

## Chapter 114 Ten Times The Standard

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Kimberly settled onto the sofa, flanked by Archie to her left and Mabel to her right. She nodded. "I understand your concerns. Don't worry, I'll handle it with care."

"If anything comes up, just call me. I'll be there immediately. Your safety is what matters most." Mabel's expression showed her unease about Kimberly dealing with Declan alone.

Over the past year, Mabel had interacted with Declan through business, as their companies both worked on new energy projects, making encounters unavoidable.

Declan was known for his ruthless and cunning nature, making him a difficult person to handle.

Mabel was genuinely worried about Kimberly's safety.

Catching this, Archie's eyes twinkled briefly, and he cleared his throat softly, asking casually, "Kimberly, Mr. Howard will be at the auction too, right?"

Kimberly gave a slight nod. "He's already assured me he'll be there."

"Then what's the worry, Mabel? With Mr. Howard there, Kimberly will be in safe hands. There's no need for undue concern."

Archie's face lit up with happiness upon hearing Kimberly's confirmation. He had been as concerned as Mabel initially, but the assurance that Chris would be present washed away all his worries.

Just last night, Chris discussed teaching Declan a lesson and promptly shared confidential details about the auction with Kimberly. Kimberly swiftly crafted an excellent plan; she and Chris were perfectly aligned!

Archie was overjoyed at the idea of Kimberly and Chris as a couple.

"Dad!" Mabel's expression became tense. How could she overlook Archie's clear attempts to set up Kimberly and Chris?

Mabel had more to say, but Kimberly interrupted her with a smile directed at Archie, "Grandpa, I'm starting to feel hungry. What's on the menu for lunch?"

Archie gave a hearty laugh as he rose from his seat. "You two keep talking, I'll head to the kitchen and check."

After Archie exited, Mabel's frown deepened, her gaze on Kimberly filled with concern, upset that her previous night's warnings seemed ignored. "Kimberly, I really can't grasp your thought process. I've warned you before, Chris is not a safe bet. Getting close to him is bound to lead to trouble. It baffles me how you don't realize Archie is eager to set you up with Chris. What are you thinking?"

Kimberly was the child left behind by Mabel's older brother and his wife. Mabel had held her dear. She couldn't just stand by and watch Kimberly step into the risky dynamic that was Chris.

Kimberly lifted her hand to her forehead, exhaling wearily. She understood what Mabel had intended to discuss with Archie earlier. She had already laid out the details for Archie at length, yet he continued to firmly believe in her and Chris as the ideal match. She had resolved to let Archie indulge in his matchmaking.

"People often find happiness in the joy of their loved ones." Kimberly winked at Mabel, playfully saying, "You're familiar with Grandpa's longstanding desires. Now, all the pressure is on me, sparing you from his endless marriage talks."

Mabel paused, her expression softening a bit. She too had been drained by Archie's relentless discussions about marriage, and being his daughter, she felt restricted in her responses. "Regardless, keep your distance from Chris. I'm advising this for your well-being Kimberly!"

Kimberly offered a gentle smile and nodded, her voice soft. "Understood, Aunt Mabel. After we eat, do you have a moment? I've got a gift for you."

Mabel, always swayed by Kimberly's charming persuasion, relaxed her expression and inquired "A gift? What is it?"

"It's a surprise"

Meanwhile, Bryce was escorted out, carrying gift boxes. Standing by the imposing black gates of the Holden Mansion, he touched his nose and walked back to his car parked along the roadside, pulling his vibrating phone from his pocket.

It was Chris calling.

Bryce answered quickly, Chris's voice coming through with a hint of urgency inquiring about the recording Bryce had sent earlier.

"Are you still at the Holden Mansion?"

"No, I've just left. They kicked me out," Bryce responded, his tone reflecting his helplessness.

Chris paused for a few seconds before asking, "What was Declan's reason for sending you to the Holden Mansion?"

It was clear that Bryce's visit was orchestrated by Declan.

"That son of a bitch sent me to deliver an evening gown and some jewelry for the auction to Ms. Holden, but she turned them down. Boss, you should have seen how the Holden family looked at me. It felt like they wanted to tear me apart. It's really tough!" Bryce couldn't help venting to Chris, his face showing his frustration.

Ever since he began his undercover work for Chris, Bryce hadn't seen any perks. Instead, he felt like a marked man, constantly targeted.

Previously, while working directly under Chris, he was treated with respect as a trusted lieutenant, a stark contrast to his current frustrating dealings with Declan.

Meanwhile, at the Howard Group headquarters.

Chris was seated in his executive chair, holding a phone in his left hand and a pen in his right, his gaze on the documents spread across his desk. Listening to Bryce's troubles, Chris felt a twinge of sympathy. "You've really been pushing yourself. I'm raising your salary by twenty percent starting now."

While it wasn't much, compensating Bryce financially was the quickest and most straightforward solution.

Chris was known for his generosity with money.

Bryce's mood lifted instantly, his voice filled with excitement. "Thank you, Boss!"

This newfound motivation surged within Bryce!

Chris responded with a calm "Hmm," his tone steady. "Next, I need you to take pictures of the clothes and jewelry Declan sent and forward them to me."

"Got it." While curious, Bryce refrained from asking more questions.

The call had barely ended when Chris received the pictures Bryce had sent. Without delay, Chris forwarded them to Leif with a voice message, saying, "Prepare a set of jewelry and a haute couture gown ten times finer than these, tailored to Ms. Holden's measurements, and ensure it is delivered directly to her at the Holden Mansion."

Leif was astounded upon hearing the instructions. Ten times the standard, Chris was sparing no expense!

"Understood, Boss!"

Chris glanced at the message on his phone, then nonchalantly set it aside and returned to his paperwork.

He was reviewing summary materials Leif had provided earlier, which included both official and unofficial details about the upcoming land auction.

Chris dedicated five minutes to the extensive stack of documents, then lapsed into thought.

As he had suspected, there was no mention of the large cache of ancient artifacts believed to be buried under the plot known as Lot 8.

Upon reflection, the lack of news was actually a good sign. Had any rumors surfaced, the government would likely have claimed Lot 8 long before it reached auction.

Chris closed the folder, a slight smile playing at the corners of his eyes as he idly twirled his pen.

His theories were likely correct. Either Kimberly was sharing his dreams, or she had lived through the events depicted in them herself!



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