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In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1331 - 1335

Although the next ones all had goddess-like curves and features, they still felt mediocre as none of them stood out particularly to me.

After all, K City was an urban jungle with sky-high property prices. Hence, it wasn't rare to see streets flooded with men and women who looked like stunning creatures.

"What do you think?" Bryson's voice picked up pace.

This felt like I had just been asked an awkward question on a live talk show. I flashed a thin-lipped smile before treading cautiously around the topic. "I'm curious as to why you're showing me these women, Mr. Queen."

Bryson's eyes widened slightly but regained composure as he explained, "It's nothing important, but a friend of mine is looking to find a wife. And you know... a tough guy like me wouldn't know what to look for in a woman. Plus, I don't have many friends in K City, so I thought I'd ask you."

His explanation made sense. However, his pursed-lip and pin-straight posture gave his intentions away.

Why would anyone take it upon themselves to wife-hunt on behalf of their friend? That "friend" is most likely referring to himself.

Back when we were dealing with Bryson's case, I got a glimpse of his personal information. He was maybe seven or eight years older than Ashton and has illegitimate children with two of his mistresses.

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Given the current laws, Bryson's assets would be divided between him and his wife should they decide on a divorce. Hence, it wasn't difficult to understand why he never officially married either of his two mistresses.

Bryson wasn't considered the most attractive man since he possessed boring and ordinary features. It was painstakingly obvious that his mistresses were only after his wealth, so it wasn't at all cruel that he refused to marry them.

However, I didn't comment on this since it was his private life. All I could do was offer a piece of advice, "Truthfully, Mr. Queen, none of these women stand out to me."

Bryson slumped. The lively expression on his face darkened to a stone-grey as his fingers tapped on the table. "I see... Never mind then, I suppose it's not meant to be. I'll have my friend reconsider."

Judging from his soured reaction, there must be someone he likes among these women that I rejected.

Regret nipped uncomfortably at my chest. I didn't want him to miss out on a chance at love because of my advice, so I took back my words as quickly as I said them. "Actually, all that matters when starting a relationship is how two people feel for each other and whether they get along well. So please don't take my personal opinion of these women to heart."

Bryson kept his phone away at this. His eyes sparkled with hope as he spoke gratefully, "Ms. Stovall, you don't understand how much your advice means to someone like me. I really can't explain how grateful I am for your help, so please accept my humble thanks. I'll buy you a meal some other day to express my gratitude. Anyways, you seem busy, so I'll leave you to it."

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Just as he finished speaking, Bryson immediately got up and dashed out the door. I could almost picture him with a bushy tail tucked between his legs as he seemed terrified that I would question him further.

Bubbly laughter erupted from my lips after seeing tough-old-Bryson scamper off like some frazzled chipmunk. What an interesting man.

...

I collected Summer in the afternoon when her school ended and told the chauffeur to head for Moore Residence.

Once there, two rows of maids greeted us upon arrival.

“Good day, Ms. Stovall and Ms. Summer.”

Perhaps I was overthinking, but something seemed odd about the maids’ stiff behavior. Was there really a need to line up and greet us so formally for a simple meal?

“You’re here.” Cameron must have waited for some time because she left over to hold Summer’s hand once we entered the living room. She cooed, “Did you miss Granny?”

“Mm-hmm! Why didn’t you ever visit?”

“Well, granny has to run a business here. How about I take you out shopping once I become rich?”

“No, I’ll earn my own money to shop!”

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“Oh?” Cameron chuckled in delight, “What an ambitious grandchild I have! Alright then, I’ll wait for that day to come.”

Perhaps it was because they hadn’t seen each other for a long time, but the two chirped away like excited birds.

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In the middle of the living room, Zachary lounged on the single-seated sofa with a cigar between his fingers whilst brewing some tea. His sophisticated gestures exuded the charm of a matured man, even at the age of fifty. One could easily imagine how equally suave he must have been when he was younger.

I sat down on the sofa next to his before greeting softly, “Dad.”

He hummed in acknowledgment before placing a teacup before me. “Have a taste of this green tea that we imported this year.”

“Okay.” I took a quick sip, running the warm liquid over my tongue. Then I flashed a brief smile at him once the flavor seeped in. “It’s pretty good. I can taste the notes of sweet grass in there.”

There was no response from him. He looked away and focused on refilling my cup.

Cameron intended to spend some bonding time with Summer before dinner. However, Summer had put her foot down and insisted on completing her homework in the study. At this, Cameron gave in and followed along to tutor her.

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Right when they arrived upstairs, a maid's voice called out from the front door. "Mr. Moore, the guest has arrived."

"Invite them in." Zachary didn't even bat an eyelash at this sudden arrival. He blew at his tea in a relaxed and unbothered manner.

Are we not having a simple family dinner?

Just as suspicion fizzled in my head, the guest's footsteps grew closer from behind me.

I surrendered to my burning curiosity. Turning around, I was faced with a foreign man. The only indication of his identity was the superb quality of his garments; he wore a white dress shirt underneath a sleek, black trench coat with a hand-knitted cashmere scarf around his neck.

Yet, I still couldn't put a name to his face, no matter how hard I pried into my mind. It was evident that this man wasn't someone I knew, nor have our lives ever intersected.

The man behaved courteously. He tilted his head to greet Zachary, then cast a warm smile my way before striding over.

"Ms. Stovall." My name rolled off his tongue as he politely extended his arm over. "I'm Elliot Jacobson."

Elliot?

As in the trader who disappeared into thin air after he single-handedly swiped billions from many capitalists at the stock trade in M Country? That Elliot?

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Back when Pitcoin first blew up, Emma often shared juicy tidbits about the stock-investing world. She also mentioned that Elliot was considered a celebrity in that realm. Hence, I couldn't help but freeze at the legendary Elliot who now stood before me.

Recalling how Emma fangirled after Elliot, I civilly reached out to shake his hand. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

"Oh Elliot, you're here." Cameron had somehow heard us chatting and trotted downstairs in a blink of an eye. Delight beamed on her face as she ushered, "No need to stand around, please sit. I heard that you've just returned from M Country?"

"That's right." Elliot flashed a neutral smile as he continued, "Father wants to return to his roots, so he moved our business back here."

Many of the wealthy who kept a low profile owned an abundance of companies under their very names. Sure enough, Elliot was no exception to this.

"That's a good thing," Zachary nodded. "There's no place like home. And I happen to be looking for potential collaborators for my company's new projects. You should come over someday, and we can discuss if there's a possibility for us to collaborate."

"Sure," Elliot responded accordingly.

A maid's voice then sounded from upstairs, "There's a phone call for you, Mr. Moore."

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“Okay,” Zachary replied whilst standing to head upstairs. With one foot up the stairs, his gaze turned over to us. “I have some matters to attend to, but I’ll be back in a bit. You guys continue chatting.”

Right as he stepped foot onto the second floor, Cameron bounced onto her feet. She moved towards the kitchen as she announced, “Letty, why don’t you keep Elliot company while I go prepare some dishes?”

My cheeks puckered after seeing those two put on such a shameless show.

I couldn’t help but squint my eyes in embarrassment. Literally, anyone can tell that you guys are setting me up with this guy.

Although I haven’t gotten around to telling Zachary and Cameron about the fake divorce, it was pretty obvious that I was still hung up on Ashton. Plus, there was a huge fuss in K City about how I stalked Ashton. Almost everyone could tell that I still had feelings for him, yet they still arranged this blind date without me knowing?

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Twisting my lips to one side, I recomposed my emotions before shrugging apologetically at Elliot. “Sorry, I apologize on behalf of my parents. It looks like you came over for nothing.”

Elliot lowered his head, smiling amusedly. “No, it’s alright. I should be the one to apologize for showing up so suddenly. It is a bit too soon, but I promise I won’t disappoint if you give me a chance.”

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This man was certainly worth giving a chance as he was devilishly handsome and possessed immense wealth. He was the kind of man that every woman dreamed of—except me.

I shook my head and smiled, not wanting to make things difficult for my parents. “There seems to be a misunderstanding, Mr. Moore. I haven’t moved on from my previous marriage, nor do I plan to start a new relationship soon. I apologize as I’m not the woman you’re looking for.”

Although I spoke humbly, we both knew that I was more than worthy of having men flock before me, given both the Moore family and the Stovall family’s support for me, as well as the assets under my name. Me being highly sought after was a fact, regardless of my divorce and my three children.

Ever since Thora started pestering Ashton, I knew that this day would come; but what I hadn’t expected was that my parents would be the ones to set me up.

How disappointing.

Emery once said that my parents were ruthless in setting Rebecca up with Ashton. She explained that they wanted to grow their influential power through securing the Fuller family.

Remembering Emery’s words, I can imagine why my parents would set up this embarrassing date.

My gaze subconsciously darted over to the kitchen. I felt a tightness in my stomach as I had completely lost my appetite.

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Elliot stood silently for the longest time beside me. I turned to look at him and saw nothing but a firm calmness on his face. He didn't seem to care about my rejection.

So I spun on my heels and headed for the kitchen.

There, Cameron leaned leisurely against the wall with a hot cup of tea in her hands as she threw sharp gazes on the maids who were cooking.

It was obvious that she had lied about preparing dinner to force Elliot and me to spend time together.

She sipped on her tea for some time before jolting nervously, realizing that I had entered the kitchen. "What are you doing here? I can manage the kitchen just fine, now shoo! How could you leave our guest alone?"

I crossed my arms, sighing at Cameron before looking over at the maids. "Why don't you guys turn off the stove and head out, so Mrs. Moore and I can talk privately."

"Yes, Ms. Stovall."

The maids understood that I still possessed a significantly high status in this household. Hence, they stopped what they were doing and left without forgetting to close the glass door for us.

They walked out, leaving Cameron and myself in the enclosed kitchen.

"Why did you invite Elliot?" My gaze pierced at her in an unflinching manner.

"What are you talking about?" Cameron held a straight face as she approached me and leaned against the white oak cabinetry. A smile crept onto

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her face. “The Jacobson family and us Moores are old family friends. Elliot is simply visiting your Dad on behalf of his father. Now, why on earth would we invite him over for no reason?”

“Is that so? Then why didn’t you inform me beforehand that there would be a guest tonight?”

“He just called to tell us right after he got off the plane.”

How bold of her to continue making excuses!

“Alright then. Since I’m not that well-acquainted with him, I suppose it won’t matter if I’m absent while you guys catch up about old times. Summer and I will head home now.”

Anger came to a roaring boil in my chest. I hated being set up by others, who assumed they knew what was best. On top of that, I hated having to guess the motives of those I called my family.

I understood that an heir was needed to pass on the family name and inherit properties and assets. I also understood that a marriage alliance between two families was, indeed, the easiest path to achieve that. However, that didn’t mean that I supported my parents, nor was I willing to be some chess piece in their plan to unite the two families.

As I turned to leave, Cameron’s hand darted and clasped around my wrist. “Letty, what are you doing? The guest is still outside... he’ll feel unwelcomed by us Moores if you leave with your child now. How will our families continue to stay friends after this?”

My face darkened to a hideous brownish-red with no intention of compromising.

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She eventually gave in after seeing my unwavering frown. A long and weary sigh escaped her lips as she nagged. "Fine, I'll admit it. Your Dad and I planned tonight's dinner because we want what's best for you. Everything between Ashton and Thora is stirring up such a storm right now, so you should consider an alternative.

Now, I know Elliot is slightly older than Ashton, but he's better when it comes to respecting his parents and being a considerate man. Granted, he may have been too devoted to his family and preoccupied with his booming career to dabble in relationships, but a husband like him would be hard to come by. You..."

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Endless nags sprung out of her like a burst pipe. While I didn't care for most of the things she said, she blurted out something that spiked my anger—I had three children, yet Elliot had never even been intimate with a woman.

Her condescending words made my toes curl in annoyance. I snapped at her, "Don't you think it's weird for someone his age to be unmarried?"

"What nonsense are you spewing! Why would your Dad and I intentionally cause you harm? We've already run a private investigation on Elliot, and it's been cleared. He's healthy as can be, so he won't have any issues with taking care of you and your children!"

"The Stovall and Moore family's assets are enough to ensure a comfortable life for my children and me. Are you really doing what's best for me? Or are you just using me to secure a son-in-law's financial investment into the companies

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under your and Zachary's name? You're using me as a chess piece to expand your business territory, aren't you?"

The reality of things was often ugly. However, I had to accept my reality and face my family's true nature, regardless of how rotten they were.

Cameron froze at my sudden retort. Her lips parted, but no words were able to form.

I held her gaze as disappointment twisted inside me. Turning on my heel, I shrugged her grip off my arm. "If you insist on using me as a business opportunity, then I'd rather us be strangers."

My feet stepped with an unyielding force, marching out the glass door and past Elliot in the living room. I stormed upstairs to collect Summer, then we left without so much as a goodbye.

Anger throbbed inside me. I had finally put Summer to bed and needed to vent, so I returned to my room and video-called Ashton.

The camera captured my darkened expression, down to my crinkled eyes that frowned. As soon as Ashton picked up the phone, he saw my furious gaze that could burn holes through him.

His brows twitched as he flashed me an amused half-smile. "Have I perhaps done anything to upset you today?"

"Yeah, you ticked me off."

We wouldn't have faked our divorce if we didn't need to get revenge. Then I wouldn't get tricked into a blind date with Elliot, nor would I be thrown around as a pawn in Cameron and Zachary's calculative ways.

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Although these were only words of anger, it made sense that I would feel this way since an angered woman often acted emotionally rather than sensibly.

Ashton frowned. His face scrunched into confusion. "After coming back from the hospital, I was in the office the entire time and only came in contact with Joseph, the secretary who delivered my coffee. So who could have possibly gotten my honey's knickers in a twist?"

Because he had a clear conscience, he spoke in a bubbly, almost joker-like manner that prompted laughter from me. His exaggerated frown made it hard to stay upset at him.

A giggle snuck out from my tightly clamped lips. "Quit acting so silly! I was trying to tell you that I got set up on a blind date."

"A blind date?" Ashton's eyes wiggled into a doubtful gaze. Then his voice sprang with an airiness that teased me, "Woah, it takes guts to go on a blind date with you. Who in K City could possibly be so reckless and not value their lives?"

I let out a deep chesty scoff. "How is dating me reckless? Am I really that bad?"

Deep laughter rumbled from Ashton. "You seem to have forgotten what I said during the Ziegler family's anniversary banquet."

This took me by surprise as I tried to recall that night's events.

At that banquet, Thora almost successfully splashed her beverage all over me. It wasn't a great experience, but at least Ashton publicly defended me and said that no matter what, we will always share a bond since we have children between us.

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The pros to his words were that they discouraged anyone from purposefully making my life difficult in the future. At the same time, he eliminated the possibility of potential suitors around me. It deterred those who wanted my hand in marriage, as well as those who were after my powerful influence since I had the support of the Stovall and Moore family. This was because they would have to compete against Ashton, and given his pristine status, any competitors would be foolishly asking for social suicide.

Seeing him so smug, my lips pinched with annoyance. "How are you so confident that I won't fall for another man?"

Ashton's gaze narrowed on me. His eyes flickered to a menacing pitch-black. "It's not that I'm confident. Rather, it's because I know that you won't tolerate messy relationships in your life. We're alike in that aspect; fidelity is something that you regard highly, if not more than I do."

His serious words struck me by surprise and left me dumbfounded.

He truly knew me like the back of his hand.

This was what I believed true love to be; a love where both parties were free to conquer their own domains, but the love between them would remain strong and unchanged.

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After giving it some thought, I no longer felt mad and decided to change the topic. "What do you think Cameron and Zachary are planning? They literally wasted all their time on your and Rebecca's stupid marriage alliance in the past. They were so blinded by that and never realized that we were actually

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family. Yet, now they're trying to force me into a marriage alliance? Don't you think they're going too far?"

"People change," Ashton soothed. "Everyone reacts differently in tough times... Maybe you should investigate if the Moore family is in trouble. You did deal a heavy blow to them back when you tried to avenge Macy. Perhaps a rival snuck past their defenses now that they're weakened. Hence, your parents resorted to the marriage alliance? But then again, these are just my optimistic deductions. I'm not sure if your parents have other reasons, so I suppose we'll have to wait and see."

I nodded. A look of solemn contemplation showed on my face as I looked at Ashton. "I noticed that Herman and Thora seemed closer at Bryson's father's birthday banquet. Have the Zieglers and the Trivetts signed on to the Pitcoin business deal?"

Ashton cracked a proud smile. "Yep. They've taken the bait. My men have begun analyzing the steps to cracking Pitcoin's software, so it won't be long before they succeed. You don't have to worry about a thing since I'm handling this. Now, back to important matters since you've piqued my interest—who's the man that's bold enough to go on a blind date with you?"

It was indeed suspicious that Elliot rushed from overseas to go on a blind date with me during this tumultuous time.

"Elliot Jacobson," I uttered with seriousness. "A local from M Country that recently returned from abroad. Also, I think Zachary is interested in a business collaboration with the Jacobson family."

"Got it, I'll have Joseph run a check later."

"Okay."

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I nodded obediently. Then in the split second that followed, I caught a glimpse of Ashton's brows flinching in pain. Although it was very brief and subtle, I definitely saw it.

"Ashton? Are you alright?" My eyes stared with great concern at his face while my smile faltered.

"Mm-hmm, what's wrong?" Ashton held a normal expression as if nothing had ever happened. He cast an innocent face at me before revealing a tired look. It seemed like he had deliberately focused the camera so that I could see him kneading his brows. He sighed deeply, "I've been overwhelmed with work these past two days and haven't had proper rest. I suppose I should take some time off to get a good night's sleep."

My face stiffened with concern at this. I uttered a quick response, "You should hang up and turn in early since you're tired."

Ashton stared straight into the camera as his lips curved slightly. "You should go to bed too. I'll call you tomorrow?"

"Mm-hmm."

Ashton hung up right after I responded. Seeing the screen flicker back into the call history, my heart sank.

He had always been skilled at disguising his emotions, not showing a hint of how he truly felt. It was the same when it came to business; he would never reveal his thoughts to his opponents, regardless of whether the situation he faced was good or bad.

But I'm not his opponent... I'm his wife, the one who's been by his side for ten years and knows him the most.

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I knew him all too well. It was impossible for that man, who constantly sought after perfection, to feel tired.

My instincts told me that Ashton was definitely hiding something from me, and it felt like the kind of secret that worried me.

I slumped on the bed for nearly a minute before the memories of recent events flashed through my mind. With haste, I scrambled for the phone and dialed Millie's number.

"Get the car. I'm going over to Fuller Corporation."

Millie's efficiency was considered one of the most elite. She had parked the car across the street by the time I was done getting ready.

I clambered onto the passenger seat with my eyes glued in the distance. My lips scrunched tightly as I managed one word, "Hurry."

Millie said nothing, but she understood my instruction perfectly. She slammed onto the accelerator and sped for our destination.

It took less than twenty minutes for us to arrive in front of Fuller Corporation. I dashed inside, unbothered if Thora or anyone else had strategically placed any spies around the area.

At that time of day, Fuller Corporation wasn't empty. Almost every floor had about one or two lights on, indicating that there were many employees working overtime. I raced into the lift and hurriedly pressed onto the floor where the president's office is located.

Once the elevator doors opened, I sprinted out and barged into his office. What I saw next was just as I had expected—no one was there.

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