

Knocked Up by the CEO/

Chapter 1

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Kimberly had seen hard times.

Hunger, homelessness, even heartbreak, but nothing could compare to a mother watching her five-year-old son lying still on a hospital bed. Little Landon had been so full of life just a week ago, running around their small apartment, asking endless questions, begging for just one more story before bedtime. Now he lay there, tubes and wires connecting his small body to machines.

She closed her eyes, the memory still fresh and painful. They had been walking back home after her shift from the farmer's market, Landon's hand in her as they talked about his day at kindergarten. She remembered his excitement about the drawing he had made her—a stick-figure family with a bright yellow sun overhead. Then, in a split second that changed everything, Landon saw a stray cat across the street and broke free from her grip.

“Mommy, look! Kitty!” he had called out, his little legs carrying him to the road.

A black car came speeding around the corner. Kimberly had screamed but it was too late. The sickening thud, Landon's body thrown like a rag doll, the screeching of brakes—it all played in her mind like a nightmare on repeat.

The driver had stepped out and Kimberly immediately recognized her. Anna Cole, the heiress of the Cole Group. She is always on magazine covers, always trending online for her luxurious lifestyle.

“Oh, my God, is he okay?” Anna had asked, but the way she looked at her car, not Landon, made it clear what she really cared about.

Kimberly had followed every digital breadcrumb, haunted her yoga studio, waited outside her favorite clubs, stood on the sidewalk in the rain outside Anna's favorite café. All for a single answer. For help

Instead, Anna had called her a scammer. A leech. She said she should have held her son better. Kimberly had to choke down her rage. Everything she did was dismissed like trash.

Now, Landon needed another surgery and without it, the damage to his spine would be permanent. Even with the surgery, the doctors said there was no promise he'd walk again. But it was his only chance. Two hundred thousand. That was how much hope cost.

Every night she worked odd jobs—cleaning floors, unloading deliveries, washing dishes, sometimes skipping meals just to save enough to buy hospital supplies. And still, the answer was always the same:

“I’m sorry Ms. Newman, but it’s still not enough. Without the full payment, we couldn’t schedule the next surgery.”

That night, Kimberly was so tired it felt like the weight of the whole world was on her shoulders. She held Landon’s little hand in both of hers. His skin was warm, but his grip was weak.

“Baby, can you hear Mommy?” she whispered. “I need you to stay strong for me, okay? I’m going to get the money for your surgery somehow. I promise you that. You’re going to run and play football again, just like before. But I need you to fight with me. Can you do that?”

Landon’s eyelids fluttered slightly and Kimberly chose to take it as a yes.

Just then, her phone rang. She fumbled for it with trembling hands, hoping against hope it might be good news from one of the countless job applications she’d submitted.

“Kimberly Newman speaking,” she said, stepping into the hallway to avoid disturbing other patients.

“Good evening, Ms. Newman. This is Ms. Clover from Valor Group. We received your application for our marketing coordination position.”

Kimberly straightened, gripping her phone tighter. Valor Group was the biggest company in the country and the toughest to get into. People said once you made it there, your life changed. The salary was good, full health coverage—something she desperately needed to afford her son’s surgery. She’d applied months ago and never heard back. She thought they’d thrown the resume out like all the others.

“Thank you, Ms. Clover,” Kimberly said. “I... I’m really grateful you called. I’ve been waiting to hear from Valor for a long time.”

She paused, swallowing the lump in her throat.

“Please, I’m ready for the interview anytime.”

Ms. Clover’s voice came back, calm and processional. “We appreciate your enthusiasm, Ms. Newman. We’d like you to come in tomorrow at 9:00 am. For an in-person interview.”

“Thank you so much, Ms. Clover. I won’t let you down,” Kimberly said, her voice steady.

“We look forward to meeting you tomorrow, Ms. Newman. Have a good evening.”

The call ended. Kimberly stood frozen for a moment, the phone still pressed into her ear. Then, a slow smile spread across her face, growing wider with each heartbeat. She took a step forward, then another until she was spinning around in the hallway, her arms wide like she could catch the whole world.

“Is this how miracles happen?” she whispered, a laugh bubbling up. “My son...He’ll walk. We’ll be okay. We’re going to be okay.”

She danced softly, singing under her breath. The weight on her shoulders felt just a little lighter and, for the first time in a week, she let herself believe in better days.

Just then, a nurse passed by, pausing to watch Kimberly with confusion written all over her face. Kimberly froze mid-step, suddenly aware she wasn’t alone. She took a deep breath, smoothing her clothes, but the light in her eyes remained.

The morning of the interview, everything that could go wrong did. Ethan had a fever spike at 6 AM, and Kimberly spent two hours with the nurses getting it under control. By the time she left his ward, she was already thirty minutes late. She ran through the halls, tugging her blazer straight while mentally rehearsing answers to common interview questions, her heart pounding with panic. This was her chance – her only chance.

As she turned a corner toward the exit, she collided hard with someone coming out of the elevator

“Oh, my God, I’m so sorry!” she gasped, stumbling back

Her bag slipped off her shoulder and fell to the ground, spilling papers everywhere

The man she'd run into was tall, sharp-jawed, dressed in a navy suit that probably cost more than her entire life. His dark eyes flicked down at her in surprise

Kimberly dropped to the floor, grabbing her paper. "I'm really sorry, I'm just... late," she muttered, too frazzled to meet his eyes

"Are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. Sorry again." She stood, clutching the half-crumbled documents to her chest and hurried off before he could respond

Marshall Valor stood there, watching her disappear into the elevator. There was something desperate about her, something that stirred an unexpected curiosity. Most people who bumped into him either recognized him immediately or at least had the courtesy to slow down and apologize properly. But this woman had been in such a hurry, so focused on whatever was driving her.

"Marshall, really?" a familiar voice said behind him. "I told you there was no need to escort me to the doctor. I'm not a child."

He turned to see his mother, Eleanor Valor, walking toward him in her usual graceful way, dressed head to toe in a soft beige with pearls at her neck.

"And I told you I wasn't about to let you come alone," he said, leaning in to kiss her.