

## **CHOSEN 1851**

### Chapter 1851

In the office sat a woman in a simple tee and jeans, gripping her jacket tightly around her shoulders. Yulia glanced at the jacket for a moment, then turned to an assistant nearby. "How do we handle this?"

"We've taken care of everything. The other party will settle it privately."

Yulia nodded. "How much?"

"Five grand."

"Alright. Can I take him with me now?"

"Once the paperwork's done, he's all yours." d2

With another nod, Yulia walked out of the office.

Enter title...

The staff exchanged surprised looks. "She didn't even ask what happened?"

"Who knows?"

Nathan stumbled out, clad only in a crumpled black shirt from a night of heavy drinking, his head pounding. He staggered slightly, his face the picture of

exhaustion. Spotting Yulia leaning against the car door, he approached her. The

smell of alcohol hung on him, mixed with the scents of smoke and cologne.

Yulia stood up and opened the car door, her expression cool. "Get in. You can

shower and change at home, maybe catch some more sleep?"

Nathan, leaning on the door, looked at Yulia with bloodshot eyes. "How

considerate."

Yulia pursed her lips, walking past him. "Get in."

Nathan's grip on the car door turned his knuckles white.

"Nathan!" A woman's urgent voice came from behind them. Yulia, about to get in

on the other side, looked back.

She faced the police station entrance, where a slender figure hurried toward

them. Yulia had a good memory, especially for someone she'd just seen. It was

the woman from the office.

Yulia watched her approach, noting the coat she offered. Her gaze fell to her

own hand resting on the car door, paused, then she pulled it open forcefully.

“Nathan, thank you for last night. This is your jacket.”

Nathan glanced at the clothes in front of him, his suit jacket. He furrowed his

brow. He looked up, his expression a mix of confusion and recognition.

The woman seemed startled, quickly saying, “I... should I wash it before giving it

back? It’s a bit soiled.”

Yulia, having opened the car door, sat down in the driver’s seat.

Nathan turned, his eyes cold. “Clean it and give it back to me.”

“But how do I return it to you?” she asked.

Nathan sat down in the passenger seat and through the still-open door, replied,

“Meet me at the bar tonight. I’ll get it then.”

The woman nodded meekly. “Okay.”

Yulia started the car, and Nathan shut the door.

They drove off. The car ride was silent, the atmosphere heavy with Nathan’s

growing anger. “Nothing to say?” he finally snapped.

It was just the two of them, and Yulia couldn't pretend not to hear. She looked straight ahead, pausing before slowly saying, "What did you promise Anya last night? She was upset with me for a long time last night, but wouldn't tell me where you were taking her. She said it was a secret between you two."

Nathan's mood was dark. He said nothing, and neither did Yulia until they reached their building and exited the car in silence, Nathan striding ahead into the apartment.

Yulia followed at her own pace, eventually taking a separate elevator after Nathan.

Nathan entered the apartment first. Soon, Anya came running with a Barbie doll in hand, looking up excitedly at Nathan. Her joy turned to hurt, and she pouted, turning her back on him.

Carly followed, greeting him, but Nathan didn't respond or acknowledge Anya, heading straight upstairs.

Anya waited for an apology that never came, and tears welled up in her eyes.

Carly bent down to comfort her, but Anya only cried harder. "Nathan's mean..."

"Don't cry, Anya, my little angel."

Carly was frantic, knowing Anya was usually so well-behaved and would only cry like this if truly upset.

The door opened, and Yulia entered, sighing softly when she saw Anya crying.

She dropped her bag, slipped off her shoes, and lifted Anya into her arms.

Carly explained, "Mr. Nathan just came back. He didn't look good, and didn't say a word to Anya. He just went upstairs."

Yulia nodded, "It's fine."

Since Yulia didn't want to talk more, Carly headed to the kitchen.

Yulia sat with Anya on the sofa, drying her tears. "What's wrong, Anya?"

Anya sobbed, "Nathan ignored me."

"He's tired. Didn't you see how dirty his clothes were? He needs to rest. Once he's rested, he'll apologize to you."

Anya hiccuped, "But what did Nathan do last night to get so tired?"

Yulia pressed her lips together, pausing before admitting, "I don't know."

Anya stopped crying and climbed the stairs to find Nathan.

Nathan had showered quickly. When he emerged, he found Anya on his bed,

pouting. "I forgive you," she suddenly declared.

Nathan, expressionless, dried his hair and looked down at her. "What did I do

that you need to forgive me?"

"Come on, you totally promised you'd take me out yesterday. You're a liar, and

lying is just wrong."

"Thanks for the reminder," he said dryly, tossing the towel aside. He scooped

her up, set her gently on the floor, and crawled under the covers. "Have fun. I

need to catch some z's."

But Anya wasn't having it. She climbed over to the other side, pulled the duvet

off Nathan's head, and planted a kiss on his forehead.

Chapter 1852

“I can get a PR firm to sweep this under the rug. I could have handled it myself.”

Ronald listened until I finished speaking. “Yulia, is Anya really your sister?”

His unexpected question made Yulia’s heart skip a beat. Without thinking, she shot back, “Of course she is my

sister.”

“I’m just curious. What exactly were you doing during those months you disappeared? It’s one thing to have a tight

grip on the company shares, but doesn’t the sudden appearance of a sister strike you as odd?”

Yulia pressed a hand to her chest, trying to calm her racing heart. “What’s so odd about it? Only someone with a

dark mind would find everything peculiar.”

“And why are you so nervous then?” Ronald pressed.

Yulia swallowed hard, her hand on her chest curling into a fist. “I’m not.”

“Yulia, I really hope Anya is your sister.”

Yulia bit her lip and stayed silent.

But Ronald persisted, “So, is she really your sister?”

That question had been eating at him for a while. Yulia's disappearance and the sudden appearance of a sister

upon her return were too closely linked. He knew her parents were a solid couple. It was unthinkable that her father

would have a child with another woman so soon after her mother's death.

And if it were true, why couldn't he find any information about Anya's mother? There should be some trace of her

after her father passed away.

"What exactly are you trying to say?"

"As long as Anya isn't involved with Nathan, it doesn't matter if you're hiding something about her."

"It's none of your business, and you don't need to know."

"Yulia." Ronald called her name, halting her. "Have you considered what would happen if the media shifted their

focus to Anya? Even if they don't find anything, what about Nathan then? Can you be sure he doesn't care or won't

do his own digging?"

Yulia trembled slightly, "What's there to investigate? Anya is my sister."

"Yulia, I said it before, you're nervous. Why?"

Caught off guard again, her heart clenched, and she had no idea what to say. Instinctively, she ended the call. Anya

looked up at her with big, puzzled eyes. “Yulipop, are you scared? Is Mister Ronald bullying you?”

She stared at Anya for a long moment before shaking her head. “No.”

Anya still looked concerned and gently patted Yulia’s stomach. “Don’t be scared, I’ll protect you.”

Yulia’s eyes filled with a tender light as she tousled Anya’s hair.

“I’ll always protect you, Anya.”

Yulia’s phone buzzed with a message from Ronald. [We need to meet. I’ll pick you up in a bit.]

[No need.]

Replying curtly, she put her phone away.

Forty minutes later, Yulia was in the kitchen, managing only a few simple dishes. Carly had tried to kick Yulia out a

couple of times, but only when Anya started complaining of hunger did Yulia reluctantly abandon her culinary

experiments and leave the dining room.

But then, the doorbell rang. It was Ronald, standing at the doorway.

Yulia frowned, "Didn't you get my message?"

"I think it's necessary. For the company, for Anya, and for you."

"Don't say it was for me." Yulia cut him off coldly. "What do you know? What are you trying to prove? What do you

think I can't handle now?

"The only thing that nearly broke me in this life is behind me. I've survived betrayal by the one person I trusted

most, the only one I thought I could turn to. What's left that I can't handle?"

Ronald pursed his lips, "Yulia, you know I've never meant to hurt you. Never."

Yulia knew her emotions were out of control. She took a deep breath and realized Anya was watching them,

confused.

"Aren't you going to invite me in?" Ronald asked.

Yulia knew refusing him would just send him away for the moment, but...

She glanced towards the second floor, then grabbed her coat and told Anya, "Stay home and play with Carly for a

bit, okay? I'll be right back."

Anya hugged her leg. "Will anyone bully you?"

Yulia smiled softly. "Ask Mister Ronald."

Anya looked up at Ronald with curiosity.

He offered a faint smile. "I like her too much to bully her."

Anya beamed. "You like Yulipop?"

He nodded. "Of course."

"But you can only like her a little bit. Yulipop belongs to Nathan, so you can't like her too much."

Ronald's smile stiffened for just a moment. He smiled without speaking further, and Yulia stroked Anya's head. Then

Yulia put on her coat and stepped out.

—

"You won't even let me into your house?"

She walked briskly toward the elevator. "It's not convenient at home."

Ronald chuckled lightly. "To avoid suspicion? Or is Nathan there?"

"Isn't either reason valid?"

The smile faded from Ronald's face. "If you care so much for him and your marriage seems so perfect, why did you

debase yourself to come to me? With the Harper family's resources and Nathan's willingness to pay or apply a little

pressure, couldn't he have easily settled your troubles? And you don't have to cheat on him."

Ronald's voice held a tinge of anger. At first, Yulia was furious, but then, silence followed her rage. The past reared

its ugly head, sending a shiver down her spine.

Handing herself over to him? Cheating on Nathan?

Her lips pressed tightly together, Yulia remained silent. No one else knew that Nathan himself had wanted her to

cheat on him, and to seduce Ronald of all people.

"Why don't you say something?" Ronald's voice broke the silence.

"What is it that you want me to say?" Yulia's voice was icy as she looked up at him. "What's the reason for your visit

today?"

As the elevator doors slid open, she stepped out, with Ronald trailing behind her. Watching her cold and resolute

back, Ronald suddenly reached out and grabbed her arm from behind.

“Yulia...”

Yulia struggled at first, and when she realized it was futile, she looked up at him, angered. “What do you think

you’re doing?!”

“Do you hate me that much? Hate me for walking out on you? For not supporting you, not handing over the Shaw

family shares?” he asked, pain etching his features.

“Yes! Yes!” Yulia admitted with a sudden outburst, her voice almost a roar. “Why wouldn’t I hate you? You were my

boyfriend, who vowed to protect me for life. I trusted you, Ronald. Do you think that is not enough for me to hate

you?”

Chapter 1853

A marriage built on schemes and calculation was never his cup of tea. The only reason they were still together was

her reluctance to let go. Their peaceable coexistence hung on every sexual encounter they shared.

After all, he was a man with needs. And she was willing to give, to indulge without burden for those fleeting

moments of joy.

Their so-called “happy” marriage was rooted in “harmonious” encounters. To the outside world, they seemed to be

the perfect couple, but it was all an illusion.

Even Damon and Chloe sensed something off about their union, yet it somehow trudged on.

How could it be?

Ronald was spot-on. She only sought out Nathan to cement her standing in the company. Having the second son of

the Harpers to back her up, no one dared to cross her.

Though her shares didn’t measure up to her uncle’s, she remained unscathed in the corporate world. Nathan was

biding his time for a divorce, and she hungered for more shares. If Ronald offered his shares to her, then there was

no need to keep Nathan dangling.

As for continuing with Ronald? Her lips, pressed tightly together, lost their color under the pressure of her teeth.

Divorcing Nathan. Could Anya handle it?

Anya adored Nathan. If they split for good, she’d have to cut ties completely.

Ronald was right. The longer she waited, the more Anya would suffer. If Nathan got wind of anything, or decided to

dig deeper, she risked losing Anya too.

No, she couldn't afford to lose Anya.

Yet something unformed within her swayed her decisions.

Nathan hadn't slept well, but a two-hour nap did wonders for his spirits. He was so hungry he felt like he could eat a

horse.

Descending the stairs, there was Anya, gyrating in the living room, her small arms flailing to some

incomprehensible dance on TV.

Nathan cast a disdainful glance her way and let out a dismissive "tch."

Anya, hearing him, scurried over, "Nathan, you're up?"

He raised an eyebrow, ruffling his hair as he headed for the kitchen. When he didn't see Yulia in the living room, he

casually asked, "Where's your mom?"

"She..." Anya paused, then corrected, "Nathan, Yulipop is my big sister. Don't get it twisted, or she'll have trouble

getting hitched someday."

Nathan froze, turned, and looked down at Anya, “You looking for trouble, young lady?”

Anya pouted, “What’s wrong?”

Nathan couldn’t be bothered to argue with a toddler. Waving her off, he continued toward the dining area.

“Forget it. Not your mom, your sister. Where’d she go anyway?”

Anya toddled after him, clutching his pants, following him to the fridge.

As Nathan rifled through the fridge for food, Anya piped up, “Mister Ronald swung by today, and Mom went out with

him.”

Nathan’s hand paused mid-search, and he turned to Anya, “She went out with who?”

Anya blinked innocently, “With Mister Ronald.”

Nathan’s face darkened.

But Anya, oblivious, cheerily added, “I asked Mister Ronald if he likes Yulipop, and he said he does.”

Nathan fell silent.

“And then I told him, he can only like Yulipop a little bit because she has you.”

Nathan’s mood soured, but it was slightly better than moments before.

So, she went out with Ronald.

“When did they leave?”

Anya shook her head, “Dunno, Yulipop skipped lunch and took off.”

Skipped lunch and left? It was past two now, so she’d been out with Ronald for hours? And they hadn’t returned

since before lunch, so they were probably lunching together?

“Heh.” A cold laugh escaped him as he slammed the fridge door shut.

Anya flinched beside him, looking up worriedly, “Nathan, what’s wrong?”

Nathan’s smirk was ice cold. So, she had an exit strategy all along.

The ravenous hunger that had him ready to devour a cow vanished in a puff. Scooping up Anya, he set her down on

the couch in the living room.

As he donned his coat to leave, Anya hopped off the sofa, “Nathan, aren’t you gonna have lunch? Where you

going?”

“Out to eat. Stay put.”

Carly emerged from the balcony, with a pair of pink shoes in hand.

“Hey, Mr. Nathan, I saved you some grub.”

“Don’t bother.”

Shod and ready, Nathan yanked the door open, inadvertently pulling Yulia, who was on the other side, into the

room. After a few seconds, it was Yulia who spoke first, “Let’s talk.”

Nathan scoffed, “I’m busy.”

Yulia pressed her lips together, “Then we’ll talk when you’re free.”

“Lunching with another man while leaving Anya home alone? Had a good time?”

Yulia frowned, “When did I ever do that?”

Nathan’s smile didn’t reach his eyes, which were frosty as he stared her down. “Who you asking?”

Yulia opened her mouth to respond, then realized something and went silent. Her silence was confirmation enough

for Nathan, fueling his rage. He pushed past her and stormed out of the apartment.

Yulia braced against the door, nearly tumbling down. She was left alone, watching the door slam shut behind him.

She steadied herself against the wall just in time to avoid an embarrassing tumble.

Nathan didn't pause for a second, and Anya watched him go with a worried frown.

Yulia stood up, closed the door, and reached for Anya's hand with a gentle tug. "Have you had lunch yet?"

Anya nodded. "Yeah, but Nathan hasn't."

Yulia's smile was thin but reassuring. "He's a grown man, and he won't let himself starve. Trust me."

Anya considered this, then nodded again, though she couldn't hide her concern. "Nathan works so hard."

Yulia's smile faded as she let the subject drop.

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Nathan made a beeline for the bar he'd been at the night before.

It was still early in the afternoon, and the place wasn't crowded yet. The staff tensed up at his arrival, treating him

like a king.

His mood seemed even darker than yesterday, if that was possible. God only knew what this spoiled boy wanted this

time. It looked like another uneasy day for the bar.

Regardless of who offered him the best VIP section, Nathan showed no interest. He just ordered a slew of drinks

and filled the table with them.

“Get some girls over here to keep me company,” he grumbled.

The staff, resigned to their fate, sent for some companions. Tall, elegant, and beautifully made-up women arrived

soon.

“Mr. Nathan, the ladies are here.”

He just grunted in response, poured a shot, and downed it without so much as glancing at them. At first, they stood

patiently, but as time dragged on, they exchanged confused looks. Were they just human screens for him?

It was a peculiar sight, really. Outside, the sun blazed, but here he was, drinking alone, and heavily. Such places

were meant for the nightlife, yet here he was, creating a time warp of sorts, making everyone uncomfortable.

But there was nothing they could do.

When the manager arrived, he too seemed clueless. He just signaled the women to surround Nathan. One by one,

they took their seats next to him, pretending to be brave as they poured his drinks.

Nathan didn't refuse. He leaned back, drank when his glass was full, and remained the center of attention well into

the evening.

The women filled the U-shaped couch, with Nathan sitting motionless at the center.

"Looks like he's picked all the women in the place, huh?"

"Who's that?"

"Well, that's the Harper family's second son. Nothing new."

"I thought he got married? Has a kid too, right? And here he is, openly with all these girls?"

"Well, just last night, he was fighting over a woman, ended up in the slammer. His wife had to bail him out."

"Wow, just got out and he's already back at it?"

The patrons murmured among themselves, and the atmosphere grew tense.

A woman in a white dress entered, holding a bag. She scanned the room and headed straight for Nathan.

Chapter 1854

Even though their marriage wasn't one of true love, now their issues had become the talk of the town.

Couldn't he, for the sake of the years they had shared a bed, leave her with some dignity? What was she supposed

to do as a nominal wife when her husband was out gallivanting?

And where did she truly stand? She didn't even know what her proper attitude should be.

A wife? Did he ever consider her one? Putting on a show for herself was just ridiculous.

Perhaps he had grown tired of her these past few days, and was hinting that she should initiate the divorce?

Ronald noticed her hesitation and spoke up again. "Yulia, now that Anya's become the center of attention, if you

keep dragging your feet..."d2

"Ronald," Yulia suddenly cut him off.

"What?"

"Anya is important to me, but getting caught up in the mess with Nathan again would just be another

misunderstanding. What are you really thinking?"

Ronald paused for a moment, "Yulia, I can't find any record of this supposed biological mother of Anya you've been

mentioning."

“So?”

“Is Anya actually your daughter?”

Yulia’s grip on her phone tightened, and after a few seconds, she let out a cold laugh, “You have quite the

imagination. Whose daughter?”

“Nathan’s.”

The cold laugh on Yulia’s face froze, and her complexion turned pale. For a long time, she said nothing. “I never had

any interaction with him before.”

“Nathan used to be a drifter, carefree and wayward. He’s been to many places, and you, coming from the South to

the North, have also moved through several cities. In three of those cities, there’s a chance you and he may have

crossed paths, however big or small. The odds are too slim. It’s rare for two people to even have that kind of

probability of fate in the same city. I don’t know if it was a fluke or if you planned it, but other than him, men rarely

appear around you. If Anya is your daughter, then the only father I can think of is Nathan.”

Yulia seemed dazed. Had they really crossed paths in three cities?

She couldn't remember. All she knew was that Nathan was her last lifeline. When she knew his identity and

happened to be in the same city, she did the craziest and boldest thing of her life.

As for the child...

"Yulia, Anya's right there, and I have plenty of opportunities to prove your relationship. You don't need to hide it

from me. The only person you need to hide it from is Nathan. Everyone can know, except Nathan. Yulia, if you keep

delaying, you might really lose Anya."

Yulia's breathing hitched. Ronald really had her by the throat. He always knew what mattered most to her.

"Even if I divorce Nathan, it doesn't mean we'll end up together."

Ronald chuckled, "That's okay. At least, I'll have a legitimate chance to pursue you again."

"Have you thought about my position in the company once we divorce?"

"I'll give all the shares to you."

Yulia let out a scoff, "Even if I'm not with you?"

"I owe you."

“Name your price,” Yulia suddenly said.

Ronald frowned, “Do we really have to make it that clear between us?”

“As long as you’re not my parents or my husband, it has to be clear.”

Ronald was silent for a long time before finally saying, “Alright. I’ll sell them to you.” As long as she agreed to

divorce Nathan, anything was acceptable.

Yulia hung up the phone without another word. She glanced at the trending news before exiting the app.

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It was a given that Nathan wouldn’t return that evening. After putting Anya to bed, Yulia sat alone on her own bed,

lost in thought.

She turned her phone on and off repeatedly, unsure how many times she had done so. She was tempted to call

Nathan and ask what the hell he was up to., but then she remembered that he probably wouldn’t have time to

answer the phone. Or perhaps she would interrupt something important, earning a burst of anger or ridicule for

overstepping her bounds.

After agonizing for a while, her phone warned of low battery, and she finally plugged it in, crawled under the

covers, and tried to sleep.

—

At the bar, Nathan left with a woman, and the crowd's curiosity faded as quickly as it had arisen. Those who

frequented bars weren't exactly saints.

A man leaving with a woman was hardly an unusual sight. In fact, it was rather common. Nothing of interest there.

The room Nathan had been given was of the highest quality. As soon as he entered, he flung the woman onto the

couch and seated himself opposite her, watching her with a smirk. "How are you going to thank me?"

The woman sat up, her face flushed. "I... I don't know."

"Hmm," Nathan chuckled, "Hasn't anyone taught you? There's really only one way to show gratitude around here."

She didn't respond.

Nathan loosened his tie and continued to watch her in silence. That gaze seemed casual, but it had a piercing

quality.

Eventually, the woman stood up and approached Nathan, straddling his lap, her knees resting on the couch, her

hands on his shoulders.

Nathan's lips twitched as he lazily looked up at her, "Are you a virgin?"

She stiffened slightly, "Didn't you say I should properly thank you?"

As she leaned in for a kiss, Nathan laughed softly, looking up at her without dodging. "If you're not a virgin, get off

me. I only play with virgins." His face wore a smile, but his eyes were cold and unyielding.

The woman's expression soured, "I've had a boyfriend before."

"Get off." Her words were cut short by Nathan's icy command.

She hesitated, and Nathan's hands gripped her shoulders and pushed with sudden force. Caught off guard, she

tumbled onto the adjacent couch, her position awkward and her cry of surprise adding to her embarrassment.

Nathan brushed off his shoulders, leaned back, propped his head on his hand, and watched her coldly. "Who gave

you the impression I'm someone who would settle for just any woman?"

Watching the woman scramble to sit up, Nathan couldn't help but let out a derisive chuckle. "How many guys have

you fooled with that innocent act of yours, huh?"

The woman bit her lip, her gaze darting around uncertainly. "I... I haven't."

Nathan's smirk only deepened. "At least you managed to fool one, otherwise the price wouldn't have come down so

easily, right? How much? I'll double it for you. How does that sound?"

"I don't know what you're talking about..."

Nathan raised an eyebrow, his fingers curling up to his temple as he casually rotated them.

"Anyway. I just wanted to thank you, Nathan. I've returned your clothes, and I... I should get going now."

As the woman spoke, she got to her feet, ready to leave in a hurry.

Nathan's eyes were closed. "Try leaving this room, I dare you."

The woman froze in place. "Nathan..."

"I didn't say that I can't play with non-virgins. Come here."

The woman stood still, unsure of how to react to this man's contradictory statements. His words just now clearly

meant that he didn't intend to hook up with her..

All she wanted was to leave, but she was too afraid to move.

Nathan lay on the couch, a frown creasing his brow, a sheen of sweat on his handsome face.

The woman hesitated in place for what felt like an eternity. Finally, under pressure, she turned back around. Taking

in Nathan's somewhat abnormal state, she was surprised.

She thought about leaving, but as soon as she turned around, her wrist was suddenly gripped. She jumped at the

sudden contact, feeling the unexpected heat of his hand.

After a moment's thought, she turned back around and placed her hand on Nathan's forehead. It was burning up.

"Nathan, you have a fever."

"Shut up. Just stay put. You don't want to know what will happen if you step out of this room."

The woman was silent. For a long time afterward, the room was devoid of conversation.

Chapter 1855

With a furrowed brow, he snapped, "What's up?"

The woman was perched on the couch, her phone in hand. "Your phone's dead?"

Rising from his bed, Nathan looked around, prompted by her question. She pointed at the coffee table, then picked

up a black phone, standing to hand it over to him.

As Nathan took the phone and opened it, she pursed her lips and said, "I thought it was dead. You didn't get a single

call or text all night."

Without a word, Nathan glanced at the phone and tossed it aside, the screen going dark. The woman asked, "So

really no calls or messages last night?"

Nathan stood up, intending to find the bathroom. Upon hearing her words, he seemed particularly impatient. "What

are you trying to say?"

There was a moment of silence before she spoke, "The stuff from the bar last night went viral. I thought your wife

would've called to check in."

Nathan froze, his hungover eyes darkening as he turned to her, his look menacing.

She recoiled two steps, her face stricken with fear. "Sorry."

Nathan looked away, a sarcastic laugh escaping him after a moment's thought. He stormed into the bathroom, and

the door slammed with a resounding thud.

He emerged from a quick shower, dressed in a bathrobe, and ignored the bewildered woman on the sofa. He

grabbed his phone and ordered clothes to be delivered.

While waiting for his clothes, Nathan ordered breakfast. He didn't neglect the woman. They ate together.

She didn't eat much, while Nathan ate like a man with a hearty appetite. She'd seen many people, men and

women, treat meals like a mere formality, barely nibbling, as if that was enough to last the day. Now, she had seen

what a real man's appetite looked like.

But even this was nothing compared to Nathan's usual intake. After a night of drinking on an empty stomach, he

was uncomfortable and headachy. Eating much was out of the question.

They ate in silence. When the clothes arrived, he tossed an outfit to the woman, gesturing for her to change in the

bathroom. She complied, puzzled, and when she returned, Nathan was transformed. Dressed in a crisp suit, his hair

casually styled, he exuded an aristocratic charm, a rakish allure.

“Let’s go,” he said emotionlessly, opening the door.

Her heart racing, she followed him out, pausing to murmur, “We really don’t have to do this.”

He walked on without listening.

The bar was quiet in the morning compared to the previous night’s revelry. The patrons were lethargic, silently

preparing to leave, their spirits downcast.

But as they saw Nathan and the woman leave together, their expressions were oddly knowing.

Nathan sensed something amiss. “What were you about to say?” he asked her, eyes fixed forward.

Startled, she whispered back, “You made headlines at the bar last night. If it was all an act, you succeeded. But I’m

not sure if this morning turned out how you wanted.”

Outside the bar, they breathed in the fresh air. “What didn’t turn out as I wanted?” he pressed.

She hesitated to reply, so he turned to her, only to have her phone thrust in his face.

The headlines blared: “Harper family’s second daughter-in-law leaves with ex, both head to work.”

“Nathan and his wife, living separate lives.”

“Old flame rekindled, Nathan’s wife indifferent to scandal.”

Nathan’s face turned ashen.

No wonder the woman pitied him.

No wonder she emphasized his silent phone.

No wonder those bar patrons looked at him so meaningfully.

Had Yulia truly left without a word, off to work sweetly with her ex, ignoring the scandal?

Yulia, well played.

His assistant pulled up in the car, and Nathan strode in, leaving the woman behind. Embarrassed but relieved, she

watched him go.

Nathan’s first impulse had been to storm into Yulia’s office, but he soon reined himself in. Why should he care? Why

should he be the one led by the nose?

He rerouted to his office.

The news buzzed online. Yulia and Ronald’s lunch further fanned the flames. The Harper Group building was tense,

the atmosphere thick with unease. Everyone was on edge, and Nathan's office was silent all day. Despite his work,

no personal calls came through.

As night fell, Ronald's dinner plans with Yulia were rejected. "Anya's waiting for me at home. I'll skip dinner," said

Yulia, her voice casual but with an undercurrent of fatigue.

Ronald didn't press the matter. "Bring Anya with you this weekend," he suggested.

Yulia glanced at him as she unbuckled her seat belt. "We'll see," she replied noncommittally.

"Yulia, I'm really fond of Anya."

"Yeah."

With that, Yulia turned to open the car door, but as she did, her movement halted abruptly.

The streetlamp outside the apartment complex cast a bright light, and moths fluttered in its halo on the edge of

visibility. The parking lot, however, remained dim.

A tall figure leaned against the front of a car, arms crossed, seemingly watching their direction. Yulia felt a tightness

in her chest as she squinted to get a better look, but before she could process the sight, Ronald's hand hooked her

shoulder, pulling her back with an unexpected kiss on her forehead. Yulia's body stiffened, her eyes blinked in

surprise, and before she could react, she suddenly tumbled out of the car.

Ronald reached out to catch her, but he was a step too late. Yulia's knee scraped the ground as she was yanked out

of the car, her posture awkward and forced.

Seeing this, Ronald immediately opened his door and got out of the car.

As he rounded the vehicle, Nathan's features became clear. His rugged good looks and tall, imposing stature

exuded a wild, untamed air, laced with an innate aristocracy. His masculine presence was undeniable.

Compared to his earlier silence, Nathan now resembled a lion that had been stepped on—a raw embodiment of

territorial infringement.

Ronald paused for only a moment before stepping forward, his voice steady. "Let her go."

The man's fist, driven by fury, landed on Ronald's face.

Ronald staggered, his arm bracing against the car's hood.

Nathan was well-protected by Damon when he was younger, but after all, being a boy, he also developed an

interest in some martial arts. Despite Damon being strict, he still learned a few things from him.

Blood trickled from the corner of Ronald's mouth.

Yulia, still reeling from being abruptly pulled from the car, was stunned by the sudden violence.

Nathan advanced on Ronald, gripping his shirt, his expression and tone equally fierce. "Who gave you the right to

touch her?"

Ronald sneered, "Nathan, had enough fun with other women and now you're looking for some attention?"

The words were a slap to Nathan's face—a reminder of the previous night's escapades at the bar, a self-inflicted

blow.

But the truth wasn't like that. He hadn't planned to lose control like this. He just knew Yulia hadn't come home that

night and found himself irrationally waiting for her here. There was no reason to be this impulsive, yet seeing

Ronald driving her home ignited a towering inferno within him.

And then Ronald kissed her. The fury found its vent, erupting with force.

How did he feel? Still angry, with no relief in sight.

His suit jacket's buttons had come undone in the scuffle. Every muscle in his body tensed with the impact of his

punch. His clenched fists and the muscles straining against his shirt seemed ready to burst. Every inch of him was

uncomfortable, but his heart clenched painfully.

The image of Yulia being kissed flashed through his mind, puncturing his heart. He knew he shouldn't have gone to

see her this morning, and he shouldn't have let her draw out his emotions.

Yet he had lost control. It was all so unclear.

"You have no shame, do you? She is my wife now."

"And what is a wife to you? A doll in the house for you to mold as you please?"

"This is our damn business. What's it to you?!"

Ronald's cold laughter cut through the tension. "I love her, does that count?"

Nathan's forehead veins bulged, his grip on Ronald's shirt creaking with tension. That was when Yulia finally came to

her senses, reaching for Nathan's clenched hand on Ronald's shirt. "Nathan, what are you doing?! Let him go."

Nathan looked at her hand trying to pry his away, his gaze shifting to the corner of his eyes, "Let go."

Chapter 1856

Yulia's struggle to break free from Nathan's grip was futile. She was incensed, nearly losing her mind.

How could he bring up Anya out of the blue?

Her mind was a blank slate, her only thought was to deny everything.

Ronald simply stared at Nathan, a bruise marring his otherwise handsome face, and his faint smirk was unbearably

irritating. "It was a sham marriage from the start. Thanks for playing house, but it's time she came back to me."

Yulia's entire body trembled. "Shut up, Ronald. Just shut up!"

In the next moment, she stumbled, and before she could regain her footing, Nathan had dragged her through the

lobby of the apartment complex without further discussion.d2

"Nathan!" Yulia had no clue what he was planning, but a sense of dread overwhelmed her.

Throwing Yulia into the elevator, Nathan frantically jabbed the close button before Ronald could catch up. The

elevator, holding just the two of them, was charged with tension, their rapid breathing the only sound.

Pressed against the cold metal walls, Yulia pursed her lips, her face ashen, barely daring to breathe too loudly. She

was on high alert, watching Nathan for any sudden moves, terrified of the darkness she saw in him. Her wrist,

gripped tightly in his hand, throbbed painfully, as if her blood flow had been cut off.

“So, Anya isn’t your sister, huh?” Nathan’s voice, cold and harsh, made her flinch.

It was a statement, not a question.

“No, Anya is my sister...”

Nathan let out a bitter laugh, turning to her with a menacing look. “Yulia, do you really think DNA can’t tell the

difference between sisters and a mother-daughter pair?”

Her fingertips trembled, and after a fleeting panic in her eyes, despair took over.

The elevator doors slid open, and Nathan yanked her out. They burst into the apartment where Carly was looking

after Anya. Hearing the commotion, Carly barely had time to rise before Nathan stormed in with Yulia stumbling

behind, looking disheveled.

Startled, Carly quickly covered Anya's eyes and stayed silent. There was no time for greetings before the pair

ascended the stairs.

Yulia was flung onto the bed. Nathan loomed over her, his legs pinning her down.

Her voice shook. "Nathan..."

He pressed down on her shoulders, leaning in to meet her gaze.

Apart from his angry eyes, he made no move.

Despite her fear, Yulia could still see the unmistakable disdain in Nathan's eyes. She suddenly felt calm. Of course.

How could she forget? He was a Harper, with any woman at his beck and call.

Clean, docile, a dime a dozen, just like his latest fling, that was what he preferred. Not someone like her, who

schemed her way up, dirty and calculating, willing to sell herself for gain, and now, even had a child with another

man.

He had every right to loathe her.

Nathan didn't touch her. He rolled off and stood by the bed, looking down at her. "Are you going to come clean, or

should I take Anya to the hospital myself?"

Yulia tensed once more. She sat up, meeting his gaze. "Whether she's my sister or my daughter, it's none of your

business. You've been wanting a divorce, right? I'll agree to it."

Silence fell like death.

Yulia bit her lip. "I appreciate your patience these past days. I've been content. I've dragged the divorce out too

long, and it's time it ended."

"Is it time, or have you found a surefire escape and think I'm of no further use to you?"

Yulia fell silent, then said slowly, "Think what you want. As long as you're satisfied, that's all that matters to me."

She was accustomed to his disdain and insults. What more could she not endure? It was her fault, after all.

Her acceptance only fueled Nathan's scorn. "Yulia, you're unbelievable. You shamelessly schemed into marriage,

and now you're shamelessly seeking a way out. Well, your dignity isn't worth much. Seems like you've put a price

on yours, and I doubt anyone's dignity is worth more than yours."

Yulia bit her lip harder, enduring Nathan's insults in silence.

"But are you really content? After being tossed aside without a second thought, you're still eager to crawl back? Tell

me, Yulia, have you always been this desperate, or do you think you can't survive without a man?"

Yulia swallowed hard, feeling a painful dryness in her throat. "You're right, I have no shame, and you've known that

from day one."

Her confession made Nathan feel like he was about to explode.

"I can't even imagine what Anya will turn into under your guidance."

"It doesn't concern you!"

Yulia, who had been relatively composed, suddenly changed at the mention of Anya. She became defensive, her

suppressed sharpness now fully evident.

Nathan paused, staring down at her, taken aback by her sudden shift.

Yulia's eyes flickered but avoided his gaze. She clumsily got up from the bed. "It really has nothing to do with you.

We're going to divorce. No matter if Anya is my sister or my daughter, and no matter what she turns into, it has

nothing to do with you. I'm ready to handle the divorce anytime. I... I need to pack. I'll move out tomorrow."

In that moment, all she wanted was to be away from Nathan. Being near him any longer, she feared she might give

herself away. She was never fooled by Nathan's wild and reckless façade. Nathan possessed the wisdom and

presence expected of anyone bearing the Harper legacy. His insights were keen, provided he deemed a matter

worthy of his attention.

Yulia was afraid, terrified that he could see right through her. She was eager to leave, but Nathan's grip on her wrist

pulled her back. His fingers tilted her chin upward, forcing her to meet his gaze. His gazes, at such close range,

seemed endlessly dark.

He studied her for a long moment before his eyes narrowed slightly and he spoke. "What are you so afraid of?"

Yulia's body tensed, and the pressure on her wrist increased ever so slightly.

"Yulia, are you keeping something from me?"

"No..."

She twisted her neck, trying to break free from his hold. She didn't succeed, but she managed to avoid his probing

eyes.

"Look, I admit I have no connection to Anya, but why are you so on edge about it?" Nathan paused and then

ventured, "Are you afraid I'll fight you for Anya?"

Her worst fear, so abruptly voiced, left Yulia utterly stunned. Frozen in Nathan's embrace, she had no clue what to

say.

Nathan's gaze tightened on her. "Even if she's your daughter, what right do I have to fight you for her? Yulia, unless

Anya isn't really your and Ronald's daughter, is she?"

Yulia felt her head might explode. Anya was involved, and Yulia couldn't remain indifferent, not even pretend to.

Yet Nathan kept pressing, adding, "Or is it possible that Anya is actually..."

Yulia's temples throbbed as if they might burst. "Nathan, Anya is my life. No one can speak of her lightly. She

belongs to me and me alone. I just want to protect her, to ensure she grows up healthy, without a care in the world.

Whether she's my sister or my daughter, it makes no difference to me. That's her story. But..."

She paused, then slowly lifted her gaze to Nathan. "Ronald shouldn't have mentioned Anya, and you... what you're

doing... You might disregard my feelings, but what about Anya? Do you realize how many people are pointing

fingers at her now. I won't allow anything to hurt Anya."

Nathan fell silent, Yulia's words hitting him with sudden clarity. He hadn't thought it all through at first. He hadn't

considered the impact the rumors might have on Anya.

Whether Anya was Yulia's sister or daughter, both identities were endlessly scrutinized by the public.

His grip on Yulia's hand relaxed slightly. "So, is Anya actually your daughter?"

Chapter 1857

Yulia's lips quivered as she shook her head, her eyes widened with fear and helplessness. "What do you even

want?" she stammered.

Nathan looked at her with a cold detachment. "The question is, what do you want, Yulia? You wanted this marriage,

pulled every trick in the book to get it. You called the shots in the beginning, but when it ends, that's not your call. If

you're planning on going head-to-head with me, by all means, let's see who's tougher."

"So what are you saying? That I'm stuck with you until you're bored? I can't ever bring up divorce?"

"You can bring it up, and I might agree, as long as you leave Anya with me."

"You know I'll never give up Anya!"

A smirk crept onto Nathan's face. "Who knows? Maybe Ronald and his shares are worth more to you than Anya."d2

Yulia bit her lip so hard that white marks formed around her teeth. "Why are you doing this, Nathan? Anya's my

daughter. She's got nothing to do with you. Why are you so obsessed with her?"

"People don't always need reasons. I like her, and that should be enough."

Yulia's anger flared at Nathan's shameless reasoning, her hand itching to slap some sense into him. "But you'll end

up hurting her. With your playboy lifestyle, you might even marry someone else. What can you offer Anya, except a

life full of scandals and tabloid headlines? How can she grow up healthy in a home with a stepfather and

stepmother? What are you really thinking? Is this how you like Anya? I will never agree. Over my dead body will I let

you take her."

Nathan's lips curled into a sneer. "Suit yourself."

Yulia felt her anger choking her, unable to vent.

Over her dead body? What would happen to Anya if she died?

How utterly cruel!

The feeling of helplessness, of being trapped, was unbearable.

Nathan watched as she fell into despair, then stepped back and headed for the door. But Yulia grabbed his shirt,

pulling him back with a desperation she couldn't hide. "What do you want from me, Nathan? What are you trying to

do? What will it take for you to let me go?"

"Let you go?" Nathan's voice was like ice. "How come you get to decide everything? When you were scheming to

trap me, did you ever consider whether I'd let you go? Now you want to walk away scot-free? You think I'm just

some toy you can play with until you're done?"

Yulia looked up at him, her expression a tangled mess of emotions. "I've heard enough. I admit I was wrong, but we

can't drag this marriage on forever, right? Give me a concrete date. When can we truly end this?"

Nathan's expression darkened. "Tell me, Yulia, why do you suddenly want to talk divorce?"

Caught off guard, Yulia was unsure how their conversation had circled back to this topic.

Nathan's grip tightened on her shoulders. "What if I helped you take over the company?"

Yulia's eyes flickered with shock.

"You wouldn't need Ronald's shares. Would you still bring up divorce after you got what you wanted? Or should I

ask, are you divorcing me for Ronald?"

Yulia's brow furrowed, and after a long moment, she shook her head. "No. I can't forgive him. If it weren't for his

shares, I'd never want to see him again, even if we got divorced, I don't love him anymore. I haven't for a long

time."

"Then who do you love now?"

Yulia paused, a struggle evident in her eyes. "I love Anya..."

Nathan's breath caught, his face twitching involuntarily. "I mean the love between two adults?!" He bellowed at her,

and Yulia flinched, closing her eyes.

Nathan took a deep breath to calm himself. "So why the hell are you in such a rush to divorce?"

"For the shares!"

"Cut the crap! Ronald's been dangling those shares over you for ages. You never mentioned divorce before."

Yulia felt her face numb under Nathan's tirade.

"Speak up!" he roared again, and Yulia's ears rang with the force of his voice.

Anger began to bubble up inside her. "It's because of you. If you hadn't been fooling around, putting Anya in the

spotlight, I wouldn't need to force this issue. What position have you put us in? Did you ever think of your wife while

you were out with other women?"

Suddenly, Yulia's usually gentle demeanor burst forth, stunning Nathan into silence. "You remember you're my

wife?!"

Yulia's retort was sharp. "What good does it do? Did that stop you from playing around?"

"If you acted like a wife should, would I have the chance to play?"

Yulia couldn't help but laugh bitterly at his words. "Do you realize how awful you sound? Blaming your wife because

you're out with other women?"

Nathan's face was a mask of tension. He stared at her for a long moment before his expression softened, and he

stepped closer, towering over her. "So since it's not about Ronald, it's about me, huh?"

Yulia opened her mouth, but no words came out.

"Because I've found other women, and you're jealous? Can't handle it? You're hurt and sad, so you want a

divorce?"

Caught off guard by Nathan's blunt question, Yulia blushed crimson.

"Who's jealous?! It's because you're affecting Anya."

"Just Anya?" Nathan frowned.

"I..."

"Yulia," Nathan interrupted, his voice threatening. "You better think carefully before you speak."

Yulia fell silent for a moment before looking up at him with a mixture of defiance and vulnerability in her eyes.

“What do you want me to say?”

“Just tell me what you really feel.” he urged.

She pressed her lips together, then threw the question back at him. “How much do you hate me?”

Nathan frowned. “I’m the one asking the questions here.”

“What if I said I like you? Would that make you happy?”

His gaze suddenly sharpened, locking onto her. “It’s always nice to be liked.”

“Is that enough for you?”

He scrunched his brow, clearly not satisfied with where this was going.

Yulia continued, “What if it’s not just ‘like’ that I feel for you?”

The hand gripping her shoulder suddenly loosened.

God knows it took everything in Yulia to say these words. If it hadn’t been for the tension between them, that feeling

of everything falling apart, or Nathan’s probing questions leading her to this moment, she might never have spoken

her truth.

With things as they were, the worst-case scenario was a divorce – a clean break. She braced herself for his

reaction, but when she felt it, her heart contracted. Not from disappointment, but from despair.

She knew it.

She convinced herself not to show too much, mustering a nonchalant smile. "Don't worry. It's just talk."

"But it's more than 'like,' so you mean you love me?" Nathan pressed, his voice deep and heavy.

Yulia didn't answer.

Chapter 1858

Yulia pursed her lips, giving Nathan an intense look as she tentatively reached out, her hand hovering before gently

landing on his shoulder.

Nathan's gaze slipped to the corner of his eyes, noting her touch, his brows arching ever so slightly. Yet he

remained silent. His eyes, once again focused on her, watched as she seemed somewhat unsure under his gaze.

Licking her lips hesitantly, it took Yulia a moment before she finally whispered, "So, you don't really want a divorce,

do you?"

Nathan scoffed, "Divorce, so you can run off with Ronald?"

Yulia's smile was tinged with irony as she nodded, "Yeah, Ronald's been feeling guilty, and he'd treat me a lot

better. After all, if we're divorced, I'd have to marry someone else, right? Ronald's got his act together, and it'd

save me a lot of trouble. cough, cough, cough."

Mid-sentence, she felt his hands tightening around her neck, and by the end, she could barely speak. She slapped

his arms, coughing so hard tears nearly spilled from her eyes.

Nathan eased his grip slightly, glowering at her fiercely. "Yulia, if I hear Ronald's name from your lips one more

time, you believe I could end you right here?"

After coughing twice, Yulia looked at him and suddenly laughed. "Nathan, you're jealous."

His attractive face stiffened, "What did you say? Don't flatter yourself. I just can't stand the sight of Ronald. The

more he wants something, the more I enjoy keeping it from him. That includes you."

Yulia raised an eyebrow, "Fine, if not Ronald, it can be someone else. I mean, I'm a woman, not bad-looking, got a

decent figure and skin. I could settle for a decent guy. Hey, what are you—stop, that's uncomfortable. cough,

cough, cough.”

Nathan felt like he was about to burst with frustration. She was so good at hitting all the right nerves, even ones he

wasn't aware of himself.

Ronald was out of the question, and so was any other man.

He knew she was doing this on purpose, but the images that came to his mind—her with another man—were

intolerable. “Yulia, are you trying to provoke me on purpose?”

She shifted his hands away slightly, “Provoke you? I thought anyone but Ronald was fine. After all, it's my life. It's

important to plan ahead to avoid making the wrong turns.”

Nathan's face was a portrait of barely contained rage at this point. “Plan my foot, your plan's been twisted from the

get-go.”

Yulia frowned, “How so?”

“From the moment you climbed into my bed. You've wandered so far off the path, there's no point in turning back.

Just keep going until the end.”

She paused, her hand slowly resting against the skin of Nathan's neck, fingers threading through his hair, her eyes

filled with trepidation. "Nathan, are we really going to see it through to the end?"

He withdrew his hands, propping one arm beside Yulia's head, "Stop messing around, and we will."

Yulia bit her lip, leaning in closer to him. Nathan didn't move, his dark eyes fixated on her, calm and unreadable. At

least, not as disgusted as she had seen him before.

After a moment's pause, she gently pressed her lips to his. Tentatively, she dared not move, their proximity so

close, her eyes locked on his for any flicker of emotion.

Nathan simply looked down at her, his gaze as deep and emotionless as ever.

Yulia mustered more courage and deepened the kiss, careful not to push too far. When she dared to part his lips,

Nathan's eyes suddenly tightened. She reflexively pulled back out of regret, only to be pushed down into the bed by

Nathan's forceful grip. "Damn it, even a kiss is so hesitant with you? Can't you just get on with it!?"

Yulia had no time to react as Nathan's weight bore down on her. His approach was as wild and domineering as ever.

In these moments, she rarely felt any gentleness from him.

His hands fumbled with her clothes, always in a hurry, no matter how many times they'd been together.

Yulia, accustomed to his intensity, cooperated fully, but this time her feelings were in turmoil. Gripping his neck

tightly, she responded with all her might.

"I thought you hated me? Hated my touch?" Her breath was ragged, but she seized the chance to ask the question

burning within her.

She had seen revulsion in his eyes, yet, past and present, he touched her as if free from any such feelings. What

was really on his mind?

"Who knows? Hating the sight of you but still wanting to fuck you."

His hands roamed restlessly, and Yulia gasped, biting her lip. Her face flushed as she looked at him, "Do you really

hate me?"

Nathan pushed her legs apart with his knee, "No. I love you, dammit. Love you... you slut."

Yulia's smile was bittersweet. She knew all too well. The fact that she had past boyfriends, even a child, would be a

thorn in any man's side, not just his.

She didn't blame him for any twisted sense of purity, as the thought of his past with other women made her uneasy.

But regardless, her feelings for him were real.

Stripped bare, Yulia began to tease Nathan, dodging his advances with a softness that drove him crazy.

Nathan, frustrated, slapped her rear without mercy. "Behave!"

Yulia trembled, still whispering against him, "Just wait."

Nathan pressed against her, "Damn it, you want me to wait now?!"

As she felt him move, her already crimson face seemed to burn even hotter. Biting her lip, she inched down a bit. "I

just wanted to ask, how many women have you actually been with in the past..."

Nathan's handsome face instantly darkened, veins popping on his forehead, a fine sheen of sweat covering his

face. "Damn it, out of all the times you could ask, why now?"

Yulia's hand glided over his shoulder and neck. "Didn't I feel like I had no right to ask before? Now that we're here, I

had to hurry and ask, right?"

“Let’s talk about it later.”

“No, come on, tell me. I already asked, so just spill it. Otherwise, I’ll get distracted later.”

Nathan clenched his teeth.

Yulia pressed a kiss to his lips. “Just spit it out if you can’t hold it back. How many women have you been intimately

involved with?”

Nathan just scowled at her.

Pressed for an answer, Yulia suddenly reached her hand boldly downwards. Nathan’s body tensed violently, the

ferocity in his gaze making Yulia’s heart shiver. “Spill it.”

“Are you really looking for a thrill, Yulia?!”

She nodded earnestly. “Yeah, I am. So get on with it. Once you tell me, you can have it your way later.”  
As she

spoke, her hand tightened its grip, moving slightly.

Nathan inhaled sharply, and Yulia, scared, shrank back even more.

Nathan found himself at a disadvantage. With no other choice, he gritted his teeth and steeled himself, growling,

“One!”

Yulia paused, not believing him one bit. “You don’t need to lie.”

“Why the hell would I lie to you? How is it so unbelievable that it’s just been one woman?”

“But your scandals weren’t just with one. Do you think I’m an idiot?”

Nathan’s body grew restless, his hand sneakily catching her leg. “All those were just rumors, and you believe

them?”

Yulia frowned. “But last night, you clearly were with another woman.”

“I didn’t sleep with her!” Nathan snapped impatiently, pulling her leg away. “Let go!”

Chapter 1859

Nathan felt a surge of frustration watching Yulia’s reaction. With an unexpected burst of force, he thrust into her,

causing Yulia to let out a yelp. “What the...”

“Are you actually a psycho? You get a kick out of me being with other women?”

Was this woman for real? Not only did she not show a hint of jealousy, but it seemed like she had some twisted

fascination with it.

She caught her breath and looked up at Nathan's rugged face, shifting slightly, which made him inhale sharply.

"Stop freaking moving."

Yulia's laughter grew, "You really want to see me jealous, huh?"

Nathan clenched his jaw, readjusting his hold on her. "A good wife should get jealous."d1

Yulia's lips curled into a smile, "Once or twice is cute, but too much jealousy drives a man nuts."

Nathan scowled, "Sounds like you've been down that road before. Don't tell me you spent all your time getting

worked up over Ronald."

She shook her head, "Ronald? Well, he bailed on me when I needed him the most. Other than that, he was pretty

loyal. Didn't give me much cause for jealousy."

Nathan scoffed, "Seems like you think highly of his character."

With a smile, Yulia reached out and hugged him tighter, pressing her soft body against his. "What can I do? I have a

thing for the bad ones. Decent guys don't always get my heart racing."

Their closeness made every touch feel more intense. Nathan took a deep breath, "So, my character's not good

enough for you?"

Yulia didn't answer, instead kissing his throat.

Nathan gritted his teeth. This infuriating woman was asking for it today. "So bold? Just don't come crying to me

later."

Yulia remained silent, as if he was ever gentle with her.

Downstairs.

Anya: "Carly, did Yulipop and Nathan just get back?"

"Well, yeah, they did. They must have some urgent matter to discuss. You be good now, okay?"

Though Carly tried to reassure Anya, she couldn't help but worry.

Relationships grow with time, and in the few months since she'd joined this family, she'd gotten a handle on

everyone's temperaments. Their characters were quite good, and with the presence of the adorable and kind-

hearted Anya, things were even better. They treated her very well. So she couldn't help but worry about her

employers when she saw them stumbled in before.

Nathan was temperamental, and just now he looked ready to tear someone apart. She wasn't sure Yulia could

handle it. If things got heated, Yulia would be at a disadvantage.

Anya nodded at Carly's soothing words, but her little brow furrowed, and her chubby cheeks took on a worried hue.

She hadn't seen everything earlier, but she did notice that Nathan seemed upset.

For a long time, Anya hadn't asked about what happened to Nathan and Yulia. Though she played with her toys, her

eyes kept darting upstairs.

Carly felt a pang of sympathy for the child who seemed to have the weight of the world on her small shoulders.

She had covered Anya's eyes and coaxed her, thinking the child would soon forget, but the incident lingered in

Anya's mind.

Finally, unable to hold back, Anya stood up with her toy and headed for the stairs.

"Anya." Carly quickly followed.

Anya's little legs trotted up the steps, looking adorable yet heart-wrenchingly worried.

“Nathan wouldn’t bully Yulipop, would he? She can’t fight him. Carly, let’s go see. If Nathan bullies Yulipop, you have

to help Anya fight him off.”

Carly, amused and touched by Anya’s words, nodded vigorously, “Of course, I will help you fight Nathan.”

With a broad grin, Anya began to climb the stairs. Carly shook her head, picking her up instead.

They reached Yulia’s bedroom door, intending to listen before entering, but before they could settle, they heard

Yulia cry out.

Anya was startled, raising her arm to knock, but Carly scooped her up and hurried away, covering her ears.

“Carly, I heard it! Nathan must be bullying Yulipop.”

Carly’s cheeks flushed as they got further away, finally releasing Anya’s ears. “No. Nathan is just playing with Yulia.”

“But Yulipop was yelling. Nathan must be hurting her. She looked like she was about to cry. She must be in pain!”

“Oh, boy...” Carly sighed softly, descending the steps while explaining, “That’s not pain.”

Anya: “Yulipop was almost crying. If it’s not pain, what is it?”

Carly: “It’s... Oh, right, Yulia is just tired, and Nathan is giving her a massage.”

Anya blinked in confusion, "Aren't massages supposed to feel good?"

Carly nodded, "Yes, so Yulipop was just expressing how good it feels."

Finishing her explanation, Carly felt a chill run down her spine. What was she doing, feeding such nonsense to a

child?

The more she thought about it, the more awkward it sounded. Was she corrupting the innocent?

But honestly, those two young ones were something else. They stormed in ready for a fight, but who would have

guessed it was that kind of battle?

Thank goodness for quick acting. If Anya had actually knocked, it would have been one hell of an interruption, not

to mention the potential embarrassment. And if Anya saw...

She shuddered at the thought.

After Carly reassured Anya that Nathan and Yulipop were fine, the little girl seemed content to let it go.

It was nearly ten at night when the door to Yulia's room finally opened.

Nathan, fresh from a shower with that after-bath glow, clad in pajamas, descended the stairs to find Carly hadn't

left. She was lounging on the couch, keeping Anya company as they watched TV.

The arrival of Nathan prompted a fleeting look of discomfort in Carly.

Nathan, furrowing his brows at Anya, chided, "Isn't it past your bedtime?"

Anya sprung to her feet and dashed over to Nathan. "Nathan, come clean. Did you or did you not pick on Yulipop?"

Nathan raised an eyebrow, "Pick on her? How so?"

Carly coughed awkwardly at the side, and Nathan chose not to delve further.

With a warm chuckle, Carly said, "Anya's been worried sick about you two, staying up so late. Dinner's in the

kitchen, by the way. If you or Yulia are hungry, I can heat it up for you."

Nathan, who had indeed come down in search of a snack, nodded in appreciation. Then, bending down, he scooped

Anya into his arms and settled back on the couch.

Anya's little finger poked at Nathan's neck. "Did Yulipop bite you there?"

Nathan paused for a moment, then let out a light laugh, "Yeah, she was the one giving me trouble."

Anya's brow furrowed, "But I heard Yulipop screaming earlier, almost crying. Carly told me you were giving her a

massage.”

Nathan paused for a moment and couldn't help but burst into laughter. “Massage? Well, right. She was all achy, and

the massage was just so she'd feel better.”

Chapter 1860

No freaking way!

Nathan blinked. Pinching Anya's chubby cheeks, he teased, “Come on, my little munchkin, flash me another smile.”

But Anya was having none of it at this point.

The little girl was at that age where she needed constant praise, and after Nathan had offhandedly called her ugly,

she was a mix of hurt, angry, and pouty. Smiling was the last thing on her mind.

With her lips pursed and brows furrowed, she twisted her little shoulders away, wanting nothing to do with Nathan.

“Hey, look at that temper,” Nathan chuckled, genuinely puzzled about who she might have gotten that from.d1

Yulia? He rarely, if ever, saw Yulia throw a tantrum. Thinking about it, Yulia seemed mostly well-behaved. But ever

since that Ronald started hogging the spotlight, he began to suspect that Yulia was not as innocent as she seemed.

Raising an eyebrow, Nathan scratched Anya's chin playfully. "Are you going to smile or what?"

"Hmph, Nathan, you're annoying."

Nathan grinned, scooping Anya up in his arms. "If you won't smile, then so be it. I don't have much of a memory for

my brother's grins anyway. I'll ask him about it tomorrow."

Carrying Anya out, they were met by Carly in the living room, who quickly said, "Dinner's all warmed up. Should I

call Yulia to join us?"

Nathan hoisted a moody Anya onto his shoulder. "No need, I'll bring something up to her in a bit."

Anya, initially nervous high up on Nathan's shoulder, clung to his head for dear life. Once she was sure he wouldn't

drop her, her fears dissolved into giggles, the previous insult forgotten.

Carly watched Anya's happiness spread and couldn't help but smile with relief.

"I'll go get ready then. Anya should be going to bed soon. You guys eat, and I'll take care of her."

Nathan nodded, and Anya, now addicted to the fun of riding on his neck, wriggled and laughed even more.

“You aiming for the stars or what?” He gripped her tightly, playfully swaying her back and forth, which made her

cling to him, laughing and screaming.

After a few minutes, Nathan’s feeling of unease grew. “All right, that’s enough. Time to get ready for bed.”

He set Anya down on the couch as Carly came out with a tray of food. Taking the tray from Carly, Nathan glanced

at Anya, who was now curled up in a ball on the couch. “Make sure you sleep tight, you hear?”

Anya pouted and huffed but said nothing.

Upstairs, Yulia was sprawled out in bed, too tired to move a muscle.

Nathan, with his appetite and build, was not a man to be trifled with. Too many times Yulia felt like he’d nearly done

her in. The art of gentleness was something she wished she could teach him.

The bedroom door opened with a familiar kick from an impatient foot. Yulia’s eyelids fluttered but she didn’t open

her eyes.

There was movement in the room, but she didn’t mind. However, she couldn’t ignore it when Nathan’s familiar

scent enveloped her, and his kisses trapped her, his broad, warm palm sneaking under the covers, causing mischief

on her skin.

She had to pay attention now.

She pushed his hand away and propped herself against his shoulder, catching her breath as she opened her eyes to

look at him. "I'm tired."

Nathan nibbled on her lip and chuckled softly, "Don't flatter yourself. Even if you wanted me now, you couldn't have

me."

With that, he flipped the covers back, wrapped her in a towel, and carried her to the sofa by the window, where he

sat down with her on his lap.

When Yulia saw the food on the coffee table, she remembered she hadn't eaten at all. Now that food was in sight,

her stomach eagerly joined the conversation. Her stomach grumbled on cue.

Nathan snorted with laughter. Yulia, face flushed, clutched the towel and tried to slide off his lap, but Nathan's arm

wrapped around her waist and he picked up a bowl of food.

“Stay put.”

Trapped, Yulia protested, “I’m hungry too. I want to eat.”

Nathan forked up a bite and fed it to her.

Yulia reluctantly accepted and eventually chewed instinctively.

Nathan watched her comply and took a bite himself. After she finished, he fed her another mouthful.

Carly had prepared lots of food, knowing Nathan’s appetite.

Throughout the meal, Nathan alternated between feeding himself and Yulia. Of course, he ate more, and Yulia ate

less. Eventually, Yulia was full and refused more food, but Nathan stubbornly fed her a couple more spoonfuls

before giving up.

With some food in her, Yulia’s fatigue eased a bit.

After a quick shower in the bathroom, it was nearly dawn. The tiredness had subsided, but her internal clock, plus

the recent exertion, had taken their toll. Once back in bed, she fell asleep in Nathan’s arms.

Nathan had been distracted all day. At the company, his brother was hardly managing things, and his inbox was

flooded with unread documents.

Now, with both body and mind relaxed and not wanting to leave the comfort of his bed, he skimmed through the

emails on his phone. With a rough idea in mind, he tossed the phone aside, content with the soft woman in his

arms, and drifted off to sleep.

—

The next day, Yulia woke first, courtesy of her internal clock. She saw Nathan and stiffened for just a moment

before relaxing, smiling softly as she lay on his chest, gazing at his peaceful face.

A man with such a devilish charm, it was as though he was crafted solely to tempt women. In his quiet moments, he

seemed almost gentle.

She reached out and sketched his features in the air, admiring the canvas that should rightfully be shared with the

world, not just her. His beauty begged for exploration, but here he was, hers and hers alone. At least for now.

The thought alone made the corners of her lips curve into a wider grin. He pretended to be a playboy, but turned

out to be an innocent virgin?

Pfft.

The term innocent virgin popped into Yulia's head unexpectedly, and she couldn't suppress a soft chuckle.

At such a close distance, Nathan woke up as soon as she pressed against his chest. Now, hearing her inexplicable

laugh, he couldn't help but feel it had something to do with him.

Opening his eyes to stare at her, he saw that indeed, her smile was particularly cheeky.

"What's got you all giggly this early, huh? Dreaming up some R-rated scenarios about me?"

Yulia glanced at him, the amusement still playing on her face. "R-rated? Why can't your mind wander to something

more for a change?"

"Hmph," Nathan snorted with a laugh, "You're lying here in my arms, as naked as the day you were born, and you

expect me to strike up a conversation about next year's charity gala?"

"Pfft." Yulia laughed again, successfully entertained by his comment, "Well, as for next year's plans, it's not like we

can't consider them. Besides, which corporation wouldn't want to show their face at a charity event?"

Nathan scoffed, "How about we kick off a rural charity project right now?"

Yulia replied, "Sure, why don't you start by outlining the proposal?"

Nathan raised an eyebrow, his hands becoming restless, "I think right now, this area seems particularly in need of

some charity and attention."

Yulia tensed up instantly, grabbing his wandering hand and blushing, "Don't mess around."

As if Nathan would listen to her protests.

...

Thankfully, they both knew they had to work today.

After freshening up and dressing, they went downstairs where Carly was already having breakfast with Anya. Yulia

felt a twinge of guilt seeing Anya again after nearly a day apart.

"Yulipop!" Anya called out happily as she saw her.

Yulia sat down beside her and gently patted her head.

Anya blinked her large eyes at her, "Yulipop, did Nathan give you a nice massage last night?"

Yulia paused, "Massage?"

"Yeah, Carly and Nathan said you weren't feeling well, and Nathan massaged you to make you feel better."

Confused, Yulia glanced at Carly, who was sporting an awkward smile. Realizing the implication behind Anya's

words, Yulia wished she could just disappear into thin air. Turning to Nathan, she found him grinning in a most

infuriating way.

"Yulipop? You're all red. Are you running a fever?"

"No, I'm fine, just feeling a bit warm all of a sudden."

Anya nodded, "I see."

After breakfast, Nathan suddenly suggested, "How about we head over to my brother's place for dinner tonight?"

They've been eating like royalty ever since he got a pregnant wife."

Normally, his brother did not eat much, but now with a pregnant wife, the meals were envy-worthy.

Yulia didn't think much of it and simply agreed, "Sure," as she put on her shoes and headed for the door.

"Wait up." Nathan called out to her, slipping on his shoes as well.

“What’s up?”

He grabbed her hand, “I’m taking you to work.”

Yulia hesitated, “I can drive myself.”