

Chapter 4 He Had Been Able To Hear

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Slowly, Alden's gaze moved lower, and he lightly ran his thumb over her lips. "Your lipstick is smudged."

Helena's breath caught sharply, and she turned toward the mirror. Until that moment, she'd been unaware of her smudged lipstick. Now, she realized with horror that she'd stood like that in front of Alden the entire time.

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Instead, he wanted renovations—preserving the houses and the care center in their original locations.

From her quiet spot in the corner, Helena watched Alden closely. He spoke deliberately, perhaps due to his impaired hearing, but his words were always clear.

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"Are you really believing in nonsense like that?" Helena responded firmly. "If Alden was really that cruel, would he go through all this trouble preserving homes for kids and elderly people? Demolishing would've been simpler."

For reasons she didn't quite understand, hearing others gossip about Alden annoyed her deeply.

She chose to trust her own experiences with Alden rather than idle talk.

The interview wrapped up without any hitches.

But just when Helena thought her shift was over, Laurence Palmer—the station's deputy manager—urgently gathered everyone who had interacted with Alden.

"Wilson Group just canceled all advertising from our Nine O'clock News," Laurence said furiously. "Does someone care to explain what went wrong?"

Eleanor instantly stiffened in panic.

As the news anchor for Nine O'clock News, she was Alden's obvious target.

There was no way she'd take the blame.

Her voice took on a sweet edge as she said, "Mr. Palmer, Mr. Wilson and most of us had no issues at all. But Helena was alone with him in the lounge for a while. She handled his microphone personally."

Several female staff quickly jumped on Eleanor's accusation.

"Mr. Wilson wears a wedding ring. Maybe Helena tried something inappropriate and angered him."

"Clearly, it's Helena's doing!"

Laurence slammed his fist down, scowling at Helena. "You'd better have a good explanation for this, Helena!"

She stared back, stunned. "I didn't do anything wrong."

Was Alden pulling the advertising from Eleanor's program just to

get back at Eleanor for her?

Helena's innocent confusion drove Eleanor wild. She yelled, "Quit acting innocent! Obviously, it's your fault. Mr. Wilson knew you were a weather anchor from the start. I bet you two were already acquainted before today!"

Dominick interrupted sharply, saying, "Funny thing, Eleanor. Wilson Group sponsors many programs. But only your slot got canceled. Maybe you're the issue."

Eleanor stomped angrily. "Dominick, shut—!"

His voice rising, Laurence shouted, "That's enough! This isn't just about one program—it's the whole station at risk. Profits are down this year. If we don't bring the advertising back, your team's first in line when the next round of layoffs hits."

A flicker of worry crept into Helena's chest. Laurence had always leaned toward the news anchors—Eleanor's job wasn't the one at risk. The Simpson family's payment hadn't arrived yet, and her father was still depending on what little she managed to earn.

There was no way she could afford to lose this job.

It was past midnight by the time Helena finally reached home. Alden's study light remained on.

Throughout their two-month marriage—whether Alden was home or away—she'd never stepped foot into the study or the master bedroom.

She always stayed in a guest room, quietly keeping her distance. Tonight, however, Helena needed answers.

As she approached the study cautiously, a deep voice startled her from behind.

"This is your house. Why sneak around like an intruder?"

Helena turned around and collided directly with Alden's bare chest.

Droplets of water from Alden's wet hair splashed lightly onto her face, making her realize he was standing shirtless.

Fresh from a shower, Alden wore nothing but a towel. His athletic build and natural presence radiated a quiet, powerful charm.

Feeling embarrassed, Helena backed away quickly, forgetting her original intention.

Alden stared at her indifferently. "If you have something to discuss, just say it."

Taking a breath, Helena asked, "Did you pull the advertising from Nexus TV's Nine O'clock News?"

Instant regret washed over her as her eyes fell upon Alden's cochlear implant resting quietly on his desk.

Without it, Alden couldn't possibly hear her clearly.

Helena started to let it go, but Alden's voice startled her again.

"Want me to change my mind? Tell me, then—what can you offer in exchange?"

She looked up in surprise, meeting Alden's steady gaze.

Without the cochlear implant in place, how was he hearing her?

Was it possible he'd been able to hear the whole time?



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