



SCAN HERE

THE BOOK SIGNING

THEA SCRIVEN'S FIRST SIGNING IN TORONTO



DETAILS INFORMATION

In this bonus scene Adrian surprises Thea by attending her first international book signing after having found a way out of work.

NAME: Adrian S Friedman

CODE: 070809112025

**THEA SCRIVEN * 'SILLY SEASON'
SIGNING IN TORONTO**

THIS TICKET BELONGS TO:
ADRIAN FRIEDMAN



06162025 06162025

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

THE BOOK SIGNING Copyright © 2025 by Ellie Owen

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without the written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review.

First Edition: June 2025

For more information, contact the author at
www.ellieowen.com

The Book Signing



To the talented editor who believes in me.
Thank you.

0

Adrian Friedman always knew he would marry Thea.

Had known it since he laid eyes on her and heard the Universe whisper to him that she was the one; had known when walking home from Ether with only her in his mind; had known when he called his mother to tell her about the girl he met that night.

Some people would think of it as love at first sight, claiming they were soulmates, but Adrian knew that even if his soul wasn't half of hers, he was born to love her.

Her happiness made him happy.

Her laugh made him laugh.

Her success made him proud.

He loved Thea. Loved everything about her, from how hard it was to make Thea like him, to the way she'd look at him as if she too loved him.

Right now, what he loved most was the way her face lit up as her eyes took in the long queue of readers, who'd been trickling inside the bookstore with her debut novel pressed against their chests as they waited to have their copies signed by her.

Many carried a small bag with little gifts they wanted to give Thea, but Adrian had been the only one holding a two-hundred-flower bouquet—one for each of the seats sold for Thea's first international signing.

Don't be mad, Adrian kept a small prayer in his mind after lying about Zoe not approving his day off to accompany Thea to the Toronto signing.

It hadn't been a lie. Zoe didn't approve of it, but what could the senior editor and boss do when Adrian called in sick this morning, claiming he'd gotten the same bug Margo brought into the office after a weekend getaway with Lottie?

His throat *was* a little scratchy—that also hadn't been a lie. But instead of drinking plenty of water and resting as per his doctor's recommendation, Adrian decided to get a second opinion in Toronto.

Thea had left New York Monday night, wanting to explore the city—it was code for needing time to visit all the restaurants and bakeries she had looked up for the initial weekend she was going to spend there.

Every spot she visited came with a flurry of texts and photos of everything she ordered and her grading of each item. The Italian Trio sandwich had the highest score so far, with a cube croissant being the most interesting, though disappointing thing, on her list.

It wasn't Adrian's fault that every text made him lean over into Margo's cubicle to show her Thea's adventures and that, slowly, every editor on his floor had become interested in the culinary trip Thea had accidentally brought them all on.

Nor was it Adrian's fault that he had made a promise to always go to her signings, and though he had a private jet that allowed him to make good on his promise, he still flew commercial, making sure to carry her book with the cover facing the world, and while waiting, he'd read *Silly Season*, being careful to not have his fingers covering the title or her name as he cried.

Partly due to the story, partly due to how proud he felt in being able to hold that cupid of a book in his hands.

Those prickly tears came again when the first person in line approached the table with shaky hands that brush a loose strand of hair behind pierced ears, speaking quickly as Thea beamed with joy, nodding along with a smile stamped over her face.

Perhaps it should have bothered him, but Adrian didn't think she'd smile as brightly on their wedding day as she did now, getting to see how her words touched real, tangible people, who now just want to gush about loving the stories Thea carried in her heart for years, believing they didn't matter to others until they did.

Ever so slowly, the queue moved forward, and the chatter among her readers grew as people discussed their favorite moments and theories for the next books.

Adrian had his smile pressed against the roses when he felt a little tap on his forearm. "Excuse me?" a girl no older than twenty asked, sustaining a suspicious smile when he lowered the bouquet to glance at her. "Do you work for her?"

"Do I work for her?" Adrian echoed the question, pondering on how he didn't technically work for Thea, but since meeting her, everything that he did had been with her in mind, wanting to bring a bit of happiness to her as she did to him without even noticing.

Yet, he wasn't a part of her team in F&E, even if that team was employed by his family company and had received a strongly worded email to ensure they treated Thea and her work like the priority they should be.

"N—no, I don't work for her."

"Oh! Why did you bring flowers then?" The girl gasped as soon as the words left her mouth. "Oh my God!

Your girlfriend is a fan, isn't she? You came here to get the book signed for her?"

"My girlfriend?" Adrian felt himself blushing, loving how that title sounded when it came to Thea, though he hadn't expected his favorite writer to enjoy their dating phase so much she prolonged it, forbidding him from proposing to her until she said so.

It didn't matter that Adrian had no intention to stop taking Thea on dates and vacation, no intention of letting romantic nights in wilt away, nor to stop bringing her a little something on his way home.

All he wanted was to be called her husband, and that desire didn't stem from putting her in a cage to let her go by feeling unloved.

"Look, he's blushing." The girl turned to her friend, hitting her in the arm as they giggled. "She's so lucky."

"Lucky? No, she's not the lucky one."

The girls around him laughed—or giggled, he wasn't sure—swatting each other in the arm, heat kissing their faces as the queue moved a little more.

"He's real world St. Clair, isn't he?" one of them said, not knowing Adrian would only take that as a compliment if they also saw Thea as Cecilia.

They batted their lashes at Adrian, acting coy and in a way that he could only imagine Thea would describe as being flirty, even if he didn't feel flirted with.

"Oh, the line, it's moving" Adrian pointed out, nudging Thea's precious readers forward before raising the bouquet back over his face, going back to focusing on the reason he spent two hours on an airplane.

Not once did Thea glance over the queue, focusing only on the reader in front of her, on what they had to say,

on the gifts they brought her, in the tears some of them shed.

Adrian felt himself growing nervous as the queue shrank until there was only one person between himself and Thea—if he didn't count the two hundred flowers too.

This close, he could listen to the exchange, could engrave in his mind the lilting joy in her voice, the sound of her fountain pen—a gift from his mother—against the title page of *Silly Season*.

His legs suddenly became jello when the reader bid Thea farewell, skipping away from the table to join her group of friends, and Thea finally lifted her gaze toward him.

"Oh, wow." She laughed nervously. "This is the first time a reader has given me flowers."

Bouquet still over his face, Adrian took small, careful steps toward the table, listening to her quiet laugh of amusement as he placed his copy on the table, peering down from the flowers to find Thea opening the book, reading the post-it note with his name.

"*Adrian?*" she called uncertainly, glancing back up—a brow arched in question before she shook her head, as if freeing herself from the idea. "That's my boyfriend's name. He said he'd come to the signing with me, but his boss didn't give him the day off."

Slowly, with her eyes flickering back toward the book in her hand, Adrian lowered the flowers, enough for his face to be uncovered by them. He pushed his glasses back against the bridge of his nose, catching Thea's attention.

She glanced at him once, eyes returning to the book for a second before she looked back up at him. A smile over

her lips, arms sprawling over the table as she melted over it, resting her chin on the back of her hands.

"You came?"

"I'm a man of my word, Thea Tea. Course I came."

Biting on her bottom lip, Thea straightened her spine, drawing a little heart next to his name before trading the book for the flowers.

"Zoe gave you time off?"

"God, no, she thinks I'm laying in bed sick."

"Adrian!" she said his name as if to chide him, but the smile on her face dimmed the impact. "You shouldn't lie to your boss."

"I do feel a little warm, and my throat is—" Adrian cleared his throat while his fingers moved as if to show it was a little scratchy.

A pout slowly crept onto his lips, making Thea roll her eyes as she walked around the table to press a hand against his forehead. "You *are* a little warm."

"I'm fine! No need to go to the doctor."

"The hotel maybe? You should rest."

Wrapping his arms around Thea, Adrian pressed a kiss against her forehead, lips moving down to her cheek, the tip of her nose, before kissing her at last.

Her body felt warm against his, her lips curling in a smile she couldn't quite hold back. "Absolutely not!" he whispered, welcoming the hand Thea wrapped around his waist while holding her flowers with the other. "We're following your plan for the rest of the night."

"I was just going to a restaurant, nothing special."

"I'll go with you."

"Yeah?" Thea tipped her head back, smiling a little brighter than she had when talking to readers.

"Yeah. Are you done here?"

"Not yet. I have some books to sign in the back."

"Should I buy everyone donuts?"

"Maybe, but I want you to stay ... I've missed you."

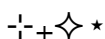
Adrian felt himself blushing again as he hid his face against the crook of her neck. He never wanted people to see how Thea had him wrapped around her brilliant little fingers, didn't want others to make jokes about him when he knew Thea hated them.

"You did?" he whispered, teeth nibbling on her neck.

"Always, Chlamy."

Laughter billowed between the two, getting lost between the little kisses they shared while reluctantly pulling away from each other, even if Adrian would become a second shadow to hers.

Right, he told himself. Just a few copies for her to sign, and we're out of here.



Nothing special, Thea had said about the restaurant she planned on exploring that night, but Adrian didn't expect it to be a ramen restaurant that was featured on the Michelin Guide—if the plaque on the wall was still accurate and not sentimentalism for bygone times.

Adrian felt strangely overdressed in his wool coat and tailored trousers, while Thea wore a black cashmere sweater under her burgundy leather coat, with the scarf

she had borrowed from Adrian laid on her lap, warming her hands as they read through the menu.

Well, Adrian split his attention between the menu and Thea resting her head against his shoulder, making it fairly difficult to flip through the pages as she asked to see an item again when debating between the house special and the Karaage Don.

It didn't matter which she opted for because Adrian would choose the other, so she could still taste it and trade with him if she wanted to.

"What do you want?" Thea asked, head tilted back to look at him—grinning when he kissed her cheek.

"The Karaage Don."

Her face brightened. "Then I'll get the house special ramen, and we can also order their Japanese curry rice?"

"To share?"

"To share."

"What if I'm really getting sick?"

"Then I'll get sick too." She laughed, turning to wave down a waitress, telling her their order quickly before turning back to Adrian. "Why didn't you tell me you were coming?"

Bumping her knee against his, Thea moved a little closer, feeling thankful for the tall bench in front of the restaurant. She hadn't wanted to sit across from Adrian, and hogging a four-seat table during dinner service would've been a crime in the restaurant world.

"And don't say you wanted to surprise me."

"I did want to surprise you."

"I could've picked you up at the airport."

"It wouldn't have been a surprise then." Thea made a face at that, letting it be known she was not convinced by his reasoning. "And," Adrian added with an inflection to his voice, "if I had let you know, then I wouldn't have been in line for a signed copy. Without that, none of your readers would've told me I'm a real-life version of St. Clair."

"You? You're the real-life version of St. Clair?"

Thea laughed, eyes twinkling in a way that stabbed Adrian deeper than silver would have.

Was it truly so laughable to imagine Adrian as the ideal love interest Thea had in mind when writing St. Clair? What did that mean for their future? What did that mean about Aaron?

Was table-leg guy closer to St. Clair than Adrian could ever be?

"If they knew you, they'd know St. Clair is terrible compared to you."

"He gives her salted cherry tomatoes," Adrian said in defense of the same fictional man that had nearly made him cry at the idea of not being up to his level. "It's cute and thoughtful."

"You know what else is cute and thoughtful? Surprising your girlfriend by flying to her book signing and risking your job."

"I've told you, Thea, my life goal is to be a stay-at-home husband."

"Maybe you should focus on the 'husband' part before the unemployed part."

Adrian gasped, scrunching his nose as he leaned closer. "If you'd let me, I'd be *Missus Scriven* already."

"Missus?"

"Mister Scriven doesn't convey how badly I want to be yours... in a legally binding way. Emotionally, you got me since day one."

"Since day one, huh?"

"*Just* like St. Clair."

"You got the hair too, you know?"

"I do? I thought he had beautiful hair when reading it."

Thea glided a hand up his chest, raking closer and closer, until her fingers were buried in his hair, caressing the nape of his neck.

"And you don't?" Thea bit her lip, a blush kissing her cheeks for some reason. "You still have no idea how handsome you are, do you?"

"Enough for you to like me. That's all that matters."

"For me to like you? You don't think the girls who compared you to Ethan were flirting? Or that every girl who looks at you and then me isn't thinking of how lucky I am? But yes, you have beautiful hair, and it's why we argue every time you want to get a hair cut. You want to deprive me of waking up to your messy hair."

"Margo says I look like her grandma when my hair is long, and you always say I look good after a haircut."

"Because I'm *indeed* lucky, you look good regardless. Just don't ever shave your hair."

"Or you'll divorce me?"

"Yes! I'll marry you just to divorce you. What?" Thea poked his waist when he blushed—it never failed to amuse Thea how easy it was to make this man blush.

Nor did it fail to make her heart flutter to see how badly he wanted to marry her, not knowing it was not that

she didn't want to be Missus Friedman, but that she knew once they were married, she'd want to have a baby with him, and that hadn't been a timeline they had discussed just yet. It seemed too hasty, too cruel to talk about having a baby when she hadn't let him propose to her yet.

A different waitress brought them their order, forcing Thea and Adrian to be apart so they could eat—with one of them shimmying in her seat at the four pieces of chashu, two beef tenderloin, and karaage that came with her ramen.

Moaning in awe of the rich umami soup with a slightly kick of spice. "Let me try yours," Thea said between bites, swaying from left to right in her seat—just a little bit, not enough to earn herself impolite glances from the ever polite Canadians.

Thea gasped at the crisp fried chicken, savoring it before she took a spoonful, balancing the rice, carrot, green onion, and half of Adrian's egg.

"Is it good?" he asked, hand absentmindedly rubbing her back. "Do you want to trade?"

Eyeing the two bowls and the plate of Japanese curry, Thea pondered on it.

"How about we share *everything*?" Adrian suggested, happy to eat half a meal if Thea was content with dinner.

"Everything?"

"No need for you to pick when you can have it all."

"Only if you marry me."

Adrian paused.

Brows raising as if she had slapped him. A smile slowly unfolded on his face, growing a little wider the more her words registered in his mind.

"I can finally—"

"Not right now! Don't you dare propose to me right now, nor tomorrow!" Thea spoke over him, finding it hard to keep her face straight when she wanted to smile as much as he did. "I don't want to know when you're proposing to me, and it can't be within a month!"

"A surprise? That's what you want? After telling me I shouldn't have surprised you today?"

"You're better than St. Clair, Adrian, but I'm a little messy and odd like Cecilia."

"You're better than Cecilia, Thea. You're better than my wildest dreams could've ever imagined."

"So marry me, Adrian Friedman."

"Can I really?"

Thea nodded, stealing a bite of chashu along with some decadent chewy noodles and broth that was almost better than the idea of a lifetime with Adrian.

"Well, you can ask me to ... in six months or so."

"Can I go all out?"

"Yeah, or small and cozy. Just no flash mob."

"Thank you." He leaned closer, kissing her over and over. "Thank you for letting me marry you."

"Thank you for loving me, *St. Clair*."

"I still can't quit my job, can I?"

Thea laughed, slapping his chest meekly. Oblivious to how Adrian would never—not even in a million of years—get tired of how she rolled her eyes at him while a smile tugged on the corner of her lips, betraying her annoyance for a sense of belonging, for being content to have him to make her days a little brighter.

"Missus Adrian Scriven."

"Missus Thea Friedman," she corrected.

"Oh, Thea Tea, if you think I'd let you take my surname when yours has been part of who you are all your life ... It's part of the woman I love—"

"And Friedman isn't part of who I love?"

"Is it?"

"Not what the surname means, the building it's attached to, but the family behind it. The people who made you who you are. That's what I love."

"Scriven-Friedman?"

"I don't know if your family lawyer would be okay with that."

"My family lawyer?" Adrian felt a chill down his spine at the mention.

"Your mom told me about how serious he is about the job ... about how your parents didn't want a stipulation of medical checkup to ensure health before marriage, and that any child of ours would need a DNA test to be added to the trust fund."

"I had hoped to convince him to drop that before needing to tell you about it."

"Gabriela told me that too. It nearly made me propose to you myself."

"I would never—"

"I know, *Missus* Adrian Scriven. I know. It makes sense. My parents would be more anal about it if things were the other way around. They'd leap with joy at the idea."

"I'll still try to convince him."

"Either way, I'm marrying you."

Husband, Adrian mused, adoring the sound of it, while some small illogical voice made him terrified of not being

the man Thea deserved when she deserved everything
Adrian could offer her and more. *Partner. That's who I'll be
to her. That's what she deserves. Someone to support her, to fight
for her, to keep her in mind through every decision. That's what
I've always been and who I'll always be*

AUTHOR NOTE

I just want to make it known that this bonus scene was written as a birthday gift to my best friend, Isabella, who was kind enough to let me share it with my beloved readers. I hope to write more bonus scenes for Theadrian, as well as some bonus scenes for Curse of Death.