

Chapter 856 All Joined To Find Sally

"Ten years back, Sally and I bounced from city to city before we finally settled in Cadena," Rita said, her voice carrying the weight of those wandering years. "We found this little villa tucked away in the suburbs—nothing fancy, just quiet. We kept our heads down, stayed to ourselves. For a while, everything felt... safe." Her expression darkened. "Then, I had to run an errand one afternoon. Never made it to where I was going. Miguel's men grabbed me off the street, and that was it. After that, I never laid eyes on Sally again."

The room fell silent. Everyone knew what came after—the years Rita spent trapped under Miguel's control before her desperate leap into the sea.

Sophie leaned forward, her tone measured but certain. "I know Sally. In those first weeks after Rita vanished, she would've torn that city apart looking for Rita. And when she came up empty? She'd plant herself right where Rita last was and wait. Ten years is a long time, but knowing her, if nothing went sideways, she's still in that villa."

Adah shot to her feet, excitement blazing in her eyes. "Elliana, let's go to Cadena right now to find my mom!"

Reality crashed back a second later. Adah glanced at Elliana, hesitation flickering across her face. "Wait—Elliana, it's your wedding day. You stay. I can handle this myself."

Adah was already turning toward the door when Elliana's hand caught her wrist.

"Adah, stop." Elliana's grip tightened, her voice firm. "We made a promise when we were kids, remember? We'd find our respective mothers together. I'm not letting you walk out that door alone." She glanced at her wedding dress and then at Adah. "Give me two minutes to change. I'm coming with you."

Rita stepped forward, her expression soft but resolute. "I'm coming too. Sally started as my housekeeper—Maxine assigned her to me years ago. But after everything we survived together, titles stopped mattering. She became my good friend. I want to bring her home."

Sophie nodded, her jaw set. "I'm going as well. Sally and I go way back. I'm not sitting this one out."

Adah's throat tightened, emotion threatening to spill over. "But Elliana, your wedding—"

Elliana cut Adah off before she could finish. "The ceremony's done. I said my vows, kissed my husband, and got what mattered most." She shook her head, dismissing Adah's concern. "The rest? Just formalities. Bringing Sally home—that matters. If I stay behind while you go, I'll regret it for the rest of my life."

Adah could see the determination burning in Elliana's eyes. But weddings only happened once. She couldn't stomach the idea of leaving even the smallest shadow over Elliana's perfect day. The guilt would eat her alive.

Adah suggested, "Let's go tomorrow instead." She'd already waited this long—most of her life, really. One more day wouldn't break her. Her mother would still be there.

Elliana understood Adah's mindset. She didn't want Adah to carry that weight. "Tomorrow, then."

After that, Elliana and Cole returned to the celebration. Rita and Sophie followed, playing their roles as family elders with practiced grace.

Adah slipped out of the lounge alone. She couldn't sit through another toast, another dance, another round of congratulations. Her mind had already left for Cadena—miles and miles away, where her mother waited, unaware.

Adah had been left behind by her mother when she was only five years old, and since then spent more than a decade growing up in that hollow space where a parent should've been. Now, finally, she was this close to filling it. Except her father had moved on, remarried, and built something new without them.

Elliana and Cole got their fairy tale endings—whole families restored,

mothers returned, everything tied up neat. But Adah's story didn't get that version. Her family would stay fractured, no matter how hard she wished otherwise.

The thought pressed against Adah's ribs like a bruise. Memories surfaced unbidden—her parents laughing, lifting her between them, swinging her through the air. Back when the three of them were whole. She wanted what Elliana and Cole had. Parents who loved each other, who'd stand together at her wedding someday and smile with pride. She wanted that impossible, beautiful thing.

Tears blurred Adah's vision before she could stop them. She didn't see the person in front of her until she walked straight into his chest.

Solid. Warm. That faint scent wrapped around her like a memory. It was Allan. She didn't need to look up to know.

Adah jerked backward, blinking hard until her vision cleared.

Allan stood there, watching her with those unbearably gentle eyes. Before she could say anything, he held out a tissue.

She took it and wiped her face. "Thanks."

"Cole told me everything just now," Allan said quietly. "I'm sorry. When you were searching for your mother before, I didn't step up. I should have." He paused, something raw flickering across his face. "But from now on, I want to help. Let me take care of her—with you."

Adah's jaw tightened. Accepting a tissue was basic decency, nothing more. She wasn't about to let him think it meant anything beyond that. "This is my business," she said, her voice flat and final. "She's my mother. You don't need to get involved."

She brushed past him without a backward glance.

Allan stood there, watching her disappear down the hall. He exhaled slowly, the sound heavy with regret. The woman he loved had carried so much pain in the past, and he—her fiancé, the one who should've been there—had done nothing. How was he supposed to fix that now?

The next morning arrived draped in celebration. The Evans household still hummed with newlywed joy, laughter spilling from open windows.

Adah showed up right on schedule. Rita and Sophie joined the gathering at the Evans family. Elliana and Cole stood ready, packed and determined. They were heading to the airstrip—Cole's private jet would take them to Cadena.

The plane's engines were already warming up when Allan came sprinting across the tarmac and hauled himself aboard at the last possible second.