

## Chapter 47 Three Years Old

Kimberly chuckled at the boy's remarks, maintaining a grave demeanor as she spoke in a tone that was both gentle and firm.

"Why did they have to die?"

The memory seemed to bring the horror back to the boy, draining the color from his expressive face. He fixed a cold, red-eyed stare on her.

"Aren't you aware?" he said, his voice thick. "The bandits murdered them!"

Despite the boy's emotional turmoil, Kimberly kept her calm, remarkable for someone two years his junior.

"Indeed, that is true."

"So why question what you already know?" Chris's stare hardened, his fists clenched by his sides. He wondered if Kimberly was deliberately provoking him, possibly as payback for overshadowing her at last night's event.

He had only spoken up because he couldn't bear to see the art disrespected, though his parents had scolded him later. Being just ten, the intricate nature of human emotions was beyond his understanding.

Finding herself speechless, Kimberly urged, "Could you try to calm down? Yes, I saw your mother attacked by the bandit, but survival was possible. What I really saw was a mother determined to do everything for her child's safety."

This realization hit Chris hard, stunning him into silence as the anger faded from his eyes, replaced by the beginnings of tears.

There was still hope for him.

Kimberly breathed a silent sigh of relief, approached him, and handed him a delicately embroidered white handkerchief. "Crying won't solve our problems. Right now, we need to think about how to get ourselves to

safety. Do you have a phone?"

Chris, curled on the floor and wiping tears from his cheeks, nodded and said, "Yes."

"You have a phone and didn't think to call the police or get help?"

Kimberly's tone mixed shock with annoyance, her breathing intensified by her disbelief.

She was beginning to regret her decision to help him escape.

However, logic reminded her that the bandits were specifically targeting the boy.

Her teacher had always said that the one who caused the trouble should be the one to resolve it.

That was why Kimberly took on the bandit's challenge and put everything on the line to find the boy, understanding he was crucial to ending the crisis.

Chris's eyelashes quivered as tears spilled from his eyes, his nose reddening. He hesitantly reached into his pocket, pulled out his phone, and asked, "Should I call 911?"

"What else would you do?" Kimberly laughed, half in frustration, feeling as if she were dealing with someone completely out of their depth.

Chris gave her a look of irritation. "Why do you have to be so harsh?"

With reluctance, he dialed the police, struggling to describe the cruise ship's location. The police, realizing they were speaking to a child, attempted to soothe him and prepared to locate him via satellite.

Kimberly felt a surge of anxiety. Her dear friend Elena was still captive. She leaned forward quickly and inquired, "Officer, how soon can you get here?"

"Well, we'll make it as fast as we can, okay? Meanwhile, try to find a safe spot to hide," the police officer responded, unable to provide a precise arrival time due to the uncertainty of the ship's exact position.

After ending the call, Chris looked up to find Kimberly, who was squatting on the floor, agitatedly running her hands through her hair.

"What are we going to do? Elena is still with them. They said if I bring you to them, they'll let my friend go."

Chris blinked in surprise, and after a brief pause, he reached out to Kimberly, catching her off guard. "You can turn me in. It might be the way to get your friend back."

Kimberly stared at him as if he had lost his mind, scoffing, "How old are you, exactly?"

Chris started to respond, but Kimberly interrupted, "What are you, three years old? These people are dangerous! Trusting them is as naive as hoping for the impossible!"

Visibly upset and annoyed, Kimberly swatted Chris's hand aside. "Leave me alone. Don't distract me. I need to think of a solution."

She then stood and began pacing, her expression serious and thoughtful.

Chris was left feeling unsure. He had assumed Kimberly found him to trade him for her friend. Yet, he hadn't anticipated her reluctance to actually hand him over. He was confused.

Why not?

It seemed like the simplest solution to hand him over.

Chris was puzzled, but seeing Kimberly so distressed, he tightened his hold on his phone and slipped away to a quiet corner to dial a number he knew well.

The phone connected almost instantly, and a warm, deep voice greeted him. "Chris, are you missing me?"

"Grandpa..."

Upon hearing that familiar voice, Chris's emotions overwhelmed him, his eyes welling up as he barely whispered the word.

Exhausted from her restless pacing, Kimberly sank onto the steps, her

chin resting on her hand, her expression one of defeat.

No matter how hard she tried, a viable solution eluded her.

Suddenly, Chris appeared from the shadows and sat next to her. His voice was raspy, hinting he had been crying.

"I've thought of something. Want to hear it?"

Kimberly turned to him, noting his reddened, puffy eyes, and realized he had found somewhere to cry. She bit her lip.

She felt a slight contempt, thinking him merely a crybaby, far from the impressive figure he was on stage just the night before.

Yet, at only eight years old, Kimberly hadn't fully grasped that, despite his talents, Chris was still a ten-year-old boy who had just suffered the immense loss of his parents. The depth of his grief was something she couldn't yet understand.

"What can you possibly do?"

Chris, now more composed, his eyes still red but his look firm, met her gaze without any hint of panic.

"The rescue might take up to thirty minutes. When it's nearly time, take me to the bandit, and use me to secure your friend's release. Don't worry, I know how to defend myself, and they won't actually harm me," Chris said, detailing his plan.

Kimberly felt a surge of hope knowing rescue was imminent, but hesitated when he suggested she hand him over. "How will you protect yourself? Do you think your tears will make the bandits sympathetic?"

Chris shot to his feet, fists clenched in anger. "Don't underestimate me. I'll prove what I'm capable of!"

Kimberly was momentarily lost for words, yet it seemed this plan was their best option. After a brief pause, she nodded. "We might as well try it."

