

Chapter 122 Latecomer

After all, Kimberly had done nothing to deserve any of this.

Chris was aware that Rocco's harsh treatment of Kimberly stemmed from Chris's rejection of the marriage proposal to Kallie.

Rocco experienced a cold sensation in his heart as he looked at Chris with disappointment, then let out a sarcastic chuckle.

"I'd rather die than apologize!"

With that declaration, he shrugged off Leif's supportive hand and limped determinedly toward the exit.

"Huh, I'm really losing my patience here." Levi was about to follow Rocco when a hand suddenly halted him. He stopped and cast a sidelong glance at Chris, clearly annoyed.

"What? Are you going to defend Rocco now?" Levi asked sharply.

"I'll apologize to Ms. Holden for him. Is that sufficient?" Chris replied.

Levi paused for a moment, visibly taken aback, then dismissively shoved Chris's hand away. "Why are you apologizing? You've done nothing wrong!"

It was clear Levi had a complex and somewhat contradictory view of Chris. He appeared to dislike him, yet not entirely.

"What are you all staring at? Keep moving!" Levi, visibly irritated, tousled his short, light gray hair.

At that moment, the host announced that everyone should relocate to another banquet hall for the auction. Levi headed to the auction hall, paying no mind to Chris.

The crowd, cautious of upsetting Levi, quickly scattered.

Chris averted his gaze, looking at Kimberly with a remorseful expression.

"I'm sorry."

"It's not you who should be apologizing," Kimberly responded, her feelings mixed. She had anticipated Chris would support Rocco, yet the situation

unfolded differently.

"No." Chris hesitated, then added reluctantly, "Rocco's behavior towards you is actually my fault. I didn't manage our conflict well. You haven't done anything wrong."

Kimberly, surprised, grew curious. "What's the conflict between you two?"

Chris looked uncomfortable. "Don't ask."

The thought of the arranged marriage with Kallie was troubling for him.

Truth be told, he had always regarded Kallie as a younger sister. Little did he know that Renee had arranged a marriage between them without his consent.

The situation was completely ridiculous.

Kimberly was about to ask more when she noticed Declan hobbling towards her with a stern look. She quickly diverted the topic.

"Here comes my good-for-nothing husband. We'll catch up later, Mr. Howard."

Kimberly quickly walked over to Declan.

Chris observed her hurrying away and noted Declan's imposing stare before he turned to make his way to the auction hall.

Supporting Declan, Kimberly accompanied him to the auction hall, where they found their seats.

Once seated, Declan turned to her, his tone cold. "What were you discussing just now?"

Kimberly asked a server for a blanket, glanced at Declan, and responded nonchalantly, "Not much. He was just apologizing. You missed it, but earlier, I had a small disagreement with Rocco Braxton."

It was pointless to conceal it. The altercation had happened in public and Declan could easily uncover the details if he wished.

Declan raised an eyebrow, his expression one of sudden understanding.

That explained why he had noticed Rocco limping away earlier, casting angry looks.

They didn't bring up the incident outside the hotel again. Declan found it

too shameful, and with the auction beginning his attention shifted to bidding on Lot 8. He might even need to ask Kimberly for financial assistance if he ran short on funds.

Meanwhile, Kimberly settled back into her chair, gratefully accepting the blanket from the server and draping it over her legs.

The air conditioning was set high just like the last time she endured a freezing auction with Declan.

This time, she was prepared and had requested a blanket in advance, avoiding hours of discomfort.

Chris was seated at the center of the front row, with the best view of the stage.

He subtly scanned the room, his gaze pausing on Declan and Kimberly, who were seated in a corner. His eyes narrowed briefly before he averted his gaze.

Their seating mirrored the arrangement he had seen in his dream.

Next to Chris sat Levi, who was representing the Hoffman family at the auction.

Levi's presence was the only unpredictable element.

Chris's expression grew somber as he focused on the stage.

Upon reflection, Levi was indeed a significant wildcard, both in Chris's dream and at the racing club. Kimberly's response had confirmed it that she wasn't acquainted with Levi.

Yet, Levi seemed to interact with her as though they had known each other for years.

Could it be...

Chris was struck by a ridiculous idea.

His gaze hardened. He couldn't simply sit idly by.

With this thought, he subtly leaned toward Levi and spoke in a hushed tone, audible only to the two of them. "Failed to make a mark in show business? What draws you to an auction?"

A flicker of irritation crossed Levi's face as he returned a piercing look at Chris. He often thought Chris deserved a stern reprimand.

"Why not? Can't I attend?" Levi retorted. "I intend to take control of the Hoffman Group."

From his past encounters with Chris, Levi realized that to rival Chris he needed to lead his family's enterprise. Status and prestige were essential to challenge Chris effectively.

Initially, Levi's aim was to keep Chris from interfering with Kimberly's marriage. However, after seeing Declan blatantly ignore Kimberly's preferences, especially in public, Levi dreaded to think what occurred in private.

The ease with which Declan could mistreat or degrade Kimberly was alarming.

This concern stirred discomfort in Levi. He suddenly empathized with Chris's perspective.

Declan was completely incompatible for Kimberly.

Thus, securing a divorce seemed the right move, liberating her from this unworthy man and her suffering.

With this motive, Levi found even more justification to assume control of his family's business. He couldn't stand by and let Chris take the lead.

Why should a newcomer outpace someone who was there first? Simply because the original contender didn't compete aggressively.

But what if Levi, as the original contender, did contend?

How would he know the outcome without trying?

Chris remained silent, his expression grave as he regarded Levi, almost in disbelief.

A wave of unease washed over him.

"May I ask why?" Chris questioned.

Levi looked at him, one eyebrow raised. "No particular reason. It just seemed right, so I pursued it."