

## His Kickass 251

### Chapter 251

Abby

My apartment is dark when I finally get home tonight. It still smells faintly of fresh paint from the new coat that my landlord put on, but I can still sense the lingering scent of smoke, too.

I decide to avoid the harsh glow of the kitchen lights as I plop the wine glass that's been tucked under my arm onto the counter island, followed by the bag of takeout food that I picked up on my way home.

It's still warm, the grease beginning to seep through the bag as the faint smell of garlic and onions permeates through the air. On any other night, I might be delighted to dig in; but honestly, I have no appetite tonight. Even the thought of food makes me sick after everything, after all of the failed dishes. But I know I need to eat, and if I don't, I know I'll regret it later.

For a moment, I dig through my cupboard for a plate and some silverware, but eventually decide to opt out of the plate.

The cork gives a subtle pop as I open the wine. No glass, I decide. Not tonight. I take a swig straight from the bottle, the sharp taste of alcohol momentarily cutting through the numbness. It's a start.

I crash onto the couch, the plush cushions a welcome comfort after being on my feet all day. The TV flickers to life with a soft buzz a moment later, and I navigate to N\*\*\*\*x to drown myself in a world away from reality.

I'm not sure how much time passes. Hours, maybe. I feel like I'm caught in a haze of cheap movies, cheap wine, and even cheaper food. But the memories of today—the truffle dish, the disdainful look in Logan's eyes, the trophy in Daniel's hand, the kiss with Karl—keep playing in front of me, crowding out the movies on the screen.

"Dammit," I whisper to myself as I take another swig.

I must look pathetic now, especially when I was so sure that I would win. And it's not even just that I lost, either; it's that I was humiliated on live television. Ingredients were swapped, tussles were had, insults were thrown, and my pleas

Come tomorrow, I'll be a culinary laughingstock. Hell, I might even be laughed right out of my own

I couldn't bear to go there tonight. I can't even bear to glance at my phone, because I know I'll be barraged with a chorus of sympathies that will only make matters worse. Right now, I just want to hide my head in

At some point, the bottle of wine finally empties. I don't remember finishing it, but the fuzziness in my head is enough proof. Groaning, I push my way up off of the couch and shuffle into the kitchen, where another bottle waits for me in the fridge. I pop that open, too, and make my way back to the living

It's then, as I'm standing in the doorway with the second wine bottle to my lips and a romance scene on the TV, that I hear it: my wolf's voice, clear as day, in the back of my

"Are you just going to wallow in misery, or are you going to keep pushing

Her sudden presence is like a slap to the face, or a rush of cold wind on a hot day. It takes me completely by surprise in my

The bottle slips from my grasp, wine splashing onto the carpet—a vibrant red against the white fibers. I curse out loud and nearly fall onto the tile floor as I dash into the kitchen for

"You could have warned me," I say out loud as I grab the towel off of the hook and return, falling to my knees and dabbing it into the carpet before the stain can spread. "Now I've spilt wine everywhere."

"That's really your main concern, Abby?" My wolf's voice is thick with disapproval. "The wine? Don't be so miserable."

“Look, I think I’m allowed to be miserable after today, okay?” I grumble, pressing the towels into the wine, but the red just seeps deeper into the fabric. “After all that public humiliation, I think I’ve earned a little wallowing time.”

My wolf’s voice snarls in the back of my head. “Earned it? You think you’ve earned the right to give up because of one setback?”

“Who said I gave up?!” My voice rises an octave before I steady myself again, and I take a deep breath. “I just... need a moment to process.”

She chuckles. “A moment? Lately, whenever things start to get tough, it’s like you need to ‘process.’”

I throw the soaked towel onto the floor in annoyance. “I don’t do that.”

But my wolf’s retort is immediate, her voice almost a growl. “But you do. When Karl left, who curled up and let the world pass by?”

“That’s unfair.” I rip off some paper towels for the roll, thinking that maybe this will do the trick instead. “You’ve been dormant since then, not me. You’re supposed to be

“And what am I if not for a reflection of you, Abby?” There’s a note of sadness in my wolf’s voice now. “I’m you, just in a different form. When you shut down, I

I sit back on my heels, the cleaning forgotten. “So you’re saying this is my fault? That I... want to

“No.” My wolf’s voice softens, hardly more than a whisper now. “I’m saying that you can’t let this single setback plunge you into

I stand, leaving the stain on the floor, deciding that it’s a problem for future Abby. “I’m just... Tired,” I say, flopping down onto the couch again. “It’s not

“Nothing is fair. It doesn’t mean you just give up and wallow when things go your

“Look, I’m not ‘giving up,’” I say with a sigh. “But I need a fucking break. A long one.

“Ah, a break,” she says with a wry chuckle. “Is that what you want? To leave the culinary industry, to give Daniel—and all of the other men who are just like him—what