to school tomorrow morning."

I rubbed my temple and nodded. "Okay, I'll head in."

Colin continued to be caring toward me, albeit the presence of Ashton in my life. However, his concern gradually feels like how an elder brother would dutifully take care of his sister.

Adults are good at weighing pros and cons. Ashton is a steady and trustworthy man. His style of doing things is unconventional as compared to most people.

On the other hand, Colin respects me as an individual, but he also knows his place.

The way he treats me started off as a man caring for his beloved woman and it slowly changes its form to sibling love. This is probably the best ending for the both of us.

I was searching for the house key in my bag when John showed up. His car lights were exceptionally bright, contrasting the dim street lamp in the alley.

I could recognize his black Bentley and the number plate.

My guess was right.

He turned off the engine and got down from the car. His casual attire complemented his chiseled good looks.

I remained silent and gazed at him at the door.

The towering figure came forward. "I was so surprised to learn that you'd returned to R Province when Uncle Louis told me you're here. I thought you'd choose to settle down in a county within Q City after leaving K City."

"Come have a seat inside."

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I turned on the lights and served him a glass of water. Sitting down on the rattan chair, I tried to sober up.

He stared at me meaningfully and asked, "Have you returned to the family home?"

I hesitated. "Twenty years have gone by. It is probably demolished or completely renovated."

I did paid the family home a visit when I first came to R Province with Summer. In fact, I like to bring her there and stroll around. Although it has been largely modified, many interior items still remain.

He continued looking at me. "I only replaced what was broken. I didn't change the rest."

I was taken aback when I realized he bought the family home.

Except for nodding, I refrained from saying anything. "It's getting late. Let's catch up another time, you should go home and get some rest."

There's no need for him to stay over since he's got a house in R Province.

He quietly made his way to the door.

I followed him from behind until we got to the main entrance.

Out of the blue, he turned around and hugged me. I was stunned at first, but calmed down within the next minute.

"I miss you, Scarlett," he said hoarsely in a childlike manner.

I stood still and patted his back. In a light voice, I said to him, "Summer is already four. Come over and visit her whenever you are free."

There's no need to brood over it because time will heal it all.

The next day, John went looking for me at the hotel.

During Ashton's absence, rumors about Colin and me spread like wildfire amongst the hotel staff.

Some accused him of bootlicking me in order to gain Louis' favor. Some criticized us for being scandalous albeit having our own families.

I was so used to all these unfounded speculations that I had grown numb to all the talks.

John's sudden appearance at the office was like the grist for the mill as far as the talk in the workplace was concerned. Immediately, there was a pin-drop silence.

I was busy arranging the files and did not notice that he was there.

I noticed something strange when the girls who were discussing lipsticks and cosmetics quieten down.

I turned around and found a handsome man standing upright before me.

His unannounced presence clearly surprised me.

"You... Why are you here?"

He withdrew his gaze from my computer screen and looked at me. "I'm taking you out to breakfast."

It didn't sound like an invitation.

Even though John was not as well-known as Ashton, being a businessman from the Stovall family had earned him some fame.

Those who recognized him were excited to see him in person.

I checked on some pending work on the computer. "You might need to wait for a while, I have to finish some work."

He nodded and then found a place to settle down. He seemed to be at ease.

With a good-looking man sitting in the office, the ladies were so distracted and started idling.

Someone curiously asked, "Who's this man? What's his relationship with Scarlett?"

"I think he's the president of an electronic technology company, John Stovall, the son of Louis Stovall."

"So, they are siblings?"

“Seriously? I haven’t heard anything about this before.”

“What’s so strange about it? We didn’t know that Scarlett was Louis’ daughter too.”

Shutting down my computer, I said to John, “Let’s go!” Though the ladies huddled together and talked in hushed voices, they were not entirely inaudible. Disliking what I heard, I left the place quickly.

John sought my opinion once we got out of the hotel. “What do you feel like having?”

“Anything.”

He picked a restaurant. It was not the most fancy one, but it was the best in the province.

We sat opposite each other. “What would you like to eat?”

“You go ahead and order.”

Without further ado, he ordered two steaks and said to me, “You lost weight.”

I chuckled. “Are you here on a business trip?”

“I’m here to see you!” He was very honest. “Uncle Louis told me you’re in R Province, so I came.”

I simply acknowledged and kept quiet thereafter.

Time flies, he’s already in his thirties.

“When will you be going back to K City?” He posted a direct question to me.

“I don’t plan to return.”

He frowned. “What about Summer’s future? She could enjoy a better school and a plethora of resources. Why would you say no to that?”

The weather was very humid. I rubbed my forehead and replied impatiently, “John, can’t we just sit and eat?”

Que sera sera. We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. What's the use of discussing in advance?

He fell silent at that and watched me eat, but consumed nothing himself. It was a weird habit of his.

I would not step foot into such a good restaurant on my own. It's too expensive for my limited salary.

As we left the restaurant, I looked up at the scorching sun. The heat was unbearable in R Province, and it could easily make someone snappy.

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"Shall I take you home?" he asked.

I squinted my eyes at him. "Going to see Summer?"

He was surprised. "May I?"

"Why not? You're her uncle."

He beamed with joy but tried to suppress it.

We went to pick Summer up from her school.

She had not seen John even once during the four years here in R Province. However, she was not too shocked to see him as we had been having many visitors recently.

Summer and I took the back seat. She turned her head to and fro to look at John and I. "Mommy, is Mr. Stovall your friend?"

I nodded. "Summer, he's your Uncle John."

"Uncle?" she gasped.

John thought she was calling him and he immediately turned around gleefully.

“Watch out!” I yelled upon seeing the cars coming our way.

Luckily, his quick reflexes in maneuvering the steering wheel prevented a car crash.

He pulled over and cast a serious look at both of us. With anticipation, he asked, “Summer, call me again.”

I...

Summer was flabbergasted but did as he said. “Uncle John!” she addressed him sweetly.

A delighted smug settled upon his face. He exclaimed ecstatically, “Did you hear that, Scarlett? She called me ‘Uncle John!’”

I could totally feel him. He’s just like me, lonely on the inside and always searching for a sense of belonging.

A simple greeting from Summer made John feel joyful. It gave him the warmth that he had been yearning.

He was very happy. At the same time, he also had a complicated feeling toward others.

When he sent us home, I noticed that his gaze was fixated on Summer for a very long time. He looked like he was in deep thoughts.

Something’s not right.

As soon as we reached home, Summer went to pluck some fruits. I asked, “Is there anything bothering you?”

He came back to his senses. “Scarlett, what would you do if you’re pregnant but the father of the child wants you to abort the baby?”

I narrowed my eyes. “Well, since it’s your child, there’s no reason for you to abandon it. John, don’t disappoint the person who holds you in her heart dearly.”

Feeling rather embarrassed and shocked, he clarified, "I didn't say it's my child."

I found it amusing. "When you stared at Summer, you're imagining if the child would be as adorable as Summer, given the chance to be born into this world. Am I right?"

He hissed and sat down on the rattan chair in sizzling annoyance.

Holding his head with both his hands, he seemed lost.

I squatted down next to him and shared my two cents. "Regardless of the situation, if that's your child, you can't leave it alone nor cut off ties with it. John, don't do something you'll regret."

He abruptly got up from his seat. Looking slightly dazed, he left me a sentence before leaving the yard. "I'm heading back to K City. I'll come see you again in a few days' time."

Seeing him walking away, I could not help but smile. People will always be healed, whether through an eventful life or the existence of a child.

Summer came out carrying a watermelon with all her might. She scanned around for John. "Mommy, where's Uncle John?"

I took over the watermelon from her and put it aside. "He's left." I sighed. "Summer, the fruit will rot if we don't finish it quick enough."

She lowered her head. "I wanted to eat it with Uncle John."

I stroked her hair and sat her down on the rattan chair. "Summer, do you want to live in the city where Grandpa and Uncle John are?"

She tilted her head, looking confused. "Will Michael be there too?"

Gosh!

I was rendered speechless and struggled to come up with a reply. "No, he won't. Michael will stay here with his daddy."

"Oh, I see." She was disappointed. "If I'm gone, Michael won't have any friends left."

Pondering over the idea, she asked, "Mommy, will I have a daddy if I go live with Grandpa and Uncle John?"

I felt uneasy. All children would want their fathers to be by their sides. Summer is no exception.

I felt sorry for her. "Summer, do you want a daddy that badly?"

She bit her lips and thought hard about it. "Yes, if I have one, I could go out and play on weekends, just like the outing we had with Mr. Fuller. Daddy will be just like Mr. Fuller who buys me yummy food, tells me stories, and piggybacks me."

I listened to her without responding.

I had never thought of telling her about Macy. Similarly, I never wanted Jared to know where Macy was.

This girl has become a part of me since four years ago. I can't allow her to live with Jared. I don't feel good about that option.

Yet, I can't give her a father.