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# In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1311 - 1315

“Why won’t you be here?” Summer asked curiously, her wide eyes blinking up at me.

“Um...” I grew silent, pretending to contemplate her words for a long while. “Because your current school is very far from home, and Uncle John and I will have to travel very far to take you there and back. And right now, there are some bad people who want to hurt me and Uncle John. If you continue to go to that school, then we might get hurt, or worse, never be able to see you again. That’s why we might not be here anymore.”

Summer’s cheeks immediately puffed up in indignation, eyes filling with tears as she threw her blanket off and clung onto my arm tightly. “I don’t want you and Uncle John to go away, Mommy! I don’t want the bad guys to hurt you! I’ll change schools, so please don’t leave me behind...”

I felt upset watching her cry her heart out, but there was nothing else I could do. This white lie would serve to shield her from Jared’s attempts to hurt her.

“Shh, it’s okay,” I cooed quietly, patting Summer’s back reassuringly. “You’re a big girl now, Summer. You need to stay strong and take care of your little siblings, not cry all the time, right?”

She swiftly lifted her head at the mention of her siblings, clumsily wiping away her snot and tears and sitting up straight in her best impression of a grown-up. “I won’t cry anymore! I’ll do my best to protect Mommy and the babies! So please ask Uncle John to help me change schools; I can make new friends, I promise!”

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It felt like Summer had instantly matured within the span of a few seconds.

It had been hard for her to get used to her family members after returning from the chemical plant, let alone fit in and make new friends at school.

I wondered if the change in her had anything to do with Jared in the back of my mind, but I quickly got rid of that thought.

How could the same man who plotted for years and almost killed Summer just switch her personality on command?

The next morning, I brought Summer to the hospital for another health check-up.

Thankfully, the doctors found nothing wrong with her, and I let out a sigh of relief.

Remembering how much Jackson doted on Summer, I thought of bringing her to visit him while at the hospital. It was only after we reached his ward that I realized Nick had already arranged for Jackson to move into another private, more expensive hospital.

With nothing else left to do, I brought Summer home.

The elevator doors slid open with a quiet ding, revealing a familiar stoic face.

Ashton was in the elevator, his expression completely unreadable as Thora stood beside him. She had gone for a lighter, more natural makeup today, but she had on a displeased frown. Even so, the sight of them together was, objectively speaking, somewhat aesthetically pleasing.

The air around us instantly dropped several degrees in temperature.

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Completely oblivious to the tension, Summer lit up and ran forward to hug Ashton's legs, beaming up at him. "Daddy!"

Ashton couldn't react much because of Thora's presence, but he reached down and gently patted the top of Summer's head. "Hi there," he greeted casually.

"Mommy!" Summer looked back at me over her shoulder, her eyes shining with anticipation. "Let's eat lunch with Daddy!"

Oh, sweet child. Your daddy is busy being a spy right now. He has no time for a family lunch.

Sighing wryly, I stepped into the elevator and squeezed myself in between the two adults. "Daddy's busy with work today, Summer," I told her gently, pulling her to stand with me. "Let's not cause any more trouble for him, okay? We'll eat lunch with Uncle John, and then I'll cook your favorite grilled eel. How does that sound?"

"Amazing!" she replied without even thinking twice before realizing that something wasn't right here. She kept glancing between me and then Ashton, knitting her eyebrows together in confusion.

Turning her attention to Thora, Summer tilted her head in surprise.

Thora had likely been waiting for this exact moment, meeting Summer's gaze as she put on a pretty, gentle smile. "You must be Summer, right? You're adorable! Your daddy has told me a lot about you," she praised in a soft voice.

## In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1312

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“Thank you,” Summer replied politely, then went on to say, “Are you Daddy’s secretary too? Where’s Ms. Collins?”

Thora’s face fell, her expression souring significantly.

It must have been humiliating for the president of a highly-regarded listed company to be mistaken for a lowly employee such as Stella by a kid, even if it had been merely an innocent mistake.

Who would have thought that my baby would learn to defend her mother at such a young age? Way to go, Summer!

Internally snickering, I cleared my throat and pulled Summer even closer to me. “I’m sorry, kids these days don’t know what they’re talking about,” I explained sarcastically. “You won’t take her words to heart, right, Ms. Ziegler?”

Thora quickly regained her composure and steeled her expression once more, haughtily throwing her hair over her shoulder as if nothing had happened. “Of course not,” she sniffed. “It was just a joke, after all. These things happen with kids all the time.”

I’d expected nothing less from a woman who built her career up from the ground all by herself. She’d mastered the method of getting close to people by first exchanging niceties with them before making her advances aggressively. After failing to appeal to Ashton’s daughter, she had likely decided to steal him away through brute force instead.

Clearly, her interest in Ashton was born out of calculation rather than a pure crush if she didn’t even have the patience to deal with a child.

Ding!

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I'd planned on picking apart even more of her puzzling confidence, but the elevator had arrived at our floor. I couldn't act too much like a bully in front of Summer either, so I took a deep breath and led her out of the elevator.

Ashton and Thora followed closely behind us.

I'd barely taken a few steps before pausing, turning around, and walking up to Ashton. Leaning in close to him just like how I'd done a thousand times before, I reached my arms around his neck and fiddled with his collar, making sure that Thora was watching every single move. After that, I grabbed his tie in an elegant motion, straightening it before stepping back to admire my handiwork. "That's more like it," I smiled to myself in satisfaction.

Glancing up at Ashton innocently, I told him, "Remember to take some time out of your schedule to accompany the kids for dinner, okay? Our arms are always open for you."

With that, I turned on my heel and pulled Summer out of the hospital.

There was a skip in my step all the way to the car, feeling especially proud of my amazing acting skills. Who wouldn't feel envious after having witnessed such an intimate, tender moment between a handsome husband and a loving wife?

The memory of Thora's unpleasant face turning several shades of red while she tried her best to suppress her rage literally made me want to laugh out loud.

Who cared if she was the woman with Ashton right now? The familiarity of ten years' worth of emotions and the natural instinct to press close to one another was something that she, a woman who had solely been focused on her career for all of her life, would never be able to achieve with him.

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She and Ashton were like the polar ends of a magnet. Even if they seemed perfect for each other on paper, the truth may turn out to be the exact opposite.

“Mommy,” Summer suddenly wrapped her arms around me, resting her chin on my chest as she stared up with questioning eyes. “Does Daddy not like us anymore?”

“Huh?” I reached down to fix her hair. “Why would you think of that?”

“Daddy doesn’t want to eat dinner with me anymore...” She pouted, unable to conceal the disappointment she felt. “Mr. Cress said that if you like someone, you always eat with them. That must mean that Daddy doesn’t like me anymore.”

Not Mr. Cress again.

Jared had infected Summer with his teachings, causing such a young child to constantly question herself and ruining her chances at having a happy, innocent childhood.

Swallowing back my temper, I patiently comforted her by saying, “Daddy and Mommy are the two people who love you the most in the world, silly. But Daddy is busy fighting bad guys now, so if we meet too much, he might get distracted and then get hurt by the bad guys. So, Daddy is actually working very hard to protect us. Knowing this, are you still mad at Daddy?”

“Then, is Daddy Superman?” Summer asked, completely serious.

I laughed wryly, not knowing what else to do other than to nod my head.

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I'd meant to agree only as a joke, but Summer was much more earnest than I'd initially thought. "Then, that means I'm mini Superman!" she exclaimed, her mouth open in a wide "O" shape.

## In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1313

I nearly jumped out of my skin at her sudden declaration. "Sure!" I giggled. "You're going to have to become really powerful so that you can protect not only yourself, but everyone you love, okay?"

"Yes, Mommy! I will!" Summer promised with all the passion and optimism in the world, as if she truly believed that she was going to transform into a superhero any moment now.

I just grinned at her, desperately wishing from the bottom of my heart that her wish would one day come true.

There was no mercy in this world. The only way you could protect everything you loved was by becoming stronger and stronger. I wasn't sure how much longer I could protect my kids for, so I prayed every day that they would be able to defend themselves after I passed away eventually.

After sending Summer home for Lois to look after her, John and I left to meet Jared.

We sat in the most obvious seat in the café. Just as the waiter was serving us our ordered drinks, the glass doors slowly pushed open, and Jared walked in.

Our eyes met, and I finally saw for myself how much he had changed since I last saw him.

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His face had gotten much rounder, and he was growing an unkempt beard. His eyebrows had also been purposefully dyed light grey, probably in an attempt to mask his identity. If he hadn't headed towards us and sat down at our table without an ounce of hesitation, I would have never noticed the similarities between this man and the angular-faced, pretty boy that I used to know.

What quickly followed my feelings of shock was an overwhelming sense of disdain.

All Jared had lost after three years of being in jail was some of his physique and good looks, whereas Summer had nearly lost her life. Everyone else who had unknowingly gotten involved in his schemes and became sick due to chemical pollution had also had their lives ruined because of him.

God, you truly are unfair and unjust.

"It's been a long time," Jared broke the silence first. His voice was now low and gravelly, I spotted the vague hints of the cruel, cynical humor in his eyes.

I had been lied to and manipulated by him so many times before because of this exact innocent appearance.

"I wish it could've been longer," I replied curtly.

He hung his head in shame, smiling wryly in self-deprecation.

How could he laugh so casually even after committing so many evil acts? I couldn't believe that the past me had allowed him to interact with my daughter for such an extended period of time.

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“I’m warning you. Don’t ever come near Summer again,” I growled out through gritted teeth. My fingernails dug into my palm as I clenched my fists at the memory of Summer’s pained cries that resurfaced in my mind.

My rationality was telling me that I had to get rid of Jared from our lives, no matter what his intentions were.

He leaned back against the seat of his chair, fixing me with a calm stare. “Don’t you think you’re being too ridiculous? I’m her father. Does it make sense for me to not be with her?”

“No, you’re not.” Rage flared up within me like a wildfire. “She is Ashton’s and my daughter. She has no relation to you.”

“Oh, really?” Jared chuckled. “We’ll see what the court has to say about that when I send both our DNA for a paternity test.”

My heart dropped to the bottom of my stomach.

He had a point. After going undercover at Summer’s school for so long, it would have been extremely easy for him to get ahold of a strand of her hair or a piece of her fingernails. He knew that he would be exposed one day, so he’d made prior preparations in order to legally be able to get near her.

Knock, knock. John’s knuckles rapped on the tabletop to get Jared’s attention. “You better watch your mouth,” he threatened, his stare was aggressive. “This isn’t J City nor the prison. There’s no one to protect you here.”

John had never been a kind man, and he could look so intimidating that children would burst into tears at the sight of him if he wanted to. But Jared seemed unbothered, turning his head to meet John’s gaze head-on with a mocking grin. “I understand. You have endless connections at your disposal in

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K City, and you have the power to make anyone disappear off the face of the earth.”

## In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1314

Even after three years, his unnerving smile made my breath hitch in my throat and my eyebrows knit together in disgust.

The rough, hard days of being in prison had failed to teach him a lesson in humility. If anything, he had come out even more unscrupulous and evil than he'd been when he first went in.

John hadn't expected his intimidation to not work on Jared, his face fell slightly and he became irritated. The two men just stared at each other while the tension around them grew thicker with every passing second.

Not wanting to waste any more time in Jared's presence, I spoke up, “Cut to the chase and tell us what you really want.”

Only then did Jared turn to stare at me, silently pondering for a moment before saying, “I never wanted to be your enemy, Scarlett, so don't act so hostile towards me. All I want is to watch Summer grow up and correct my past mistakes.”

“You're wrong. You became my enemy the moment you included Summer in your plot of revenge,” I instantly retorted. “You've gone mad. What right do you think you have to sacrifice so many people's lives and happiness for the sake of one deceased person?”

He took a deep breath as his expression turned solemn. “I've already paid back everything that I owed those people while I was in prison. The Crest family is also doing their best to help compensate for anything that I've yet to

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make up for. Why is it your place to decide that I deserve the death penalty all because of that one mistake I made?"

"That's bullsh\*t!" John blurted out. "The death penalty is exactly what you deserve! While you were kicking back and relaxing in jail for three years, Summer was in the hospital struggling to stay alive! And even if she's been discharged from the hospital now, she'll need to live on medication for the rest of her life! That damage is something that you'll never be able to compensate for!"

John had verbalized exactly what I was feeling. Summer had suffered greatly as a result of Jared's actions, both physically and mentally.

Jared looked slightly upset at that. "I didn't know back then that Summer was my child," he lamented, staring at John with a frown. "My heart hurts, too. All I want is one more chance with her. I promise that I'll never reveal to her my real identity, and that I'll never make her remember what happened all those years ago."

There was a brief pause. He held his hands on top of the table as he hung his head, staring at the ground. "I've also been going to therapy and counseling sessions recently. I'm aware that Summer has slowly learned to trust me, and that no one is more suited to be her private doctor than me. I'm confident that I can change her back into the innocent, naive child that she once was, if only you'll give me some more time with her..."

"No thanks," I cut in. I didn't want to listen to him go on. "Let me ask you. If Summer isn't your child, would you still be acting this way?"

I recalled very clearly how many children from families living nearby the chemical plant had fallen sick or had been affected in some way by the

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pollution from the plant. Even if Jared truly regretted his actions, Summer was not the only child that he had to compensate.

Jared looked surprised that I would ask such a thing, his eyes widened for a brief second. “There are no ‘if’ or ‘but’s about any of this. The fact that Summer is the flesh and blood of Macy and I is the truth. I can’t just give up on her. I know that you’ve started arranging for her to change school. If you’re willing to go to such measures to prevent me from seeing Summer, then I’ll have no choice but to take our paternity test results to show the court.”

There it is.

He’d finally shown his true colours after being all polite and nice, just like every other manipulative person I’d met before.

“Do you want to sue us? Go ahead and try!” John jumped to his feet, about to swing a fist in Jared’s direction before I frantically tugged on his shirt under the table, signaling for him to calm down.

Jared was completely undisturbed, not even flinching as he went on, “By the way, I forgot to congratulate you on giving birth to twins, Scarlett. I’m really happy for you, and I’m sure Macy feels the same way up in heaven. But you must be busy with taking care of two babies, especially after having gone through a divorce recently. Summer is at the age where she loves running around and causing mischief, so it’ll be a challenge for you to look after her as well. Why don’t you let me take care of her and lift a burden off of everyone’s shoulders?”

“What rubbish! The Stovall family has countless relatives available and willing to help take care of a child!” John rolled his eyes, breaking free from my grasp and standing up to tower over Jared. “Even if Letty and the maids are unable

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to look after Summer, she still has me as her uncle! And as long as I'm around, you will never be able to touch her!"

## In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1315

His sudden outburst of emotion had caused him to raise his voice, drawing the attention of the other customers in the quiet café.

If John went on like this, he might actually start a physical fight.

I glanced at Jared, who still appeared calm and composed. He hadn't taken John's threats seriously, or maybe this entire situation was completely within his control.

The rest of the café's patrons were made up of small groups of two or three people who would occasionally look over at us. They were just being a little nosy, but there was nothing particularly strange about our surroundings.

Was this the calm before the storm? I had no clue what tricks Jared had up his sleeve, but I knew one thing for sure—being too reckless might cause more trouble than we needed.

After having come to that conclusion, I reached up and pulled John to sit back down in his chair.

I forced a fake smile onto my face, softening my tone as I spoke. "You said you wanted to take this case to court, right? I'll happily agree to that, and I'll make sure we see this to the very end. As a lawyer, I can tell you definitively that you do have primary custodial rights as Summer's biological father. I also know that I have a huge disadvantage due to my marital status. I'm assuming your lawyer told you all of this, too?"

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“So what if they did?” Jared shrugged, unlocking his clasped-together hands and spreading his arms wide in a motion of defeat. “I’m just a doctor; of course, I have to leave these sort of things up to a professional lawyer. I might as well let you in on a little secret—the country’s best child custody lawyer has already accepted my case. I won’t lose this time, Scarlett. I suggest you turn a blind eye and back off, and stop preventing me from seeing Summer again. If not, you can’t blame me if you have to hear my lawyer reveal some particularly unpleasant things about you while in court.”

I let out a cold scoff.

The mere mention of a “professional child custody lawyer” wasn’t enough to scare me off.

“I don’t know who your lawyer is, but I already feel sorry for them,” I fluttered my eyelashes innocently. “They won’t be earning their legal fees this time.”

Jared blinked owlishly at me. I could nearly see the gears turning in his head, wondering what I was up to.

Leaning forward with a laugh, I said, “I am sure you have not told the lawyer the whole truth if you’re feeling so confident in them. But of course, who would willingly admit that they nearly killed their own child? I can easily dig out Summer’s old medical records from the time she underwent surgery at the hospital, as well as your criminal history. And I can safely assume that everyone else who is suffering because of having worked at the Crest family’s factories will be more than happy to be my witnesses in court and testify against the evil, selfish piece of trash you are!

“Don’t even get me started on custodial rights! If you’re really Summer’s father, let me ask you this. Why did you bring her to the chemical plant even knowing that it was polluted, and cause her to suffer from an incurable disease? She

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trusted you, but you left her in such a desperate, painful situation! According to Article 261 of the Criminal Law, I can sue you for negligence and throw you back in jail where you belong!”

For the first time in my life, I felt that I’d been right in choosing to become a lawyer.

I hadn’t considered my words properly nor gotten my thoughts in order before I went on that rant, but I’d successfully recited the correct article effortlessly and rendered Jared speechless.

I secretly breathed a sigh of relief when he had nothing to tell me.

What had I been so worried about? Someone like him had long since lost the right to be a father to any child; thinking that he could take Summer away from me was nothing more than a far-fetched daydream.

Exchanging a meaningful look with John, we both got up from our seats.

I’d barely taken a few steps before stopping in my tracks, giving Jared a sidelong glance. “You can’t always forget the past and start anew, Jared. You are so wrong to think that way; the truth is, you have to pay the price for your grave mistakes. This is my only and final warning to you—Summer is Macy’s daughter as well as mine. She has nothing to do with you, so don’t try and humiliate yourself any further. If I see you anywhere near her, I’ll make sure to bring down hell upon you.”

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