

Chapter 131 Cautious Choices

The moon illuminated the night sky, casting a gentle glow over a vibrant crowd where music and laughter danced together in the air. Accompanied by friend and enveloped in the electric energy of the evening Kimberly felt a sense of liberation wash over her. Her eyes sparkled with joy.

In her past life, such a life felt like a dream she could scarcely imagine.

She vividly recalled how Declan had kept her confined to Lakeview Haven Villa, never allowing her a moment's escape. It was as if she were a bird trapped in a cage, gazing longingly at the same dreary view day after day, enduring a monotonous existence that had numbed her spirit.

Kimberly reflected deeply on why she had never left Declan. Perhaps it was simply that he was all she had left.

With her parents gone and the Holden family in disarray, her remaining relatives scattered across the globe, and her best friend long out of reach, she had felt utterly alone.

Declan was all she had, and a flicker of hope still burned within her. She held onto the belief that he would one day realize she was the right choice for him, especially since he had once gone to great lengths to fulfill her wish.

In her innocence she thought that her love, especially while carrying their child, could transform him.

But she had been profoundly mistaken.

It wasn't until she stepped into a new life that Kimberly recognized the capacity for change within people.

A wave of relief washed over her as this understanding settled in. She shook her beer can and took a hearty gulp, savoring the moment.

Now, all she had to do was wait. Before long, she would see Declan's



downfall unfold. The land he had invested so much hope and resources in, convinced it would lead to success, would ultimately become the catalyst for the Walsh Group's collapse.

"What's on your mind?" a clear, teasing voice broke her contemplation. "Why are you drinking alone? Am I not a friend?"

Kimberly shook off her thoughts and turned to the tall, handsome Levi beside her. A smile brightened her face as she raised her can to meet his. "Cheers!"

Levi studied her with an amused expression, took a sip of his beer, and grimaced slightly at the bitterness. "Honestly, why do you like beer? It's such an acquired taste and fills you up!"

He usually favored spirits or cocktails, enjoying their higher alcohol content that delivered a pleasant buzz after just a few drinks.

He relished that feeling.

However, with each sip of beer, he found himself less impressed by its weak flavor and heavy fullness.

On the other hand, Kimberly was in a cheerful mood that evening.

Leaning back against the railing, she let the gentle breeze tousle her hair, tucking a stray strand behind her ear with a smile. "I don't really like it either, but today feels... special."

Though her life had taken a remarkable turn from the past, a lingering worry nagged at her—what if Declan had tampered with her drinks?

To be cautious, she had opted for canned beer. It might not have been the tastiest choice, and she wasn't accustomed to it, but at least it felt safe!

Levi raised an eyebrow, about to ask what made the day so special, but was interrupted by a voice. "Mr. Hoffman, here are your skewers."

He glanced up to see a server standing before him, completely oblivious to any hidden agendas. "Just leave them there," he replied casually.

"Okay, enjoy your meal." The server set the plate down with a smile, bowed slightly, and swiftly blended back into the crowd.

After several cans of beer, Kimberly felt a bit tipsy. The enticing aroma of the skewers made her stomach rumble, and she quickly grabbed two, handing one to Levi. She studied his profile and grinned "I don't know why, but being with you feels oddly familiar. Mr. Hoffman, have we met before?"

Levi hesitated as he accepted the skewer, captivated by her cheerful, slightly inebriated eyes. Her cheeks were flushed, and he felt his heart skip a beat. His gaze was gentle and hopeful.

"Really?" he smirked. "Maybe... if you think hard enough you'll remember something."

Kimberly raised an eyebrow, intrigued "So, we really have met before?"

Levi shrugged a hint of arrogance in his demeanor, and took a bite of his skewer. "Who knows?"

Deep down, he hoped she would piece together their past without needing him to remind her.

As they continued to eat, Levi frowned, noticing something unusual about the flavor. He looked at Kimberly and said casually, "You might want to avoid giving this kind of skewer to other men."

"Why's that?" she asked, curious about his sudden seriousness as she enjoyed her skewer.

"Do you know what this is?" Levi pointed to the skewer in his hand, his expression turning serious. Seeing her confusion, he explained, "This is lamb kidney, which some cultures consider an aphrodisiac. If you offer this to a man, he might take it the wrong way, you know?"

Levi discarded his skewer into a nearby trash can and wiped his mouth with a napkin.

Kimberly quickly grasped his reasoning and nodded, but when she noticed him tossing away the skewer after just a few bites, her frown deepened. "Why waste it?"

The Holden family had always emphasized frugality, and she found it difficult to shake that ingrained habit.

Seeing her look of regret, Levi's lips twitched, sensing his words had

fallen flat. "My sexual function's just fine; I don't need any boost."

Kimberly took a moment to process his response, but before she could reply, Levi leaned in closer, his handsome face suddenly filling her vision with a mischievous grin. "Ms. Holden, would you like to try?"

For a moment, Kimberly was taken aback, her breath catching as she instinctively pushed him away. "No, thanks. I have no shortage of options."

Still, she couldn't shake the feeling that something was off. A flush of warmth coursed through her, and she frowned. Was it the beer? Surely not. When had her tolerance dropped so low?

Meanwhile, Chris stood nearby, his grip tightening around his wine glass, his expression cold as an unmistakable tension radiated from him. His eyes were fixed on Kimberly.

As he watched her laugh and talk with Levi, frustration bubbled within him, leading him to down his drink in one swift gulp.

Next to him stood several men in their thirties, all business partners from the Howard Group. They exchanged confused glances, trying to make sense of Chris's reaction.