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In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 1381

Within ten minutes, the hashtag #FulleReconciliation had been propelled to Facebook's most widely searched and used term.

Ashton seemed in no mood to talk once he got into the car. Wary of disturbing him, I continued scrolling through Facebook.

The photo that was the most widely-circulated piece of information regarding this trending topic was my intimate photo with Ashton at the airport.

The internet was ablaze with theories and frenzied discussions.

Tsk tsk! Look at them! That's what I call true love!

The president's a real man indeed! He didn't abandon the woman who gave birth to his child after all.

Scarlett's gorgeous! She and Ashton really look like a match made in heaven.

I definitely ship this couple! None of those messy relationships for me!

Isn't this great? I'm glad the twins won't be separated. I was so worried that if they divorced, they'd end up splitting the twins between them!

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I was rather thankful that the bulk of the comments were positive. A handful of cynical netizens questioned the validity of our relationship, citing the ambiguous closeness between Ashton and Thora. However, these naysayers' voices were quickly drowned out by the flood of other netizens eager to express their delight and support.

As I read on, a smile hovered on my lips. The comments, no matter their nature, didn't affect me much. I found myself immensely moved, however, by the genuine outpouring of well-wishes from people Ashton and I have never even met.

Ashton sensed my body weakening in gratitude. Perhaps mistaking it for unhappiness, he reached out a warm hand and pressed mine firmly into his palm.

I turned to look at him in surprise, but he had already reclined against his seat, his eyes shut.

Perhaps Ashton merely wanted to hold me. I thought to myself, and another wave of pleasure washed over me.

It had been a while since Ashton had managed to get any rest. I briefly considered waking him up, then thought otherwise.

As it turned out, however, the decision to let Ashton rest for long wasn't mine to make.

The car soon pulled up at the Stovall residence. The moment we'd entered, Thora was already waiting with Herman in the living room. They were both engaged in a frosty standoff with John and Emma.

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At the sound of our arriving footsteps, the four of them swiveled around in unison to face us.

Ashton, however, looked utterly unconcerned. He airily led me into the house, where we took a seat beside John.

Herman scoffed. "True love, huh, Ashton? You and your wife really know how to put on a good show, stringing the rest of us along by the nose. Do you take us for fools?"

The Trivett family had always been suspicious of the Stovalls and naturally took an excessively defensive attitude towards us. When they'd initially agreed to let Ashton vouch for us, The Ziegler Corporation's collaboration with Pitcoin had seen a meteoric rise in value, all thanks to the conflict between Ashton and me.

The relationship between Ashton and me was harmonious again now. Furthermore, Ashton had publicly declared that he'd never separated from me. Neither had he ever fallen for anyone else. The Trivetts saw this as an affront to their alliance with Ashton. Herman, however, was reluctant to give up his privileged access to confidential data.

Ashton remained silent, his face expressionless. His look of complete vacancy was as impenetrable as a solid wall. Unable to bear the mounting tension in the room, John burst out, enraged, "Mr. Trivett, let me give you a piece of advice. Don't blame others for your own faults. Everyone can clearly see that the love between Letty and Ashton is real. You're the only one who's blind, I suppose. Who's to blame for that?"

Aggrieved, Herman glowered at John. "Don't think I won't dare to touch you just because you have Louis to back you up! If you get on my bad side, I won't rest until I've destroyed you."

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At that, John let out a snigger. "Be my guest. Go ahead and try."

"You..." Herman spluttered, leaping to his feet. The air in the room was almost crackling with the abundant aggression between the two men.

Just then, Ashton intervened in a low voice. "Mr. Trivett, you're concerned about your Pitcoin business, aren't you? I'll promise you that whatever the relationship between Scarlett and me, I'll ensure that it doesn't affect Pitcoin at all. Are you satisfied?" he asked coolly.

Herman had actually been harboring the fear that Ashton and Louis would combine their strength. They would thus emerge as a formidable opponent. Ashton's declaration, however, greatly reassured Herman. However, another thought struck him, prompting him to thus further demand, "Mr. Fuller, I would have been more inclined to believe you if you had openly announced your relationship with Ms. Stovall at the start. In fact, I would have been willing to continue with that deal. However, now that I've come to know about this matter through hearsay, your credibility has been utterly reduced to zero in my eyes. How do you expect me to continue working with you?"

"What do you want, then?" John asked sharply, his wild eyes once again meeting Herman's level gaze.

Ashton, however, stepped in before the situation could escalate once again. Icily, he informed Herman, "Fuller Corporation will withdraw from all collaborations and related enterprises with Trivett Corporation. We'll compensate you for the breach of contract."

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That single statement silenced Herman entirely. At the same time, it had come at the cost of Ashton's bargaining power.

Fuller Corporation's withdrawal from the collaboration with Trivett Corporation meant that Ashton would be unable to interfere no matter what evil ends Pitcoin would be used for.

It seemed as if the discovery that his parents were alive had utterly transformed Ashton. The upright, dignified man that George painstakingly raised had vanished.

Ashton's words thus dropped like a bomb in the living room, scattering the uneasiness that had hung so heavily in the air before.

Thora, who had been observing the scene unfold from the sidelines, chose this moment to speak. "You're going to withdraw from all collaborations? Ashton, do you really intend to sever all ties with me?" she seethed.

The Ziegler family was no longer Ashton's target. In fact, from certain perspectives, Ashton had indeed wronged Thora in some aspects.

A flowering career was all well and good for a woman, but her relationships and emotions would always remain her core occupation.

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Thora waited in agony for Ashton's reply. Ashton, however, was in no frame of mind to deal with anything other than the recent tragedy. He merely gazed at her blankly with disinterest, looking absent altogether as if his soul had flown off to another dimension entirely. Wherever it was, it was neither present nor ready to engage with Thora's demands.

It wasn't that Ashton wanted to evade her questioning. He didn't quite possess the capacity to at the moment.

Every second that ticked by threw Thora into a greater frenzy. The expression on her face was growing increasingly desperate. Unable to endure this long-drawn awkwardness, I hastily chipped in, "Ms. Ziegler, allow me to apologize to you on behalf of Ashton. He only hid our marriage from you due to the circumstances. If there's anything you're dissatisfied with, we'll do whatever we can to make amends."

Thora was an intelligent woman. I truly believed she would know that negotiating a compromise would enable her to achieve the best possible outcome from this catastrophe despite the hurt she'd suffered.

Besides, Ashton and Thora were both victims of the previous generation's wrongs. There was no real benefit in furthering this resentment.

Thora, however, did not act like the reasonable woman I expected her to be. "I was played for a fool by the two of you. Do you think I'd let you off the hook that easily?" she asked bitterly.

Upon further reflection, I realized that it must have taken a considerable amount of courage and pride for Thora to have arrived at her current position. For her to have cast off the help of the Ziegler family and establish her own

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business, she must have had an unimaginable amount of perseverance. I knew I should not expect her to back down without a fight, then.

I heaved a sigh. "What does Mr. Ziegler think of this matter?"

At the mention of his name, Thora instinctively started and glanced away. I followed the line of her gaze and realized that she'd been looking at Ashton.

She had her jaw clenched in contemplation. After a while, she said evenly, "I want Ashton to sign a five-year contract. It must clearly state that within the stipulated period, Fuller Corporation will only collaborate with one of Ziegler Corporation's construction companies."

I gaped at her. Thora clearly had no qualms about allowing her personal grievances to interfere with professional matters.

Five years of collaboration with the Fuller Corporation was a surefire way for Thora to propel her own company to the top. It was the best maneuver the woman could make from unrequited love.

Ashton, however, had no discernible reaction upon hearing Thora's demand. He nodded, saying gravely, "As long as the work is legal and reasonable, I have no problem with it."

Despite such an enormous ask, Thora remained discontent. She piped up again, "Furthermore, this scandal put me in a bad light. Both of you will have to find a way to fix my reputation."

"Don't take advantage of their kindness! How do you expect them to clean up your mess? Are you expecting Ashton to divorce Scarlett to pursue you, then let you dump him this time around?" John retorted heatedly.

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Thora, however, remained unflappable. She obstinately stuck out her chin at him before saying haughtily, "That's just what I'm asking him to do. I'm the only one who should be permitted to dump others, not the other way around."

Her ridiculous statement made John give a snort of incredulity. "Who do you think you are to make such ridiculous demands? You..."

I hurriedly cut in, "Wait, John." I glanced at Thora thoughtfully, then said, "I think Ms. Ziegler's request can be met in another way."

I was certain that Ashton's and my divorce was not the only option for Ms. Ziegler to recover her standing.

Thora's features softened upon hearing my attempt at conciliation. The corners of her mouth twitched before she spoke, "I've finally seen for myself today that you're a practical woman. You're not the spoilt princess I thought you were, but a wolf in sheep's clothing. You really did put up a good performance all those other times we met."

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There was nothing Ashton and I could say to justify ourselves, so I kept my peace.

The next day, the country's biggest financial news station reported that the Fuller Corporation's high-profile investment had incurred a loss of hundreds of

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millions due to a decisive managerial failure. The Ziegler Corporation, in defense of their own interests, had cut off all collaboration with Fuller Corporation. Stovall Corporation, on the other hand, had decided to merge with Fuller Corporation to bail the latter out.

This piece of earth-shattering news was immediately lit upon by netizens eager to devour the next piece of gossip. They immediately connected this event with Facebook's top search.

I'll be damned. Does this mean Mr. Fuller only reconciled with Ms. Stovall for money?

I told you all! Thora dumped that jerk because of Fuller Corporation's investment failure. His ex-wife had mercy on him and bailed him out despite everything that he did to her! Babes, what a tragedy this is for women everywhere!

Yes, I despise Mr. Fuller now! What a beastly man he is!

All I have to say is, poor Scarlett!

Mr. Fuller, if you already have a woman that loves you so much, please cherish her!

I've always known that what Thora and Mr. Fuller had was a marriage of convenience! There were never any true feelings involved. I predicted this!

Back in the Stovall residence, we were sitting in the living room when the news reports flowed in, thick and fast. Ashton and I were scrolling through our

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phones and scanning the news. The only noise interrupting the otherwise dead silence of the room came from the television.

Ashton sat on the sofa, staring ahead of him, his face devoid of any expression. Ever since he'd returned to K City, Ashton seemed to have lost all purpose.

Even though the latest news reports had thoroughly cast Ashton's name into disrepute, we had managed to resolve the matter with Thora. As for the Pitcoin projects, we'd managed to tie up all the stray ends during the day. Fuller Corporation had thus ceased all involvements in illegal activity that day.

Danger or trouble had always been of little concern to Ashton. Even though we had successfully concluded all of Fuller Corporation's pressing matters, Ashton did not look overjoyed at all.

I knew then that the Hall family was another burden weighing on Ashton's mind.

I was about to sit Ashton down for a talk when the maid suddenly dashed into the room. "Mr. Stovall, a guest is currently waiting outside. He gave his name as Bill Young," she announced.

Something seemed to reawaken within Ashton. His dark eyes smoldered as he glanced towards the doorway where the maid had just entered from.

The rest of us exchanged looks uneasily. Louis then instructed, "Bring him in."

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The Stovall family had always been known for its openness. It wouldn't have been appropriate for us to have turned away a world-renowned philanthropist from our home.

Bill, the man waiting outside, soon hobbled in on crutches. He was accompanied by Tiffany, who had angered Ashton the day before. The woman leaned towards Bill as she helped him in. The closeness between the two of them suggested that they were on rather intimate terms.

Ashton was evidently incensed by Tiffany's arrival. His face darkened by a few shades, and his eyes flashed with fury.

Bill was getting on in years, but he was remarkably frank in his manner. The moment he'd settled down into his seat, he immediately declared, "I came here today to convey a message on behalf of a friend."

Bill paused and surveyed the room. He nodded, pleased that all eyes were fixed attentively on him. Bill then continued, addressing Ashton directly, "Mr. Hall has given the matter some thought. Your entire family can return to the Hall family and be reunited as one again. As long as you're willing, you'll be welcomed back anytime."

Did Christopher suddenly develop a conscience and decide to accept Ashton back into his fold? I mused.

Before anyone else could respond, however, Ashton had erupted in anger. He stood up vehemently and bellowed, "Keep your hypocritical pity to yourself! I don't need it!"

I had rarely seen Ashton lose control of his emotions. His abrupt, violent rage threw the room in disarray. We gawked at him, all equally aghast.

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The tension in the room was so thick that one could cut it with a knife. Ashton took a deep breath, rearranging his features into their previous stoic expression before roughly shoving his way past Bill and storming upstairs.

“Ash-” Appalled, Tiffany turned on her heels to go after him, as if fearful of being discarded by the man a second time. “Ashton!” she called out, a desperate plea.

Ashton ignored her. He refused to dignify her with even a backward glance in her direction and hastened his footsteps.

I lunged forward to restrain Tiffany. “Ms. Hall!”

My outburst got her to halt in her tracks but refused to turn back. Seeing her reluctance, I continued kindly, “Ashton doesn’t want to meet anyone who has anything to do with Christopher. Please respect that.”

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As I spoke, I strode over to the stairs. Shouldering Tiffany brusquely aside, I said as I ascended, “I need to discuss some urgent matters with Ashton. Please go ahead without us.”

Tiffany had been raised in a life of luxury and pampering. She was thus unused to the subtle emotions that undergirded every social interaction. She

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was unable to recognize the extent of our loathing for her from my simple, placid expression.

It was undeniably rude of Ashton and I to evade our guests in this manner. However, I believed our behavior was not entirely unwarranted. The guests had to be deserving of our respect as well.

The bedroom door was left open, so I entered cautiously, hearing the sound of water running in the bathroom as I walked in.

I closed the door softly behind me as I entered, then tiptoed towards the bathroom. At the door, however, I found my eyes locked with Ashton's.

His eyes were wild and bloodshot, and his entire face was dripping with water. He looked both embarrassed and intimidating at the same time. Water was still gushing in torrents from the tap. I looked up to see that a huge crack had split the bathroom mirror. A few shards littered the floor.

I looked down and was horrified to see that Ashton's hand had suffered a few gashes that were bleeding profusely.

Ashton's forlorn figure tugged at my heartstrings. I whirled around and hurried to fetch the first aid kit to treat his wounds.

Neither of us spoke throughout the entire process. Ashton merely bowed his head. With his unfathomable dark eyes fixed upon me, he seemed oddly contented at last.

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After a long while, when I finally lifted my head to dispose of the used cotton swabs, he said hoarsely, “Why do you care so much for a useless castoff like me?”

I froze upon hearing that, my hands arrested in the act of bandaging. I lowered them, then said slowly, “It doesn’t matter to me whether you’re a useless castoff or the epitome of perfection. You’re Ashton. You’re my husband and the father of my children. I chose you because you’re the one I love most. It doesn’t matter what other people think of you.”

I could feel his hands tremble in mine. He suddenly seized me and dragged me into the bedroom.

He proceeded to sit me down on the bed, then walked over to the closet. He pulled out a small plastic bag, then stuffed the pill bottle that had been encapsulated within into my hands.

Vitamin A Supplement Lozenges, the label read. The package looked familiar. Ashton had been taking these since Summer fell ill. He’d reassured me that nothing was wrong with him, and they’d since been relegated to the back of my mind.

“Over the years, my doctor has been trying various methods to increase my intake of Vitamin A. There aren’t many others with a similar condition, so no one, including me, really took it seriously. Recently, however, I compared my medical records to the Hall family’s and realized that this is a hereditary chronic illness. There’s a seventy percent chance that I’ll go blind after the age of forty. That’s also the reason why the Halls cast me out,” Ashton said lightly.

He sounded matter-of-fact as if he had long since accepted the fact, but I could detect a hint of self-degradation in his tone.

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He seemed understanding, but I felt a bitter wave of outrage rising within me nonetheless.

If his eyes were the problem, that would explain Ashton's unusual behavior over the video call. As long as he wasn't doing a drug trial of any sort on my behalf, I thought there was no need to further worry myself.

However, this hereditary blindness was no fault of his. It wasn't even a complete guarantee that he would lose his sight. Yet, the Halls had thus decided to forsake their own son because of it. It was an utterly heartless move on their part.

Realization dawned upon me with a flash. The reason for Tiffany's arrogance was suddenly crystal-clear to me.

As Ashton's younger sister, she must have scorned what she perceived as her brother's inferior genes. The fact that Tiffany hadn't inherited the illness must have convinced her that she was clearly his superior.

What an utterly debased family! I fumed to myself. It was ridiculous that one could despise others for their genetic makeup in this day and age.

Ashton tilted his head and looked at me bemusedly. "What's wrong? Are you concerned for me?" he teased.

I remained silent. Ashton paused, then continued determinedly, "It's only a possibility, after all. I'm still holding out for that remaining thirty percent that everything will be fine. Besides, even if I can't see, Joe is back at the headquarters of the company, and Joseph is a capable, steadfast worker. He's worthy of the hopes I'm pinning on him. I'll only be losing my sight, not my mind. As long as I'm alive, I'll keep striving. I won't let you and the children down..."

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“I was thinking,” I said, interrupting Ashton, “that even if Fuller Corporation goes bankrupt, we’ll still have help from John and the Moore family. Besides, I think I’m capable of raising three children. All I’m worried about is letting you down. You can’t enjoy the wealth and influence of being a president any longer. You’ll have to make do with our uneventful, quiet happiness. I suppose I’ll be your sugar mommy...”

I trailed off, noticing Ashton staring at me in bewilderment.

“Are you upset?” I asked timidly.

Any man who took pride in his masculinity usually recoiled at the idea of getting a sugar mommy.

Ashton wrinkled his brow for a moment, then abruptly chuckled. “Are you saying that you’ll raise me as well?”

I hadn’t expected him to respond so jovially. My tentative smile widened into a grin. “Sure, what’s your price?”

At my joke, Ashton burst into peals of genuine laughter. In that instant, the dark shadows that had hung over him seemed to have fled. He finally looked rejuvenated.

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I saw my chance. Gently stroking his injured hand, I declared, "You're mine now! I don't like people who are constantly putting themselves down. You have to stay positive, or I'll drop you off my list. There's a long line waiting after you."

A wicked gleam appeared in his eyes. He pinched my chin, compelling me to meet his eyes. "Then I'll have to be a good boy and work hard then, won't I?"

"You know it..." I nodded playfully.

Ashton dipped his head towards me, and before I realized what he was doing, he stole a kiss from me. "Is this what you're looking for?"

I felt my cheeks instantly burn crimson. Gritting my teeth, I countered cheekily, "It's a borderline pass. I'm sure you can do much better than that. I'll be looking forward to it."

Ashton's dark eyes seemed overwhelmed with emotion. He reached out and pulled me over, his arms encircling me in a tight hug. We were so close that I could hear the throb of his heartbeat and feel the rise and fall of his chest with every breath.

At that moment, the world and its worries seemed to fall away. All that remained was Ashton and me, wrapped in our mutual embrace. The two of us sat like this for what felt like an eternity. It was barely a few minutes later, however, when Ashton suddenly sprang up. He ran out of the room with me in tow, saying, "I've spent enough time feeling sorry for myself. It's time to deal with the obstacles getting in my way of being a sugar baby."

Seeing his renewed vigor, I merely smiled and allowed him to lead me down the stairs.

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When we reentered the living room together, Bill and Tiffany were still seated inside.

Tiffany straightened up when she caught sight of Ashton, saying brightly, "Ashton, have you changed your mind? I knew it! I knew you wouldn't be able to walk away from our family just like that."

Ashton said nothing, silently leading me over to the sofa. We sat down facing Tiffany, and he took his time to settle down, crossing his legs before replying evenly, "I can rejoin the Hall family but on one condition. My children will remain with the Stovall family."

A look of disquiet crossed Tiffany's face. "You can't do that. The babies have the blood of the Hall family running through their veins! You can't leave them in the hands of outsiders."

"You're wrong," Emma finally spoke. There was a tremor in her voice from the state of agitation she was evidently under. Impassionately, she continued, "The Stovall family has always treated any children as their own. Now that Ashton and Scarlett have reconciled, how can you call the Stovalls outsiders? If we're talking about bringing up children, what do you have to say about a certain family that brutally abandoned its child for ten years, not caring whether it lived or died? What right do you have to decide for Ashton and Scarlett's children?"

Emma turned to look at John after speaking. There seemed to be a fleeting acknowledgment of mutual agreement between the two. However, it was only a brief flash that quickly faded back into their original stiffness.

Ashton paid no heed to John and Emma's marital rows. Carelessly, he answered Tiffany, "You're too late. I'm already part of the Stovall family, and so are my children. Scarlett is the only one who has any say over where we go."

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Ashton paused to direct an intent look at me. "Isn't that right, Honey?"

Caught off guard, I scrambled to keep up with his theatrical performance. "That's right! Ashton's mine. Don't you use Facebook. Ms. Hall? The entire Fuller family belongs to the Stovall family now."

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