

Coolest Girl in Town Chapter 685 - 686

Chapter 685 Jack Started a Fight

“Not specifically. Craig’s a very well-rounded performing arts student,” Winona interjected to speak up for Craig. “By the way, Elise, do you think Rushmore Entertainment might consider signing Craig up as one of their artists? I saw that they were recruiting.”

Winona knew that Mr. Howard took Elise’s words seriously, and if Craig could get her recommendation, his career could blossom in Rushmore Entertainment. Moreover, Mr. Howard had very casually paid off Garreth’s contractual damages, which racked up to well over hundreds of millions, after all. So, surely he would extend the same sentiment to Craig if he got into the agency.

While Craig had the same idea, he still looked flustered when he heard Winona reveal his innermost thoughts. He reached out to tug on the corner of her shirt as he muttered in embarrassment, “Winona, what are you doing? You can’t ask Miss Sinclair to go through the trouble...”

Obviously, he was only feigning courtesy because he immediately glanced up at Elise expectantly after he said this, trying to whittle her down with his pleading gaze.

Alas, Elise was not one who fell for tricks like these. So she raised her glass at them and smiled as she changed the subject. “I’m sure the both of you would want to catch up after all this time. I won’t be a third wheel, then.” With that, she headed out of the kitchen and up the stairs, indirectly rejecting their request for her favor.

Craig faltered when he sensed that Elise had no intention of helping him with his career. He waited until she had disappeared around the stairwell before saying in low, angry tones, “What the hell, Winona?”

“What?” Winona shot him a blank look.

“This is the first time I’m meeting Miss Sinclair, and you’re already trying to build connections? What will she think of me?!” he demanded as frustration welled up in him.

Winona felt tears prick her eyes as she argued, "Be reasonable, Craig. I was only doing you a favor and hoping that you could start your career on the right foot. Do you plan on going around filming commercials for the rest of your life?"

"I'm a man, Winona. I don't want them to think that I'm only with you to get connections!" he snapped, his voice growing louder in the kitchen.

"Well, I know you're not like that, so isn't that enough? Why do you care about how others might see you anyway?" She could feel the pricking sensation in her nose as she added in a teary voice, "We're a couple, and I don't see the need for you to mind if I try to network for you. It's not even that big of a deal!"

This rendered Craig speechless as he stood there with his hands planted on his hips. He was still boiling with rage, but he was worried that he might push Winona over the edge, so he stopped arguing with her.

All of a sudden, the tension in the living room was so thick and suffocating that one could slice through it with a knife.

Just then, a steady set of footfalls drew near from the threshold, sounding particularly loud in this pregnant silence.

Craig turned to see who it was, but he had only just registered Jack's presence when the latter's fist came hurtling in his direction, then slammed right into his face.

Caught off guard by the assault, he staggered and toppled to the ground like a felled tree.

Winona gasped and quickly crouched down to prop Craig up, asking anxiously, "Are you okay?"

Craig knew that Jack had only punched him because of Winona. He swiped her hand away and spat out a mouthful of blood, then sat up on his own as he glowered at Jack mutinously.

On the other hand, Winona didn't seem to mind that he had so brusquely turned down her help and only went on to assess the damage to his face. Thankfully, there didn't seem to be any bruises or signs of a broken nose, though that didn't stop her from turning to glare at Jack incredulously. "Mr. Jack, why did you do that?"

"I've been wanting to hit him for a while now," Jack ground out through gritted teeth as his fists clenched at his sides. He looked intimidating and angry, like a high-strung predator ready to strike.

He didn't think Craig would continue his shameless ways even after being warned. He was clearly using Winona to achieve his own ends, and it was disgusting to see him put on a holier-than-thou and goody-two-shoes demeanor.

"Is there something going on between the two of you?" Winona pressed. She knew that Jack was not an unreasonable person, and she decided to try and mediate. "Craig's my boyfriend, and he's a really nice person, to boot. Did you maybe confuse him for somebody else?"

A grim look passed over Jack's face as he ignored her, and the awkward tension in the living room made an even stronger comeback this time.

As things were, she could only help Craig onto his feet. But he had only just straightened up when he shoved her aside, clearly lashing out at her.

She wasn't offended by this. Jack was something like a friend to her, and now that he had hit Craig, she couldn't help feeling guilty. She frowned and said nothing, though she eyed him worriedly nonetheless.

"You ambushed me like a coward! Why don't you prove you're a real tough guy and fight me without sneaking around, huh?!" Craig challenged furiously.

Jack's expression was not even the slightest shift as he drawled icily, "You think you're a match for me?"

"What the hell are you both doing?!" Winona was baffled by the hostility toward one another as she stood between them to hold them apart.

"You saw what he did, Winona! He started it! Whose side are you on?!" Craig thundered, trapping her in a dilemma.

She was so torn that she wasn't even sure what to do with her hands right now. Craig was her boyfriend, but Jack had been nothing but kind to her all this while. It would weigh down on her conscience if she were to side with either one of them.

As though reading her mind, Jack pointed out coolly, "This thing is between you and me, and we'll settle it like men without having to drag the poor girl into it, you coward."

"If it's a fight you want, then so be it!" Craig hollered, raising his fist and gearing to brawl.

Jack was incensed as well, and he took an imposing step forward.

Stuck between them like a weak barricade, Winona reached out her hands to try and stop them from coming into contact.

"What's with all the noise?!"

At that moment, Elise appeared at the foot of the staircase and shouted at the two aggravated men, "If you're going to fight, then take it outside! I won't have that sort of nonsense happening in my house!"

She was on Jack's side, of course, but seeing as he refused to confess his feelings for Winona and then chose to butt into the couple's personal affairs, she was irritated and decided that he deserved to be snapped at just as much as Craig did.

Presently, Craig dared not disobey Elise, and Jack was always obliging when it came to her. The two men exchanged a glance, then did as they were told and marched to take the fight outside, with Craig being the last to go out the door.

Worried that something might happen to him, Winona wanted to hurry after him, but Elise stopped her firmly. "Stay here, Winona."

"Elise, I have to go and stop Craig from getting into a brawl. What if they hurl fists and end up roughing each other up so badly that they leave injuries? They can't afford to have their faces bruised up, not if they still want their careers in this industry!" Winona explained anxiously, though she did not try to take another step toward the door.

"He's a full-grown man, and it's his job to settle his own personal affairs. As his girlfriend, all you can do is wait for him to come back after he blows off steam so that you can try and talk some sense into him. You don't have to mediate a fight or join in the brawl. We ladies need to protect ourselves at all times instead of going all out to clean up the men's mess," Elise pointed out patiently.

“But...” It was clear to see that Winona could not stop fretting over the two grown men fighting outside.

“Look, go and stop them if you want to, but you ought to really think about why Craig never told you that he and Jack were on such horrible terms. Does he even see you as a girlfriend or a confidante?” Elise turned around and made her way to her room after she said this.

It was only then that something clicked in Winona’s mind, and her thoughts were suddenly clearer than ever. In recent times, she had become more oblivious to what was going on in Craig’s life.

Before today, she had been under the impression that they were both working regular, monotonous jobs, which did not make for interesting conversation. However, judging from the scene earlier, Craig clearly had a far more exciting life than she thought.

Meanwhile, outside the house, Jack and Craig had come to a stop just in front of the door. They were glaring at each other balefully, and the air around them crackled like there was a brewing storm.

Cooldest Girl in Town Chapter 686

Chapter 686 Light at the End of the Tunnel

After what felt like a long moment, Jack was the first one to break the tense silence by saying, “It seems like you thought I was joking the last time we met, Craig. But, unfortunately, your happy days are numbered.”

“Whatever, man. Go right ahead, try and take me down. We’ll see if you’re just all talk,” Craig challenged with matching defiance.

He had already discerned from the exchange earlier that Jack had feelings for Winona. He can’t do anything to me as long as I stay with her, Craig thought.

On the other hand, Jack was unaware of what the other man was thinking. He only wanted to ruin Craig’s reputation and life as soon as possible. He shot Craig a glacial look, then took out his phone and made a call as he walked away.

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Meanwhile, a week had gone by, and Andy still had not received the calligraphy Elise wrote at the mall the other day. He even called the Calligraphy Association Museum to ask if they had sent the work to the Archive, but the employee on the other line fumbled over his words and excuses. Eventually, Andy grew restless and decided to drop by the Archive himself.

When he got to the S-Class Archive, he saw that the employee had dozed off at the work desk.

Andy rapped his knuckles against the desk, and with two thuds, he managed to wake the employee up.

“Mr. Nixon!” The employee snapped out of his sleep and stood up as he apologized profusely, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to slack off during work hours. I was just really worn out. I promise this won’t happen again!”

“Don’t worry about it. I’d be sleeping like a log by now if I were you. It’s not the most interesting of jobs, to be fair,” Andy said with a dismissive wave, not wanting to pick on the employee. Then, without beating around the bush, he asked, “I had an item sent over last week that still has not been archived. Why is that?”

“Mr. Nixon, are you talking about Elise Sinclair’s calligraphy?” the employee asked.

“We’re in the S-Class Archive here, so who else would dare send something here unless they’re asking for humiliation?” Andy countered dryly.

“That’s true,” the employee agreed with a flustered smile. “I’ve been here for half a year now, but I’ve never received an S-Class item before.”

“So why haven’t you archived it?” Andy pressed. He had only one thing on his mind right now, and it was Elise’s calligraphy.

“Oh, well, it’s actually because Cody—that is, Mr. Carlson—and his student, Miss Hill, said that while Miss Sinclair is qualified for the Calligraphy Contest finals this year, she has yet to become an official member of the Calligraphy Association. So, as protocol goes, we’re going to need to see where she places in the competition this year and wait for her to be assigned a rating before we can archive her work,” the employee explained truthfully.

Andy's eyes lit up. "Are you saying Elise is on the list of contenders for this year's finals?"

The employee nodded with a blank look on his face. "Yes, that's right."

When he heard the confirmation, Andy felt as if he had seen the light at the end of the long, dark tunnel. For the last few days, he had been using his grandson's WhatsApp to text Elise, but she never replied to any of his messages. He was starting to think that he would never meet the genius behind such intricate calligraphy, but alas, fate decided to humor him with a miracle, for he was finally going to see her.

There had been a considerable lack of talent in the recent Calligraphy Contests, and Andy only ever showed up when he was invited as a guest of honor to hand out the awards.

However, now that he knew Elise would be there, he was determined to stay for the entire run of the competition and watch her at work.

"Alright, I understand. In that case, keep the calligraphy with the utmost care until you can archive it," Andy said to the employee. He and Cody didn't see eye-to-eye, and he didn't want the innocent employee at the museum to be caught in their spat, so he let the matter drop for now.

After that, he came out of the museum and decidedly posted a picture of Elise's calligraphy, which he had taken before this, into the group text meant for premium members of the Calligraphy Association. However, he did not provide any context, making it seem like he was trying to keep something exciting a secret.

Little did he know that everyone in the group text would burst into an uproar.

'Andy, is this your work? Look at that handwriting! No one can do it without an S-Class Rating!'

'Come on. Flattery won't work without common sense. All of you should be familiar with Andy's penmanship by now, and there's no way that's his calligraphy. Spill, Andy. We demand to know the artist behind this legendary work.'

'Paging for Andy. Stop hiding and explain this right now!'

'Paging for Andy!'

Andy read the series of texts in amusement and waited for a minute or two, then clicked into the conversation to send in a voice note, saying, "I bet none of you saw this coming! I have discovered a genius, and she's the one behind this work of art. She's also a contestant for the Calligraphy Contest this year, so all you old fogeys might get to meet her.'

This voice note was met with a frenzied response from those in the group text.

'You discovered such rare talent and only decided to tell us now? What the hell, Andy?'

'Andy, this isn't fair! You have a genius disciple and held out on us until now! That's some clever hiding if you ask me!'

'Disciple? Please! Look at the remarkable talent packed into each cursive and tell me she isn't a true master of calligraphy. Mind telling us more about her, Andy? Give us a name or something so that I can visit her right now to behold talent with my own eyes!'

'You must tell us!'

'It's imperative that we know, Andy.'

At once, Andy panicked when he saw all these demanding messages, and he quickly sent a voice note saying, "I'm going to make it clear that I discovered her first! Don't even think about trying to beat me into getting her as my disciple, or our friendship is over!"

He knew exactly what these old foxes were up to. If he gave them a name, then they would hunt Elise down before the contest ended and have her become their disciple, then try to hitch a ride on her fame.

Now that he had called the other members out so mercilessly, they did not try to push his buttons.

However, they began booking their air tickets to take a flight to Tissote.

Presently, Andy was pleased when he saw that the group text had quieted down, and he nodded in satisfaction. He thanked the heavens that he and Cody had had a fight that led to the latter exiting the group. If he found out about Elise, then he would secretly try to procure her as his own disciple.

In truth, Cody was competent, though he often resorted to underhanded ways to achieve what he wanted. That, however, couldn't be helped, seeing as everyone in the industry had different goals and means to attain them.

Andy was never one to hang around people like that. However, he still tagged all the members in the group text and typed, 'The genius is an introvert with mild social anxiety, so I'd appreciate it if you could all keep her participation in the upcoming finals a secret from the public.'

Those in the group replied instantaneously in agreement.

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On the day of the contestants' rating day, Tiana, along with Cody and Malia, drove to the Calligraphy Association.

As the car rolled to a stop outside the building, Cody glanced at Tiana and encouraged, "Just treat this like how you would any other practice session and take it easy. You have already outdone yourself regarding your skills, and you'll do great. Go on, then."

Tiana eyed the luxury cars that were parked on either side of the street and felt her heart drop to her stomach. She was so distracted by her own thoughts that her face had a dazed look.

"Tiana?" Cody called out, louder this time. "Are you okay? You seem a little pale."

It was only then that Tiana snapped out of her daze. She tucked her hair behind her ear and muttered a little absentmindedly, "Maybe I just didn't get enough sleep last night. I'll be fine."

"You have to be. The Calligraphy Association only does the rating once a year, and you can't afford to miss it. So, just hang on until it's done," Cody cajoled.

"I know, Mr. Carlson, but what's with the number of cars today? Are these all parents of the finals contestants? Some of these cars even have reporters in them, and they're all carrying equipment as well," she pointed out in confusion.

"Don't you know?" Cody explained calmly, "The heads of all the Association's divisions are here today, and I reckon they'll take part in the rating as well. The press is drawn to the likes of these people, so make sure you do well, okay?"

“Oh, okay,” Tiana mumbled as she let out a sigh of relief, then nodded with a smile. “Don’t worry, Mr. Carlson. I’ll do my very best! I’ll be going now.”