

## Chapter 850 The Soul Beneath It

Allan's infuriatingly smug expression made Adah's knuckles itch. It took every ounce of restraint not to drive her fist straight into his face. If this were any other setting, she might have already snapped and left him sprawled on the floor. How could a person be this shameless? To erase his own words and actions as if they had never existed.

Adah hadn't forgotten that back when Allan believed she was nothing more than a rude bumpkin, he had looked down on her without mercy and treated her like an inconvenience, a mistake he was eager to discard, even choosing to fork out thirty billion dollars just to break their engagement. And now that he knew she was Ava—the stunning beauty he'd fallen for at first sight—he suddenly wanted her back, clawing at her with every disgraceful tactic he could muster. What a shallow jerk.

Adah suppressed the urge to beat Allan senseless. A bright, captivating smile curved her lips as she spoke, her tone light and polished. "Mr. Shaw, please know that I don't take back what's already been thrown away. Harassing me won't change that."

With that, she turned to leave. But once again, Allan's fingers closed around her wrist.

She tugged, but Allan held firm. Each time she tried to break free, he countered her strength effortlessly, refusing to loosen his grip.

The fake smile gradually faded from Adah's face. Frost settled over her striking features as a violent storm raged within her—she was on the verge of throwing down with him. Only the thought of not disrupting Elliana's wedding forced her to rein herself in.

After a slow, steady breath, Adah turned around. Her gaze cut into Allan like ice. "Allan," she asked flatly, "have you no sense of shame?"

Allan looked entirely unbothered, one brow lifting in lazy amusement. "If it leads to a lifetime of happiness, a little thick skin is hardly a flaw," he

The message was unmistakable. If she had not hidden her true appearance and misled him in the beginning, none of this would have happened. Since she had deceived him first, he felt fully justified in clinging to her now.

Adah's anger burned so fiercely that her jaw tightened until her teeth throbbed. With his elegant appearance and gentlemanly manners, no one would ever guess how brazen he truly was. He was a scoundrel wrapped in a refined facade.

Adah recalled how, back when she was still living in Apricot Blossom Village and hadn't even met Allan, Elliana had described him over the phone with a single phrase—a polished jerk.

Later on, when Adah had finally encountered Allan in person and saw his mild expression and courteous behavior, she had assumed Elliana was being unfair.

But now, after witnessing his audacity firsthand, Adah could only marvel at Elliana's uncanny judgment.

Grinding her aching teeth, Adah let out a cold laugh. "Allan, someone like you, who judges by appearances, doesn't deserve lifelong happiness. Happiness is not something you get to chain to a single woman. I despise men like you. Even if you put three hundred billion on the table, I will still be nothing more than your ex-fiancée."

She wrenched her hand free at last and glared at him with undisguised hostility.

Allan watched her quietly, a faint smile playing at his lips. The fire in her movements, the sharpness in her eyes, and even that furious glare were enough to set his pulse racing. So this was what it felt like to fall in love at first sight—he knew it well. He had felt it the very first time he had seen her in Podgend. He had always been hopelessly drawn to women like her—one glance was enough to bind him for a lifetime.

"I can give you my devotion forever," he said earnestly. "No other woman will ever catch my eye. You don't need to worry."

Adah froze. Was that truly the conclusion he had drawn from everything she just said? Had she expressed even the slightest bit of worry over his

devotion just now? She had been ridiculing him, not seeking reassurance. On what basis did he twist her words so shamelessly?

Though her disbelief burned silently inside, her reply was sharp and immediate. "Yeah, right. Coming from someone who only ever cares about looks. I see right through you to know that if I married you today, the moment I stopped being young and beautiful, you would already be chasing someone else. You can't fool me."

"I won't," Allan replied calmly. "If I'm devoted to anyone for this life, it'll be you. Even in death."

I admit it. When you disguised yourself as a plain bumpkin, I broke off the engagement. Later, when I saw how beautiful you were, I fell for you completely. That makes me look superficial, I know. But saying that I only care about appearances is not entirely true. What I seem to pursue is beauty, but what has always drawn me in is the soul beneath it."

Adah stared at him, speechless. Not because she was touched—but because she was stunned by how he quoted these words to justify his actions. Was he seriously talking about the pull of her soul now?

After a brief pause, she let out a short, incredulous laugh. "Allan," she asked coolly, "what are you actually trying to say?"

Allan smiled. "I'm saying that even when you donned that unattractive disguise, I was already head over heels for you."

"Geel! Spare me your nonsense!" Adah spat on his face, completely abandoning any concern for decorum. "Need me to remind you how desperate you were to get rid of me back then? I've seen shameless men before, but you've managed to redefine the term."

A bit of spit landed on Allan's cheek. He did not react in anger. He simply wiped his face with slow, deliberate grace. "I know you don't believe my words yet," he said evenly. "That's all right. You'll believe me someday."

Ever since Cole had revealed that the Ava he had been searching for all along was actually Adah, the very woman he had been so determined to abandon, Allan had secluded himself in his home for two full months, doing nothing but thinking. By the end of it, clarity had come. He had finally understood his own heart. He had once believed himself to be a man obsessed with appearances.. But the truth was simpler. He had

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always been drawn to women like Adah—women with radiant, unrestrained souls, something far deeper than looks and completely untouched by them.

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