

## Chapter 121 The Pain Of Betrayal

Levi radiated an undeniable presence that made it clear he was not someone to be trifled with. As he spoke, his chin tilted slightly upward, and his commanding tone left no room for debate. "Apologize to Ms. Holden."

"Apologize! To her?"

Rocco laughed, as if Levi had just shared the most absurd joke imaginable. "Are you out of your mind? Why should I apologize to her?"

"Because your earlier remarks upset her," Levi replied, his icy gaze fixed firmly on Rocco.

His voice was measured, yet an unmistakable irritation simmered just beneath the surface.

Levi had always followed his own whims, his reputation for unchecked arrogance well-known. He acted as though even the highest authorities were powerless to rein him in.

And there was plenty of justification for his demeanor. Levi was, after all, a third-generation military heir. His grandfather, Kenton, had clawed his way up the ranks to become a respected commander, while his father had been a notable military figure until his mysterious disappearance.

The Hoffman family had never offered a public explanation.

Since then, Levi had been their treasured heir. As long as he remained loyal to the country, the Hoffmans would shield him from any scandalous fallout. This privilege had fostered a sense of recklessness and invulnerability in him.

No one dared provoke Levi, not just because of the Hoffmans' military influence but also because he was a formidable fighter. The only person to ever best him in combat was Chris.

Today, in stark contrast to his casual attire at the racing club, Levi wore a striking dark red suit paired with a black shirt, his jacket casually unbuttoned. The thin fabric hugged his muscular frame, showcasing his strong build. His light gray hair was slicked back, accentuating his handsome features, and every gesture he made radiated an air of arrogance.

Levi possessed a rugged charm that was hard to ignore.

As Levi's seriousness became apparent, Rocco's earlier confidence began to wane, his smile fading into a scowl. "What if I refuse to apologize?" he challenged.

A sinister thought crossed Rocco's mind, and he let out a chilling laugh. "I've heard the stories about you, Mr. Hoffman. Are you planning to bankrupt my family or throw me to the sharks?"

Sorry to burst your bubble, but I'm an orphan staying with the Howard family. Given your family's declining influence, I seriously doubt you could bring them down. And as for throwing me to the sharks— are you really planning to do that? Just remember, I'm—"

Before Rocco could finish, Levi's eyes flashed with menace as he kicked Rocco hard in the knee. Accustomed to academic pursuits rather than physical confrontations, Rocco collapsed to the floor, agony etched on his features.

Levi advanced, gripping Rocco's hair and forcing the latter to meet his gaze. His eyes were dark and cold, revealing no hint of mercy.

"Do you really think you can talk back to me? You're lucky I haven't gone further," Levi sneered, a cruel smile on his lips that drained the color from those around him.

The spectators instinctively recoiled, eyes wide with fear.

Kimberly stood in shock, struggling to grasp how quickly things had spiraled out of control.

"Mr. Hoffman, isn't there a more peaceful way to resolve this?" she asked, her voice shaky.

"But he disrespected you!" Levi exclaimed, his attention turning to

Kimberly.

Sensing the concern in her eyes, he let go of Rocco's hair, easing his expression and softening his tone.

"Don't worry. I don't hurt women."

The crowd exchanged doubtful glances.

Anyone who knew Levi understood he feared nothing. When enraged, he showed no regard for anyone, regardless of age or gender.

With this in mind, the onlookers couldn't help but speculate about the kind of influence Kimberly must have to elicit such fierce protection from Levi.

After all, he had even dared to confront Chris's associates for her sake.

Everyone knew that Rocco and his sister had been taken in by the Howard family as children, growing up alongside Chris. The three of them were practically family, so Levi's attack on Rocco was a direct humiliation for Chris.

"Are you going to apologize?" Levi demanded, his eyes fixed on Rocco, who struggled to get back on his feet. With another swift kick, Levi sent Rocco crashing back down to the floor. His voice dropped to a low, chilling tone that felt like a death sentence, sending shivers through those who listened.

"You won't get an apology from me!" Rocco shot back, his bloodshot eyes blazing with fury. He refused to back down, even in the face of Levi's intimidation.

Levi narrowed his eyes dangerously, cracking his knuckles as he moved closer, his presence overwhelming.

"Let's find out if your bones are strong enough for me to break."

"Stop!"

A cold, commanding voice sliced through the tension, prompting everyone to turn and see Chris striding out of the elevator. He was flanked by a group of industry leaders, his expression stern and radiating an aura of icy authority.

Chris quickly approached to help Rocco to his feet, signaling for Leif to assist as well. When Chris's gaze landed on Levi, it was sharp and unforgiving.

"Why are you beating my people?"

Levi had to be out of his mind to lay hands on one of Chris's men.

With a casual laugh, Levi met Chris's gaze without flinching.

"Do you want an explanation from me, Mr. Howard? Fine. I asked your guy to apologize to Ms. Holden for disrespecting her. When he refused, I lost my patience. Now that you're here, why don't you tell me if I did anything wrong?"

Chris's expression remained inscrutable, his emotions hidden beneath a calm facade. He turned his attention to Kimberly, his voice calm yet firm. "Is what he's saying true?"

The commotion had caught the attention of every guest at the auction, but many were still oblivious to the drama unfolding, including the group of industry bigwigs accompanying Chris.

Under Chris's intense scrutiny, Kimberly felt anxious but nodded slowly in confirmation.

Just when Kimberly thought Chris might downplay the situation as he had done with Kallie, he shifted his gaze back to Rocco, who was being supported by Leif. Chris's eyes darkened.

"You were wrong here, Rocco. Apologize to Ms. Holden."

Rocco's eyes widened in disbelief, staring at Chris as if he couldn't fathom what he was hearing. He had assumed Chris would support him, but instead, he was defending Kimberly.

The realization hit Rocco like a ton of bricks. "Chris, I'm your friend! Why are you making me do this?"

In that moment, Rocco grasped the frustration Felix had felt on the luxury cruise—the profound sense of abandonment. His feelings of betrayal deepened.

Despite their two decades of friendship it seemed to hold less weight than Chris's brief connection with Kimberly.

Rocco felt justified in his actions, convinced he had done nothing wrong.

Chris frowned and sighed, his lips tightening "No matter what, you shouldn't have disrespected Ms. Holden. Did she provoke you? Did she insult you first?"

Chris wasn't simply siding with Kimberly; he couldn't condone Rocco directing his anger toward her. If Rocco had an issue, it should not have been directed at Kimberly.