

## Chapter 839 Laughter

When Allan asked point-blank if he was hiding Ava's whereabouts, Cole grew even more flustered, unable to meet his friend's eyes. He was keeping things under wraps, only because he dreaded Elliana's reaction if he let anything slip.

Merlin and Manley exchanged suspicious looks. Their instincts told them that Cole wasn't telling the whole truth.

Under their combined scrutiny, Cole squirmed in his chair, feeling as though he were sitting on a bed of nails. Desperate to dodge Allan's questioning, he blurted out a sudden change of topic. "Do you all know why I called you here today?"

That did the trick. Manley's focus shifted right away. "Yeah, why did you call for a meeting abruptly?"

"Because I came across some challenges in my love life," Cole said plainly.

There was no mystery about it; everyone could guess this was all about Elliana. He had not summoned his friends out of nostalgia or brotherly love. He was here because his relationship had hit a wall, and he was out of solutions.

Realizing this, Manley's lips twisted into a smirk, while Allan and Merlin gave low, exasperated chuckles. When it came to putting romance above friendship, no one was more notorious than Cole.

A flush of embarrassment crept over Cole's face. He cleared his throat and pushed on. "I divorced Elliana a while ago, and we still aren't remarried. She's still hurt about being forced into that divorce and refuses to take me back legally. I need your help figuring out how to win her forgiveness."

"Heh." Manley couldn't help but tease, rubbing it in. "So you're basically just her boyfriend now? You want to lock things down, but she won't let you?"

Cole clenched his jaw as he unfolded the sheet of paper in his hand. "Elliana asked me to write an application. It's meant to be honest and emotional; powerful enough to bring her to tears the moment she reads it. I poured everything into it, but she still wasn't satisfied. She said something's missing, and I need your help to figure out what it is."

An application to get remarried? Allan, Merlin, and Manley erupted in laughter, clutching their sides and barely able to catch their breath. It was the most ridiculous thing any of them had heard, and it was happening to Cole of all people. Cole had always been icy and impossible to bend, never yielding to anyone. Yet now, Elliana had him completely under her thumb. She had ordered him to write an application, and not only had he obeyed without complaint, but when she found it lacking, he'd come running to his friends for help. It was almost too much to believe.

Cole was already mortified. Watching his friends nearly collapse with laughter only made things worse. His face darkened, his patience wearing thin.

The laughter dragged on, showing no signs of stopping.

Manley burst into uncontrollable laughter, slapping the sofa with such force that he lost his balance, tumbled off the cushions, and landed flat on the floor; yet even there, he continued howling with laughter, completely unfazed.

Allan and Merlin managed to keep it together a little better, but even they doubled over, losing any shred of composure.

Cole glared at his friends in stony silence for a long moment before snapping, "Are you planning to keep this up all night?"

At last, they reined in their laughter.

Allan and Merlin rubbed their temples, still catching their breath, and then picked up Cole's handwritten application to examine it. Manley climbed up from the floor, craning his neck to peek over their shoulders.

As soon as the three finished reading, the laughter erupted again. None of them had ever seen Cole write anything so sentimental; it was dripping with sweetness, so much so that it barely seemed like his own work.

"If any of you laugh again, I'll throw you out the window!" Cole muttered

a warning through clenched teeth.

The three immediately bit back their laughter, faces turning bright red as they struggled to hold it in.

Cole let out a heavy sigh, resigning himself to the chaos. If putting up with it meant getting real advice, he was willing to tolerate every second of it.

When the laughter finally faded, Cole asked, "Now that you're done having a field day at my expense, will you actually help me figure this out?"

Merlin gave a slow shake of his head. "This one's beyond me. I'm not a mind reader, especially not with Elliana, and the last thing I want is to steer you wrong and make everything even messier."

Manley rubbed his chin, lost in thought. "Maybe your application is too flowery? It sounds like something out of a romance novel. Maybe Elliana thinks you're just trying to impress her with fancy words, and that's why she's not happy with it?"

Cole pursed his lips, instantly dismissing Manley's theory. Paulina and Myles had already suggested he was "showing off" yesterday. But from Elliana's reaction earlier, he knew the problem wasn't his style; she didn't seem bothered by it at all.

Just as Cole was mentally brushing off Manley's suggestion, Manley added another idea that made Cole's patience snap. "Trust me, in my experience, women love cheesy love lines. Why not fill your application with some of those for Elliana?"

Cheesy love lines, again! Memories of Elliana teasing him this morning flashed through Cole's mind, setting his temper off. He shot Manley a furious glare. "Get lost!"

Startled by the sudden intensity in Cole's eyes, Manley flinched, completely clueless about what had triggered his outburst.

Just as Manley began to puzzle over Cole's reaction, his eyes caught sight of a piece of paper lying near Cole's feet. He bent down to grab it, and the instant he read what was on it, he burst into another round of uncontrollable laughter. "Ha-ha! You actually went and wrote those cheesy lines already? Oh wow, I can't believe this. Just look at them! Ha-ha!"