

Chapter 619 Played Him

The elders of the Evans family refrained from commenting on anything involving Lilah, but the younger members had no such restraint. One after another, they jumped in.

"Taylor, what happened to you? You act like you've gone from head over heels for Lilah to flat-out despising her."

"When a guy swings that hard from love to hate, it's usually one of two things. Either he put his heart on the line and got rejected, or she slammed the door on him before he even got the chance. Which one is it, Taylor?"

"Come on, the way Taylor flipped overnight, I'm betting on the second! Ha-ha!"

"Ooooh, the famous movie star couldn't even get through the front gate of a so-called heartbreaker. Now he's throwing a tantrum, and his love has curdled into hate, so he's badmouthing her. Imagine if this little story leaked online--Taylor's career would be toast! Ha-ha!"

Their teasing piled up, nothing but blind guesses tossed around for fun. But their words cut deep as the casual digs landed far too close to reality. Only Jason, Lance, and Jeff knew the truth.

Taylor's temper was already stretched thin, and every word they hurled only made it worse. He tossed the bread he hadn't finished, swung toward the couch, and braced himself to bite back.

But before he could, Jeff's smirk came through in the group chat. "Bet when Taylor finally confessed, Lilah didn't just slam the door in his face. She probably told him not to show up at it ever again!"

That froze Taylor's fingers above the screen. Because Jeff was right. And what excuse could he possibly come up with now? In his earlier fury, he had shot his mouth off about Lilah, forgetting that Jason, Lance, and Jeff, the only three who had actually witnessed his humiliation, were also in the group chat.

Taylor knew Jason wasn't the type to put him on blast. At most, Jason would pull him aside later and scold him in private. Lance was blood. A brother wouldn't drag him through the mud, not publicly.

But Jeff was reckless. That kid had a knack for chaos, and everyone in the Evans family knew it. He was even more of a headache than Taylor himself, and Taylor wasn't dumb enough to push his luck with Jeff.

With that in mind, Taylor sighed and then began erasing his angry reply. Letter by letter, he wiped it away. Backing down stung, but it was the only choice he had.

Taylor decided it was pointless to keep dragging Lilah's name through the mud. Instead of stewing on it, he figured he might as well head upstairs and crash.

Pushing off the couch, Taylor sprang to his feet and stomped toward the staircase, jaw locked tight. Two steps in, though, he came to an abrupt halt. Someone was on their way down.

It was Cole. Usually, he carried himself with impeccable composure, but right now, he looked nearly as wrecked as Taylor did.

Taylor's own eyes were rimmed red, his skin pale from a sleepless night spent sparring with Ublento Medical University students online. Yet, Cole's face was far worse—his expression stormy, his eyes bloodshot to the point of looking raw.

Taylor wondered whether Cole had stayed up the whole night working. But that guess didn't sit right. If it were just another brutal round of overtime, he would still be collected, his usual picture of control. Instead, his face carried the kind of fury that looked seconds away from boiling over. Could it be that Cole had also been locked in a fight all night? And who in their right mind would push him that far?

While Taylor's thoughts spun, Cole's steps brought him to the bottom of the staircase, right in Taylor's path.

"Cole," Taylor managed, his throat dry and his voice edged with unease. Every instinct warned him that a punch was coming, even though he had no clue what he had done wrong. Had he somehow crossed a line without realizing it?

Before the answer could form, Cole's hand came down on Taylor's shoulder. It was nothing more than a light pat, but the pressure carried the weight of a warning that couldn't be mistaken.

Taylor's mind raced. What exactly was he being warned about? A man who could steal the show from anyone else was now standing in front of Cole, looking more like a scared little bird than any superstar.

Taylor slouched and cast a nervous glance upward before saying, "Was there something you wanted?"

Cole smiled, his lips pulling back slowly. His voice sounded almost friendly, but Taylor could feel the tension. "You just said you'd give Lilah a piece of your mind if you saw her, right?"

Taylor looked completely lost. He couldn't for the life of him figure out why Cole was acting this way.

Cole didn't bother explaining himself. Instead, his grin spread wider and his tone dropped into something deceptively gentle. "Fantastic. I'll bring Lilah over today so you can give her that earful. Just stay right here and wait for her. I'll be watching then."

Cole gave Taylor's shoulder another calculated tap.

Without giving Taylor a chance to say anything else, Cole turned on his heel and walked away.

Taylor stood frozen to the spot for what felt like an eternity. His skin crawled.

Throughout the brief exchange, Cole had kept that unsettling smile, but Taylor was sure there was something sharp hiding behind it. When had he gotten on Cole's bad side? And why was Lilah suddenly coming to meet the family?

Taylor, the superstar, usually so confident, now felt like a complete and utter fool.

Cole couldn't have cared less how badly he'd spooked Taylor. All he knew was that Lilah was driving him insane. That cold heartbreaker! She'd reeled him in, dropped the bomb about her ex, and left him stewing all night. Now she was out there charming someone else, like he didn't

even matter. Was she planning to dump him?

He was pissed off. She'd hooked him, let him kiss her, and now acted like she could just do whatever she wanted. Unbelievable. She was the absolute worst. How dare she toy with him? All right then. He would just catch her in the act and see how far she'd push him.