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In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1321 - 1325

Pitcoin continued trending, but the Queens and the Zieglers' court case had become a piping hot topic and everyone was waiting for the final verdict.

Some people looked forward to seeing the nouveau riche cum business legend emerge to victory miraculously, while others envisioned K City's number one career woman bowing in apology. They had different reasons for wanting to see her fall, but ultimately, everyone was eager to push Thora and her investment company into the eye of the storm.

However, before Thora announced her response, it was Bryson's father, William's birthday.

Bryson had already sent an invitation to the Stovall residence, stating that the entire Stovall family was invited. Due to Louis' status, he found an excuse to politely refuse. Hence, only John, Emma and I attended the banquet.

The Queen family managed to knock Ziegler Corporation down a notch because of the lawsuit. Once word got out, businessmen all over K City no longer treated Bryson coldly. On the day of the banquet, the scene was surprisingly lively. When we arrived, there were already a few rarely-seen owners of listed companies chatting away happily with Bryson.

"Oh, Ms. Stovall!" Bryson instantly spotted us when we passed through the doors, leaving his guests to come over and greet us. "I don't know why the staff didn't announce the arrival of my distinguished guests. I'm so sorry for my poor hospitality."

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“This must be Mr. Stovall. I’ve heard a lot about you from Brooklyn and I have to say, your reputation precedes you!”

Then, turning a blind eye to John’s stoic expression, Bryson grabbed his hand with both hands and flashed a flattering smile at him.

John wasn’t a snob. Moreover, he had heard that Bryson was a decent person from me. Thus, he wasn’t angry and instead, spoke in an amicable tone.

“You’re too kind, Mr. Queen. It’s your father’s birthday today. My uncle wanted to drop by to see him, but he’s just too busy with his official duties and really couldn’t step away, so he wanted me to wish your father a blessed birthday and a long life on his behalf. However, I’ll have to trouble you to relay this message, Mr. Queen. There are too many guests, so we won’t be going over.”

“Thank you, Mr. Stovall. I’ll definitely pass on your message. Please, enjoy yourselves tonight!” Bryson smiled from ear to ear and quietly surveyed his surroundings. Then, he leaned closer to us and whispered, “Socializing is exhausting. If you guys get tired, go out from the side door and walk all the way to the end. I’ve specially prepared a private room for you to rest. When the banquet is almost over, you can come on out again. Nobody would know.”

We were dumbfounded by the degree of Bryson’s double standards. I never thought that such a burly and rough-looking man would be so thoughtful.

However, the Queen family was the star of the night after all. As soon as he finished speaking, more guests poured in.

“Mr. Queen!” A man came over with his family and shook hands with Bryson. Subsequently, his gaze landed on John and I. “This must be Mr. Stovall and Ms. Stovall. I’ve heard so much about you both.”

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“You flatter us.” I smiled lightly and nodded in greeting before smoothly steering the topic back to Bryson. “Mr. Queen, we’ll leave you to attend to your guests.”

Before he could respond, I exchanged glances with John and Emma before walking toward a corner.

As soon as we left, many guests crowded around Bryson, sandwiching him in the middle as they engaged in a merry conversation.

John stopped a waiter who was passing by to ask for three glasses of champagne, then handed Emma and me one each. “I never expected Bryson Queen to be so well-known in K City. It’s a shame we didn’t get acquainted sooner.”

“The Queen family only made a fortune in the past few years.” Emma lifted her champagne flute to her lips and took a sip before calmly analyzing, “I find it rather peculiar though. All three generations won the lottery one after another. Then, they relied on other capitalists to become capitalists themselves. Ordinary people can only dream of having such luck.”

“Relying on luck isn’t realistic. Sooner or later, that luck would run out and their entire fortune with it,” John commented disapprovingly.

Emma rolled her eyes at him. “Does Bryson look like an idiot to you?”

“Stop being so cryptic. Just say whatever it is you want to say.” John’s face instantly clouded over.

I noticed that this was a frequent occurrence lately. Whenever Emma started talking, he would immediately get defensive.

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Emma didn't feel like arguing, deliberately turning her gaze to me, as though she could avoid him this way. "Don't be fooled. Although the Queens' older generation weren't that refined or cultured, they had an eye for investment. Whatever they invested in would surge. Stocks, private equity funds, corporate bonds... They even have investments abroad. After so many years, they didn't suffer any losses, and their assets even doubled!"

I didn't really listen to the details, but I got the whole picture.

Bryson wasn't some kind of rich idiot who had more money than sense. On the contrary, he seemed to have the Midas touch when it came to business and investments. Thinking of this, I turned to look at Bryson. Indeed, he had the look of an honest man. Right then, an inexplicable emotion rose in my chest.

He was an accurate example of how the idiom "never judge a book by its cover" came about, and it was the first time I felt this way about the same person twice.

A seemingly gentle person turned out to be a nouveau riche, and just when you thought he was naive and easily deceived, he proved you wrong by being a legend who had talent in making money. Who would've expected such a turn of events?

While I was lost in thought, there was some noise at the door. It seemed like a prominent figure had arrived. Glancing over, I saw Thora in a blue tube top dress. Appearing together with her was Ashton, who was clad in a well-tailored black tuxedo. Due to his height, he was particularly eye-catching among the crowd.

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As far as I knew, Bryson did not send an invitation to the Zieglers. It seemed like Thora had listened to Zander's advice and made the right choice.

Ziegler Corporation had been in close contact with the Trivetts lately. Rumor had it that the matter regarding Pitcoin was final. Those who desperately wanted a piece of the pie were already slowly making their way toward Thora.

Ashton stood expressionlessly beside her, his impatience showing. After whispering something to Thora, he strode toward the washroom.

Emma's eyes lit up all of a sudden and she raised her skirt slightly to walk somewhere to our left. "I saw a few friends. I'm going over to say hi. You guys go ahead without me."

"Hey, what friends? Hey..." John was clearly anxious, but he couldn't put down his ego to go after her. Seeing that she didn't respond after calling out to her twice, his face darkened and he looked like he wanted to punch someone at that moment. I could even hear him murmuring through gritted teeth, "She's only been Mrs. Stovall for a few days, but look at her, she has become a social butterfly."

I craned my neck slightly to look in the direction Emma went and realized that her so-called friends were a group of handsome young chaps. At that moment, they were gathered around her, laughing and chatting at the same time.

Emma was undoubtedly a beautiful woman. Seeing as she was unaccompanied, the men naturally assumed she was single. Hence, they were all attempting to ingratiate themselves with her.

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I cracked a wry smile. My dear brother, just admit that you're jealous. If you'd just go over and stand beside her, who would dare to spare her a second glance?

I shook my head helplessly and patted John on his shoulder. "Women need to be coaxed sometimes."

With that, I abandoned him and walked into the crowd, not once looking back to see the baffled expression I knew he was wearing.

He probably never expected that he, one of the most well-known and handsome men in K City, would be abandoned by two women on the same day.

...

The party had just begun right then, so there was basically no one nearby the washroom. As I made my way over, the sound of my heels clicking on the ground was especially clear.

I stopped right outside the men's washroom, contemplating how I should pretend to run into Ashton when a hand suddenly grabbed my wrist and pulled me into the washroom.

The world spun for a moment and by the time I regained my bearings, I was already pressed against the door by Ashton. Our faces were barely inches apart. His warm breath tickled my cheeks, causing my heartbeat to turn erratic.

"Mrs. Fuller, I've been waiting a long time for you." Ashton's voice was already deep to begin with. When he deliberately lowered his voice, it sounded even more sultry and sexy.

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How could I hold on to my anger in the face of such temptation?

Sighing helplessly, I shied away from his heated gaze and muttered feebly, "Why would you wait for me when you have such a beautiful companion, Mr. Fuller?"

Ashton deliberately moved closer. I quickly turned my face away, so his breath ended up tickling my neck instead, causing me to subconsciously bite my bottom lip.

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Ashton chuckled softly, obviously delighted by my subtle expression of jealousy. While I wasn't paying attention, he swiftly dropped a kiss on my ear, then let me go and backed away.

My cheeks burned all of a sudden and I quickly reached up to cover my face with both hands. Seeing the gleeful look on Ashton's face, I shot him a dirty stare and snapped, "Don't laugh!"

Technically, we're still not on speaking terms!

The corners of Ashton's mouth quirked up slightly, but it vanished quickly and he returned to being serious. "I have to constantly be on my guard in front of outsiders and it's really exhausting. Do I have to suppress my feelings in front of my wife too?"

I adjusted the shawl around my shoulders and gave him a flat stare. "Is there a difference? I mean, you're an ace when it comes to keeping secrets after all, Mr. Fuller. I'm sure one more won't make much of difference."

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Ashton's brows furrowed. "Are you still mad about the matter regarding Jared?"

I curved my lips into a smile and moved to the sink to touch up my makeup. "I think you should really keep an eye on your buddy. That talk about a paternity test makes it seem like he's prepared to sue me for custody."

Ashton had a resigned look on his face when he heard that. "Jared explained to me about all of this. He never expected that you'd find out so soon. The night his identity was found out, he saw the school transfer application and knew that you were trying to prevent him from seeing Summer. He panicked. That's why he used the stupidest method there is to stop that. In fact, he isn't aware of this, but I'm sure you are. Since he has a history of harming his child, he'll never be able to regain custody."

Sometimes, I honestly felt that Ashton had a way with words. Everything he said was scarily persuasive.

Although I still stood by my belief that Jared could never change, Ashton's words still struck a chord in me. "Maybe. Only time will prove which of us is right."

Seeing me relent, Ashton took long strides forward and wrapped his arms around me from behind. Leaning his head casually on my shoulder, he buried his face into my hair, inhaling long and deep. As though feeling revived, he tightened his arms around me.

"The party outside is in full swing, but here you are, hiding in the washroom, indulging in a secret rendezvous. Is this really okay, Mr. Fuller?" I teased him.

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Ashton was undeterred, shamelessly nuzzling my neck as he whispered, "I don't know when I can finally fall asleep with my wife in my arms again. I just wanna imprint your smell into my mind."

It was impossible to resist a man with such a breathtaking look, especially when he was behaving like a clingy little puppy. Pursing my lips, I let him have his way. "There's more to Bryson than meets the eye. Check his background and see if he's a friend or foe."

"Mm..." Ashton grunted in a low voice. He was leaning his entire weight on me as if he was asleep. I wasn't even sure if he heard what I said.

Looking at our reflection in the mirror, I was suddenly hit with a sense of unease.

We've been together for a decade. Since when did we have to sneak around for something as simple as a hug?

Although reluctant to part, we had been away for far too long. If we didn't get back to the party, people would begin getting suspicious. After adjusting my attire, I left the washroom first.

Coincidentally, Thora and Herman were walking toward this direction.

I abruptly paused in my steps. If I were to continue going forward and Ashton came out soon after, those two shrew people would definitely know that we met just a while ago.

Right then, I heard the door opening behind me. The sound of Thora's heels clicking on the ground also drew nearer. Without hesitation, I swiveled around.

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After confirming that the two people behind had seen me, I walked confidently toward Ashton and without warning, forced him against the wall. Grabbing the collar of his shirt, I rose on my toes and kissed him smack on the lips.

For a moment, I could hardly believe what was happening. I'm forcefully kissing a man!

What's more, it's in front of an audience!

Oh God, help me! This is so embarrassing!

Most importantly, because of my lack of control, I clearly heard the muffled sound of Ashton's head hitting the wall when I kissed him.

At the same time, the footsteps behind, a blend of heels and leather shoes, stopped abruptly.

Mission accomplished! It's time to retreat!

Sensing the murderous gaze burning a hole through my back, I instinctively wanted to move away, but Ashton suddenly latched onto my bottom lip and spoke in a voice only the two of us could hear. "We need to make sure it looks real, only then will the audience buy our act."

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This man is clearly taking advantage of the situation!

But since I had already set the ball rolling, I couldn't back out so soon. Closing my eyes, I steeled myself, prepared to go all out.

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Drawing a sharp breath, I raised my hands to cup Ashton's face and kissed him more passionately.

I could feel him smirking against my lips, obviously satisfied with my enthusiasm. In the next second, he suddenly reached out to push me away.

Of course, it was just an act and he didn't actually put any force into it. I pretended to stumble two steps backward before standing firm.

The carefree expression on Ashton's chiseled face morphed into impatience as he straightened his coat. Then, he chided, "Scarlett, I've already made it clear to you that I no longer have feelings for you. You're out to make my life difficult, aren't you?"

We probably succeeded in making Thora and Herman believe that Ashton truly resented me.

Meanwhile, I was caught between laughing and crying. The glee in Ashton's voice was tangible; he was obviously happy about that bonus kiss.

You're enjoying this very much, aren't you, Ashton?

Since I was the one who started it, I had to see this to the end. Hence, I continued playing along and said, "You're not the only one who has a say in this relationship. As long as I still have feelings for you, you can forget about freeing yourself from me."

Ashton narrowed his eyes a fraction, pretending to look like he was at his wits' end as he scanned me up and down. Due to my in-depth understanding of him, I could easily detect the delight in his eyes.

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Hearing our conversation, Herman taunted, "I have to say, Ms. Stovall. You really aren't like other women."

Only then did I turn around to look at them, feigning innocence as I replied, "Mr. Trivett, what a coincidence. We meet again."

Herman looked at me, then at Ashton. Stuffing both hands into his pockets and straightening his posture, he said in a mocking tone, "Yes, a coincidence it is, but this is the male washroom. Isn't it a little too appropriate for someone of your status to approach a man like this, Ms. Stovall? After all, you have the Moores and the Stovalls' reputations to consider, no?"

"Exactly, I'm someone who has the Moores and the Stovalls backing me, so who would dare to say anything about this? Besides, this is between Ashton and me. It's really none of your business, is it? You saw it too when we kissed. He still has feelings for me."

Pausing briefly, I turned to Ashton with a smile. "Admit it. You still can't get over me. Let's find a time to remarry and get the formal procedures settled, hmm?"

I knew that Ashton liked how I was currently gazing at him, like I only had eyes for him.

After staring at each other for a few seconds, Ashton turned his face away and adjusted his cuff links. He had a grim look on his face and his eyes were hooded, but there was a hint of anger in them. "Seeing as you're the mother of my children, I'll let you off the hook just this once!"

With that, he walked away with an impassive expression, never once breaking stride, not even when he passed by Thora and Herman.

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After Ashton's departure, only the three of us were left in the hallway.

Since the act was over, it was time to withdraw myself from the scene. Smoothing out my attire, I prepared to head back as well.

However, just as I was about to brush past Thora, her hand shot out to block me.

Turning my head to her, I perceived the unsightly look on her face, seemingly p*ssed off.

"Ms. Ziegler, is there something you want to say to me?" I boldly raised a brow at her.

"Of course." Her voice was biting cold. "As a woman myself, I really pity you. You have failed to make your man stay, but now, you're even clinging to another woman's man. Have you no shame?"

Although she didn't like me before, she was never so blunt with her words. It seemed like the kiss Ashton and shared earlier had really provoked her.

I continued behaving barefaced. "Shame? If I can get back together with the person whom I love, no amount of sacrifice is worth mentioning, not even if it means trampling on my dignity."

Thora's eyes narrowed into slits as she gnashed her teeth. "It's all wishful thinking on your end. Ashton may not feel the same. Besides, a man of his stature deserves someone better. The fact that the Stovalls didn't even properly seize a small business like Pitcoin already shows that you're beneath me. Do you think you're worthy to be my opponent?"

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Somebody's finally revealing her true thoughts.

As expected, after the anniversary party, Thora had already taken the liberty of labeling me as a self-centered and selfish person. She was convinced that someone like me wasn't worthy of Ashton, let alone fit to be her opponent.

It was too bad that things didn't always go well for overconfident women.

I turned to face her fully, making sure to level my gaze with hers before flaunting in a lackadaisical manner. "Perhaps I'm not as good as you when it comes to doing business, but capturing a man's heart may not be your strong suit. I only need to curl my finger at Ashton and he'll come back to me sooner or later. When that happens, it won't just be a simple kiss. But you've reminded me of something. Losing the Pitcoin business opportunity is indeed a shame. If that's the case, you should guard the gem in your hand, lest you slip up and allow someone the opportunity to snatch it away..."

With that, I flashed her a meaningful smile and spun on my heels to leave.

Behind me came Herman's concerned voice. "Ms. Ziegler, are you okay?"

Thora, however, didn't respond.

Only then did a smug smile tug on my lips.

Perfect. She's not even showing her business partner any courtesy. I knew that Thora's competitive streak had been triggered. To gain an upper hand over me, she would undoubtedly push Ziegler Investment to go all out in the Pitcoin business.

And this was exactly what I wanted.

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Back in the main hall, Ashton was already surrounded by business moguls. He discreetly glanced in my direction. After our eyes met, he visibly relaxed and focused his attention back on socializing.

Meanwhile, I noticed that Emma and John were quarreling in hushed tones a short distance away before the former stormed over.

“...unreasonable!” Emma’s chest heaved with anger as she put down the empty flute in her hand and grabbed a glass of red wine from the tray of a passing waiter. Then, she tilted her head backward and took a huge sip.

Just then, John strode over at an unhurried pace. He didn’t even bother stopping her. Instead, he lowered his gaze and acted like this didn’t concern him.

Upon sensing his presence, Emma shot a vicious glare at him. However, it was like punching cotton because John remained unfazed.

“What’s going on here?” I arched an eyebrow, curiosity filling me.

“Ask him!” Emma spat and I could feel the anger radiating from her. John flicked his eyes at her before shifting his face away, maintaining that unbothered look on his face. It seemed like he had no intention of explaining the situation whatsoever.

Emma looked like she was about to pop a vein, so I hurriedly stepped in to play peacemaker. “John, can’t you be nicer to Emma?”

To my exasperation, John’s expression remained as calm as a millpond, as though he didn’t hear a thing I said.

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Seeing as he was being so difficult, I gave up talking to him and tugged Emma slightly off to the side. Only then did I ask in a soft voice, "What did you guys argue about this time?"

Emma wasn't ignorant or spoiled. During such occasions, she would always make sure not to do anything that would humiliate John. But earlier, her face was completely devoid of warmth. Anyone could see that the reason the husband and wife got into an argument was because the former had done something unacceptable.

After exhaling a long breath, Emma calmed down enough to explain, "Recently, I planned to start a company with some friends and was looking for investors. This banquet was the perfect opportunity and I finally got the chance to rub shoulders with several business owners with extra cash on their hands who also happened to be interested in our project. I was this close to clinching the deal. They already agreed to sign the contract tomorrow, but John appeared out of nowhere with this ridiculous scowl on his face and ended up scaring them away!"

I winced with embarrassment and glanced fleetingly at John. Did he really do something that lame?

"John went overboard this time, that's for sure, but why didn't you mention that you want to start a company before? Besides, if you're looking for investors with more money than sense, isn't John the perfect candidate? Wouldn't it be great to start a company together as husband and wife? I'm sure your business would flourish."

"Him?" Emma shot him a sidelong glance filled with disdain before scoffing. "Yes, John has the money, but he's not without sense. Besides, he's never shown an interest in the things that I like. He will never invest in my business... Forget it. I guess today's just not my lucky day. I'll look for some other investors."

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