

Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 181

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Love Demands Honest Hearts – Yash Malhotra 181

Chapter 181

“To a beautiful little handmade shop!” Khloe replied with a sweet smile.

Hand in hand, they rode the elevator-Khloe slightly taller, Nick just beneath her-but their heights. complemented each other perfectly, naturally drawing the attention of onlookers along the way. i

Nick felt awkward under the gaze of strangers and instinctively lowered his head. Normally, he traveled via private entrances and elevators, letting his assistants handle any shopping-he never personally visited a place like this.

Noticing his discomfort, Khloe whispered teasingly, “Do you want to hide your handsome face in my arms? I can shield you from all these eyes.”

Her playful remark made him smirk. “I’m not that vain,” he murmured.

At the top floor, a handcrafted cake shop stretched across nearly a third of the level. Khloe had pre-booked a private room, and the owner personally led them there, helping them pick the type of cake they wanted to make.

Nick raised an eyebrow, a bit surprised. “You’re making a cake... for me?”

“Yes.” Khloe nodded, gazing into his eyes. “Birthdays deserve a big birthday cake. It’s the least bit of ritual anyone should have.”

“But I never celebrate birthdays, and I don’t even eat cake,” Nick’ replied gently. “Today, just having you with me is enough.”

“Then we’ll start today,” Khloe said firmly, already slicing the cake base according to her design. “From now on, I’ll always be with you on your birthday. Today isn’t just your birthday-it’s also our wedding anniversary. And the cake isn’t just for you; it’s for the people celebrating you. I’ll eat it too!”

She focused entirely on her task, oblivious to the way Nick’s gaze lingered on her, growing deeper and more intense.

“Khloe.”

“Hmm?”

She turned and felt his cheek brush against hers, a gentle, teasing kiss landing near her lips.

Khloe froze, instinctively wanting to pull away, but Nick’s hand held hers steady. His low, husky voice whispered near her ear, “What do I do... I think I like you too much.”

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“Nick...” Khloe gulped, her pulse racing. His aura was unlike before—bold, commanding, and overwhelming, sending an electric thrill coursing through her body. She couldn’t resist.

Just then, the shop owner walked in with more ingredients. Khloe quickly pushed Nick aside and turned toward him.

“Don’t worry, don’t worry,” the owner smiled, noticing the couple’s flustered state. “You two focus—call me if you need anything.”

Once the owner left, Khloe sat across from Nick. “We need to finish this cake quickly. I’ve got other plans for later.

“I

Her voice was calm, but her heartbeat thundered in her chest.

Did Nick just... confess? Why did he always have to be so direct? She felt her cheeks burn with embarrassment.

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Chapter

+25 Bonus

He noticed her flustered expression and pressed the corners of his lips slightly before responding, “Alright.”

They were making a three-tiered heart-shaped cake—a moderate challenge, but still tricky for a beginner. Khloe’s nimble hands shaped it nearly perfectly.

Nick tried to help, but one careless cut nearly ruined her delicate work. Quickly, she handed him a piping bag to work on the frosting instead.

“Not bad,” she praised, “you’ve improved. The piping looks much better now.”

Working together, they bent the frosting into delicate patterns. Watching him go from clumsy to confident, Khloe couldn’t help but smile in satisfaction.

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Nick was an incredibly fast learner, and when he focused on something, he gave it his full attention. There wasn’t a trace of the usual CEO airs about him.

“It’s because you taught me well,” he said softly. Then, after a pause, he asked, “Have you... ever made cakes for anyone else before?”

His voice faltered slightly on the last part, and it took Khloe a moment to realize what he meant.

“I’ve only ever made cakes for myself,” she said honestly. “Besides me, you’re the first person I’ve ever wanted to make a cake for by hand.”

It was the truth. Khloe had only started celebrating her own birthdays while still in school. Compared to buying cakes, she enjoyed playing the role of someone who cared for herself on her special day.

Later, when she met Trey, she had wanted to make him a birthday cake herself-but he refused. He thought such frilly gestures weren’t sophisticated, never once considering her intentions. Even handmade gifts from her would never receive a second glance.

Khloe understood that this was simply a difference in their lifestyles. Trey measured everything in money and prestige, so her personal touches never matched the value of the gifts he could buy.

Nick, however, was different. He genuinely cherished the thought behind a gesture, no matter how small.

He murmured a soft “Hmm,” then lowered his head, his palm shading part of his face.

Hearing this, Khloe couldn't help but think of Michelle. Since he had asked her, she felt she should ask him too.

"Nick... did you choose to marry me today because of what Michelle said?"

Although she didn't believe Michelle's words, the timing of their registration coincided with Michelle's provocation. Khloe paused, trying to keep her tone light, though a subtle trace of concern lingered.

"Even though I didn't believe her, it being today... I couldn't help but wonder a little."

Nick set down what he was holding and met her gaze steadily. His voice held no hesitation.

"Of course not."

He leaned slightly closer, his eyes deep as the sea. "It's over with her long ago. Every decision I make is mine alone. No one else has any influence over me.

"Registering today may have been impulsive, yes-but it's also exactly what my heart wants."

Khloe felt her chest ease, and a faint smile curved her lips.

"Good. I trust you."

"Don't you want to hear about me and her?" Nick asked quietly, his gaze still on her.

Khloe shook her head. "I'm willing to hear whatever you want to tell me. But if it's a past that burdens you or brings pain, you don't need to say it. I won't ask."

Her tone was calm, flowing with complete trust.

"Everyone has a past. You said it's over-then it's over. All I care about is your present and future."

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Nick couldn't help but pull her into his arms. Her words were like the gentlest wind, instantly smoothing over every shadowed, troubled corner of his past. For the first time in his life, he felt such warmth and security from

someone.

“Good. The past doesn’t matter anymore,” he murmured, tightening his hold, as if he wanted to weave her into the very fabric of his life. “Khloe, from the moment we registered our marriage, the rest of my life is only yours.”

‘... Mine too,” Khloe replied softly.

Later, as they left the cake shop, it was getting late, but Khloe still managed to stop by a luxury store before it closed. She personally picked out two sets of shirts and ties for Nick.

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This was Khloe’s birthday gift for Nick, and at the checkout, she insisted on using her own card.

But no sooner had they finished packing her clothes than Nick led her next door to a luxury jewelry store, where he selected a pair of matching wedding rings and a set of bracelets.

The rings and bracelets were simple and elegant-clean, precise lines with no excessive embellishments. Yet the premium materials and flawless craftsmanship gave them a quiet, understated brilliance that drew the eye.

Khloe couldn’t help but laugh and cry at the same time. “Today was supposed to be my gift to you.”

“You give yours, I give mine. This is our newlywed gift,” Nick said, a slight curl at the corner of his lips. He personally slipped the rings and bracelets onto her fingers and wrist, then gestured for her to help him put his or

On Nick's wrist was a watch worth nearly a million dollars. Khloe smiled, eyes twinkling. "This is a matching set. Aren't you afraid people will make fun of you at work?"

"All the better if they do," he murmured teasingly in her ear, so softly that the store staff couldn't hear, yet their intimate gestures drew plenty of attention. Soft whispers of envy floated over to them, making Khloe's ears flush red.

She hurriedly put the bracelet on him-but on his right wrist, separate from the watch. The slender bracelet didn't clash with the prominent bones of his wrist; instead, it enhanced a subtle, elegant masculinity.

Khloe gazed at him for a moment and couldn't help commenting, "Nick, do you know how beautiful your hands are?"

He chuckled softly and took her hand before she could withdraw it, letting his fingers naturally slip between hers.

"Now I do," he said. The warmth of his palm seeped through their joined hands, and Khloe felt her ears flush hotter than ever. She tried to pull back, but he held her tighter.

"Let's go," Nick said, leading her out of the store. "What's next on the agenda?"

"Hmm... dinner first. I'm hungry," Khloe replied, lips pressed together, her gaze dropping to the glittering rings on their hands.

By the time they finished dinner, it was almost nine o'clock. Nick suddenly seemed to think of something and tugged her toward a nearby supermarket.

"You want to buy anything?" Khloe asked curiously. Nick didn't look like the type to enjoy grocery shopping.

"I noticed your place is a little bare. I want to get a few things for you-so it'll be convenient when I stay over," he explained.

He rarely went shopping himself, but he understood that couples often wandered supermarkets together in their downtime. Even his grandparents still liked shopping together. Seeing the supermarket, he suddenly wanted to pick out household items with Khloe.

Hearing him say this, Khloe felt heat rise up her neck. They were already married, living together would naturally follow and whatever Nick wanted to do now... well, that would also be only natural.

"What's wrong?" Nick asked, noticing her sudden silence.

“Nothing. Buy whatever you want. I’ll pay,” she replied quickly, picking up some toiletries.

Wherever Khloe reached, Nick followed suit, grabbing a whole row. Since she liked them, he figured they might as

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+25 Bonus

well get plenty.

Before she realized it, just a few turns of the aisle later, their shopping cart was overflowing.

“Nick... are you trying to buy wholesale?” Khloe exclaimed, her eyes nearly popping out at the sheer volume of items. 1

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Who goes to the supermarket and grabs an entire row of products off the shelves?

Khloe noticed several people trailing behind them, staring at their overflowing cart. Apparently, they were eyeing every single item as if Nick and she had claimed it all.

“Sorry, you can have these,” Khloe quickly said, putting some items back.

“Buy as much as you like. We only come here occasionally. There’s plenty to choose from, and I can have Lenny bring people over to carry the extra,” Nick said calmly from the side.

Khloe couldn’t help laughing. “Nick, you’ve never really shopped at a supermarket, have you? The point is to browse, pick up a few things the house needs-one or two items at most. That way, you can come regularly, and nothing goes to waste or expires.”

“Come regularly? With me?”

It seemed like Nick had only caught the words “come regularly.”

Khloe looked up at his deep, intense gaze and suddenly found him unbearably cute. She hesitated for a beat before replying, “Of course, as long as you’re willing to come with me from now on.”

She turned back to continue loading the items onto the shelves. For the higher ones she couldn’t reach, Nick simply lifted them up himself.

His tall, commanding frame was usually the kind to dominate any place he entered, yet here he was, pushing a shopping cart alongside her. The contrast was jarring, but oddly charming—he looked impossibly handsome even in a mundane supermarket setting.

Despite Khloe’s attempts to limit their purchases, the cart was still almost full, and it nearly filled the wide trunk of Nick’s car.

On the way home, Khloe received another call from Nick’s grandmother. Her heart tightened. They hadn’t even told either side of the family about going to register their marriage.

Khloe had grown up without parents and was used to handling everything herself, but Nick’s family was different. Their upbringing was undoubtedly strict.

“Nick, your parents and grandparents... they don’t know we registered yet. Aren’t we being rude?” Khloe asked anxiously.

Nick, however, remained calm. “My dad doesn’t get involved in my affairs. Arista has always let me make my own decisions. I already sent them a message after we registered; our grandparents know now.

“They were upset that we didn’t prepare in advance and felt you were treated unfairly. They want me to make it up to you. As for the Morrison family, I’ll handle that carefully. You don’t have anyone particularly close there, so we need a proper occasion to announce it publicly.

“After that, we’ll have the wedding... and it won’t be rushed.”

Hearing Nick’s words, Khloe finally relaxed. He had thought everything through for her. As for the Morrison family, all she needed was one formal public announcement.

Sure enough, Nick’s grandmother called at just the right time. By now, the two of them had finished their private time and were about ready to go home.

Chapter 184

+25 Bonus

“Khloe, that grandson of mine... he’s so headstrong! He suddenly decided to register with you just like that, so impulsive. You’re not upset, are you?” Loretta asked cautiously.

Khloe felt warmth and shyness at the same time. “No... I’m really happy.” Her voice was soft, and she didn’t dare

look at Nick.

“Thank heavens! My granddaughter-in-law is so gentle... Nick is lucky! Khloe, why don’t you come home tonight? It’s his birthday, and you’re married now. The whole family should celebrate! I’ve even got your room ready!”

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Loretta’s words were warm, exuberant, and wonderfully direct.

Khloe felt her cheeks heat up and her heart skip a beat. She quickly stole a glance at Nick, who was focused on the road ahead, yet a faint smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

Without a word, he reached over and took the phone from her. His tone, rare in its softness, was like flowing water. “Grandma, don’t scare her—we’re on our way home.”

“Good, good! Be careful on the road, stay safe,” came the reply, brisk but affectionate.

Nick handed the phone back to Khloe. She asked instinctively, her voice tinged with hesitation, “Tonight... we’re staying at your place?”

“Our home,” Nick said simply.

The words struck Khloe with a jolt. Of course—Nick’s home was now her home too.

“Grandma was just teasing. If you don’t want to stay tonight, I’ll take you back,” he added.

“I’m good,” Khloe replied softly, her heart fluttering.

As night deepened, they returned to the villa, where several people were already waiting for them. Loretta had stationed many servants outside; the moment the car arrived, they hurried to carry their belongings, greeting them with all the ceremony of welcoming distinguished guests.

Inside, the house had been festively decorated. The atmosphere instantly felt warm, cozy, and celebratory.

Leon and Loretta were dressed in matching casual outfits, waiting specifically for the newlyweds. The scene made Khloe feel the reality of being married and being part of a big, loving family.

In the past, when she and Trey had registered with a fake marriage license, it had been a simple meal, no different from any ordinary day. The Fox family had never welcomed her, and no one had been waiting at home.

“Khloe, from today on, you are officially part of our family! I’m so happy! Don’t worry, I will treat you well and love you like my own granddaughter,” Loretta said, taking Khloe’s hands, tears brimming in her eyes, the rims red from emotion.

Leon reminded her not to cry on such a happy day, and Khloe forced herself to hold it back.

“Grandma, I should be the one happy. To become your granddaughter-in-law, to have you as my family, I am truly lucky. I will honor and cherish you always,” Khloe said, her voice trembling slightly with emotion as she hugged Loretta. She had always longed for a warm, happy home.,

Nick, who seldom showed emotion, also found himself momentarily moved by the scene—the tenderness in Khloe and his grandparents’ faces was undeniable.

“Alright, Khloe and I brought a birthday cake—do you want some? She made it herself,” Nick quickly interjected, placing the cake on the table before anyone could protest.

Loretta and Leon were delighted, immediately instructing the servants to bring utensils. Normally, Nick never celebrated his birthday, and anyone presenting him a cake would be met with his usual cold expression—or worse, risk angering him.

But now, with Khloe, Nick had brought the cake himself. Finally, the family could celebrate Nick’s birthday, and it filled them with quiet joy.

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+25 Bonus

The birthday celebration began at home, surrounded by family. Khloe had prepared the candles: Nick was twenty- nine, so she placed nine on the cake and carefully lit them herself.

“Nick, close your eyes before blowing out the candles and make a birthday wish,” she instructed softly, noticing him reaching for the knife.

Nick obediently did as she said, closing his eyes for a few seconds. “Alright,” he said when he opened them.

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The flickering candlelight danced across Nick’s sharply defined features, and Khloe found herself staring, utterly captivated.

It wasn’t until the flames were blown out that she snapped back to reality, quickly distributing the utensils to Loretta and Leon and cutting slices of the cake.

Knowing Nick didn’t usually have a sweet tooth, no one offered him a piece. But this cake was handmade by Khloe, and after serving the others, Nick cut himself a generous slice. He ate it, savoring it completely, and even looked at Khloe with a faint smile. “Delicious.”

It was an ordinary flavor, yet to Nick, it somehow tasted better than anything a top-tier pastry chef could make.

Loretta and Leon, delighted like children, devoured their portions with obvious pleasure.

After the cake, Arista called for a video chat. She spoke with Khloe and the others briefly before connecting Nick to his father, George Hunt.

Nick's father shared almost the same facial structure as Nick, but his features were softer and less striking, lacking the sharp, refined edges that made Nick's presence so commanding.

Perhaps due to the video call, George seemed less imposing than rumors suggested. His hair was streaked with gray, and his square glasses gave him a scholarly appearance. While he rarely smiled, his tone was surprisingly gentle, though he spoke sparingly, not appearing overly enthusiastic.

Nick didn't seem inclined to let his father talk too much to Khloe. He quickly took the phone upstairs, leaving George's sudden shift to business matters behind. Khloe exchanged a look with Nick before he retreated to the study.

"Don't worry about it. That's just how father and son are-they rarely have emotional exchanges. Every time they meet, it's either work or work," Loretta sighed.

The relationship between father and son had always been strained. Loretta had hoped that marriage would soften Nick, but he remained the same-polite to the family, yet rigid and disciplined under his father's scrutiny. Even minor matters brought sharp words, sometimes harsh enough to sting.

Nick's choice to take the call away from Khloe was largely to spare her the sight of his cold reception in front of his father.

"It's fine, work comes first," Khloe murmured, her gaze lingering on him with concern.

She lingered on the sofa chatting with Loretta a while longer before being guided to the suite prepared for the newlyweds.

The Hunt family estate was vast. The main villa alone had six master bedrooms, and Loretta had chosen a quiet, south-facing corner for them, complete with a private staircase leading directly to the downstairs hall and dining

area.

The bedroom had been thoughtfully arranged: champagne-colored silk bedding, a plush, pristine leather-and-fur rug, and a pale yellow crystal lamp casting a soft glow on the nightstand.

Loretta personally showed Khloe the walk-in closet, stocked with brand-name clothing, sleepwear, and lingerie -all carefully selected to her measurements. She had prepared all this immediately after helping Khloe pick her formal gowns, ensuring everything would be ready for her stay.

Khloe's heart swelled with warmth and a hint of embarrassment. "Grandma, you've gone to so much trouble."

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Chapter 196

+25 Bonus

"I don't understand young people's tastes, so I let the store assistants help. Are you satisfied? If you need anything else, tell me, or just ask Nick to get it. Our family has means-you don't have to be shy with me," Loretta said, her cheeks tinged with pink as she held Khloe's hands.

Khloe looked down, a soft smile tugging at her lips. "It's perfect, everything you chose is wonderful... I'm just... not ready yet."

Her eyes flicked to the wide, inviting bed in the room. Though they had officially registered their marriage, things had progressed so quickly that the thought of sleeping beside Nick made her blood run hot.

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Chapter 187

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"Don't be shy, silly girl!" Loretta exclaimed, noticing the tiny expression flicker across Khloe's face.

Suddenly, it all made sense. She'd long forgotten the giddy, fluttering excitement of young love and had almost overlooked Khloe's pure-hearted nature.

But this was perfect!

Despite his age and commanding presence in the outside world, Nick was just as innocent at heart.

Loretta leaned close to Khloe's ear. "Then tonight, let him sleep on the sofa."

"Absolutely not!" Khloe immediately protested. "He won't rest well there."

Loretta laughed uncontrollably. "Ah, so this is what it's like to be married-already worrying about your husband?"

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"Grandma, I'm not-" Khloe floundered, completely flustered, and could only tug on Loretta's arm in a playful, helpless gesture.

"Hush now, you two can handle your own affairs. I just want you to feel comfortable at home," Loretta said, patting Khloe's hand. "Nick treasures you, don't worry. He'll come to understand you more each day."

With a cheerful smile, she left, not wanting to keep Khloe from resting.

Once alone, Khloe returned to the bed. Her fingers brushed across the smooth, silky sheets, but her mind was ablaze with memories of the past few days with Nick. Her heart and her gaze both burned with warmth.

Two hours had passed since Nick returned from the phone call with his father. Only the two bedside lamps lit the room, casting a soft, muted glow.

"Khloe?" Nick called gently, assuming she had fallen asleep.

"I'm here."

But the voice didn't come from the bed-it came from behind him. Turning around, he saw her curled up on the wide sofa, absorbed in a game on her phone.

Sitting up, the blanket slipped off her shoulders. Her hair was half-dry, cascading over her chest, and her loose white lace sleepwear draped over her delicate frame. She looked like a soft, fragrant porcelain doll.

"Why are you on the sofa?" Nick asked, loosening the collar of his shirt as he sat beside her.

Her subtle fragrance enveloped him, easing the tension in his brow, Almost instinctively, he wrapped an arm around her waist.

“I was waiting for you,” Khloe said, her eyes sparkling. “Are you done talking with your dad?”

“Yes.”

Nick buried his chin in her shoulder, letting the fatigue accumulated over the day slide off him. His breaths deepened slightly before he murmured, “Talking to him... it’s exhausting.”

Khloe didn’t reply, only lifted her hand to gently stroke his hair, a soothing gesture.

“Then rest early. Take a shower, and go to sleep.” 1

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+25 Bonus

Every time she spoke softly like this, Nick felt as if she were coaxing a child, and it made his chest tighten. He let out a small smile. “Together?”

“Huh?” Khloe’s eyes flickered. “Together what?”

“Sleep together.”

“Tonight?”

The room was dimly lit, but her flushed, burning face made the answer obvious.

“Khloe, we’re married now. Are you really planning to sleep apart from me?”

“I’m not...”

Her voice was so soft it was almost a whisper, her head lowered and lips bitten in nervousness.

Before she could finish, Nick lifted her effortlessly into his arms. Khloe gasped lightly and immediately wrapped her arms around his neck.

He strode steadily across the room, placing her gently on the bed.

In his arms, she was as small and delicate as a fawn. Curled up in the vast bed, she looked fragile and endearing, the kind of vulnerability that made him want to protect and tease her.

Catching the flicker of her hesitation, Nick pinned her arms lightly and leaned down, lips close to hers. "I'll go shower first."

The heat radiating off him, mixed with a potent surge of pheromones, sent shivers of electricity coursing through Khloe from head to toe.

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Khloe was wide awake, even more alert than a rooster at dawn.

What did Nick mean by this?

Sleeping together tonight...

Khloe's mind raced. She had never crossed that line with Trey in all their years together. Could today... be her first time? 1

The thought made her bury herself under the covers, hiding her flushed face.

When Nick emerged from the shower, wearing nothing but a towel, he saw her curled up in the corner of the bed, wrapped in blankets like a defenseless little lamb. A smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

He reached out and gently tugged at the edge of the blanket. Khloe didn't react, so he pulled a little harder.

The blanket slid away easily, and instinctively, Khloe's hands shot out, wrapping around his damp, sculpted body.

“You missed me that much just after a few minutes?” Nick chuckled lowly, leaning over her. Droplets of water from his hair fell onto her flushed cheeks.

Khloe’s eyes swept over his toned muscles and the faint rise and fall of his chest with each breath. Her hands remained tightly pressed against his waist.

“Nick... why aren’t you wearing any clothes...” she whispered, turning her face away, though her hands still lingered.

“...If you’re holding me this tightly, it’s not exactly convenient for me to get dressed either,” he replied, his already deep voice dipping even lower, sending a thrill straight to her chest.

She quickly withdrew her hands, flustered.

Nick stepped away to change into his sleepwear but soon returned to the bed, settling beside her. The weight of his body pressed gently against her.

Khloe’s heart raced, and just then, the lights went out, leaving only a thin stream of moonlight slipping through the curtains, softly illuminating the foot of the bed.

“All right, time to rest.”

There was no fiery intensity, only a tender, heated “goodnight” whispered into her ear.

After speaking, he stretched out, scooping her up-including the blankets-into his arms, holding her securely.

“Don’t be nervous,” he murmured against her hair, his voice low, magnetic, and just a touch lazy. “Tonight, I’m just going to hold you like this while we sleep.”

“Mm...”

She closed her eyes, feeling his steady heartbeat, finally allowing her nerves to ease.

Getting married was one thing, but taking that final step still left her apprehensive. Her past with Trey had left scars, a fear of intimacy she hadn’t fully shaken. Even with Nick, she needed time. 1

Yet he seemed to understand her completely. Without a word, he could calm her anxiety before she even voiced it.

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+25 Bonus

The next afternoon, at the Fox residence.

“This tea tastes off! Stella, are your servants incompetent? Can’t they do even a simple task right? Or are you deliberately sabotaging me, hoping I’ll leave sooner?”

“Mom, how could I ever wish that? I’ll have the servants brew a fresh pot immediately!”

After her afternoon nap, Lauren enjoyed tea, and Stella had already instructed the servants to prepare it. Yet, even with careful preparation, Lauren’s standards were impossibly high.

Only the finest tea leaves would do, brewed at just the right temperature. A single misstep, and the elderly lady would grumble.

And it wasn’t just the tea-every meal, every nap, even her daily routine these past few days had been a potential complaint.

Stella was bewildered. How had she never realized Lauren was so difficult to please?

“If only Khloe were here... she’s the most meticulous and thoughtful girl,”

As she instructed the servants to rebrew the tea, the elderly lady murmured to herself.

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Stella felt a pang of unease at the words.

She had been serving Lauren diligently every day, yet the older woman found herself thinking fondly of Khloe

instead.

But the truth was undeniable-Khloe really was thoughtful and meticulous when it came to taking care of others. The servants reported that she would massage and soak Lauren's feet before bedtime, light soothing incense to aid sleep, and ensure the elder woke refreshed and in a good mood.

As for tea, Khloe had carefully timed everything, setting alarms to make sure it was brewed just right according to Lauren's schedule.

Just these small gestures alone were enough to pamper anyone. It was no wonder Lauren liked staying at Khloe's place.

Mentioning Khloe left Lauren uneasy in her heart. When Stella brought over the tea again, she hesitated before asking, "Has Khloe been in contact with Trey these past two days?"

"How would I know? Didn't she say she wanted a divorce? Maybe she's waiting for Trey to beg her."

Stella deliberately brought it up, and Lauren's face darkened instantly.

"Beg for what? Throwing tantrums is one thing, but it needs limits. Once is fine, but can this go on every time?" she murmured, pressing her lips together.

In truth, she didn't mind Trey asking Khloe to come back. But Khloe wanted her shares and refused to listen to her, leaving Lauren with no leverage to say more.

"You're right. That's why I said if it weren't for you and Trey spoiling her, she wouldn't dare behave this way, Stella said with a cold laugh, casually picking up an apple and starting to peel it.

"Bad habits need correction. This is the perfect chance to straighten her out, let her taste a little hardship. Make her realize our family is fine without her, and if Trey ignores her, she'll learn to be afraid."

Her words swept away the last trace of softness Lauren had felt.

Lauren sighed and glanced at the apple Stella had just cut in half, assuming it was meant for her. But Stella took a bite directly from it.

"Mom, do you want some?" Stella blinked, suddenly realizing she was still in the role of serving the elder.

Lauren snorted, "If it were Khloe, she would know I love apples and cut them into small pieces for me."

Stella's face fell, and she silently cursed under her breath. Forcing a smile, she said, "I'll cut you a new one right away," and grabbed another apple.

By evening, Arthur and Trey returned home together.

Since securing the first round of investment from the Morrison Group, multiple business partners had approached the Fox family with offers of collaboration. While none were as large as the projects Khloe had led, taking them on would fully cover the recent losses Fox Group had suffered and accelerate the company's path back to going public.

Both men were in high spirits as they returned home.

Arthur's attitude toward his son had softened considerably. "You've been working hard. Once these projects wrap

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up, the company will still be under your command."

Trey's face brightened, the shadow of recent stress lifting. He nodded and replied, "Thank you, Dad."

"Remember this: family will always be your strongest backing. Women? They are not," Arthur said with a meaningful tone, slapping his son firmly on the shoulder.

Regarding Khloe, he still blamed Trey for mismanaging matters. In the Fox family, no man had ever failed to keep a woman in check. Even Lauren herself, strong and capable in her youth, had been tightly managed by Arthur's father. Any grievances had to be subordinated to her husband's and the family's interests.

"I understand," Trey said, lowering his head to accept the lesson. But as he thought of Khloe, a wave of frustration welled up in his chest.

His father was right-how could he let Khloe hold sway over him?

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At first, Trey's indulgence toward Khloe, the endless pampering-it had all been a calculated move, a way to control her completely.

But now, he almost forgot that original intent. He found himself thinking only that it would be enough if Khloe came back.

Perhaps it was the chaos of company matters that had unsettled him.

"Right," Arthur said, "you need to find a way to meet with the investors from the Morrison Group. Even if they aren't ready to appear publicly yet, we must express our gratitude. We have to hold onto the Morrison Group tightly-completely turn things around."

He and Trey handed their coats to the servants and began walking toward the dining room.

"Yes," Trey replied. "I'll prepare. There's a jewelry auction next week-I want to pick a really good gift."

"Jewelry?" Arthur raised an eyebrow, then nodded in understanding. "Of course. Something rare and without a market. Don't hold back on price. Show the Morrison family our full sincerity. Go all in."

"Yes," Trey nodded, but his mind wasn't on the Morrison family at all. It was on the Morrison heiress he hadn't even seen in the parking lot that day.

Even through the car window, she exuded a sense of nobility, an unmistakable, rare aura.

And she liked jewelry. He would make sure this gift landed squarely in her heart.

The Fox family had barely eaten half their dinner when the doorbell of family estate rang. Again and again, urgent, insistent.

Stella glanced at the maid. "Are we expecting visitors today?"

"No," the maid replied.

Before she could finish, someone came in with a document.

"There's a woman outside, dressed very heavily, wearing a hat, face not visible. She said these are for Master Arthur," the servant reported.

Trey, head down at his plate, didn't pay much attention.

Their house saw countless deliveries daily-files, documents, gifts. Arthur's network was vast, and those eager to curry favor weren't few. Many young entrepreneurs approached him directly.

"Here, for you," Stella said without suspicion, handing the folder to Arthur.

He hadn't wanted to be interrupted during dinner, but in a strangely good mood, he opened it.

And in an instant, his expression changed.

Inside was a marriage license.

A chill ran through Arthur. Within seconds, he slammed the table with a roar.

"Bastard!"

"Dad, what-what happened?" Trey jumped in alarm, still clueless, rising to ask, but before a word could leave

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his lips, a sharp, resounding slap landed across his face.

Arthur was old, yes, but his strength had only grown with age. His hand struck with force, and Trey's lips bled.

Stella and Lauren gasped in shock. Stella immediately stepped forward, shielding Trey with her body.

"Arthur! What are you doing? Why hit him? You could have just spoken!"

Lauren's voice trembled, strained. "What is this? Are we invisible here? Why resort to violence without even speaking?"

"See for yourselves!" Arthur's face was dark as he threw the marriage license onto the table.

The moment their eyes fell on it, the air in the dining room seemed to freeze.

Trey's face turned red with fury and disbelief. He lunged for the marriage license, but Stella was quicker, snatching it away.

Seeing the contents, she stared at Trey, unable to comprehend.

“Is this... real?”

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