

Chapter 36

Inside a vast mansion, four individuals awaited Abner and Adrian's return. Riley became the center of attention. Like Adrian's family members, they sat at the dining table as if participating in a staring contest.

Anthony King, Tonet, and Fredrick scrutinized Riley's every move, judging her by her appearance.

Tonet had short black hair, very full lips, a slender face, and skin as white as pearl. She kept raising a brow at Riley and sometimes whispered in Fredrick's ear.

Adrian's stepbrother also had very fair skin. He had light brown hair and was good-looking. However, to Riley, Fredrick paled in comparison to Adrian.

Fredrick was constantly smirking and checking Riley's frame. The way he maintained his prolonged gaze felt invasive and inappropriate to Riley. It made her very uncomfortable.

"Anthony, I'm only looking out for Adrian. I think she must be a gold digger," Tonet remarked, leaning closer to her husband. She pretended to whisper, but her voice was audible enough for Riley to hear.

"Are you really in a relationship with my son?" Anthony King asked in an authoritative tone. "Or are you just using him to climb the social ladder? I'm warning you right now: Don't use Adrian."

Riley was dumbfounded. She asked back, "Excuse me?"

"My son had not dated a woman since his early college days. Because of his condition, only women with selfish intentions expressed interest in

dating Adrian," Anthony revealed. "Leni Eros was the only good candidate to be my son's wife because she obviously doesn't need Adrian's money."

"What did he say? It sounded more like Anthony was discounting his son," Riley mused.

"Mister King, surely you can't think that. Are you saying that Adrian has no better qualities than his money?" Riley said back. "Adrian is so much more. As his father, you should know this about him."

"Adrian is handsome, smart, talented, strong-willed, disciplined, and kind. All his employees respect him and look up to him for leadership. He is protective of the people he cares about, like Aunt Linda. He treats me well. Even without his money, any woman is lucky to be with Adrian. This part of him hasn't changed since we were in college, regardless of what has become of his legs," Riley added.

"You know Linda? And you knew Adrian since college?" Anthony asked with his brows meeting.

"Yes, Aunt Linda and I get along very well. And, yes," Riley nodded. Despite the tension in the room, she confidently said, "Adrian is like my knight in shining armor. He saved me from drowning once and was a good college friend. However, our communication was cut off due to his accident."

"It was only recently that we have reconnected, but I have always known him to be a person of good character," Riley described.

"Adrian has good character? Are you sure we are talking about the same person? He isn't even respectful towards me," Tonet bitterly said. "He is my husband's disobedient son."



Riley didn't like Tonet's tone. She was utterly shocked by how Adrian's own family viewed him. 'Why don't they see the good in him?'

At that point, Riley could not help but clench her jaws. She suggested, "Surely, there is a misunderstanding here. After all, there is a saying that goes... respect is earned."

Tonet's eyes rounded. She pointed a finger at Riley and said, "Are you - are you saying -"

"Are you causing trouble for Riley?" A far more authoritative voice echoed in the dining room, and it came from Abner King. He returned with Adrian. 1

"No, Father, we were just making sure Riley here has good intentions toward Adrian," Tonet suggested. Her earlier contoured expressions were now masked with something neutral. "There is no trouble here."

"It's like what my wife said, Father. We want to know more about Riley," Anthony echoed. "If Adrian wants to replace Leni, she should be far worth it."

"Leni Eros is not marrying Adrian. She had made that clear already. Let us not push it," Abner expressed. "As for Riley, let me be the judge of that. I am the patriarch of this family, and I have a good sense of character!"

"Riley?" Abner called. "I'd like to have a word with you... in private."

Riley turned to Adrian's grandfather, a little jittery. However, when she met Adrian's gaze, she felt reassured. Adrian had nodded her way, mouthing, 'Don't worry.'

Well, Riley thought Adrian's words were true. She was more worried



about the people at the dining table than Abner King. She followed Adrian's grandfather to his study and the latter urged her to sit in front of his table.

As soon as they were settled, Abner asked, "Is it possible to move on from a failed marriage so soon? Tell me how you found yourself in a relationship with my grandson when you had just recently divorced."

Riley tried to be as calm as possible. She and Adrian had discussed what to say to Abner last night.

"It's true. I had just recently divorced," Riley admitted. "But while I was broken, Adrian was there to help me pick up the pieces. I leaned on him, and as time went by, I realized he was someone I wanted to be with."

"Adrian is no stranger to me, Mister King. He saved me seven years ago." Riley smiled as she tried to convince Abner, "Is it too fast? I supposed it is, but we can't control how we feel about each other."

"So you love my grandson?" Abner asked.

"We are in the process of figuring that out. Our relationship is still fresh, but we have a profound connection, at least -" Riley's face burned as she defined, "That's how I feel about it."

"And you are not doing this just so I could give my grandson his inheritance earlier?" Abner asked.

Riley's mouth rounded. She asked, "I'm not sure what you mean, Mister King."

"Hmmm." Abner leaned back in his chair and thought deeply. He implied, "My grandson is determined to take back what he rightfully deserves. He might just be willing to fake a relationship to get that."



"I - I still don't understand," Riley said. She raised her brow as if clueless about everything.

"Riley, you must be a good person, I can tell," Abner said before leaning forward. "There is a reason for everything I do, including pushing Adrian to have a family of his own, to find someone to support him in his endeavors. I hope this is not a mere sham to please me or have Adrian gain my approval." 1

"I'm still a bit confused, Mister King. My relationship with Adrian has nothing to do with whatever agreement you have," Riley answered. "I want to be with Adrian, and I will support him in his undertakings."

"Okay," Abner sighed. He was silent for five seconds before saying, "I want to see my grandson happy. Are you his happiness?" 1

"I believe I am," Riley claimed. Regardless of her agreement with Adrian, Riley truly wanted the best for Adrian. "I will try my best to make him happy. That's how much I care about him."

"Then, I'd really like to see that," Abner declared. "I tell you what. I know you and Adrian have been living under one roof. I will stay at Adrian's villa for one week and observe your new, loving relationship."

"What?" Now that was not something she and Adrian had planned!

Riley's heart raced, but she concealed her emotions and answered, "That would be great, Mister King. I'd also like to get to know you more."

A smirk became painted on Abner's face. He said, "Likewise, dear. Likewise."

