

Chapter 835 Envyng Hugh

Hugh's jab hit Myles where it hurt most. He halted in his tracks, his anger flaring as he swung at Hugh without warning. "You just keep asking for it, don't you?"

Caught off guard, Hugh was too slow to dodge. The slap cut through the air and sent the donut he'd been biting flying from his mouth.

The projectile pastry landed straight on Aron's face, smearing glaze across his cheek.

Hugh let out a cry and dove behind Paulina, desperate to put her between himself and the chaos. Meanwhile, Aron wiped sugary glaze from his cheek, bewildered by the sudden turn of events. He struggled to understand how he'd ended up caught in the middle when Myles had clearly meant for Hugh to pay the price.

While Hugh managed to slip away unscathed, Aron was left with a sore cheek and a sticky mess as proof that luck was not on his side today.

No one even glanced in Aron's direction, leaving his quiet misery to hang in the air without sympathy.

Myles burned with fury. Since his first attempt had missed completely, he charged again with his sleeves shoved up and every bit of his calm gone.

Hugh shook so hard that he clutched Paulina's shoulders. "Paulina, do something. He's going to beat me up!"

Paulina breathed out slowly and aimed a cold stare at Myles. "Stop it right now."

Myles froze on command, his hand suspended only inches from Hugh.

Hugh jerked backward, eager to put as much space as possible between himself and that raised hand.

Myles forced out a harsh breath and dropped his arm. Since he could not

land the blow, he yanked at his tie with two rough tugs to bleed off the anger.

Paulina understood the source of Myles' temper. She gave him a level look and said, "What is done is done. Sitting here worrying will not fix a thing. Eat your food. You will need the strength when it is time to apologize."

Spurred on by her words, Hugh let out a smug little laugh. "So Myles really messed up this time. Is Cole going to kick him out?"

"Just eat your food!" Paulina shot Hugh a sharp glare. "Why are you grinning like you just won the lottery? What's so thrilling about Myles getting in hot water?"

"Well, would you look at that," Hugh said, snorting as he leaned back and polished off the last bite of his donut, a mischievous grin stretching across his face. "How long do you think it'll take Cole to let Myles off the hook finally? Heather and I are tying the knot soon—do you think Cole will even let Myles attend our wedding? I swear, our kid will be calling us 'Mom' and 'Dad' before Myles gets out of the doghouse!"

To Myles's dismay, Paulina piled on without a hint of mercy. "No sweat. We'll just have the baby call Myles on video. That should be enough, right?"

Hugh nearly doubled over with laughter at her remark.

Aron lifted his hands in surrender, casting a look of sympathy at Myles, who could only muster a subtle, annoyed twist of his lips.

Hugh's infectious energy filled the room, cutting right through the heavy cloud that clung to Myles.

As Myles watched Hugh devour another donut, looking every bit the picture of pure bliss, he felt a sting of envy twist in his chest.

Hugh had always been a little odd—not the smartest guy around, and completely lost when it came to perceptiveness. Compared to Myles and Aron, he seemed almost hopeless.

And yet, fate had gone out of its way to shower Hugh with every ounce of good fortune. No matter how many times Hugh messed up, Paulina always leapt to his defense, leaving Myles and Aron to deal with the fallout.

There was a time when Myles and Aron all figured Hugh would end up a lifelong bachelor, thanks to his lack of tact or charm. In the end, he was the first to get engaged—and not to just anyone, but to Heather, who had it all: looks, smarts, and more talent than anyone else in the room.

Meanwhile, neither Myles nor Aron could catch a break with women. There was no telling when—or if—that would ever change. Was this what people meant when they claimed that luck always drifted in unexpected ways?

Brooding didn't belong to Myles alone. Aron simmered right beside him. Watching Paulina flutter from one wedding detail to another was eating him alive. He'd never said a word about envying Hugh, yet the truth gnawed at him now.

In Aron's mind, he had the looks, the brains, and the competence. So why was Hugh walking around like fortune's favorite child?

Lately, every compliment Paulina tossed Hugh's way turned into another jab at Myles and Aron for being hopeless in winning women's attention. The thought chilled Aron. If Myles ended up being transferred elsewhere for punishment, he'd be the only one left for Paulina to scold. There would be no one to share the misery with.

And Hugh's smug glow didn't help. Ever since he started dating Heather, he'd been eating like he was training for a competitive buffet. His face was getting rounder by the day.

Aron couldn't imagine how Hugh was supposed to protect Cole when he could barely keep his shirt from bursting at the seams.

Just as both Myles and Aron were tearing Hugh to pieces in their minds, Cole stormed into the room with a look sharp enough to slice through steel.

Myles went rigid. One glance at that stormy expression told him everything. Whatever hope he had pinned on that second application had collapsed. Elliana had probably laughed Cole straight out of the room. He was doomed.

The weight of it held Myles frozen, though Paulina, Aron, and Hugh scrambled upright at once.

"Good morning, Mr. Evans," said Paulina and Aron together, their voices tight with respect.

Hugh, floating through life without a care, didn't bother with formality. He bounded toward Cole, waving a half-eaten donut like it was a peace offering. "Are you hungry? These donuts are insane. You have to try one!"

Myles and Aron recoiled at the sight. How could anyone be this clueless?

Mortified, Paulina rushed forward and grabbed Hugh's arm, trying to haul him back before he dug the hole any deeper.