

Chapter 837 Transformation

After walking out of the Fletcher siblings' courtyard, Cole slipped into deep reflection. He realized it wouldn't be fair to blame Myles alone for the failed second application. Myles had based his advice on countless success stories he'd seen, so his reasoning hadn't been entirely off.

Cole now saw that the real mistake rested with himself. He always knew Elliana was extraordinary, yet he had foolishly tried to win her over with the approach one might use for ordinary women. Wasting that second chance was completely his fault.

Reflecting on his two failures, Cole understood what he needed to do. Rushing into another application wouldn't work; he would have to prepare thoroughly before making a third attempt. One more failure would mean there'd be no more opportunities left.

Even if the lack of a marriage certificate didn't lessen his feelings for Elliana or their commitment to raising their kids, Cole couldn't shake his slight displeasure. He wanted to be officially bound to Elliana. Without the legal tie, he always felt like something was missing.

He couldn't help but recall how easy it had been to marry her the first time. It was almost as if fate had just handed him the marriage certificate, placing Elliana's name beside his without any effort at all. Back then, winning her hand had seemed effortless. But now, just getting her name on that document again felt like an impossible task, and he didn't even know where to begin.

Cole gazed up at the sky and let out a heavy, drawn-out sigh.

Just then, a gust of wind broke apart a cloud overhead. Cole took out his phone and called Manley. "Dude, I want to get the guys together for a meeting."

He figured his closest friends—Allan, Merlin, and Manley—were all brilliant in their own right, and their advice would be much more valuable than anything Myles could offer.

Manley, clueless about Cole's real intentions, answered with a mix of surprise and amusement, "You want to hang out with us? Well, this is rare. I thought you were always too busy spending time with the wife and kids for any of this."

Since regaining his memories and making up with Elliana, Cole's life had revolved entirely around her, pushing his friends far into the background. He'd turned down every invitation, no matter who called. Manley often teased him about choosing love over friendship.

After the children were born, Cole had hardly left the house for anything else. It wasn't just that Manley and the others never saw him; sometimes, Cole didn't even bother answering their calls, leaving his friends hanging time after time.

Therefore, it was no surprise Manley couldn't resist a jab.

Cole felt a little awkward but quickly replied, "Enough talk. Just get everyone together."

"Alright." Manley relented at once. "I'll ring up Allan and Merlin now. You pick the time and place."

"Tell everyone to be in the private room at the Royal Club in half an hour. If anyone shows up late, they're doing a handstand and downing three hundred drinks," Cole replied mercilessly.

Manley's mouth fell open in disbelief. "A handstand and three hundred drinks? You vanish for ages and then gather us just to torture us? Are you in a bad mood or what? Did Elliana give you trouble or something?"

Cole hung up the phone with a blank expression—not to play it cool, but out of sheer panic. Whenever he was in a bad mood, his friends always assumed he'd gotten into trouble with Elliana and needed to let off steam, and they were never wrong. That alone was enough to make him squirm with embarrassment.

Soon, he would have to sit in front of all three of them and ask for tips on winning Elliana back, and he had no clue how to keep his dignity while doing it.

Still, even if it was humiliating, he couldn't avoid it. Reuniting with Elliana meant more than saving face. If that was what it took to marry her again,

he would swallow any amount of pride; he would even give up an arm or a leg if he had to. This was his future, his happiness for life, and nothing could matter more. For that, a bit of embarrassment was a small price to pay.

Bolstered by that resolve, Cole straightened his back and walked to his car with determination.

Thirty minutes later, the four found themselves together in a private room at the Royal Club.

Months had passed since they'd all sat down together. As they exchanged glances, it became obvious that everyone had changed.

Cole, once cool and composed, now radiated full-time dad energy from every angle.

Allan, once the very image of polished charm and composure, now appeared completely unkempt. He slouched like someone loitering on the street, his face marked with irritation and weariness.

Merlin, once silent and aloof, now wore a gentle smile that never left his face, giving him a surprisingly warm presence.

And Manley, famous for his outrageous floral shirts, had replaced them with a crisp black suit and white shirt, looking every bit the corporate professional.

After settling into their seats, the four glanced at one another, each trying not to laugh at the group's transformation. None of them quite knew what to make of these changes.

Cole broke the ice, but instead of diving straight into his troubles, he shot Manley a teasing look. "What's this? Decided to change your wardrobe all of a sudden?"

"You've got two kids, Cole, and I don't even get a girlfriend; don't you think I'm feeling the pressure?" Manley pulled his shoulders back, brushed away invisible lint from his sleeve, and sat upright. "If I want to settle down, I figured switching up my style might help me meet the right woman. A cleaner look tends to turn more heads, don't you think?"