

Chapter 635 Set Boundaries

The whispers and gasps spreading through the crowd made Elliana want to disappear into thin air. The embarrassment was so overwhelming that she felt like she might actually combust on the spot. Seriously, wasn't Cole's dramatic little show just now incredibly immature?

Elliana couldn't bear standing there for another second, being stared at like she was some kind of exotic creature on display at the zoo. She needed to escape this situation immediately. Taking matters into her own hands, she gave Cole a gentle but firm poke in the chest. She tilted her face up to look into his eyes and whispered urgently, "All right, that's quite enough. Let's get out of here."

Her voice was barely audible, intended only for his ears. But to all the curious spectators watching from a distance, who had no clue what she'd said, it simply looked like Cole was glancing down at her with a slightly irritated expression.

Elliana had to fight the urge to roll her eyes. Did Cole seriously have the audacity to look annoyed when she was trying to rescue them both from this awkward situation? Was he really going to give her the silent treatment right here in front of everyone?

His endless childishness made her want to give him a good, solid kick in the shin—just enough to jolt him back to reality and make him act like a grown man. But she managed to control herself. After all, this was the man she'd chosen to be with, for better or worse. If she was going to make this relationship work, she'd have to learn to handle his moods and ego, even when it meant swallowing her frustration in public settings.

At home, she could deal with him however she pleased. She could make him kneel on a bag of uncooked instant ramen without crushing a single noodle or balance on a TV remote without accidentally changing the channel. But out here in public, she had to let him maintain his dignity and reputation.

With that thought in mind, Elliana kept her face tilted up toward Cole's, letting her expression soften into the sweetest, most charming smile she

could manage. "How about we find somewhere romantic and private for our date?" she said in a voice like honey.

This time, she spoke loud enough for everyone nearby to hear—her tone gentle, affectionate, and filled with just the right amount of playful flirtation.

A wave of approval seemed to sweep through the watching crowd. No man alive, their expressions seemed to say, could resist such a gorgeous woman being so openly lovely. Cole had better recognize what a lucky guy he was. If he didn't appreciate her properly, he'd definitely end up losing her to someone who would.

Cole remained completely unaware of what the crowd was thinking. His entire focus was locked on Lilah, studying her face with fascination. Her patience today was genuinely surprising. It was almost impossible to believe this was the same fierce, stubborn woman who'd been arguing with him so passionately just yesterday. Part of him felt tempted to test her limits, to see just how far he could push before that sweet facade cracked and her real personality came blazing through.

But in the end, he decided not to risk it. He wasn't entirely sure where that breaking point might be, and what if he pushed too hard and ended up pushing away the girlfriend he'd just worked so hard to win over?

Instead, Cole simply draped his arm around her shoulders in a casual but possessive gesture and began guiding her toward the school's main entrance. He stayed quiet, projecting an air of confident coolness as they walked together through the parting crowd.

Elliana slipped perfectly into her role as the devoted girlfriend. She tucked herself against his side, walking in perfect rhythm with his steps. To anyone watching, they looked like the ideal couple.

Cole couldn't quite identify what he was feeling, but underneath his composed exterior, he was practically radiating satisfaction. The way Lilah had shown him respect in front of all those people fed his ego in the most incredible way. He felt victorious, cherished, and completely spoiled all at once.

They strolled together along the tree-lined campus walkway, aware of the countless eyes following their every move. The attention continued until they finally passed through the school gates and slipped into Cole's

sleek car waiting at the curb.

Cole had come alone today—no assistant hovering nearby, no bodyguards flanking him. For someone of his wealth and status, traveling without a full security detail was almost unthinkable.

But Elliana wasn't the least bit surprised by this. Cole was the legendary Blaze Wraith, after all. His combat skills were so exceptional that he had complete confidence in his ability to handle any situation solo. Any unfortunate criminal who tried to rob him would be the one ending up bruised and beaten on the pavement. His usual parade of assistants and security guards was nothing more than an impressive show for the public.

Without his entourage around, their date could actually feel like a real, intimate date.

Once she had settled comfortably into the passenger seat, Elliana clicked her seatbelt securely and turned to face Cole with an expression of perfect, sweet compliance.

Cole was already buckled in behind the wheel, but when he glanced over at her, those dark sunglasses remained firmly planted on his face. They weren't just a fashion statement. He was desperately trying to hide the telltale signs of a completely sleepless night—the dark shadows under his eyes and the bloodshot look that would immediately give away how much he'd been brooding over her.

Elliana watched him carefully for a moment, her head tilted with curiosity. "Why are you still wearing those sunglasses?" she asked innocently.

The last thing Cole was going to do was confess the embarrassing truth and hand her perfect ammunition to tease him with. He let out a dismissive sound. "What, are you that eager to stare at my devastatingly handsome face? Well, tough luck. I'm in a rotten mood right now."

Elliana felt that familiar surge of irritation rising in her chest. He had just kissed her passionately in front of the entire student body, essentially announcing their relationship to the world, and now he was treating her coldly the moment they were alone? She would absolutely not allow this to continue.

She had played the part of the sweet, accommodating girlfriend long

enough for the public show. Now that they were in private, it was time to set some clear boundaries. She wouldn't let him think this was how their relationship was going to operate moving forward.

Without giving him any warning, she reached across the space between them and smoothly plucked the sunglasses right off his face.

Cole was completely caught off guard. He sat there frozen as she removed his only defense, a burning wave of mortification washing over him. He absolutely could not let her see him looking so wrecked. But it was far too late for that now.

Her hands had moved like lightning, and suddenly his exhausted, haggard appearance was completely exposed. Before he could even begin to form a response, she was already speaking.

"Oh my goodness," she said, her voice dripping with mock concern and barely contained amusement. "Why do you have such terrible dark circles under your eyes? And look how bloodshot they are. Did you have trouble sleeping last night?"

Her questions landed like a one-two punch of annoyance and shame. "Are you seriously trying to suggest I stayed awake all night obsessing over you?" he shot back defensively. "Don't flatter yourself—I'm not that pathetic!"

A slow, triumphant smile spread across her face as she savored her small victory. What a delightfully short fuse he had. "I wasn't thinking that at all," she replied with sugary sweetness. "I just assumed you must have been working late on some important business deal. But you just completely gave yourself away—you practically confessed that you spent the whole night tossing and turning because you couldn't stop thinking about me."

Cole's expression turned absolutely stormy, his face darkening with frustration and embarrassment.

