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In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1326 - 1330

“Actually...”

Ding, ding, ding!

Just when I was about to resolve the conflict between them, the emcee, who was standing on the podium, tapped a spoon against his glass in front of the microphone. Hence, I could only swallow back the words at the tip of my tongue.

“Today is Mr. William Queen’s seventieth birthday. May the coming years bring even more happiness and good health to him. Now, let’s invite his son, Mr. Bryson to come up and say a few words!”

With that, Bryson went up on stage as the guests applauded.

“Thank you to all my friends for coming to celebrate my father’s birthday today. There’s nothing really great about me, but one thing about me that hasn’t disappointed my family is my ability to make money. Despite that, my father still worries about me, so I wish him a long life full of happiness and good health!”

“What a filial son!”

The emcee expertly hyped up the atmosphere and the hall immediately erupted with thunderous applause.

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Right then, a figure flashed below the stage and walked directly to the emcee. After whispering a few words, he passed a square wooden box to the emcee and swiftly stepped off the stage.

The podium was quite far from my position, so I couldn't see the person clearly, but he looked vaguely familiar to me. I just couldn't put a finger on where I had seen him before.

Soon, the emcee spoke into the microphone again. "Ladies and gentlemen, it seems like you're all very lucky today. Ms. Thora Ziegler knew that Mr. Queen Sr. likes antiques, so she specially searched for a very precious item to present as a birthday gift to him. The gift is currently in my hands. Everyone, please take a look!"

The emcee held the box with both hands and opened it in front of the guests. Following that, the cameraman in charge of recording the event aimed the lens at the box. In the next second, the antique inside the box was displayed on the large screen behind the podium. It was a Turlen bead.

The emcee gazed at the item in his hand and didn't forget to explain excitedly, "If I'm not mistaken, this is the earliest bead found in ancient Turlen and it's worth more than two hundred and fifty million! Last year, after the auction in M Country, a private buyer kept it as a collection and it hasn't emerged since then. What a surprise to know that it was, in fact, Ms. Ziegler who bought it! This is truly remarkable!"

This emcee was considered rather knowledgeable. To me, it was merely a bead the size of a finger. I never expected it to be of such great value.

Most importantly, the bead's price provided some food for thought. Two hundred and fifty million seemed to have a strong interrelation with the lawsuit.

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The guests present had seen their fair share of the world started discussing among themselves in hushed whispers.

“Isn’t it obvious from the price that the Zieglers are settling things peacefully with Bryson? Perhaps this gift can resolve the conflict between both families.”

“This was completely out of my expectations. Here we were, waiting to see that woman make a fool out of herself, but it looks like she came prepared.”

“True. If she didn’t, the company she established on her own would be crushed. Since she publicly presented the bead as a birthday gift, there’s no way Bryson can reject it. It seems like he won’t be able to get his revenge anymore.”

“Tsk, tsk, tsk. Thora Ziegler is really something. After swindling him out of two hundred million, she’s compensating him with a measly amount of fifty million. Remind me not to get on her bad side...”

Most of the discussions were about the same, with many of the guests aiming hostile and mocking remarks at her, but at the end of the day, they were just envious of how well she played her cards and wished they could master the ability of defeating someone without lifting a finger as well.

Amid the animated discussions, the strain in Bryson’s smile as he stood on stage was evident, but like everyone expected, a son would never make a scene at his own father’s birthday banquet. Very soon, he regained his composure. Gracefully accepting the bead from the emcee, he studied it casually before nodding, making sure to plaster a satisfied look on his face.

Just when everyone thought that Bryson was going to begrudgingly accept Thora’s indirect apology, he closed the wooden box, took the microphone and walked off the stage. Stopping at the nearest table, he picked up a bottle of

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whiskey and poured three glasses full before facing the crowd with a broad smile.

“Ms. Ziegler.” Bryson easily found Thora among the crowd. Subsequently, the spotlight fell on her and the people around her. “I really don’t know how to thank you for such an extravagant gift. Why don’t I offer you three toasts as an expression of my gratitude? I wonder if you’ll accept, Ms. Ziegler?”

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“Wow, I never expected Bryson to pull such a trick. At least he’s doing right by us men.”

“The glasses are filled to the brim. Wouldn’t drinking all three burn a hole right through the stomach? Isn’t he a little bit too savage?”

“What do you know? Let this serve as a lesson for that conniving woman!”

“Hmp! You guys don’t know yet, do you? To kickstart her business when she first established her company, she’d already damaged her stomach from too much social drinking. She won’t merely suffer from drinking these three glasses of whiskey, she’d probably lose her life! I never expected Bryson Queen to be such a ruthless man!”

I was bewildered by all the gossip, wondering which part was true and which was false. However, when I noticed Thora remaining motionless after a long time, I surmised that the larger part of it was true.

Just like when Bryson received the gift on stage, Thora was caught between a rock and a hard place, hesitating to agree to drink the glasses of whiskey.

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In a world where power and money were supreme, both sides would never be able to truly end their dispute if they didn't put down their egos and apologize.

At that moment, everyone's eyes were focused on Thora as they waited for her response with bated breaths. The air seemed to freeze and except for the faint static sound coming from the microphone, the entire hall was quiet.

Finally, after a good ten seconds, Thora's expression changed subtly and she walked toward Bryson. Without a word, she polished off all three glasses of whiskey.

The guests couldn't help from gasping aloud. Even Bryson was taken aback, probably not expecting her to be so cooperative.

After downing three glasses of whiskey, Thora didn't look too good, but things didn't seem to be as exaggerated as the gossiping crowd made it sound. Under the hollers of the emcee and the guests, she even shook hands to make peace with Bryson.

Everyone was naturally happy to see their harmonious interaction. Soon after, Thora and Bryson returned to enjoying the banquet.

I kept my attention on Thora the whole time, but the crowd was too thick and I lost sight of her in the blink of an eye. Later on, Emma informed me that she had already left through the back door.

Not long after Thora left, Bryson brought a cheque over to me, his body reeking of alcohol.

"Ms. Stovall, today's a day of celebration. This is my reward to you and Brooklyn. Take it."

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With that, he stuffed the cheque into my hand.

Looking down, I saw one hundred and fifty million written on it. Although I knew Bryson was loaded, this still came as a shock.

The lawsuit was mainly to demand for a compensation. According to the law, up to thirty percent of the compensation could be collected as the attorney fees. Even if Bryson paid us the hundred million as promised, it would already be considered excessively generous. Hence, adding another fifty million was really unsettling.

“Mr. Queen, isn’t this a bit too much?” I protested.

“Nah, it’s not. The two of you have helped me so much, Ms. Stovall. You both deserve this. Besides, we already agreed on this. The extra amount belongs to you. Please accept it.”

Since Bryson insisted, I had no choice but to temporarily accept it and get Brooklyn to handle it later.

Nothing worthwhile came easily. Since I accepted something that didn’t belong to me, I would indefinitely have to pay a price. Although Bryson didn’t look like he was laying out a trap for me, there was no way to be completely certain. Hence, I thought it wouldn’t hurt to keep my guard up for the time being.

Right then, John interjected, “Mr. Queen, well-played just now. That woman is probably hooked up to an IV drip at the hospital now, huh?”

“Huh? What do you mean, Mr. Stovall?” Bryson asked in confusion.

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“Didn’t you know that Thora’s stomach can’t handle alcohol?” John squinted with suspicion.

“What? Is that true?” Bryson’s face instantly fell. “I had no idea!”

He was momentarily stunned before slapping a hand on his forehead and saying dismally, “Jesus! I simply wanted to do things the way we do it at home. To the Queens, an apology isn’t an apology until alcohol is involved. If I knew about this earlier, I would never have asked her to drink!”

John smirked and patted him on the shoulder. “It’s fine. Serves her right anyway. There’s no need to feel guilty about it.

“That’s not right. Okay, you all enjoy the party and I’ll make a trip to the hospital. Sorry for leaving so soon. I hope you understand.”

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Bryson apologized while hurrying toward the doors. His flustered behavior was actually comical and genuinely adorable at the same time.

It seemed like what happened earlier was indeed a misunderstanding, which surprised me quite a bit. The moment Bryson heard that Thora might be hospitalized, he became so nervous and even left his guests unattended to head to the hospital. It seems like he wasn’t all that cruel after all.

Even so, he was currently at loggerheads with her. I couldn’t help but feel suspicious when he abruptly showed such concern for her.

Hence, it remained to be seen whether or not Bryson was trustworthy.

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“Hey, Letty. Since the host has already left, should we leave too?” Emma was probably tired. We had an excuse to leave since Bryson was gone.

Glancing at the remaining guests, I affirmed that I had already greeted most of them, so there was really no need to stay. Hence, I nodded to Emma’s suggestion.

That night, the search term for the Queen family’s birthday banquet ranked first on social media, with the happenings and guests at the banquet becoming the hottest topic of discussion.

After showering, I lay in bed while scrolling through social media, but inadvertently caught a glimpse of a headline that was soaring in popularity.

Ashton Fuller Thoughtfully Chaperones Thora Ziegler To Hospital And Bryson Queen Abandons Guests To Visit.

Damn. For those who didn’t know any better, they’d think they’re in a love triangle after reading this headline.

When I tapped into the headline, blurry photos taken by paparazzi appeared. Among them were photos of the three of them entering the same hospital at different times. Not once did they appear in the same photo and neither of their faces were shown clearly.

Currently, it was three hours after Thora disappeared. The anonymous account who started this topic kept posting the latest information. At present, only photos of Bryson leaving the hospital were taken. Hence, it was safe to assume that Thora was hospitalized for the night.

It looked like her condition was quite severe.

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I subconsciously refreshed the site several times, hoping to see some news about Ashton, but the situation remained the same after twenty minutes. There was no news about him whatsoever.

Some nosy netizens begun speculating that Ashton was guarding Thora at the hospital that night.

Despite having complete trust in Ashton, my heart still felt uneasy when I saw such comments.

After all, which woman would willingly allow her lover to look after another woman?

Ashton's too much. It's already been so long, but he hasn't even called to update me. I understand that he wants to gain Thora's trust, but he doesn't have to try so hard, right? Can he even sleep well in the hospital? It's not like Thora can't afford to hire a personal caretaker!

The more I thought about it, the angrier I got. In the end, I called him directly.

Surprisingly, he picked up the call very quickly. "Why aren't you sleeping yet?"

"I could ask you the same thing." I intentionally raised my voice and demanded, "Where are you?"

"Hospital," Ashton replied.

"Oh." I puffed up my cheeks in anger and didn't know what to say all of a sudden.

"What's wrong? Did something happen?" Ashton queried.

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“Nothing. I just made a hundred million in legal fee and wanted to share the news with you,” I said while grabbing the pillow next to me to vent my frustrations.

Ashton’s low chuckle drifted across the phone. “Mrs. Fuller, you really are ideal wife material, hmm? At this rate, I won’t be able to catch up with your money-making speed anymore.”

Oddly, a thought flashed across my mind. Men only spoke honeyed words when they felt guilty toward their wives.

Feeling troubled, there was a bitter note in my voice when I spoke, “Is that so? Well, I doubt that. Once you collaborate with Thora, I’m afraid money would fall into your lap with a mere snap of your fingers. Clinching multi-billion business deals would be a piece of cake to you, no?”

Ashton could probably sense that I was mad.

He released a defeated sigh. After a few seconds, he found his voice again. “The medical team that’s developing the antidote for you just happened to be in this hospital, so I’m staying back to check their progress. Did you think I was sleeping over with Thora?”

Hearing his explanation, the weight in my heart abruptly vanished and I quickly threw the pillow aside to sit upright. Pressing my lips together, I guiltily changed the topic. “So how’s the development of the antidote going?”

“The first generation of the finished product is ready and the trials will commence immediately. If it’s a success, they’ll make it available for your use at once. When that time comes, our hands and feet will no longer be tied. We’ll be able to deal with Armond and the rest once and for all.” Ashton sounded very confident.

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“Okay.” I nodded obediently and continued speaking through puffed cheeks, “Get home as soon as you can.”

A faint voice spoke up from his end of the call. It was foreign and sounded like it belonged to a man. “Mr. Fuller, you may begin now.”

“Alright,” Ashton responded to the voice before turning back to me. “I have to deal with some stuff here, so you should go on to bed without me. I’ll text you when I get home.”

Then he hung up before I could manage a “goodbye” or even an “okay.”

Looking back at the call history, something didn’t quite sit right in my chest.

Am I mistaken or did Ashton sound a little nervous earlier? As I contemplated giving him another call after he was done with his work, my phone buzzed—it was a WhatsApp message from Ashton: Don’t worry, Honey. I’ll be extra careful so no one can cop a feel.

A soft smile broke out on my face, thinking that he must be fine if he can joke around like this.

Feeling relieved, I put away my phone and decided to check on the twins in their nursery. On my way there, I noticed a faint glow coming from Summer’s room. Seeing that her door wasn’t fully shut, I peeked into her room out of curiosity.

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Surprisingly, Summer was still awake at this hour. She sat before her brightly lit computer with her head leaning down, doing something that I couldn't see from where I stood.

The last time this happened was when Stella tried to get close to Summer. I already transferred Stella to the Logistics Department and made sure she suffered for it. Don't tell me that woman hasn't given up...

Suspicion grew in me as I tiptoed behind Summer to get a better look. It turned out that Summer was practicing some fourth-grade math questions with the guidance of an online mathematics website.

My lips parted slightly as I took in the unexpected sight before me. Summer had just started school, yet she had somehow attained this level of knowledge.

Her head was still lowered, focusing on the fourth-grade workbook before her. She was so absorbed in solving equations that she hadn't even noticed me standing behind her.

How can such a tiny human being look so mature and focused?

I inhaled and gradually approached her side, making sure to not startle her before asking my question, "What are you up to, Summer?"

"Mommy!" Summer beamed at me whilst eagerly motioning to the contents of her workbook. "Math equations are so fun, and Mr. Cress said I'm really good at solving them! He even assigned some extra homework so that I can practice. See!"

"Is that so...?"

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I grinned before reaching for the workbook and flipping through its pages. Truthfully, there was nothing special about the contents since it mostly consisted of basic two-digit calculations. However, Summer nailed every single question so far.

I pressed my lips into a proud smile.

Summer resembled Macy, who had a gift for numbers before she passed. Back when Macy was a business owner, she would happily throw herself into the tediousness of bookkeeping. She loved it dearly; calculating, and tallying the sums like she was baking bread. When it came to this, Summer definitely took after Macy.

In many ways, this was comforting to see. It was as if Summer was living proof that a wonderful person like Macy had once existed on this earth.

I placed the workbook back down and petted the top of Summer's head. A comforting smile stretched across my face as I encouraged, "That's great, Summer! I'm so proud of you. Now, you're still young, and your body needs to rest. So let's get you tucked in, okay?"

Summer's face scrunched as she glanced at the workbook. Eventually, she returned her attention to me, surrendering through a cheeky smile. "Okay, Mommy, but can you please tell me a story?"

She did work hard earlier... Oh! How could I refuse?

The next day.

I received Cameron's call right after I dropped Summer off at school.

"Letty, are you free tonight?" Cameron asked casually.

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I was too busy watching Jared, who had just come out of school to play with Summer. My eyes zoomed into his every move out of caution. Hence, I could only respond absently with, "I think so. Why?"

"Come over to ours tonight. Oh, and bring Summer with you because your father and I miss her," Cameron stated.

Cameron and Zachary hadn't reached out ever since I rejected Zachary's offer to gift their company shares to my twins. They probably assumed that I was avoiding them and felt guilty, so they decided to give me some space until now.

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Unbeknownst to them, I only refused because I wanted my kids to have a carefree life. I never expected them to misunderstand my actions or even go as far as to feel grief. So after some pondering, I spoke into the phone, "Alright, see you tonight."

My gaze shot back to the school gate once I hung up. There, Jared and Summer held hands as they skipped into the school. Call me a softie, but I couldn't help feeling a hearth-like warmth after seeing them hop away like father and daughter among the other children.

Though that feeling lasted for a brief moment because everything that Jared did in the past was unforgivable—he would always be a despicable piece of scum in my eyes, even if he spent a lifetime begging on his knees.

I understood that Ashton allowed Jared to meet Summer because he felt sorry for Jared as a friend. However, I personally disagreed with trusting or forgiving a horrible man like Jared. So for the sake of my children's health and safety, I decided to take additional precautions.

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On my way back to the law firm, I texted Holden to find a nutritionist; preferably someone certified and licensed.

All I had to do now was wait.

Arriving at the law firm, I opened my office door and saw Bryson waiting inside.

“Mr. Queen, what brings you here?”

I initially planned to have Brooklyn transfer the excess of the one hundred and fifty million to Bryson. Yet, Bryson had unexpectedly taken the initiative and shown up here.

Bryson burst out into boisterous laughter as he stated, “I’m obviously here to pay you, Ms. Stovall!”

At this, my brow furrowed. Didn’t he shove me a check with a large sum scrawled on it last night? Did he lose his marbles?

Then again, he looked like he was serious. He then threw a quick look at his assistant. In a matter of seconds, the assistant pulled out a document and passed it to me from across the table.

“Sign this. From today onwards, your law firm will be in charge of my many companies’ legal affairs.” Bryson guffawed heartily.

My eyes rounded at the thin document. Oh my god, this is my lucky day!

According to Emma, Bryson’s net worth is estimated to be far more than mine and Ashton’s combined. If our law firm successfully negotiates this deal, then we’ll never have to worry about rent ever again.

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It was like we had struck gold. Although a beaming delight smeared across my face, I still couldn't ignore the teeniest hint of worry inside me. After all, nothing good came this easy.

This jackpot, along with the rough ten million that he gave me last night, might bite me in the ass someday. What if he comes asking me for impossible favors? How am I going to refuse?

After weighing my options, a decision finally came to mind. I cracked a smile whilst gently nudging the document back to him. "We were only doing our jobs by settling your case. Moreover, you've already over-compensated us for our efforts. Mr. Newman will get the Finance Department to transfer the excess sum over to your personal account. As for this other matter, there's really no need to be polite."

Bryson's smile faltered for a split second after hearing this. "That's alright then. We'll put this matter aside for the time being since your current schedule is overwhelmed. Now, I came here today because there's this other thing I need your help with..."

I knew it! No one's that nice for no reason.

"Go on."

Seeing that I didn't refuse, Bryson raised a fist over his mouth and cleared his throat while shooting an impatient gaze at his assistant.

A knowing look flashed in the assistant's eyes as he nodded, then promptly turned to leave.

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Once the door clicked shut, Bryson's eyes darted around to ensure that it was just two of us before he finally felt safe enough to pull his phone out of his pocket.

He then unlocked his phone and raised it before me with a giddy smile.

"Ms. Stovall, take a gander at these women and let me know if any of them catches your eye."

Regardless of how ridiculous his request sounded, I still did as told.

The screen showed a photo album. Tapping on it, the display flickered to a photo of a stunning young woman. However, she stared at the camera vacantly as if she were a soulless zombie.

I glimpsed at the thumbnails and recognized the first few women from last night's birthday banquet. Nonetheless, I continued to scan the following pictures.

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