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Chapter 242

Leslie's expression darkened instantly.

If looks could kill, Jack would've been six feet under.

Even Phoebe seemed to sense the tension. She glanced briefly at Jack before turning back to Leslie.

"So, what were you saying?"

Leslie forced a smile, smoothing out his tone. "I was hoping you'd come with me to a friend's birthday party tonight."

Then, as if worried she might misunderstand, he quickly added, "Just as friends, of course. Everyone knows we're not together, and my friends understand that too."

Phoebe didn't seem particularly interested. She wasn't the type to enjoy these kinds of events anyway. But considering that Leslie's friends had gone out of their way to shower her with expensive gifts on her birthday, skipping out entirely felt a little rude.

Before she could give an answer, Jack cut in.

"Hey, about that History of Finance book-can I borrow yours? My copy's missing the last hundred pages."

Phoebe turned to him, frowning slightly as she said, "But I just saw you with your book yesterday."

"Yeah, but I realized the last section got torn out somehow," Jack said quickly. "I really need to review it. Can you lend me yours now?"

Before she could reply, Leslie snapped.

"You've got to be kidding me." His voice dripped with frustration. "Are you seriously interrupting just to talk about a damn book? Can't you see she's busy?"

He had already been on edge around Jack. Now, he was seething.

If Phoebe wasn't standing right there, he would've loved nothing more than to smash his fist into Jack's smug face.

Phoebe hesitated.

Leslie had a point-Jack's timing was terrible. But something in his expression made her pause.

She sighed, then turned to Leslie and said, "I'm sorry, but maybe another time?"

Leslie's frustration spiked. He tried to convince Phoebe, "Come on, Phoebe. I already told my friends you'd be there. And it's just a book. How urgent could it possibly be?"

She still shook her head.

"Jack seems pretty desperate," she said simply. "And besides, I don't even have a gift prepared."

"We can buy a gift on the way," Leslie pressed. "I'll cover it-just come. My friends are expecting you."

But Phoebe had already made up her mind. "I'll join you guys next time," she said firmly. Her tone left no room for argument.

Leslie could only watch as Phoebe and Jack left the studio. Once they were out of sight, he finally lost it, smashing his phone to pieces in a fit of rage.

But Phoebe and Jack weren't concerned at all about Leslie's temper.

Walking back to the dorm, the sun was setting, painting the sky with brilliant shades of red and orange. The cool autumn breeze brushed against Phoebe's skin, and her long hair swayed in the wind, making her look even more beautiful. Seeing Phoebe choose him over Leslie, Jack couldn't help but feel a sense of relief, quietly proud of his quick thinking earlier.

They walked in silence, neither of them speaking.

When they reached the building where the females' dorm was located, Jack waited for Phoebe to head upstairs to grab the book. But Phoebe stood still, giving him a strange look. Jason felt a little uncomfortable under her gaze, awkwardly saying, "Phoebe, could you grab the book for me? I'm really in a rush."

Phoebe softly replied, "I can give it to you, but the 'History of Finance' book only has 95 pages."

Jack froze, staring at Phoebe's serious expression, suddenly unsure how to respond. He had never actually looked at that book, so he had no idea how many pages it had.

Meanwhile, Phoebe, who was an outstanding student, knew the book inside and out. She was thoroughly familiar with it.

Instantly, Jack's face turned red with embarrassment. He felt a level of awkwardness he had never experienced before. He was also deeply grateful to Phoebe for not exposing him in front of Leslie, clearly trying to protect his dignity. She had even agreed to come with him, completely disregarding Leslie's feelings. Jack knew that they wouldn't fool Phoebe no matter how many lies he tried to spin. All his excuses seemed utterly pointless in front of this sharp and intelligent lady.