

Chapter 147 Finding Common Ground

"Finished venting?" Chris's calm voice slipped through the phone after Levi's rant. "I know letting this go isn't easy for you."

"So, what now?" Levi gave a harsh laugh, his anger simmering without a clear outlet. Clad in a loose black robe, he rose from his bed, padding barefoot to the floor-to-ceiling window. He lit a cigarette and took a deep drag, trying to cool himself.

He'd never been on this end of things before. He was used to being the one in control, pulling the strings, never the one fooled.

Yet here he was, caught in Declan's trap.

But Declan wasn't the only reason for his fury—he was just as livid with Chris for using him.

"I can't let this go either." Chris's voice came low and cold, a hint of menace threaded through. "He hurt her. For that alone, he won't walk away unscathed."

Levi paused, narrowing his eyes with a dangerous glint. "Tell me something Chris. How did she... make it through last night?"

There was a silence on the other end.

Levi ground his cigarette into the ashtray with a harsh motion, his expression hardening. "Don't tell me you treated her the same way you treated me."

Chris could practically feel the chill radiating from Levi through the phone. With a sigh, he leaned back on the sofa, crossing one leg over the other in a relaxed stance.

"How could I?"

"So, then how—"

"I called a doctor," Chris cut in, pouring himself a warm cup of coffee and taking a sip, his expression calm. "If you doubt it, check the hotel footage."

Of course, Chris had already ensured the surveillance had been doctored. Any footage Levi could find would only show the doctor entering and leaving the room.

Chris was always several steps ahead—he had to be.

Levi acted on impulse; Chris survived on caution. Otherwise, he wouldn't have made it through the perils he'd faced overseas.

He had enemies everywhere, people who'd love to see him dead.

After a pause, Levi said, "As long as she's alright, I'm grateful."

Relief washed over him, knowing Kimberly was safe. But his mind quickly snapped back to Declan, and his eyes darkened. He sneered, "Alright, since you saved her and didn't take advantage of the situation, I'll let him be for now. But only for a month. The second that divorce is through, he'll wish he'd never crossed me."

Levi wasn't playing around. It was one thing to try to drug him, but putting Kimberly at risk? Unforgivable.

Declan would pay for this!

Without waiting for Chris's response, he ended the call.

Chris looked at his phone momentarily speechless.

He then set it aside and took another sip of coffee, his expression unreadable.

Every time he interacted with Levi, it became clearer that Levi's connection to Kimberly was far deeper than she claimed.

A wildcard like Levi—who even someone like Kenton Hoffman couldn't rein in—kept bending for Kimberly. Furious as he was with Declan, he was willing to hold back, all for her.

Just how much did Kimberly mean to him?

And what had really happened between them?

Chris found himself mulling over these questions, tightening his grip on his coffee cup.

Finishing it off, he set the empty mug down heavily and made his way out.

A few minutes later, Kimberly, fresh from a shower, heard a knock on her door. Her nerves prickled as she stood, listening. She tiptoed over but didn't open it right away.

"Who is it?"

"It's me," Chris's low, cautious voice replied, mindful of the Holden family's presence.

Kimberly wasn't completely surprised, but she hadn't expected him to follow her here.

She gathered herself and called out, "I'm going to sleep, Mr. Howard. You should rest early too."

Was she really not going to open the door for him?

Chris arched an eyebrow, having figured out her plan the moment she slipped away during his call. He chuckled softly, then raised his voice just enough to be heard.

"Ms. Holden, going to bed..."

Before he could finish, Kimberly flung open the door, grabbed his arm, and quickly pulled him inside, shutting the door behind them. She shot him a sharp look. "Mr. Howard, what exactly are you doing here?"

The Holden Mansion wasn't exactly soundproof, and if Archie overheard...

With his temperament, he would be more than ready to nudge her and Chris toward marriage!

Archie had long approved of Chris, even before her split from Declan, and now that her divorce was nearly finalized, he'd be even more eager.

A smile spread across Chris's face as he reached up to gently pinch her cheeks, unable to resist the urge.

At that moment, he realized that even when Kimberly was upset, she was undeniably beautiful.

She swatted his hand away, watching him intently.

"Huh..." Chris shrugged, amusement glinting in his eyes. "Your guest room doesn't have a private bathroom. Thought I'd borrow yours."

Kimberly studied him a moment, then sighed. "Fine, but will you leave once you're done?"

"Leave? I think not."

Sliding his arms around her, he pulled her close, feeling her warmth. He leaned in to kiss her, his gaze softening.

Suddenly, a soft hand pressed against his lips, stopping him in his tracks.

Kimberly's eyes narrowed, her voice firm. "Mr. Howard, even though we have an understanding you can't just ignore my boundaries. Don't my feelings matter?"

She recognized that look in his eyes too well.

Thankfully, she stopped him in time.

Last night, despite being drugged, it was her first time.

She was still sore and definitely couldn't have sex again so soon.

If she had known just how intense his desires were, she would never have agreed to this...

Now, she was filled with regret.

Chris's gaze was intense as he gently pulled her hand away from his mouth, not ready to let her go. Noticing her heightened alertness, he couldn't resist teasing her, a smile playing on his lips. "Not even a kiss or a hug? Ms. Holden, you really are quite the tyrant."