

## Chapter 857 First Kiss

Allan looked rather haggard, the faint smell of alcohol still hanging on him like a ghost. He'd been completely wasted the night before, barely slept, and had only managed to drag himself out of bed through sheer stubbornness. At least the shower and clean clothes kept him from looking like a complete disaster.

Allan wasn't a drinker. When he did touch the stuff, it was usually just a single glass of red wine. Getting tipsy was rare. Getting blackout drunk? Almost unheard of.

No one else understood why Allan had gotten so smashed last night—but Cole did.

Watching Adah walk away on Lance's arm yesterday had stabbed Allan right in the chest. He was the kind of man who couldn't stomach competition, who refused to share what he wanted with anyone.

Beneath Allan's polished, refined exterior lay a ruthless streak. If Lance hadn't been Cole's cousin, Allan would've crushed him without a second thought. But Cole's cousin? That required finesse.

Allan's version of finesse was getting Lance so drunk that he'd be physically incapable of joining Adah today.

At first, Allan had been confident. Lance was legendary for being a lightweight. Two glasses of red wine usually knocked him flat.

Last night, though, Lance's tolerance had been disturbingly, impossibly high.

Allan had matched Lance drink for drink, glass for glass, over a dozen brutal rounds. Yet, Lance had barely swayed while Allan had felt gravity shifting sideways.

Apparently, after meeting Adah, Lance had discovered she could drink grown men into oblivion. Desperate to keep pace with her, he'd been training in secret, systematically building his tolerance.

Allan had been frustrated, but surrender wasn't in his vocabulary. He'd get Lance drunk even if it killed them both.

Allan had cunningly cheated. Lance, sweet and trusting as a lamb, could never stand a chance against a wolf like Allan. Lance had suspected no foul play and continued to drink.

The outcome? Lance had been rendered unconscious, dead to the world even now.

Allan had gotten drunk as well—but he'd remembered his commitment to accompany Adah when she collected her mother today. Before touching the first glass, he'd ordered his people to wake him and force him functional the instant he collapsed, which led to the scene this morning.

Cole spotted Allan and lifted one knowing eyebrow. He had absolutely no interest in inserting himself into Allan's relentless pursuit of Adah.

Elliana glanced sideways at Adah. Yesterday's hurricane had prevented her from asking whether Adah was genuinely considering entering marriage with Lance.

Adah stared at Allan, her expression hardening. "Why are you here?"

Allan greeted Rita and Sophie with his trademark smooth charm, acknowledged Elliana and Cole with a polite nod, and then positioned himself beside Adah like he owned the space—like they were already promised to each other, already inevitable.

Adah immediately shifted away, revulsion flickering across her face. "I asked you a question."

Allan's skull was throbbing. He noticed a half-finished glass of water sitting on the table, grabbed it, and drank deeply.

Adah lunged to stop him. "That's mine—"

She cut herself off mid-sentence. It was the water she had left unfinished. The rim still carried the ghost of her lips. She'd tried to stop him, but he'd already emptied it. Done now. Pointless to mention it.

Allan knew exactly whose glass he'd taken—he'd chosen it deliberately, drinking from the precise spot where Adah's mouth had been, savoring

But he wore his most innocent expression. He placed the glass down carefully and then finally addressed her question, "I told you yesterday, didn't I? I'll take care of your mother with you from now on. Bringing her home—that's not something small. Of course, I'm coming with you."

Adah's eyes rolled hard. But with Rita and Sophie present, she preferred not to cause a scene. So, she dropped her voice low. "This isn't your concern."

"I'm your fiancé, and she is my future mother-in-law. How could that not be my concern?" He delivered it smoothly like stating simple facts.

Adah's gaze sharpened into something dangerous. "Allan, stop pushing, or I swear I'll deck you right here."

Allan's mouth curved slightly. To avoid getting physically removed from the plane, he shifted the gear abruptly, gesturing toward the empty glass. "Did someone drink from this before?"

Adah followed his gaze, heat of embarrassment flooding her face instantly.

Allan smacked his lips like he was tasting the water and then dragged his tongue slowly across his lower lip. "Huh. Why does this water taste like lipstick? Peach, maybe?"

His eyes dropped deliberately to her mouth.

Adah's face blazed. "Quit staring! One more look and I'll gouge your eyes out!"

Allan laughed low, leaning close until his breath touched her ear. "We just shared a glass. That's practically a kiss, you know. My first one, actually. You took it from me—so now, you've got to make this right."

Adah's ears burned like someone had set them on fire. His first kiss? Seriously? Did he have any idea how ridiculous that sounded? How could he twist something so ordinary into something so absurd and then latch onto her like she owed him something?

Adah's jaw clenched hard. She refused to cause a scene with Rita and Sophie watching, so she chose violence of a quieter kind. Furious, she

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reached over and pinched his thigh viciously.

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