

## Chapter 832 Barricaded Himself In The Study

Cole, a man of eloquence who could usually compose a masterpiece with a single flourish of his pen, found himself completely stumped by a new challenge—crafting cheesy romantic lines.

All afternoon, he'd barricaded himself in the study—writing, crumpling the paper, and restarting in a maddening loop. He had wracked his brain to the point of exhaustion, yet he hadn't produced a single satisfying sentence.

By the end of the day, crumpled papers littered the carpet, nearly swallowing the floor.

A golden sunset painted the windows, but Cole barely noticed. He sat at his desk, staring down a fresh sheet of paper as if it were his greatest adversary. He pinched the bridge of his nose, trying to push away the headache that had been brewing for hours.

He finally had to admit it. Sappy declarations of love were his ultimate weakness. He couldn't find the magic spot between sweet, ridiculous, and genuinely moving—no matter how hard he tried.

A soft creak broke the silence. The study door inched open.

Elliana's curious face appeared in the doorway. Her eyes widened as she took in the disaster zone around Cole. The room looked like a cyclone had passed through.

Caught in the act, Cole tensed up, feeling completely exposed. He could not, under any circumstances, let Elliana figure out he was trying to write cheesy love lines for her. The mere thought made his heart race with embarrassment.

Oblivious to his thoughts, Elliana crossed the room and picked up a crumpled piece of paper. "Did a tornado hit in here, or are you just losing your mind?" she teased.

Cole's voice came out sharp, a little too loud. "Put that down! Don't touch it!"

Elliana stopped mid-motion and glanced at him, eyebrows raised. Cole looked so frantic that she half expected him to snatch it from her hands.

Elliana frowned. What kind of massive secret was hidden in these crumpled scraps that he was so desperate to hide from her?

Cole blurted out the first thing that came to mind, "Those are company files. Sensitive information. You can't read them."

Elliana sneered and tossed the paper onto the desk, "Relax. It's not like I care about your boring paperwork."

With an exasperated shake of her head, she turned around and left the room. Cole's suspicious glare had reached absurd levels. Did he really think she would pilfer his papers and run off to auction his secrets to the highest bidder? If he couldn't even trust her a little, he could forget about remarrying her. Hmph!

Of course, Cole realized she'd gotten the wrong idea. Words nearly escaped him as he watched her go, but he clamped his mouth shut and let her leave, reasoning that a little confusion now was a small price to pay. The last thing he needed was Elliana catching sight of the lovesick nonsense he'd been struggling to write. He would never live down that embarrassment.

Just as he let out a sigh of relief, Elliana reappeared in the doorway.

His whole body went rigid. He narrowed his eyes at her. "Did you need something?"

"I came to tell you dinner's ready," Elliana replied, her voice cold.

"Go on without me," Cole said, waving her off. "I'm tied up with work right now."

Without another word, Elliana left the room, her face unreadable as she pulled the door close behind her.

Cole finally breathed out, grateful to be alone again. He had no clue Elliana was just outside, leaning against the doorframe with a faint,

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knowing smile. She had caught a glimpse of those papers, and even though the writing was half hidden in the creases, she recognized his handwriting and the telltale fragments of awkward romantic lines. No one could mistake those for company memos. Was Cole writing her a love letter?

She smiled. Apparently, he was pouring his heart and soul into the second draft. That alone made her grin. She couldn't help but wonder what sappy lines had made him so frantic to hide from her. Chuckling to herself, she padded downstairs.

When Elliana nearly finished eating, Cole finally dragged himself to the table, looking like he'd been through a storm and lost.

Cole settled beside Elliana, picking at his meal and barely glancing at anyone else. His mind was still trapped in the study, wrestling with cheesy romantic phrases, leaving him with zero patience for conversation.

Elliana knew exactly what was troubling him, but she kept quiet.

Across the table, the rest of the family shot each other confused looks, wondering if Cole had run into serious trouble at the company.

Ruben leaned forward, genuine concern in his voice. "Cole, has work been tough lately?"

Cole barely looked up. "It's nothing, really."

Ruben refused to drop the subject. "Even if business is picking up, you can't neglect your health."

Only then did Cole realize how much his mood was affecting his grandfather. He straightened his shoulders and forced a cheerful grin. "I'll take care of myself, grandpa. You don't have to worry."

But his mind wasn't on business at all. The real source of his stress sat right beside him—Elliana. That thought made him throw a subtle glare her way, frustration flickering in his eyes.

Elliana finished her meal and offered him a sweet smile before heading upstairs to spend time with the children.

Cole didn't come to see Elliana before bed. When she quietly asked Paulina where he was, she learned he hadn't left the study all night.

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A faint laugh escaped Elliana as she wondered if he was actually pulling an all-nighter just to write a love letter. She decided to leave him be, curious what sort of romantic "masterpiece" he would reveal next. That night, she slipped into bed alone.

Morning sunlight crept across the sheets, and Elliana woke naturally. As her eyes fluttered open, she realized Cole was sitting at the edge of the bed, looking like he hadn't slept in days. Purple shadows ringed his eyes.

The sight left her speechless. Had he truly spent the whole night writing? Her curiosity deepened. What on earth had he written that required this kind of dedication?

Wanting to show him she appreciated the effort, she sat up and gave him her undivided attention.

But Cole immediately turned away, suddenly shy, fussing with his hands and refusing to meet her gaze.

## Chapter 833 Failed Again

Elliana spotted the telltale signs immediately—Cole's hands concealed behind his back, his eyes refusing to meet hers as they skittered nervously across the room. She understood at once what this meant. He'd burned through the night crafting the second application and stood before her now, ready to place it in her hands for judgment. Anticipation sparked through her veins.

"Got something for me?" Elliana asked, her lips curving into a teasing smile.

Cole cleared his throat with deliberate softness, drawing his hands forward to present the second application.

His pulse hammered wildly in his chest. This draft overflowed with saccharine declarations of love—every single one his own painstaking invention, utterly unique creations that existed nowhere else on earth.

For him, writing those lines had proven more agonizing than accumulating a hundred billion dollars. He'd drained every reservoir of energy during that sleepless night, and exhaustion now dragged at him like an anchor, threatening to pull him under completely.

Still, even after all that effort, he doubted this version would meet Elliana's standards. His confidence lay shattered at his feet. He wasn't merely afraid of disappointing her again. He was paralyzed by the thought that she might laugh at him.

Elliana absorbed Cole's obvious distress, allowed herself a small smile, and extended her hand to receive the application.

The opening line stopped her cold. She'd braced herself for another eloquent, sophisticated piece. Instead, a tidal wave of pure corniness crashed over her from the very first sentence.

It read, "Elliana, did you know? The moment I first saw you, I suspected your shoes were enchanted. Otherwise, how could every step you take land perfectly on the beat of my heart?"

She'd never suspected Cole harbored this capacity for such cheesy lines.

After the initial shock subsided, Elliana struggled to contain her amusement, sinking her teeth into her lower lip to protect Cole's fragile pride.

Once she'd wrestled down the laughter threatening to escape, she pressed onward—but the deeper she ventured into the text, the more impossible it became to suppress her rising giggles.

She'd never imagined that alongside the emotional gravity of the first draft, this version would be absolutely saturated with cheesy lines woven throughout.

"Elliana, are you a remote control? Otherwise, how are you flipping all my emotional channels with one press?"

"A mysterious man told me something important is missing from my life—so I've come to ask you to fill the empty space."

"I've never even seen you cook, but I'm convinced you'd be amazing at it. Otherwise, how did you fry my heartbeat to a perfect medium-rare with one glance?"

"I think my eyesight's been getting worse. Why else would the entire world auto-focus on you every time I look your way?"

"I have a suspicion you're a shopping cart. Because the second I see you, my heart fills up with everything I want to buy for you."

One line after another jumped off the page, each one sending a little electric jolt through Elliana's heart. It was the first time in her life she'd been bombarded with cheesy love lines, and Cole wasn't just giving her a taste—he was giving her a seven-course banquet of them.

This second application stretched past twenty thousand words—almost ten thousand more than the first—and most of that extra bulk was pure, concentrated cheesiness. It was like he was spoon-feeding her cominess nonstop.

Elliana read on, paragraph after paragraph, the urge to laugh growing stronger with every sentence. By the end, her face was warm from the effort of holding it in, and her chest felt tight like laughter was trying to

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burst out.

She had wanted to stay composed for Cole's sake, but the moment she hit the final paragraph, her restraint shattered. There was no holding back—she erupted into full, uncontrollable laughter.

This was what Cole had written in the final section. "Elliana, let me make one final statement. Recently, while studying geometry, I realized your face forms the perfect angle to break down all my defenses! And according to new research, the gravitational waves from your smile have permanently altered my trajectory—you are now fully responsible!"

"Ha-ha!" Elliana's laughter erupted so loudly that it could have shaken loose every speck of dust clinging to the ceiling above.

She never in a million years could have foreseen Cole transforming the second application into such an extravagantly cheesy, comball masterpiece—especially that closing paragraph. Weaving together math and physics references? It detonated a thousand miniature fireworks across her heart in a single, breathtaking instant. Cole could have effortlessly seized the throne as the reigning King of Cheesy Love Lines.

She finally understood with crystal clarity why Cole had appeared so bone-deep exhausted the previous day and why he'd obliterated so many sheets of paper on the floor in seething frustration. For a man of his nature, constructing these sugar-drenched declarations must have been nothing short of excruciating agony.

Even though she genuinely treasured the herculean effort he'd poured into this and knew she should demonstrate some semblance of respect, she simply couldn't barricade her laughter behind any wall of composure.

Elliana's boisterous, utterly unrestrained joy plunged Cole directly into the abyss of mortification. Throughout Elliana's reading, he'd been studying her face with hawk-like intensity, cataloging every fleeting expression that danced across her features.

When astonishment had bloomed across her face at that opening line, his heart had stumbled violently in his chest. The awkwardness stabbed through him so acutely that he yearned for the floor to split apart and mercifully devour him whole. Thankfully, she hadn't erupted into immediate laughter or unleashed mockery—she'd merely continued reading with unwavering concentration.

But as he observed her losing ground in the battle to preserve a neutral expression, he had felt as though he were balanced precariously on a bed of razor-sharp needles. He could virtually hear the laughter accumulating and fermenting in her mind as she processed every single one of his laboriously crafted, hopelessly cheesy lines.

The precise moment she conquered the final paragraph and erupted into volcanic laughter, he recognized with sinking certainty in the hollow cavity of his stomach that this attempt had spectacularly imploded, mirroring the catastrophic failure of its predecessor.

Myles had sworn with absolute conviction that girls receiving cheesy love letters experienced hearts racing at breakneck speed and found themselves catapulted straight over the moon with intoxicating euphoria—but Elliana showed zero evidence of being "swept off her feet" whatsoever.

Elliana was laughing, undeniably, and it flowed from a wellspring of genuine amusement—but this bore no resemblance to the flustered, lovestruck, head-over-heels reaction Myles had guaranteed with such unwavering certainty would manifest.