

Chapter 520 Sulking

"Allan, you finally found that wavy-haired beauty you've been chasing in your dreams. So, what now?" Manley said with a knowing grin.

Normally composed and soft-spoken, Allan surprised him by answering without hesitation, his voice laced with fierce resolve, "Of course, build a life with her—dating, marriage, children. I want to keep her close forever. I won't let her out of my sight again."

Days of restless searching, of aching for a face he couldn't find, had worn him thin. But now that she was real and right in front of him, he wasn't about to let fate steal her away again.

Manley raised an eyebrow, amused and wholly taken aback by Allan's sudden boldness. "Well, damn. You're not playing around this time, huh?"

"Not even a little," Allan said flatly. "This isn't a phase. I've made up my mind—she's the one. And if anyone tries to come between us, I'll put him in the ground."

"And Adah? Your fiancée?" Manley blinked.

Allan smirked, a flicker of amusement in his eyes. "I ended the engagement with that country bumpkin ages ago. We're done for good."

"You did what?" Manley blinked in disbelief. "When? How the hell did you pull that off? And what about your stubborn grandfather? Did he actually let it slide?"

Allan gave a short, dry laugh tinged with irony. "Let's just say it took some negotiations and a hefty payout of 3.1 billion to shut that chapter for good. But honestly? Money well spent to shake her off."

Manley gave a slow, knowing nod and then turned his attention to the oversized screen where Elliana's image played like a dream in motion. "Well, no surprise there. You've never exactly been strapped for cash."

After a beat, Manley elbowed Allan with a sly grin. "Dude, I like her." He

pointed at Elliana on the screen. "What do you say we each woo one of these two stunning beauties?"

Allan had no objections. As long as Manley wasn't aiming for the woman with the wavy hair, he was fine with it. Manley could chase whoever he liked.

Allan was just about to nod and reply when the atmosphere shifted. The air seemed to thicken with tension. The oppressive aura unmistakably came from Cole.

At that moment, Manley felt a frigid glare slicing across his face, sending a chill down his spine.

Allan and Manley turned to look at Cole simultaneously.

Cole sat still, but his presence was like a looming blizzard. His eyes, narrowed and razor-sharp, were fixed on Manley with the intensity of a predator locking onto prey. His presence practically froze the air around him.

Allan and Manley exchanged bewildered looks.

"C-Cole... What's with that look?" Manley asked, voice faltering, still bewildered.

Nearby, Hugh's lips twitched. Of course, Manley had gotten under Cole's skin. Whenever it came to Elliana, Cole was notoriously possessive. Even harmless compliments from her to Aron, Myles, and the driver had earned the three poor men "temporary" transfers to a remote outpost under the guise of "training." And Manley hadn't just complimented Elliana. He had casually announced he wanted to marry her.

Hugh leaned in slightly, eyes fixed on Cole, eager to see how this would unfold.

Cole's face was a mask of cold fury. His eyes gleamed like drawn blades, but his voice was disturbingly composed when he finally spoke. "You're out of the deal for the western land."

Manley froze. "W-What? Why?" He stared at Cole in disbelief. "You promised me a cut of the profits. What changed? What the hell did I do?" With ten billion already sunk into the project, being booted now meant

watching his fortune burn to ash.

Cole didn't answer. He gave Manley one last glacial stare and then looked away, leaving Manley in a state of anxious confusion, without any answers.

Being blindsided by Cole's sudden rejection, Manley lost any interest in watching the screen. His eyes darted to Cole instead, studying his expression. "Cole, what did I do?" he asked hesitantly, voice thin with nerves. "Just tell me straight. What upset you?"

Cole remained silent. His gaze dropped, his entire presence steeped in a heavy, unreadable silence. A shadow clung to him like a storm cloud.

The longer Cole ignored Manley, the more frantic Manley became. Manley's voice cracked with desperation. "Come on, dude! Don't shut me out like this. If I messed up, I'll fix it! Just don't leave me in the dark! I'll stress myself into a heart attack!"

Everyone knew that investing alongside a savvy businessman like Cole guaranteed huge returns. But crossing him? That was a one-way ticket to ruin.

Cole remained stone-faced, still silent, the tension thick enough to choke on.

Manley squirmed, feeling like he was sitting on broken glass. His eyes shot to Allan, wordlessly pleading for help.

Allan glanced at Cole, lips twitching with faint amusement as he laid out his analysis to Manley. "Cole was in a great mood when he walked in. So, Manley, you didn't offend him before then. But right after you mentioned wanting to pursue the girl in the white dress, everything changed."

Manley's mouth opened in slow realization. "Wait, Cole, you're into her too? So you think I'm your rival in love now?"

At that, Cole's expression shifted. A flicker of panic crossed his face before it twisted into anger laced with embarrassment. Honestly, it was his inexplicable possessiveness. He couldn't stand the thought that any other man got close to Lilah. But he couldn't admit it. Not out loud. Not when he was set to marry the real Campbell heiress. Competing with one of his closest friends over another woman? He wasn't in any position to

do so.

Cole was fully aware of how absurd he was acting. It made no sense, and yet, he couldn't stop himself. So what now? What was he supposed to do with feelings that refused to be silenced?



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Chapter 521 He Spun Stories

"You seriously think I am into that woman in white and view you as my rival in love?" Cole fixed Manley with a cold stare, firmly denying revealing his true feelings.

Trying to keep things light, Manley quickly forced a grin. "No way, Cole. You're in a league of your own. How could I ever be your competition?"

Despite his words, Manley was still puzzled. Was Cole getting worked up over that girl in the white dress?

There was no way Cole would admit to feeling pissed off by Manley's desire to pursue Lilah, so he made something up on the spot. "I took you off the West City project to get your attention. You've had it too easy making money by sticking close to me, and I don't want you to get too dense or be fooled."

"Please, Cole, enlighten me," Manley replied, sounding sincere.

Cole gave Manley a blank look and then pointed at Elliana's image on the screen. "That woman there—Lilah Briggs—she's the daughter of a wealthy businessman overseas and goes to Ublento Medical University. She's known for breaking hearts!"

Hugh barely managed to keep from reacting. If Cole ever got his memory back, would he regret the things he was saying now?

Allan and Manley, though, were hanging onto Cole's every word, eager to hear more.

Cole didn't actually have proof that Lilah was a heartbreaker. It was all just guesswork, but that didn't stop him from spinning stories for Allan and Manley.

"She barged into my car a couple of hours earlier, snuggled up to me, and started flirting with me under the pretense of hopping into the wrong car," Cole said. "She didn't just flirt with me—she was pretty bold with Myles, Aron, and even the driver. She's clearly a pro at this, and I'd bet she's up

on stage tonight just to reel in more guys!"

He turned on Manley with a look of pure disdain. "It's no surprise that someone as simple-minded as you fell for her tricks! Since you are this gullible, why should I let you make big money working with me?"

Manley looked stunned, but he found himself believing Cole's words. "Wait, Cole—did you really send Myles, Aron, and the driver abroad just because of all this?"

Cole nodded without a hint of remorse. "I couldn't just stand by and let them get caught up with a heartbreaker, so I sent them away before anything could happen."

Hugh nearly rolled his eyes, amazed that Cole could tell such bold lies with a completely straight face.

Manley glanced at the screen and mumbled, "She looks so sweet and harmless. It's hard to believe she's the type to break hearts."

Then, Manley turned back to Cole and promised, "Don't worry, Cole. I won't give that girl another look!" A bit of defensiveness was woven into his words. "I am not the type to fall for women's tricks. I have simply been trying to find the right one. Finding true love isn't easy, so you have to put yourself out there. That's not a crime, is it?"

Amid all the talk, Cole picked out the part that mattered most. Manley said he wouldn't look at Lilah again. Good.

Finally, Cole's stern look began to soften a little.

Allan, however, looked troubled. If Cole was right about Lilah being a heartbreaker, what did that mean for the curly-haired girl he liked? She and Lilah seemed to be close friends. Was he falling for a heartbreaker too? He just couldn't accept that idea.

Allan remarked, "Cole, do you really have proof that Lilah is a heartbreaker? Just because she got into your car by accident, you can't call her that. Isn't that a bit much?"

Hugh quietly shot Allan a thumbs-up, approving the challenge.

Cole looked a bit uncomfortable. "I just go with my gut when it comes to reading people," he said.

Allan's mouth twitched, already knowing that meant Cole had nothing solid to back up his claim.

Always more perceptive than Manley, Allan quickly figured out Cole's motives. He didn't call Cole out on it, but simply changed the subject. "What about the girl in the red dress? Do you know anything about her?"

Cole was more than happy to steer the conversation away from Lilah. "Her name's Ava Braxton. Lilah's father sent her here to keep Lilah company while she studies."

Allan nodded and left it at that.

At that moment, the music ended and both Elliana and Adah stepped off the stage.

The audience had been waiting for a chance to meet the two, and as soon as they stepped off the stage, people swarmed around them.

Allan rose from his seat without hesitation and headed toward the exit.

Manley called out, "Where are you off to, Allan?"

Without slowing down, Allan replied, "To pursue that fiery woman. If I wait around, someone else might snatch her away!"

Manley frowned in disbelief. "That girl is best friends with a heartbreaker, so she can't be any better. Are you still not giving up?"

Allan shot him a look full of scorn and kept walking.

Suddenly, Cole stood up and made for the door as well.

Manley asked, "Where are you going now, Cole?"

Cole replied over his shoulder, "I'm feeling bored, so I'm heading home."

That left Manley sitting by himself. He picked up his drink, took a slow sip, and decided there was no reason to stay any longer. So he left for home.

Meanwhile, Cole made his way to the lobby on the first floor. He wanted to keep an eye on Lilah and see if she would start flirting with another man. If she did, he planned to step in.