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In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1076

What could I say to that? I only nodded in response.

I had nothing to do in the afternoon, so naturally, I did not go to the office. However, what surprised me was Armond. He had called me and went straight to the point—he wanted to meet me.

I pursed my lips before replying, “There’s no point for us to meet. Mr. Murphy, what you’re looking for is not with me.”

His chuckles traveled out of the speakers. “You’re overthinking this. I just want to invite you to a meal. Nora is here in K City, and you were once close friends. Are you not going to have a meal with her now that she’s here?”

Sensing something else lying behind his friendly tone, I frowned before answering, “I’ll invite her another day. I won’t interrupt your meal with her.”

“Scarlett, I heard you’ve rented a small place for Shane’s parents. I’ve met with the two today, and they told me they want to thank you personally by inviting you to a meal. Is that inconvenient for you? If you reject, the two might be upset.”

His words made my heart skip a beat. Why did Armond go to see Sasha’s parents? Did Shane cross Armond?

“Armond, they’re old. What are you trying to do?” Until now, I still could not figure out to what extent of cruelty Armond could tolerate.

“Nothing, really. I’m just free recently, and I was thinking of getting a meal with someone. Scarlett, will you join me? Should I come and pick you up or are you going to drive?”

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Tamping down the fury in my heart, it took me a while of silence before I uttered, "Send me the address."

Once again, I heard him laughing. "Hahaha! Scarlett, aren't you an exceptionally nice girl? I really like that about you."

My lips pursed as I ended the call. Then, I called Ashton.

It took a few rings before the call went through. "What's the matter, Scarlett?"

"Armond called me. It seems like he has found Sasha's parents, and he has gotten Nora to come to K City. I don't know what his aims are, but I've agreed to meet him. How are things on your side?"

Ashton inhaled sharply. "Brandon's been in a foul mood ever since he found out about how his daughter has been treated. He's hesitating. Something seems off about Abe. It's as if he's been drugged. When I saw him, he's only half-conscious, so I couldn't get anything from him."

I frowned. Thinking of Hailey, I said, "Ashton, perhaps there's someone who can help. Look for Hailey. Her father should have seen Armond in the past. As long as Hailey's the one to talk to her father, things will be much easier."

After a moment of contemplation, I added, "By the way, before meeting with Hailey, look for Fawn, Amy, and Jody Falker. They're all victims among the children. Hailey can't come to a decision. If you ask them to come with you, she might be able to make up her mind. Also, will you be able to come up with a plan to protect Hailey's father? At the end of the day, he's still involved with the organ trafficking incident. Once the investigation is done, I don't think he'll be able to say that he's innocent in it."

After a moment of silence, Ashton replied, "I'll try my best. Armond should be looking for you for that box. Hold on to it. If you have to, then give him the box. The box is useless to us, so it's best if you don't get into a conflict with Armond."

I understood why he said those words, so I hummed in agreement. After ending the call, I was about to leave the house.

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When Holden saw me about to leave, he darted to my side. "Where are you going? Why aren't you bringing me along? You can't be dating another man behind my back, right?"

I nodded as I looked at him. "That's right. I'm going to have a secret date with another man. Do you want to join me? It'll be exciting."

For reasons beyond me, he blushed. "No way, Scarlett. Are you really that shameless to do something like this behind Ashton's back?"

Rendered speechless for a moment, I then asked, "Are you coming with me? If you're not, I'm going to leave now."

Promptly, he nodded and entered the car before I did. When he turned back to look at me, there was a smug expression on his face. "How can you possibly leave me out of such a thrilling matter? Just the mere thought of it makes my heart race."

Ignoring his excitement, I started the car. The address that Armond had sent to me was a villa in the suburbs.

Bringing Holden with me was part of the plan. If anything did happen, he would be useful.

When he realized we were heading toward the suburbs, Holden muttered, "Wait, why are you driving toward the suburbs? Shouldn't we be going to a hotel?"

I pursed my lips for a moment before replying, "We're going to a villa in the suburbs. Only fools go to the hotels."

"Holy sh*t! Scarlett, you're one brave girl. Does Ashton know about this? When did you start doing this? Aren't you afraid of contracting some disease? How many men are there? Are their figures as good as mine? Why didn't you ask me to come along to such a fantastic gathering before today?"

Irritated by his rambles, I shot him a glare. "Shut up or get down from the car. Also, things aren't what you think they are. Armond has invited me to a meeting in the suburbs. I'm a little worried, so I brought you along. Don't be a coward later."

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He was taken aback by my words for a while. After a beat, his eyes widened comically before he gasped in disbelief. "Scarlett, you set me up?"

I nodded honestly. "You can think of it that way if you want to. If you're scared, you can leave the car right now. I won't stop you."

He gritted his teeth before hissing, "This has nothing to do with whether I'm scared or not. You clearly know I have no way to go back if I were to get down from the car now. Moreover, do I look scared? Armond's nothing but a dumbass. Why should I be scared of him? I just don't want to see him."

I nodded again. "Well, then. Since you're not afraid of him, be quiet and follow me there. Take it as if you're protecting me, and I'll owe you a favor. How about that?"

He scoffed, "How are you going to return me the favor? Tell me more. If I like it, I'll even take Armond down, not to mention protecting you."

My mouth hung open for a while before I managed to voice, "What do you want? I'll try my best to fulfill it."

He mulled over my words. "Why don't you cook for me for a week? I don't want pasta every day. I'll definitely puke by the second day."

His request was reasonable and simple, but it still stumped me. With a frown, I muttered, "Mr. Taylor, have I ever told you I can't cook? Other than making pasta, I don't know how to make anything else. Are you sure you want me to cook for you?"

He glowered at me. "If you don't know how to cook, then learn. I don't care. That's my request, and nothing else will work."

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“Okay, then.” I had to agree first; whether or not my cooking would be edible was another matter.

When we finally reached the villa, I was transfixed. This villa is humongous. The villa in K City’s suburbs usually have specific limits for their size, but this house is evidently thrice the size of the normal villa. This isn’t a villa; this is a manor!

The Murphys are filthy rich. This villa is worth hundreds of millions. Are they planning to live in it? Do they plan to use it for something else?

After entering the compound, I had to drive a distance before I reached the villa itself. By then, there was someone waiting for us by the doorway. “The size of this villa is comparable to the Taylor residence. The Murphys are truly affluent if they can build such an enormous villa in a place like K City, where the population density is high.”

When I took a good look at the villa, I realized I had to agree with him. The place looked newly built, and it would be impossible for them to build a place like this legally; they must have bribed the authorities and pulled some strings.

After entering the living room, I noticed it was so empty I could even hear the echoes of our footsteps. We then followed the maid up into a room on the second floor. Right as we entered the room, we were greeted with the sight of a gigantic folding screen.

Facing the folding screen, the maid respectfully announced, “Sir, they’ve arrived.”

The person behind the screen hummed in response before muttering, “You can leave now.” Then, he said, “Ms. Stovall, you’re quite punctual. It seems like I’m still important to you.”

I frowned but stayed silent. All I did was take in my surroundings. Sometimes, it was not a good thing when a house was too big, especially when the house was not lively. It would be like stepping into a haunted house.

It was eerie.

When Armond walked out from behind the folding screen, his gaze landed on Holden, and he frowned. “Mr. Taylor, you’re here too?”

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Sounding exactly like a ruffian, Holden drawled, "Yes. I wanted to take a walk, and I ended up here. Mr. Murphy, your house is quite big. What's it for? Keeping babes?"

It was easy for Holden to set someone ablaze with fury in seconds.

However, Armond only smiled. As he stared at me, he asked, "Ms. Stovall, why don't you take a seat while we chat? It's been a long while since we had a good chat."

Pressing my lips into a thin line, I then said, "Didn't we agree to have a meal together? Where are the others? Were you just joking with me, or did you think that my time isn't worth anything?"

"Of course not," he responded before chuckling. "They're all upstairs. I have some things I'd like to discuss with Ms. Stovall, so I'm meeting you here."

As he spoke, his gaze trailed toward Holden. "Mr. Taylor, if you don't mind, could I have a word with Ms. Stovall alone? I've prepared drinks and snacks upstairs. You can try out K City's specialties there."

Holden glanced at me, his thoughts obvious; he was asking what he should do next.

When I stared at Armond, I speculated that he must want to ask for the sandalwood box from me, so I said, "Mr. Taylor, please greet Nora and the others for me upstairs."

Holden tensed for a brief second before nodding. Then, he left the room and headed upstairs.

At that moment, the two of us were the only ones left in the spacious room. After Armond sat down and crossed his legs, he lifted a brow at me. "Are you not going to sit for the talk?"

I was silent as I sat down on a chair and waited for him to speak.

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As expected, he soon said in a low voice, "Ashton must be progressing well in A City."

His abrupt topic made me sat transfixed for a moment. Then, I frowned. "You can be straightforward with me, Mr. Murphy."

He snorted, "You know what I want. Scarlett, honestly, I like you a lot. My mother asked me about you a while back, talking about how your stomach will be bigger soon. She even asked me when I'll be preparing for the wedding and when I'll marry you. To be frank with you, if you're meeker and more obedient, I'll be more than willing to let you keep the baby. However, you're too cheeky; you registered that girl, and you even adopted her. What you've done upsets me. Once I'm upset, I'm prone to do bad things. So, I'm sorry, I could not stop myself from getting rid of that baby in you. You won't hate me for this, will you?"

For a moment, his nonchalant tone made a murderous urge sprout in my mind. At that second, I wanted to strangle him to death; in seconds, I had already murdered him in a hundred ways in my mind.

However, I did nothing but look at him, waiting for him to utter all those words I despised. However, he did not continue. "You don't need to record what I've said. These things are useless to you. Scarlett, for me to be in my position, I can't be a fool, so stop those pointless things you're doing, okay?"

My heart skipped a beat as I tensed. In the next second, I schooled my features to look calm. "What are you talking about? I don't understand what you're trying to tell me. I'm not doing anything pointless for those disgusting acts of yours. I know karma will come for you soon."

He raised a brow at my reply before rising to his feet. Walking to my side, he leaned his face closer to mine as he smiled menacingly.

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When I saw his bony fingers reaching toward me, I could not help but hold my breath. Swiftly, he removed my earpiece and mocked, "Don't worry. I won't do anything to you. There isn't any need for you to wear these unnecessary things. It'll only affect our conversation."

With that said, he threw it out of the window. My mouth was set in a hard line, feeling rage boiling in my gut, but still, I looked at him calmly.

He soon returned to his chair. "I know you hate me, but that's fine. If I can't get you to love me, it'll be equally thrilling to have you hate me. You shouldn't blame me for what happened to the kid; you should be blaming yourself. If you didn't appear, no one will do anything to you. But, Scarlett, you were too stupid to save someone who's completely unrelated to you. That's why your kid's dead. This is the ending you've brought upon yourself, and the only thing you can blame this on is how you've stuck your nose into someone else's business."

"Shut up!" I roared. "Armond, have you never thought about how you'll end up? I used to think that you're a gentleman, but boy was I horribly wrong. You're a scum that has no morals nor principles. No one will ever love you. You want that box, don't you? I'm going to tell you now that I'll never give it to you. I'd rather burn the box myself than hand it to you, so stop thinking of getting it. I want to see you destroy the Murphy family and yourself."

Unfortunately, it seemed like he was not as angry with my words as I was with his. His gaze on me remained tranquil, but it took him a while before he said, "Scarlett, you know I don't want to do anything bad to you. I hope you'll be good and give me the things I want. That way, I won't hurt you or those that you're concerned about. If not, I can't guarantee your and their safety. You must be curious about what this villa is for. Have you heard of a snake's nest? I've loved them since young, but my grandfather did not like them. So, I could only secretly keep them. The third floor is where they reside. If I press on the switch, those upstairs will be together with my pets. As for whether they'll live or die, I won't know. After all, I'm not quite sure whether those pets I have are venomous or not."

My eyes were wide as I stared at him in disbelief. "Armond, you shameless man!"

He nodded in agreement. "I, too, think of myself as shameless. But Nora's with me. Say, why do you think she loves me that much? At the start of our relationship, we didn't like each other that much, and I never have any romantic feelings toward her. Why is she enamoured with me?"

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My hands clenched into fists as I scavenged through my brain for what I should do. I knew nothing about how many snakes Armond had kept. Since young, I was deadly afraid of these soft creatures. I was not sure whether we could escape the place in time if those creatures were released. If the worse did happen, he could easily dismiss his responsibility in the matter by claiming that it had only been an accident. All he needed to do was pay for the medical fees and remove the snakes. He would lose nothing in this.

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At that thought, anger curled in my chest.

“At the very least, Nora truly likes you. How can you possibly use her to threaten me? Armond, you’re shameless beyond imagination,” I snarled as I tried to look for my phone in the pocket.

He sneered, “Truly likes me? What’s the use of that? If she isn’t the one I want, what’s the point of her true feelings? She’s still useless. Am I right?”

I was sure that the man was insane. To him, everything he did not like, did not want, and did not care about, was nothing but a burden. He would never cherish those things.

Has Holden realized that something is off? At that thought, I was about to call my father with the phone in my pocket.

However, before I could, a hand stopped me. A wide, emotionless smile was on Armond’s face as he leaned close to me. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you. Isn’t the sandalwood box useless to you? Why are you stubbornly holding on to it instead of giving it to me?”

Retracting my hand as I clenched my jaw, I then moved away from him and sneered, “Will you let them go if I give you the sandalwood box?”

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He raised a brow. "Of course. You know my aim is a simple one. Furthermore, I don't really want to hurt them. Scarlett, no one is born a villain."

As I stared at him, I knitted my brows. "All you need is Nora if you want to threaten me. Why did you invite Sasha's parents here? They're old people who are useless to you. Why do you have to torment them?"

He lowered his gaze. "I'm not using them to threaten you. It's a mere coincidence that they're here. Shane owes me too much, so I'll have to invite his parents over so that he'll pay up soon."

I pursed my lips. "Why don't you just kill him?" He's destroying someone's family, but he won't even stop at that. Why can someone like him continue to live in this world?

He shrugged and said instead, "Give me the box. You know I really need the things in it. If you give it to me, you can take the people away."

I muttered, "Let them come down here first. The box isn't with me right now. Also, you know that even if I want to take Nora away, she won't come with me."

He narrowed his eyes. "So what are you trying to tell me?"

"I'll give you the box, but you have to let them go first. You know well that Sasha's parents are useless to you. That b*stard Shane has no morals to speak of, so he won't care about his parents. That's why you should just let the two go and let them enjoy their last decades peacefully. Leave Shane to the police. Let them stop him from making society worse."

However, he sneered, "These things are out of my control. Scarlett, honestly, I don't trust you much. You've fooled me once, so no matter what happens this time, you have to give me the box. It's fine even if you don't have it with you now. I'll give you a chance to go back and get it. Once you get it, give it to me, and I'll let them go."

My brows furrowed. Ashton had swapped the box once, and I had no idea where it was now. Looking at him, I confessed, "It's not that I don't want to give you the box, but that I don't know where it is. When I gave you the box back then, I didn't even know it had been swapped."

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He narrowed his eyes again, the upset evident on his face this time. "You mean, you don't know where the box is?"

I nodded. "Yes."

Immediately, a scowl grew on his face. "Then, I'm sorry. Since you don't have the box, we'll have to talk again when you find it. You might as well stay here for the next few days. Don't worry; I will treat you well."

I froze before frowning. "Armond, what do you mean? Are you trying to lock me up here?"

He shook his head before smirking at me. "No, of course not. How can this be considered as locking you up? I just want you to stay here for a few days. Ever since the villa was revamped, no one has come for a stay. It's quite dead in here. Since you're all here, it's a good opportunity to liven up the place.

As he spoke, he reached out to press the call bell. Soon, someone came upstairs—a middle-aged man. When Armond saw him, he said, "Spencer, I'll have to trouble you to take care of my friends for the next few days. Thank you."

With that said, he stood up and walked out of the room.

I hastily stopped him. "Armond, this is illegal. Let us go."

"We'll talk again when you find the box. I'm tired now. Spencer will lead you to your room. You don't need to think much about anything; you just need to stay here. I'm sure Ashton will help you with the box."

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In my fury, I glared at him. However, he ignored me and left without sparing another glance at me.

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The only ones in the room were Spencer and me. When the man turned to look at me, he smiled. "Ms. Stovall, your room's on the fourth floor. You..."

"Take me to the third floor," I interrupted. Then, I walked out of the room. Armond's villa was massive to the point one would take minutes just to go from one end to the other end of a floor. Spencer frowned, seemingly hesitant about leading me there.

Hence, I said, "Take me there. Since he wants to keep me here, he can't possibly stop me from going anywhere."

Spencer was taken aback by my words for a moment. A beat later, he nodded.

The layout of the third floor differed from the second floor; the third was locked by a steel door. At the sight of that, I grimaced. "Where are my friends? Have you locked them all in there?"

Spencer smiled before answering, "Of course not. Your friends are all on the fourth floor, Ms. Stovall. This floor is where he keeps his pets. They used to come out from there and scare the rest, so he locked them all in here."

I nodded. "Are they all snakes? Does he keep anything else?"

The smile remained on Spencer's face as he replied, "Mr. Murphy likes to collect rare animals, so he almost has all kinds of creatures. He has had them for years now. Ms. Stovall, would you like to take a look?"

As I could not see anything from behind the steel door, I dared not answer him immediately. It would be fine if the creatures were locked up as the animals in the zoo, but it would be dangerous for me to enter if they were free to roam anywhere they pleased.

After brief contemplation, I replied, "No need. Spencer, please take me to the fourth floor instead."

He nodded before leading me to the floor above ours. The villa was huge, and the structure of it was reminiscent of a noble castle of ancient times. It was grand but empty.

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The stairs looked complicated. I did not know whether it was built that way to display the designer's capability.

The moment I entered, I saw a lavish living room decorated with statues of Venus and saints. I was startled when I realized there was even a statue where one of the saints was breastfeeding a baby.

Perhaps it was because I knew not how to appreciate art, so I felt nothing when I looked at the statues.

There was a couch and a table in the living room. Holden was by the window, staring outside. For a moment, I wondered what he was thinking about.

However, I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw him. It seemed like Armond had not done anything to him. When he heard my footsteps, he turned to look at me. "Armond's house is built weird."

"Huh?" I froze in my spot for a moment. "Like how?"

"Do you see that greenery there? Don't you find it odd?" He raised his arm to point at the green patch downstairs, but no matter how long I looked at it, I found nothing odd about it.

Thus, I looked at him, perplexed, and asked, "What's odd about it? It looks fine to me. Is it some kind of Fengshui setting? When have you learned that?"

He gave me a look before replying, "Nope. It's the growth of the plants. Can't you see any problems with them?"

I looked back at the spot, but still, I could not see anything strange about it. It was winter then, and most of the plants had wilted. The only ones that did not wilt were the pines, which thrived in all seasons.

He sighed. "The growth of the pines is all different from each other. Don't you see it?"

His words made me look closer again. He was right, there were dozens of pines in the courtyard, but the ones in the middle had wilted. Meanwhile, the ones planted by the sides were still fine.

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"Is it because the soil isn't as healthy in the middle?" I asked.

He shook his head. "The soil here is all the same. The courtyard is enormous, and it's far from the villa. It's unlikely that the villa has blocked the sunlight from reaching the plant. In other words, either there isn't enough soil in the middle, or something is buried there."

"A cellar?" The villa had no underground parking lot, so the only thing I could think of was a cellar.

He turned to stare at me in silence for a moment. "I don't think a villa like this needs a cellar. It should be a warehouse, meant to store something."

When I thought about Abe and Armond's relationship in Venria, I could not help but say, "For example, kyanine? Armond was quite close to Abe back in Venria. However, K City has strict rules about kyanine. How is he planning to sell them?"

Holden rubbed his nose, seemingly speechless for a moment. "What in the world is in that skull of yours? A huge villa like this usually has basements built for refuge from disasters. Even normal villas have them; they're just converted into underground parking lots."

After Holden tapped my head, I frowned. "You were so serious about your observation, so that's why I thought about kyanine instead. What else did you think I was going to think about when I saw that solemn look of yours?"

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