

## Chapter 111 The Deal

"But we're out of money!" Kimberly exclaimed. "How are we supposed to compete with the Hoffman family?"

Declan remained quiet, his gaze fixed on the auctioneer. As the final bid was called, he watched with reluctance as a representative of the Hoffman family won item number eight. Frustrated, he abruptly left the auction hall.

Kimberly, shocked by his sudden departure, turned pale under the scornful eyes of the crowd. She rose quietly and followed him out.

Meanwhile, the auction transitioned into a festive gathering in the banquet hall, where guests clinked glasses under the bright lights, filling the room with laughter.

Chris, invisible and ignored, trailed Kimberly. She looked tense as she navigated through the crowd in search of Declan.

It didn't take long for her to spot him in a secluded corner, a seductive woman clinging to him. Kimberly's face drained of color as she approached them, her voice shaky. "Honey, who is this?"

Declan, looking relaxed and slightly intoxicated, was in stark contrast with his earlier irritation. He casually put his arm around the woman, smiling slightly.

"This is Miss Hoffman. We're talking business. Why are you here?" His tone was dismissive as if he were speaking to a servant.

Chris, witnessing the scene, felt his anger rise, his hands balling into fists. Declan's arrogant attitude towards Kimberly was infuriating.

Who did he think he was, treating Kimberly like she was beneath him?

Yet, he knew he was only a specter in this dream.

"Actually, I came looking for you... Honey, the auction's over. Shouldn't we

"What's the hurry?" the woman taunted, leaning closer to Declan and offering Kimberly a glass of wine. "This is our first meeting, Mrs. Walsh. Won't you have a drink with me?"

Her invitation was clearly a challenge.

Chris struggled to contain his outrage. Surprisingly Kimberly paused only briefly before accepting the glass, her gaze locked on the woman. "If I drink this, will you leave my husband alone, Miss Hoffman?"

"Drink up, then we'll talk," the woman replied with a playful laugh, her eyes flirting with Declan.

Declan continued to watch Kimberly, staying silent as the tension grew.

Chris narrowed his eyes, watching intently.

There was something off about that drink

He tried to take the glass from Kimberly, yet his hand just passed through it.

Determined, Kimberly drank it all in one swallow. As she was about to say something her eyes bulged, and the glass tumbled from her grasp, shattering on the floor. The fragments sliced into her pale leg, but she seemed not to notice as she fell into Declan's embrace.

Declan quickly concocted an excuse and whisked the feverish Kimberly upstairs. In the room, he carelessly flung her onto the couch and loosened his tie, turning to notice someone tall by the window.

Laughing in surprise he said, "Mr. Howard, I didn't expect you to fight off the effects of the drug for so long. Well done! I'm impressed!"

At that moment, the spirit Chris stopped dead, lifting his gaze to a familiar figure slowly turning around. It was himself!

Chris in the dream looked fierce, his expression stern. He was dressed in just an open white shirt, and his voice was raspy. "Do you really intend to trade your wife for my cooperation?"

Declan responded indifferently, "Where else am I supposed to find a woman for you at such short notice? Women are easy to find, but with your status, I can't just bring anyone, especially with the strong effects of this drug."

Chris in the dream diverted his gaze to the woman on the sofa, who was urgently removing her clothes, acting out of instinct. His eyes narrowed, and he quickly draped his jacket over her.

Beside him, Kimberly, confused and unclear, sensed someone's presence

and abruptly grasped Chris's hand. Her eyes were mesmerizing

"Honey... Don't leave."

The strong drug visibly affected Chris, causing his eyes to well up. He managed to contain his urges without looking at Declan and firmly said, "Leave now!"

Declan seemed unfazed by Chris's stern demeanor, simply smiling. "Let's revisit our earlier conversation..."

Chris shut his eyes, his voice raspy. "Rest assured, you'll receive your compensation."

Declan smiled with satisfaction. "Excellent, thank you, Mr. Howard. And once you're finished, send me a message. I'll be in the adjoining room. She won't be aware it was you with her tonight."

With a contented smile, Declan exited the room.

Chris tenderly stroked Kimberly's cheek, carefully lifted her in his arms, and carried her to the soft bed..

The spirit Chris watched in dismay as 'he' and Kimberly were intimate.

Only as the early morning hours approached, with the first light dimming the sky, did dream Chris rise from the bed, collect his scattered clothes, and send a message to Declan. He cast a longing look at Kimberly, still sleeping and left the room at the sound of a knock at the door.

Declan, yawning, stepped into the room and immediately noticed the intimate bruises on Kimberly's skin. She was dressed in a beige nightgown. Without hesitation, he joined her in bed, quickly falling asleep as if the night's events had left no impression on him.

The soul Chris watched with bloodshot eyes, waiting for Kimberly to wake up. Her surprise was evident when she noticed a red stain on the sheets.

As Declan woke up, he quickly fabricated a story, soothing her with claims that he too had been drugged the previous night. Kimberly naively accepted his fabricated story.

"No! He's lying to you!" Unable to contain his frustration any longer, the soul Chris shouted, but his cries did not reach Kimberly. He felt a profound sense of powerlessness.

How could this be happening?

As dawn broke, the real Chris abruptly woke up, his eyes red and wide.

He sat up slowly, his gaze fixed on a corner of the room, his expression

one of disbelief.

He had always puzzled over his absence from the dream, but now, it suddenly all made sense...

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