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In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1346 - 1350

I saw it with my own eyes. I didn't just think he did it. I knew the man did it! I looked at Joseph, but he was standing behind Ashton calmly, as if he didn't do anything.

Well, maybe he didn't, but how would I know that? Joseph worked for Ashton long enough, so he was an expert in hiding his emotions. I wasn't sure if he was actually innocent or putting up an act.

I racked my brains and calmed down. "Where's the volunteer?" I asked Ashton. I wouldn't believe he didn't have anything to do with it until I saw the volunteer.

Ashton knew that was coming, so he looked to the mechanical door on his right. "Open the door," he instructed coldly.

The door opened. I gave Ashton another glance before going into the room. I had to go through another couple of rooms before finally seeing the volunteers who were taking the risk for me.

It was a room that measured a hundred meters square, and it was divided into four equal parts. The volunteers were kept inside the glass walls. There was nothing but beds and desks inside. The volunteers were wearing patient attire and living their lives inside as if they were merchandises on a shelf. It made it easy for the researchers to observe the medicine's effect.

"They'll go back safe and sound after the experiment. And they'll be paid a million as thanks. Also, the Fullers will take care of them for the rest of their lives," Ashton said coolly as if he was just listing his grocery list.

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I knew he was doing it for me, but I couldn't accept that someone else had to be sacrificed for it. It didn't even take one minute before I wanted to leave.

Ashton sent his men away and came up to me. "Just pretend you've never seen this. I did this, so it has nothing to do with you. If someone's gonna get bitten in the *ss, it's me."

It was the law of equivalent exchange. Ashton made it sound so easy, but what he did was controlling someone else's life with money so nobody else needed to take the risk. It was insane. People should be equal, but I couldn't tell him that when I saw the resolve on his face.

That was what we'd do for love. I did the same thing for Summer back then. Ashton was making the same choice for the same reason. Telling them to stop at that point would mean death for those volunteers. They had no choice but to wait for the antidote.

"I want to leave." I didn't know what else to say, though I was relieved Ashton didn't risk himself for me.

I was immersed in my own thoughts on the way out. My questions were answered, but I still had that feeling of unease. Did I miss something?

I glanced at Ashton as I went into the car, but he didn't seem different. I wondered if I was being paranoid.

Ashton buckled himself calmly. He didn't even look at me, but he said, "I know what you're thinking."

A pause later, he stared at me coldly, but his anger was directed at something else. "I'll risk my life for you, but we have to live until we get our vengeance. I won't do anything that'll hurt us. Do you think that's selfish of me?"

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He was a heroic man, but at the same time, he looked so melancholic. I was seized by an urge to hug him, to tell him everything was okay.

Then I felt more at ease. As long as he was safe, nothing else mattered. I smiled and held his hand. "I'm glad that you know what you're doing. Professor Sanchez said that the toxin has mutated, so we don't really know how long I can hold out. We're just delaying the inevitable. If you had risked yourself for me and died, who'd fend for baby and me?"

Ashton thought about what I said, though he never did reply to me.

There was no traffic in the dead of the night, but Ashton was still driving carefully. Something about him made me feel uneasy. I could still remember how he looked that night no matter how many years had passed. He was as calm as a pond on a windless day, but I could feel his love for me underneath that façade, still going strong as ever.

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If he had to make a choice between revenge and dying for me, I had no doubt he'd choose the latter, but that was just hypothetical. No need to waste a life on something imaginary.

It was quiet the whole way through. Ashton parked the car at the roadside when we approached the crossroads near the Stovall residence.

I saw Millie's car, so I unbuckled myself. When I was about to go out, Ashton suddenly said, "You're mistaken."

Well, that came out of nowhere. "Sorry?"

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Ashton gazed into my eyes. "You're the most important person to me. Nothing else matters. Yes, you might have guessed it wrong this time, but that doesn't mean you're always wrong. I'll risk my life for you if you were ever in trouble, and nothing can stop me. You'd better give up on dying, or I'll dump everything on you. You can try handling my job."

I was surprised he would go so far for that, but he was right. I was too at ease the moment I came out of the lab. I even started thinking that I should leave my life in the hands of fate. Naively, I thought everything I cared about would be alright as long as Ashton was there.

But I forgot about the fact that Ashton could never accept my death. Even the thought of it was torture for him. There was nothing more devastating than watching the person he loved waste away while he could do nothing.

It was then I realized he needed someone to tell him everything was fine. Even though I knew everything was not fine, I looked him in the eye and told him otherwise. "I won't. Even if I am going to die, I'll send Thora and her backers to jail before I do. I'm not going to leave my kids alone. They're too adorable for this world."

Ashton stopped frowning and started smiling. He knew the kids were more important to me than anything.

To think that a business genius like him would ask the same question three times just to get my confirmation. He was just like a child asking for candy.

I unbuckled myself and, before he realized it, kissed him on his cheek. Then I went out of the car, avoiding his passionate gaze.

When I went into Millie's car feeling all smug, she revved up the engine and took me back to the Stovall residence. I looked back at Ashton, who was still

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in his car. He was becoming farther and farther away, but still, his gaze was fixated on me.

It wasn't until he disappeared from my sight did I turn back to Millie. "I want to know the truth." I stared at her through the rear-view mirror.

She looked at me calmly. "Mr. Fuller should have told you everything."

"Yes. He let me see the truth he wanted me to believe." I gave her a solemn look. "The apparatuses, the volunteers, everything. Everything looks so natural, so reasonable, but you guys overlooked one thing. There was nothing in the corridor, so even if I did fall, I should have bruises all over. But all I have now is my neck injury."

I didn't know why Ashton lied to me, but I didn't dwell on it. All I wanted was for him to be safe and sound, and that was what he did. Also, he ordered me not to die. That was a sweet bonus.

If that was the truth Ashton wanted me to see, then I would go with the flow.

Millie said nothing, but that silence was an answer in itself. My face fell as I asked, "How much did he pay you? Holden told me skills and loyalty are the most important things for mercenaries. I'm your employer, but you worked with someone else and lied to me. You ruined my trust. You'd best give me a reason for that, or I'll terminate you."

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Suddenly, the tension was palpable. After a few moments of silence, Millie stopped the car by the roadside.

She wound down her window, lit a cigarette and took a long drag before turning to me and said, "It was indeed someone who works for Ashton that knocked you off yesterday. My contract with you is to keep you safe, and investigative work is not part of our deal. If you have doubts that I'm taking double salaries, feel free to cross check with Ashton. If you don't wish to see my face, I will do it out of your sight. But I won't leave until I fulfil my contractual obligation."

The woman was all calm and collected, as though she had already anticipated that her secret would be exposed any time. That, or this was all within Ashton's planning and expectation.

Nonetheless, I didn't wish for him to learn that I was now aware of his arrangement.

After some considerations, I decided to give Millie one more chance. "I believe you didn't do that for money. However, this will be the first and last time you tried to pull something like that with me. If you choose to pledge your allegiance to me, we can still work things out between ourselves. Alternatively, if you wish to continue your work for Ashton, then I'll terminate our contract right now. I'll make sure you're fully compensated based on the contract, but I'll ask that you stay away from me as I don't want someone I can't trust around me."

Millie tilted her head a little and was quick to come to her decision. "One last time."

It was her way of apologizing and promising.

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Since I decided to forgive her, I chose to re-establish mutual trust between us.

“Fine. Let’s just put this behind us and move on. Since investigative work is not your strong suit, will you look for someone with such talent in your circle? I want to know what Ashton is up to.”

“Certainly.”

“It’s late. Let’s just head home.”

Millie nodded and tossed the cigarette butt out the window before starting the car and heading for Stovall residence.

Staring out at the blurry neon lights flashing by, I felt a sudden weight on my shoulder.

Ashton, what do I do with you?

The man went to great length with John to come up with such an elaborate lie so that I could wait for the research of my antidote without worrying, and to stop me from ending my own life.

Although his plan was full of plot holes, it was not without any success.

Since I couldn’t determine the imminent threats he was facing, I kept a tight lid about “my death” for the time being.

After that night, Ashton kept himself busy and didn’t contact me for one whole week.

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I was in no rush to confront him. Instead, I instructed Millie to speed up the investigation covertly. However, before any useful information could come to light, a piece of news materialized out of nowhere.

Legendary investor Elliot Jacobson injected ten billion into Moore Corporation, making him the second largest shareholder after the Moores.

Instantly, all the media outlets in K City had their cameras zoomed in on the sudden appearance of a new big wheel in the corporate world.

Incidentally, Elliot had indirectly expressed his interest in me when asked about his love life by the press, resulting in some tabloid's exploitation of our stories to boost their magazine popularity.

Some even went one step further with an in-depth report about the possibility of our union based on common business interests.

"Elliot Jacobson. Seems like a nice bloke, I must say. Not only is he good looking and loaded, he also sounds like a gentleman with no scandal. His only two previous relationships during university time ended on amicable terms. If these were true, he does appear to be a husband material. Aren't you the slightest bit interested?" Emery asked suggestively while reading the tabloid filled with our photoshopped images.

I rolled my eyes, looked at her with distaste, but kept my comments to myself on this matter.

On another level, this piece of news might actually serve as a nice addition to the rumors already circulating around Ashton and Thora, which showed that he and I were drifting further apart. If Ezra dropped his guard because of this, it might provide Ashton with the perfect cover.

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As for Elliot, I had made myself pretty clear when he visited the Moore Residence last time. I assumed a seasoned investor like him wouldn't shoot himself in the foot.

"Enough about me. It's Monday morning. Instead of slaving away in your own office, you're here to bug me. What's going on?" I tried to change the topic.

"Don't you remind me." Finally tossing the magazine away, Emery sighed. "It's Hunter. He's been following me everywhere and pestering me to reconcile with him. It's so annoying!"

"You can't hide from him forever. Maybe it's time to consider applying for a restraining order, given the harassment he's causing you. You two are already divorced, there's no need to hold back." Emery had her fair share of pain and

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grief from this marriage. She deserved to have a better life, not being entangled in this mess from her past.

“Forget about him, I’ll deal with it later,” she said while shaking her head as her attention shifted elsewhere in the next moment. “By the way, I’ve taken over The Jade. Some fresh seafood has arrived from overseas yesterday. Will you be my guest?”

“Of course!” I agreed readily, and we left my office in tandem.

Although Ashton had made up the mutation of the poisoned cells in my body to make his story more believable, they changed my treatment plan and made me stick to a strict diet regimen at the Stovall residence. I had enough of their nonsense.

As soon as we arrived at the restaurant, Emery asked for their most prestigious private room.

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“My apologies, Ms. Moore. The room is occupied at the moment.”

I knew The Jade only had one VVIP room. It was almost as exclusive as a five-star hotel’s presidential suite. Guests who could afford such a room that came with an outrageous price tag were not ones to mess around with.

“It’s just the two of us having a meal. There’s no need for such extravagance. Let’s just go to any private room.”

Emery thought for a brief moment and finally nodded in assent. “Alright then. But I want you to bring us your best wine available. We’re here to celebrate my venture into a new business. Lead the way then.”

“This way, please,” the manager said politely while leading us down a long corridor to the left.

Even though this was not my first visit to the restaurant, I was still in awe looking at all the opulent private rooms that lined up on both sides of the

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corridor. A few familiar faces could be spotted along the way when the waiters flitted in and out of the rooms. They were all prominent businessmen and politicians in K City.

The VVIP room was at the end of the corridor. The manager stopped at the room right across and said to us, "We're here. Please take a seat and make yourself comfortable while I bring over the menu and your wine, Ms. Moore."

"Don't worry about the menu. We'll have all your seafood specials today. Bring me your best wine. You can leave us to attend to the VVIPs next door. Just get another waiter to serve our table," Emery said to the manager as she waved her hand and led me into the room.

Despite being the new owner of the restaurant, she was not one of those pompous, self-absorbed snobs who would insist to be served by the manager himself. Her gesture only reflected her belief in excellent customer service.

With a standard smile on his face, the manager retreated from the room courteously.

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Not long after, a young waiter came in with trays of grilled salmon and butter codfish. In addition, the manager had taken upon himself to send in some foie gras and A5 wagyu beef.

For the past few weeks, I had to follow the nutritionist's approved diet strictly. Now that I had the opportunity to dine outside, I quickly dug in without caring so much about the poison in my body. As the first bite of foie gras melted in my mouth, I could feel myself being enveloped in a world of happiness.

Emery was sipping on her wine from the DRC. Then she looked at me quizzically with one raised brow. "How long has it been since you last had meat?"

"I can't remember." I shrugged and placed my glass of wine under my nose and took a whiff of the fermented aroma before putting it down with satisfaction. "Not much since I came back from M Country."

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“Your suffering seems endless...” Emery intoned sentimentally. “Life is too short. We should enjoy it while we can. I had a first-hand experience when I was getting my surgery done in M Country. After spending some time overseas, I’ve realized that it’s completely okay to be single. I think I’ll just stay away from men from now on. God knows what kind of trouble they will bring. Most importantly, they’re like a sticky gum that I can’t get rid of.”

I burst out a laugh. “I believe the last part is what you’re most afraid of.”

What’s life without a mixture of joys and sorrows? With age, we learn to let go of many things that’s out of our control.

“Can’t you join in without killing my buzz?” Emery rolled her eyes at me and shot a glance at the waiter, who was quick to fill up her wineglass.

I finally conceded. “Alright, alright. It’s my fault. Please stop tempting me with the wine. You know I have to abstain from alcohol now.”

“Fine. I’ll let you off this once.” There was a satisfied smirk on her face.

Just then, a male voice rang from the door, “Isn’t this Ms. Stovall? What a pleasant coincidence!”

It was Marshall Tiedemann, CEO of Tiedemann Industrial. I met him once at a gathering, but we never hung out privately as friends.

A group of men and women were standing outside the door with him. They appeared to be some important people he wanted to butter up to.

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Marshall strode into our room as though we were close friends. "It's so good seeing you here. Why don't we join you two lovely ladies for a meal? Manager, reset the table," he said while gesturing his friends into the room.

Despite feeling annoyed by his self-serving attitude, Emery and I were not ignorant of common social etiquettes. Since he meant no harm, we half-heartedly accepted them into our room.

The manager, on the other hand, was crafty enough to wait at the door for Emery's confirmation before excusing himself to sort out the table.

Marshall solicitously invited Elliot to sit next to me, while another woman sat between the two men. The rest of their friends started to whisper among themselves. Judging from their expressions, I was sure my name was one of the topics.

Sighing helplessly, I planned to finish my food and get out of there when Emery suddenly nudged my elbow and made a gesture for me to check my phone.

Within seconds, my phone lit up with a WhatsApp message from her.

The woman sitting next to Elliot seems to be Ezra's only daughter, Katharina Grant. Looks like someone is playing matchmaking.

Katharina Grant.

I muttered the name under my breath.

If what Emery said was true, my mere presence seemed to have disrupted the matchmaker's plan. That might explain Katharina's icy stares on me earlier.

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I looked around the table disinterestedly and brought my attention back to the food before me.

Emery, on the other hand, couldn't contain herself as she whispered, "Don't you have anything to say?"

"Not really." I shrugged and sighed wearily. "I don't want to meddle in something that doesn't concern me. It would be better if we keep to ourselves and mind our own business."

Just because I never made a public stance against the rumors circulating on the internet, that didn't mean I had to associate myself to Elliot in any way. He and I knew it was just a publicity stunt hyped up by the media.

Away from the limelight, our social circles couldn't be farther apart from each other. Even if we were dating, we still had all the freedom in the world to seek other potential partners before marrying.

Emery nodded and fell silent.

In the meantime, Marshall was talking boisterously, whereas Katharina was as meek as a bunny throughout the meal. She did nothing other than a few polite nods and filled up Elliot's plate from time to time.

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