

## Chapter 19

Ashley couldn't hide her delight as she scrolled through her contacts to find Carlos's number.

The first time Carlos had seen Leslie, he gifted Leslie a painting worth ten million!

He had never been a person who loved spending money for women. Although there weren't any rumors about him when he had just returned to the country, today, Ashley had seen the rumors of Carlos and a female model.

Ashley believed that Carlos, despite impulsively gifting Leslie the painting, held some sentiment for her. Playing the concerned card, she decided to call Carlos.

"Mr. Lester, this is Ashley. I hope I'm not bothering you, but there's something I need to share..."

Ashley spoke with urgency, injecting a hint of worry into her voice.

Carlos responded in his usual laid-back manner, "Ah, Mrs. Byrd. What's going on?"

His lazy voice, along with his touching voice, made Ashley's heart beat faster.

"I overheard that Leslie sold the painting you gave her to Wyatt for two million."

A moment of silence ensued, leaving Ashley pondering Carlos's thoughts.

"I'm genuinely sorry; it's my oversight. Leslie undervalued the painting you generously gave, and I regret it was sold for such a low price. I apologize for betraying your trust," Ashley expressed remorse.

"No need to blame yourself, Mrs. Byrd. The painting was a gift to her

and is now her personal possession. If she wants to sell it and it brings her happiness, I'm fine with it,"

Carlos said with a faint smile.

Ashley's expression shifted. Carlos wasn't furious.

However, Carlos was from a wealthy background and had seen all kinds of people. He probably cared about his public reputation and chose not to unleash his anger in front of her.

"That's so kind of you. I won't trouble you further. I hope we can have the opportunity to invite Mr. Lester over for dinner at our home,"

Ashley said with a smile. In her mind, if Carlos had lost interest in Leslie, her biological daughter, Sarah, might have a chance.

"Sure, I'll look forward to it," Carlos replied with a smile in his voice.

Ashley's heart skipped a beat. What did he mean by that?

"Hehe, my daughter, Sarah, would also love to dine with you!" Ashley added.

"Sarah? I might have been a bit impulsive last time. I apologize," Carlos calmly stated.

Ashley's heart, however, swelled with joy. Did he just express interest in Sarah? "Hehe, it's alright. Sarah won't mind. Well then, I won't disturb Mr. Lester any longer. Goodbye," Ashley bid farewell.

"Goodbye," Carlos's voice carried a hint of amusement, fueling Ashley's excitement.

Sarah was no less attractive than Leslie.

Carlos had been in a good mood just now; maybe he was interested in Sarah?

Ashley's face lit up with a brilliant smile.

In the evening, Leslie descended for dinner.

Ashley and Sarah waved to her with smiles. "Hurry, tonight we have

dishes you like!"

Leslie happily came down. "Wow, it smells amazing!"

"Yes, these are all made by Mommy!" Sarah said with a grace.

Riley glanced at Ashley, and his eyes softened a bit.

"Thank you, Mommy!" Leslie picked up her fork. "Wow, Dad, you've been working all day. Eat more!"

"Got it! Sweet girl!" Riley smiled, his eyes filled with joy.

"Oh, by the way, Riley, Leslie is amazing. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Lester actually gave her a ten-million-worth painting!"

Ashley sneered inwardly but maintained a smiling face.

Riley, engrossed in his work all day, rarely paid attention to gossip. Hearing Ashley's words, he looked at Leslie with surprise.

"Leslie, is that true?"

Leslie smiled awkwardly. "Of course, it's true."

"A ten-million painting! I didn't expect Mr. Lester to be so generous. It seems he likes you. Hurry up and show it to us!"

Riley was so excited that he forgot about his food.

"Dad, about that painting... I..." Leslie lowered her head. "Wyatt said he wanted to see it, so I gave it to him to appreciate for two months and will get it back."

"It's okay. The Cohen family is also wealthy. Building a good relationship with them is a wise choice." Riley didn't mind.

Sarah, with a glint in her eyes, spoke up. "How can you lie to us like this? I heard from Mya that you sold the painting to her grandpa for two million!"

Ashley looked at Leslie in shock. "Leslie, you've really disappointed Mr. Lester, if he knows that..."

Leslie sneered inwardly. Sarah was quite good at playing her part,

making the situation escalate to a group-level issue.

Riley became even more anxious. "Leslie, how could you do such a foolish thing? Two million for a ten-million painting?!"

Leslie widened her eyes and glared at Sarah. "Dad, I didn't sell it!"

"I was afraid you'd get into trouble, so I told Daddy. I didn't want to see you scolded by him. But if Mr. Lester finds out, Byrd Venture will definitely be resented by him!" Sarah looked pitiful.

Leslie coldly smiled. Sarah was skilled at talking, escalating the issue to the level of a corporation.

So Riley was even more anxious. He suddenly stood up and said, "Go and get the painting back now! How much are you willing to sell it? I'll give you that money!"

"Daddy, she sold the painting cheaply. Only two million!"

Sarah said hurriedly, and Ashley pretended to be shocked. She shook her head in disappointment and said, "Leslie, you really let Mr. Lester down..."

"Dad, Mom, you've got it all twisted. How on earth could I sell that painting? Don't buy into Mya's baloney. Wyatt is a fan of paintings, so I handed it to him for two months to appreciate, and then it's back. If you don't believe me, Dad, you can personally ask him,"

Leslie retorted with a dismissive snort. "Why are you tarnishing my reputation? There was no sale of the painting!"

Riley's face became much better. He stepped out onto the balcony for a call. After a brief conversation, Riley returned with a satisfied grin.

"Sweetheart. Wyatt praised your wisdom, and based on that, the Cohen Group is looking to team up with us on a project!"

Ashley and Sarah exchanged glances, their expressions turning somber.

"So, it was just a misunderstanding... Mya must've been spinning baseless tales. Sorry, sis!" Sarah quickly apologized, forcing a smile.

"Hmph, no need for the theatrics. You almost had me catching an earful from Dad!" Leslie chuckled with mild discontent.

Riley shot a stern look at Sarah. "Sarah, don't go stirring the pot. You nearly had me convinced that Leslie would sell a painting for two million!"

Sarah lowered her head. "Dad, I didn't mean to. I just got worried when Mya started spouting things about my sister."

"Alright, it's just a misunderstanding. Let's sit down for dinner; I'm famished!" Ashley interjected, smiling to ease the tension.


A glimmer of resolute determination flashed in Leslie's eyes. Want to go up against me? Do you even stand a chance?



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