

Chapter 567 Competition

Cole's warning carried an unmistakable edge in both tone and gaze, the palpable pressure radiating from him enough to silence everyone present.

Taylor, bearing the full weight of that warning, felt an involuntary tremor course through him.

Yet, no one knew that Cole's stern caution sprouted from purely selfish roots. They all believed his gravity stemmed from genuine concern—for the Evans family's welfare, for Taylor's own safety.

Cole remained utterly indifferent to their assumptions. Having delivered his warning, he mirrored Jason's earlier gesture, his expression turning glacial as he hurled the phone back at Taylor before striding away.

The device struck Taylor squarely in the chest, forcing a sharp wince from his lips. He grimaced while retrieving the fallen phone from the floor, a sudden wave of injustice crashing over him. What heinous crime had he committed? Did Cole and Jason truly need to take turns delivering severe warnings with stern faces? All he'd done was take a liking to a beautiful girl! That was it!

Even if Lilah proved as dangerous as they claimed, couldn't they have just told him nicely? Why resort to these grim warnings and theatrical phone-hurling? Cole and Jason had shown no mercy, their aim devastatingly precise—both strikes landing exactly on the same tender spot.

Taylor tugged his shirt open for inspection. A large bruise was already spreading across his chest like spilled ink. Had all traces of family love between cousins vanished from this household?

Even as he inwardly mumbled, he had this feeling that Cole and Jason were being deliberately evasive—concealing their true intentions behind the convenient mask of concern.

Both men had claimed Lilah posed a threat, yet Taylor couldn't fathom it. Lilah radiated purity and beauty, appearing as though she wouldn't

harm the most delicate butterfly. How could such a creature be dangerous?

Besides, Cole and Jason were simply men, possessed of desires and preference like anyone else. Perhaps they too had been captivated by Lilah's charm. Their stern warnings might simply be calculated moves to eliminate competition—and with his striking looks and widespread appeal, the object of countless girls' dreams, he certainly represented formidable competition.

If that was their strategy, then Cole and Jason had revealed themselves as truly contemptible.

Beautiful women naturally drew admiration, and three cousins sharing an interest in the same woman wasn't particularly scandalous. As long as their bond remained intact, they could compete honorably. The victor would claim his prize while the defeated retreated gracefully. Nothing complicated about that.

But this trick? Using their family status and influence to intimidate him? What kind of despicable behavior was that? He refused to tolerate it. Everyone possessed the fundamental right to pursue love, and he deserved the same opportunity as Cole and Jason. Wielding their authority to silence him amounted to nothing but petty, cowardly conduct!

For the first time in his existence, Taylor's deep reverence for Cole and Jason had begun to crack. He found himself questioning their motives, a silent promise crystallizing in his mind. If he discovered they were deterring him for purely selfish reasons, he wouldn't merely ignore their warnings—he'd enter the competition. In fact, he'd make the opening move and capture Lilah's heart before they could even attempt their own pursuit. After all, if he won her heart behind their backs and made Lilah their sister-in-law, what could they possibly do then?

Within moments, a torrent of chaotic thoughts flooded Taylor's consciousness. Naturally, he kept these rebellious musings locked away, not daring to voice them aloud.

Stewing in his mixture of suspicion and wounded pride, his mood darkened further as the others began their chorus of lectures.

"Taylor, pull yourself together! Don't chase after some girl simply

because she possesses a pretty face."

"Precisely. If Cole and Jason hadn't intervened, you might have gotten yourself killed over this Lilah girl."

"I don't wish to sound critical, Taylor, but you can be remarkably shallow. You're entirely focused on appearances with no regard for substance. You should follow Cole and Jason's example—perhaps open a book occasionally!"

With each word, Taylor's irritation climbed to new heights. He wouldn't dare unleash his fury on Cole or Jason, but he harbored no such restraint toward those relatives of his age.

"Get lost!" Taylor bellowed. "What the hell do any of you understand? Shut your mouths, all of you! If you keep running those flapping tongues, I'll slice them out one by one and serve them to the tigers at the zoo—Ow!"

Before Taylor could complete his vicious threat, he cried out, clutching the side of his head.

Louisa had delivered a resounding slap.

When the ringing in his ears finally subsided, he gazed up at his mother.

Louisa's beautiful eyes blazed with fury, practically protruding from their sockets. "You brat!" she snapped, her voice razor-sharp. "Not one single day passes without you behaving like a complete fool. I have no idea where you acquired such shameless behavior! They're absolutely right—you should heed their words! Cole and Jason issued that stern warning for excellent reasons, and you'd better engrave it into your memory!"


Taylor, still defiant, parted his lips to offer a retort, but before he could speak, Emmanuel strode forward and delivered his own slap. "Obey your mother!"

Crack! The sound rang much sharper than Louisa's initial blow.

Louisa, despite her anger, might have restrained herself as a loving mother, but Emmanuel showed no such mercy. Though he presented a gentle, kindly facade to the outside world, with his own son, he remained an unyielding disciplinarian.

Taylor's head spun like a carnival ride.

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Just then, Ruben's voice thundered from the top of the staircase. "Why did you strike Taylor?"

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