

## Chapter 17 Be Good

Chris's voice snapped Kimberly back to the present. She turned to see Chris, who had been close by, now standing right at the gate. His eyes twinkled with a friendly smile.

Kimberly hesitated only a moment before swiftly unlocking the gate. "Yes, of course."

"Glad to hear that."

Chris offered a small smile and took a peek inside, his expression showing a spark of curiosity.

The Lakeview Haven Villas, numbering over twenty, all boasted luxury furnishings ready for immediate occupancy. However, Kimberly's home stood out distinctly. One could see paths lined with carefully tended, blooming roses.

A soft breeze wafted the sweet scent of the flowers through the air.

Across the pebbled pathway, at the courtyard's center, stood a fountain adorned with a cherubic statue, water cascading from the vessel it held. Nearby, a wicker swing gently swayed, and further back, a stone pavilion housed several lounge chairs, inviting relaxation.

The courtyard wasn't large, but it exuded warmth and tranquility, meticulously arranged to encourage peace.

In contrast to his own courtyard, which was cluttered with high-end cars, this serene setting offered a peaceful, leisurely vibe.

"Have you had breakfast, Ms. Holden?" Chris pulled back his gaze, the warmth in his eyes dimming slightly.

Kimberly caught his appreciative look at her courtyard and quickly moved aside. "Not yet. Would you care for some coffee, Mr. Howard?"



Before Chris could answer, Maggie chimed in with a warm smile. "Mr. Howard, perhaps you haven't had breakfast either? I was just about to prepare something. Why don't you join us?"

Chris's smiled and responded, "Thank you, I'd love to."

"Not at all, Mr. Howard. Without your intervention, that troublemaker might have started tearing down the gate by now... You two chat; I'll go start on the breakfast."

Maggie expressed her gratitude for Chris's assistance and then hurried off towards the kitchen.

Kimberly didn't bother to relock the gate right away, knowing that with Chris present, Declan wouldn't dare to cause more trouble. She accompanied Chris through the fragrant courtyard.

"Ms. Holden, this courtyard is really special. Did your husband arrange it?" Chris walked alongside her silently for a while. As she settled onto the swing, soaking up the sunlight leisurely, he couldn't suppress his curiosity any longer.

He had returned late last night and couldn't see the scenery inside the gate. The unique view of the courtyard had stirred a bit of envy in him.

The courtyard was impeccably maintained. It was hard to believe that the owners of such a place could be in conflict!

So, were they just having a marital argument earlier? Did they still have a foundation of love...

"How could that be?" Kimberly's voice, surprised and tinged with sarcasm, suddenly broke into Chris's thoughts.

Chris was momentarily startled and looked up at the woman on the swing.

Kimberly's gaze swept nostalgically over the courtyard as she explained, "This was my parents' doing. They knew I loved roses, so they filled the courtyard with them and even hired a gardener

to maintain them. See, this swing was their idea too." Kimberly patted the seat next to her.

Although she smiled, a shadow passed over her eyes. "It's only after marriage that I've realized the ones who truly cared for me were my parents. Sadly, they're no longer with us."

Kimberly had been married to Declan for just six months when her parents died tragically in an accident. At the time, she was employed at the Walsh Group, tasked by Declan to oversee a tourism project on an island.

When her parents died, Kimberly wasn't there to be with them!

By the time she heard the news and hurried back, their bodies had been cremated, and the Holden family had already started funeral arrangements. ⑤

Declan was absent from the funeral.

Overwhelmed by grief, Kimberly hadn't even thought to question Declan's absence. A few days post-funeral, when she returned to Lakeview Haven Villa, Declan was there waiting, informing her that she no longer needed to work at the Walsh Group.

Kimberly, shocked, demanded to know why.

Declan explained that she had abandoned the island project without notifying anyone, which had disrupted the work and upset her colleagues. Her sudden departure had even reached the board of directors. ①

Her colleagues were quite unhappy with her actions and raised complaints to the higher-ups, even alerting the board of directors.

Her firing was a decision made by all the shareholders of the Walsh Group!

Feeling deeply unjust, tears welled in Kimberly's eyes as she confronted Declan, her voice breaking with emotion.

She said, "Declan, those were my own parents! They had a terrible





accident, and you think I could continue inspecting the project with a clear conscience? Don't you see how ridiculous the reason for my dismissal were? Put yourself in my shoes. If your parents had met with a tragic accident, could you have remained calm and carried on with work?"

Declan had planned to offer her some semblance of comfort, but her last words ignited his fury, leading him to smash a nearby antique vase!

In his anger, he seized her by the throat and accused, saying, "Kimberly, are you cursing my parents?"

He didn't allow Kimberly any chance to clarify, his words cutting her deeply.

He said, "Stop justifying your errors! Kimberly, you said you were restless at home and wanted a job, so I got you a position at the Walsh Group. You know the island tourism project is critical for the Walsh Group!

If I didn't care about you, would I have entrusted you with leading the team to the island for an inspection? Is it my fault your parents died? Now the project's failed, and instead of owning up to your errors, you're insinuating something about my parents. What are you implying? ⓘ

Your parents passed away, and you're unhappy, so you wish the same on my parents too? Kimberly, I never thought you could be so cruel and offensive!"

Declan's furious tirade had reverberated in her ears. Just thinking about it now drained the color from Kimberly's face, like reliving a nightmare.

"Kimberly!" Suddenly, a man's voice, laced with urgency and concern, broke through her thoughts.

Her vision blurred momentarily, and when it cleared, she found herself enveloped in a reassuring embrace.

She couldn't resist looking up into Chris's tense, striking face.



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"You... Put me down."

"Don't move!" Chris's tone was firm and unusually grave. He walked toward the villa, gazing down at her with a serious look. "You don't seem well. I've already called a doctor. Be good."



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