

Chapter 762 Buried

Heather's eyes lit up like wildfire at Hugh's words. Her gaze turned soft, almost predatory, lingering on his face as though she were committing every line and angle to memory. The affection in her eyes deepened into something bolder—something that made it look like she might just throw him to the ground right then and there to "start working" on that daughter they'd just discussed.

Being rendered flustered by the intensity of Heather's gaze despite all the eyes on them, a violent flush crept up Hugh's neck, his face turning the shade of ripe cherries as his heart pounded against his ribs. For one absurd moment, he actually wondered what he'd do if she did pounce. Should he resist—or surrender and let fate take its course?

Around the group stretched a bleak, frozen wasteland. The air bit at exposed skin, the remnants of blood and battle still clinging to the silence they'd just escaped. Yet somehow, amid the snow and death, Heather and Hugh managed to exude a kind of nauseating, sunshine-drenched romance.

Every single person around them rolled their eyes.

Myles and Aron exchanged a bitter glance—the universal expression of brothers witnessing something they'd rather not see. They wanted to scold Hugh for his brazen interaction with Heather, but experience had taught them better. Any attempt at reason would only earn them a smug, "You're just jealous because you're single."

Meanwhile, Clifton, Kieran, and Damian looked moments away from combusting. Watching Heather behave like that made them want to sink through the ice. The proud Thorn Rose warrior, reduced to this? Unthinkable.

Damian, never one to filter his thoughts, finally blurted out, "Shouldn't we get going?"

Before Elliana could even respond, Adah's sharp glare sliced through the air. "Are you brain-dead?" she snapped. "We're staying right here. Once



those two lunatics in there tear each other apart, we move in and take advantage of the situation. Why would we leave now?"

Damian felt the color drain from his face due to embarrassment. He looked to Elliana for support—but one glance at her expression told him she agreed completely with Adah. He knew that was the right call. But Heather's ridiculous flirting with Hugh had thrown him so far off-balance that he'd blurted out the dumbest thing imaginable. It was entirely her fault.

Scowling, Damian turned toward Heather, ready to unload his irritation—but Heather beat him to it. "Ugh, Miguel and Maxine are going to be at this for hours!" she chirped brightly. "I'm going to enjoy the snow while we wait!"

And before anyone could stop her, she skipped off into the white expanse.

Hugh stood frozen for a beat, eyes following Heather's retreating figure as she disappeared into the snow. Then, without looking at anyone, he turned stiffly to Cole. "Mr. Evans, I—I think I'll, uh... go enjoy the snow too."

Before Cole could so much as blink, Hugh bolted after Heather.

The silence that followed was thick with collective disbelief. Then came the synchronized groans. Everyone knew exactly what "enjoying the snow" meant. It was a laughably transparent excuse—those two were absolutely sneaking off to "work on that daughter" they'd just been talking about. In this freezing weather, no less! Utterly shameless. Did they have no fear of frostbite? 

Elliana couldn't help a quiet laugh. Tilting her head toward the sky, she made a mental note: she'd have to help plan Heather's wedding soon—at the rate things were going, a shotgun ceremony seemed inevitable.

Cole, on the other hand, looked like he was grinding his molars into dust. Hugh had been a competent fighter once, but ever since Heather had sauntered into his life, he'd been reduced to a lovesick fool. 

Myles and Aron lowered their heads and began muttering a silent mantra to themselves, "We are not jealous. We are not envious. We are not jealous."

This wasn't the first time Hugh and Heather had abandoned logic—and decency—to bask in their own little romantic bubble. After a few



moments of collective grumbling, the group finally pushed the couple from their thoughts. There were far more pressing matters at hand.

Just as Heather had predicted, the battle underground had dragged on endlessly. Miguel and Maxine were locked in a savage deadlock—neither strong enough to overpower the other.

Hours slipped by. The sun vanished behind the peaks, and the world descended into a deep, icy twilight. The cold thickened, the wind howled, and still—no sound emerged from the base.

Cradling her daughter, Elliana's patience began to fray. Adah, equally restless, finally stood up and said, "That's it. I'm going in to see what's taking so long."

Adah had barely taken three steps when Elliana's instincts screamed. Her head snapped up, eyes widening in alarm. "Everyone, get back—now!"

The urgency in her voice sent the entire group diving backward, retreating across the snow.

Adah spun on her heel and sprinted with them.

They had barely put a hundred feet between themselves and the underground entrance when a deep, guttural roar thundered from within the base. The ground quaked violently beneath their boots.

Then came the explosion. A tidal wave of fire and choking black smoke burst from the opening, devouring the air in a hellish inferno. Heat slammed into them, blistering and wild, turning the snowfield into a landscape of molten red.

When the smoke finally thinned, the mountainside had been split open—its entrance swallowed beneath tons of rock and debris.

The detonation's fury echoed outward, shaking the very slopes around them. And then, with a deafening crack, the avalanche began.

"Go back! Go back!" Elliana's voice rang out, sharp and commanding against the thunder of collapsing snow.

They obeyed instantly, scrambling farther away as the avalanche roared down like an angry beast. A thunderous crash echoed through the valley, and in seconds, the mountainside was gone.

When the rumbling finally died, silence fell—thick and eerie. Where the underground base had once been, there was now only an untouched, endless expanse of snow. Not even a hint of rubble remained.

Adah broke the silence first, her voice low but edged with grim satisfaction. "Guess that's that. Miguel must've lost his cool and blown the place sky-high." She exhaled through her teeth. "Serves him right. He and Maxine—may they keep clawing at each other in hell."

Elliana said nothing. Her gaze was distant, unreadable. She still hadn't pried the truth about her mother from Maxine.

Cole stepped closer, brushing the frost from his jacket. "It's over," he said quietly. "We should head home."

Before Elliana could respond, movement flickered at the edge of the storm.

A lone figure stumbled through the snow, coming from the opposite ridge—ragged, bloodied, but unmistakably human.

Adah's jaw dropped. "You've got to be kidding me. That's—" she said, disbelief twisting her face. "That's Maxine! How the hell is she walking in from that side? She was supposed to be buried! What, did she crawl out through solid rock?"