

Chapter 85 Are You Lying To Me

"No longer necessary," Chris propped himself against the desk casually, his arms folded, his demeanor a stark shift from his fervent earlier request for a kiss.

Caught off guard by his sudden change, Kimberly stared at him, puzzled by the abrupt shift.

She much preferred Chris when he was overtly passionate.

Biting her lip, Kimberly held back her thoughts and asked in a tone mixed with surprise and confusion, "Why? Why is it suddenly unnecessary?"

Was it her refusal to kiss him that prompted him to turn away from her now? That seemed disappointingly shallow.

Unaware of her swirling thoughts, which would undoubtedly anger him if he knew, Chris gave her a slight, enigmatic smile.

"Questioning why? I assumed you were already aware of the reasons."

"I'm not sure what you mean," Kimberly responded, her eyes intently fixed on Chris, her face marked by concern.

The success of their collaboration was crucial for her and the Holden family, and any mistakes could not be afforded.

"Really?" Chris laughed quietly, though his eyes remained unamused.

His voice was calm and detached as he continued, "I was under the impression that you placed great importance on our families' collaboration. Now, it seems I was mistaken.

I spent time assisting you with the project proposal, and yet, you seemed ready to drop everything at a moment's notice for a phonecall. Your lack of seriousness, casual attitude, and apparent disinterest in our work together made me question whether the Holden Group is as capable as I once thought.

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Ms. Holden, do you believe I have all the time in the world to revise project proposals for you? The new energy market teems with competitors, not just your company. Why should I prioritize a partnership with a company that seems to lack commitment?"

Kimberly found herself momentarily speechless, overwhelmed by a mix of emotions, and unable to dispute Chris's assertions.

Indeed, what right did she have to demand that Chris choose only Holden Group for collaboration?

Just because he had once offhandedly expressed an affection for her?

She knew deep down that her significance was not so great. She took a deep breath, her face earnest as she lowered her stance slightly to express her sincerity to Chris.

"Mr. Howard, I hear your concerns. I truly value the time you've dedicated to helping with the project proposal. I want to clarify that I take my professional responsibilities seriously and do not forsake them for personal issues. You know, I..."

Kimberly bit her lower lip slightly, feeling a bit embarrassed. Rationally, she knew this was a personal matter unrelated to work, but another voice inside her urged that if she explained well, Chris would surely understand.

She didn't want to lose this hard-won opportunity because of Declan. However, when Declan called her today, he issued an ultimatum. He had finally agreed to the divorce, so she didn't want to miss the chance to rid

finally agreed to the divorce, so she didn't want to miss the chance to rid herself of that demon.

Pushing past her embarrassment, Kimberly looked up earnestly, her pride set aside as she said, "I've been attempting to secure a divorce from Mr. Walsh, but he has been uncooperative. I thought about taking legal action, but today he unexpectedly softened, agreeing to the divorce on the condition that I meet him."

What a despicable bastard.

Chris listened intently, his face betraying no emotion, while inwardly he seethed at Declan.

A divorce should be straightforward. Why would Declan insist on a meeting?

Could he be seeking a reconciliation?

This possibility made Chris instantly alert. He studied Kimberly, who looked serious and tense, expertly masking his own feelings.

"Have you considered the reasons behind his sudden change of heart?"

A spark of hope flickered in Kimberly's eyes as Chris engaged further in the conversation. She felt encouraged that there might be more to discuss.

"I've pondered it, but he stated there are stipulations," she responded.

Chris's eyebrow arched inquisitively. "What stipulations?"

Kimberly shook her head, her expression one of helplessness. "I'm not sure. He said he would only discuss them face-to-face."

Chris internally condemned Declan's manipulative tactics.

He straightened, his gaze intensifying and said, "For your safety, I will accompany you."

"What?" Kimberly responded, taken aback, her eyes searching Chris's face with a puzzled look. "Are you sure?"

Sensing her hesitation, Chris's demeanor cooled. He scoffed softly and questioned, "What's the matter? Do I look inappropriate? Or..." He stepped closer suddenly, reducing the space between them, his presence imposing as he peered down at her, his voice deep and foreboding. "Are you deceiving me? I must remind you, I have no patience for dishonesty."

Chris's slow tone hovered over her, prompting Kimberly to glance up at him, her expression one of alarm. "I'm not lying to you! It's just... Given your unpleasant past with him, I worry that your presence might aggravate

him."

"Then let him go mad!" Chris said, filled with contempt. He grasped her hand, pressing it against his cheek, his eyes burning with a troubling intensity. He wondered if there was something wrong with him.

Why else did he enjoy her closeness so much?

"Ms. Holden, will you consider my proposal?" he inquired

Kimberly was left speechless.

She had a sudden revelation about Chris's character. She recognized his dangerously obsessive demeanor, reminiscent of a wolf on the verge of baring its teeth.

This man posed a significant threat!

Taking a deep breath, Kimberly replied, her eyes reflecting a trace of surrender, "Alright, you can come with me."

Did she really have another option?

Clearly, she did not.

Who could say whether Chris's irritation at being refused would lead him to pull out of the project?

She needed to calm him until the strategic cooperation agreement was signed.

Chris's smile broadened, his thumb gently caressing her hand. The contact made Kimberly shiver.

"Ms. Holden, you clearly understand what's in your best interest," he said.

Kimberly managed a forced smile and subtly pulled her hand away, busying herself with packing her laptop bag to avoid Chris's penetrating stare.

She felt a twinge of frustration. Once the collaboration was sealed, wouldn't she be bound to Chris?

It was uncertain whether Chris would seek to involve her further after the

deal.

Chris regarded her intently, quietly opened a drawer, and retrieved two contracts, tossing them onto the desk. "There's no hurry to leave. Let's finalize the contract now."

A contract?

Kimberly instinctively looked at the document, the title "Investment Cooperation Agreement" embossed across the top in bold letters.

Her eyes widened slightly, her emotions intensifying