

Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 31

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Love Demands Honest Hearts – Yash Malhotra 31

Chapter 31

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Khloe understood well enough. They'd only met once before-there was no real connection between them.

His coming here tonight could only mean one thing: Nick was giving her respect, showing her she mattered.

Still, she couldn't help feeling touched.

From the corner of his eye, Nick noticed the distance in her expression. His mind drifted back to the night before.

Khloe had suddenly sent him a message, and he hadn't known how to respond. He rarely interacted with women and had no idea how to behave with someone he was meant to be engaged to.

So he'd asked Lenny for advice.

Lenny told him, "When a woman messages first, it usually means she's saying, 'I miss you.'

Nick was a man of action-decisive, straightforward. If she missed him, then he would simply come see her.

And so, as soon as work ended, he boarded a flight to Celosia.

The way Nick and Khloe leaned close, talking softly, drew quiet attention from nearby tables. No one dared to stare outright, but curiosity hummed through the room.

What exactly was going on between them? Did they have some kind of private relationship?

But that couldn't be. No one had ever heard of Nick being close to any woman.

“Mr. Hunt, do you know Khloe?”

Finally, Veronica couldn't stand it any longer. She leaned forward and asked the question outright.

Her voice was steady, but her heart was pounding. Nick's presence was so commanding that even speaking to him made her uneasy, but she couldn't just sit there in silence.

Two years ago, she had seen Nick once, from afar. Just one look had ruined her for every other man since. She had tried everything she could think of to form some connection to the Hunt family.

Even the time she'd fought Khloe over that apartment...

It wasn't really about the property itself. It was because the unit Khloé bought happened to be directly across from Chrystelle Tower-Nick's office building.

But clearly, Khloe had no idea about any of that. She was just a woman who had inherited a fortune-an illegitimate daughter, a sudden heiress. How could someone like her catch Nick's attention?

“I'll be staying here tonight,” Nick said suddenly. “Leaving tomorrow morning. There's a ball tonight. Will you come?”

Khloe turned toward Veronica, waiting for Nick's answer, but he spoke again before she could say anything. He completely ignored Veronica's question, as if she didn't exist.

“I'm not very good at dancing,” Khloe said after a pause.

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Since he was clearly avoiding the topic, she saw no reason to respond to Veronica either. Besides, from his demeanor, it was obvious he didn't want whatever this was to be made public. Their marriage arrangement was still only verbal-nothing official yet.

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Chapter T

+25 Bonus

“I'll teach you.”

The words brushed past her ear, low and close. His breath grazed her neck, and something flickered through her chest like a spark catching fire. Heat spread from her ear to her face, and she quickly lifted her drink to hide the flush.

“Okay,” she murmured.

Veronica, ignored completely, shot up from her seat. Anger and humiliation burned in her chest. Yet, no matter how much noise she made, Nick didn’t spare her so much as a glance.

Her eyes filled with tears, and she stormed off. A few of her friends hesitated before one of them finally followed.

At another table, Winnie lowered her head, pretending to eat. Through her lashes, she watched Khloe and Nick talking quietly, a faint smirk curving her lips.

This dinner, she thought, hadn’t been a waste after all. She’d witnessed something far more interesting than she expected.

Nick, as always, managed his time precisely. He took a few bites, set his utensils down, and his assistant appeared almost immediately to remind him of an upcoming online meeting.

“See you tonight,” he said to Khloe, his dark eyes calm yet magnetic-impossible to look away from, and just as impossible not to fear.

Billionaire’s Match Novel Chapter 32

Read Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 32 -

Love Demands Honest Hearts – Yash Malhotra 32

Chapter 32

Khloe nodded.

After the banquet, Michael drove her back to the hotel. He had already heard about what had happened during dinner. Nick’s sudden appearance had surprised him too.

“You handled yourself well tonight,” Michael said, his tone a mix of pride and regret. “That should be enough to shut some people up. Still, I should’ve taken better care of you. I’m sorry.” 2

“There’s nothing to be sorry for,” Khloe said quickly. “I didn’t make too many mistakes this time, and it’s all thanks to you, Michael. Besides, your friend helped me out too.”

“Friend?” Michael blinked.

“Winnie,” Khloe said. Her long lashes fluttered slightly, and her gaze held a quiet note of curiosity.

Maybe it was instinct, but she felt something subtle between Michael and Winnie—something unsaid.

“Oh, her.” Michael cleared his throat. “She’s fine, I guess, but I wouldn’t say we’re friends.”

The way he dodged the topic made it clear enough.

Khloe didn’t press. She wasn’t the kind of person who pried into things people preferred to keep private.

Michael shifted the conversation. “It’s rare for Nick to show up at an event like this. I’d say he came for you. Looks like he’s got a good impression of you—the engagement should be as good as settled.”

“I’ll handle it,” Khloe said. “But ‘good impression’ doesn’t mean much.”

An arranged marriage was still an arrangement. Best not to mix feelings into it. And she’d already learned how dangerous a man’s affection could be. Trey had been kind to her once too—at first.

Back in her room, she changed clothes. For the ball, she chose a red fishtail gown that hugged her waist and moved lightly when she walked.

She didn’t know how to dance, but the last thing she wanted was to embarrass herself in front of Nick. So she found a tutorial on her phone and practiced along.

Her movements were naturally graceful, and the steps weren’t too hard to follow. After a few tries, she could already move as if she’d done it before.

She kept practicing until the start of the ball.

The ballroom was dimly lit, half the guests masked, their laughter soft beneath the music. The crowd wasn’t large, but even after a while, Khloe still hadn’t spotted Nick.

“Isn’t that Khloe? She’s here to dance too? Do you think her partner’s Nick?”

The voice came from not far away—one of Veronica’s companions.

Veronica was sitting nearby, drinking one glass after another. The moment she heard the name, she turned sharply, eyes narrowing.

“Khloe. Everything’s always about Khloe!”

Her voice trembled with drink and anger. The next second, the glass slipped from her hand and shattered on the floor. She stormed straight toward Khloe.

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Chapter 12

+25 Bonus

“Khloe! What’s going on between you and Nick? Why is he protecting you? Tell me what tricks did you use to seduce him?”

Khloe had been scanning the room when a sudden, harsh tug on her arm jerked her back. Veronica’s voice came crashing over her.

“Veronica,” Khloe said, her voice cold but steady. “My relationship with Mr. Hunt isn’t something I owe you an explanation for. Please, have some respect.”

She pulled her arm free and turned to leave, but Veronica’s heel caught on her gown. The sound of fabric tearing broke through the music—a sharp, ugly rip.

“Veronica,” Khloe snapped, anger flaring in her chest. “I’ve been patient out of courtesy. Don’t push it.”

Then she shoved Veronica hard.

Veronica, unsteady from the alcohol, lost her balance and fell backward.

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Billionaire’s Match Novel Chapter 33

Read Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 33 –

Love Demands Honest Hearts – Yash Malhotra 33

Chapter 33

Fortunately, a few waiters and security guards rushed over in time to separate them. Veronica was pulled upright by those around her.

Michael was there too. He'd come precisely because he worried something like this might happen to Khloe. He never cared for such social gatherings, but tonight, he made an exception.

The moment he arrived, he took off his jacket and draped it over Khloe's shoulders, then turned to glare coldly at Veronica. 1

"Veronica," he said sharply, "this isn't the Olson family's territory. Even if you want to throw a tantrum, know who you're dealing with. Are you trying to make the Olsons and Morrisons enemies by going after Khloe like this?"

"Michael," Veronica shot back, her face flushed. "This is between me and Khloe. It has nothing to do with you-or your family. Move."

But her voice trembled. Seeing the way people stood around Khloe, protecting her, she grew even more frustrated, helpless and frightened. Her anger crumbled, and tears started spilling down her cheeks.

Her friends quickly surrounded her, murmuring soft words of comfort.

"Veronica, it's not worth it. Don't start something with the Morrisons over this."

"Yeah, and besides... Nick might still be around."

The mention of his name made everything worse. Veronica froze, then laughed bitterly, her expression collapsing. Her eyes, full of jealousy and grief, flicked toward Khloe again-eyes sharp enough to cut through glass.

The ballroom remained dim, their quarrel swallowed by the low music and shadows. Most people hadn't even

noticed.

Then, all at once, a ripple of excitement swept through the room. Every gaze shifted toward the dance floor.

Under the soft, glittering lights, a man and a woman moved together with quiet grace. The rhythm of their steps was steady, the way they fit together almost seamless-like a pair born for this moment.

Khloe recognized the man immediately. He was Nick.

“It’s Nick...” one of Veronica’s friends gasped. All eyes turned toward Khloe, expecting that the man protecting her earlier would be the one dancing with her now.

Veronica looked toward the stage and let out a dry laugh.

“Khloe, seems I was wrong about you. Nick would never look at you that way. He’s clearly not here for you.”

Her voice cracked at the end, but she kept her eyes fixed on the couple in the center of the floor-the woman beside Nick. From across the room, his presence still radiated that same calm authority, bright and distant as ever.

Veronica could bear it no longer. She turned and hurried out of the ballroom.

“Don’t listen to her,” Michael said once Khloe seemed to come back to herself. “The woman with Nick is Michelle Keller, They’re old friends.”

He was being polite about it. In truth, Nick and Michelle were more than that. They’d grown up together, childhood companions.

Michelle came from a family steeped in literature and art-her grandfather a renowned calligrapher. Nick had

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Chapter 13

+25 Bonus

even studied under him as a boy.

Later, their lives had taken different paths, and contact between them had faded. Tonight’s charity gala was the first time they’d seen each other in years-Michelle was one of the hosts.

During the speeches, Khloe had noticed her, elegant and luminous on stage, though she hadn’t realized then that Michelle was also a special guest.

Now, watching them dance, Khloe could see how naturally they moved together. Every turn, every step fit perfectly, as if they’d rehearsed.

She looked on for a few seconds, then took a slow sip of champagne.

There was nothing to dwell on.

Setting her glass down, Khloe turned and left the ballroom. She had an early flight in the morning, and rest seemed far more important than staying to watch.

Back in her room, she packed her suitcase neatly.

Just as she was finishing, her phone lit up.

Three missed calls. One message.

Two calls from Trey, and a text asking whether she was flying home tomorrow-written with that familiar edge of quiet suspicion that she knew all too well.

Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 34

Read Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 34 -

Love Demands Honest Hearts — Yash Malhotra 34

Chapter 34

Khloe glanced at the screen and swiped the message away. There was nothing left to say between her and Trey.

The other missed call was from Nick. The duration showed only a few seconds-probably an accidental dial. No

message.

She stared at his name for a moment, her finger hovering over the callback icon, then slowly lowered her hand.

There was no need. 1

Their collaboration would continue as planned. Anything more would feel forced.

After a marriage built on forged papers and hollow vows, she had long since learned how to separate emotion from interest.

Nick was an exceptional man, someone she genuinely admired. But his private life—who he met, what he did—wasn't her concern.

She turned off her phone and lay back on the bed. Moonlight filtered through the gauzy curtains, casting pale shapes across the room.

She closed her eyes. Sleep came quietly.

When morning came, she wheeled her suitcase through the hotel lobby, her steps light. There was still so much waiting for her back home.

Just before she left, a hotel staff member approached, holding a velvet-wrapped box.

“Miss Roswell,” the woman said, “Mr. Hunt left this for you. He had to leave early and didn't want to disturb you, so he asked me to deliver it on his behalf.”

Khloe looked down. The box was small, black sandalwood, its surface carved with intricate old-style patterns. It was heavy and finely made.

Inside, nestled against black velvet, lay a ring—an imperial-green emerald, oval-cut, polished to a clear, icy sheen. The gem was framed with a thin circle of diamonds, understated yet impossibly striking.

Michael, standing beside her, let out a low whistle. “That's... incredible. The color alone could take your breath away.”

Khloe said nothing. She wasn't an expert in jewelry, but even she knew emeralds of this shade and clarity was rare—extraordinarily rare—and worth a small fortune.

Even for an arranged engagement, the gift was far too valuable.

“I can't accept this,” she said. “It's too much.”

She looked at Michael, intending to hand it back, but he stopped her.

“Nick clearly meant for you to have it,” Michael said. “If you plan to refuse, it's better to do it in person.”

He was right. Khloe nodded and placed the box carefully in her bag.

At four that afternoon, Oscar's private jet touched down at Goldmont City International Airport.

At the same time, Trey arrived at the same terminal, accompanied by his assistant. He was there to see off a client

a crucial one. The company had suffered heavy losses recently, and until this deal was secured, he couldn't

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Chapter 34

+25 Borus

afford a single misstep.

It would've been easier if Khloe were here. She always handled clients with impossible speed and precision.

After the meeting, as he walked back toward the car, he found himself checking his phone again.

He'd been doing that all day-again and again.

He still hadn't gotten a reply to last night's message. The calls he made that morning had gone straight to voicemail.

Was Khloe really going to ignore him completely this time? They'd had arguments before, but never for this long

Still, he couldn't shake the feeling that this wasn't anger. It wasn't distance born from a fight-it was indifference.

Near the VIP exit, a cluster of reporters waited, cameras poised. His car was parked in the same section.

He asked his assistant to find out what was going on. A moment later, his assistant came back with an answer.

"They're waiting for Miss Morrison, the Morrison family heiress. Word is she just came back from a charity gala in Celosia. Usually, it's the family patriarch who attends, so everyone's saying there might be a change in succession. The business world's buzzing-sounds like the Morrison family's leadership might shift soon."

The assistant spoke quickly and thoroughly.

The Morrison family was one of the key investors Trey had been trying-and failing-to win over for years. No matter how many proposals he'd sent, not one had ever been acknowledged.

Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 35

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Love Demands Honest Hearts – Yash Malhotra 35

Chapter 35

Working with the Morrison Group was clearly out of the Fox Group's league. But if there were changes within the company-especially a shift in leadership-then maybe, just maybe, there would be a chance.

Trey stopped walking. He pulled out his phone and looked up the latest information. There was nothing about the Morrison heiress. Not a single photo, not even a trace online. She was said to be mysterious-never once had she appeared publicly in the country.

He suddenly remembered an old class group chat. He scrolled back through it for a long time, but the image that had once been sent there had expired.

Meanwhile, under the escort of her bodyguards, Khloe entered the underground parking lot through the VIP passage. She and Michael left in separate vans.

Michael had already arranged for the reporters outside the terminal to be cleared out, so when Khloe's car exited the garage, the area beyond was completely empty.

Then, just as they reached the exit, her van came to a sudden stop.

A car had pulled in front of them, blocking the way.

The driver honked twice, and the bodyguard beside Khloe sat up straight, instantly alert.

A man stepped out of the blocking car.

Khloe, who had been half-asleep, snapped fully awake when she saw who it was.

Trey.

What was he doing here?

Knock, knock.

Trey rapped lightly on the car window beside her. He bent slightly, his voice polite and restrained.

“Miss Morrison, I’m sorry to disturb you. May I borrow just one minute of your time?”

Before Khloe could respond, one of the bodyguards got out, his expression darkening.

“Who are you? What do you think you’re doing? Who told you you could stop this car?”

The man was tall and intimidating, his presence sharp. But Trey stayed calm, his tone steady, his face unreadable.

“I’ve long admired the Morrison Group,” he said evenly. “I’ve been hoping to discuss a potential collaboration. I happened to hear that Miss Morrison was here, so I took the liberty of introducing myself. I was hoping she might grant me a few minutes of her time.”

“There are plenty of people hoping for that,” the bodyguard shot back impatiently. “Who the hell do you think you are?”

Khloe sat silently inside, watching Trey through the tinted glass.

Of course his expression looked strained. Still, he didn’t seem surprised.

Even as the bodyguard barked at him, Trey smiled faintly. He held out a business card with both hands and glanced once more at the shaded window where she sat.

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“Miss Morrison,” he said, “my company may not rank high in Goldmont City, but our capabilities are on par with any major firm. If you’re willing to give us a chance, it could be mutually beneficial.”

The bodyguard didn’t answer. He took the card, then immediately tossed it to the ground.

The driver turned to Khloe. “Miss Morrison, do you want me to tell him to leave?”

Khloe said, “No. He’ll do whatever it takes to get what he wants.”

“What?” The driver looked puzzled, not understanding who she meant.

Sure enough, Trey didn’t react when his card hit the pavement. Instead, he called to his assistant for another one, which he held out again.

“Miss Morrison, please—just take my card. Otherwise, I’ll have wasted your time for nothing.”

He spoke toward her window, but his hands remained extended toward the bodyguard. There was a trace of a smile on his lips, but none in his eyes—only the quiet, gathering weight of something darker.

For a moment, even the bodyguard was at a loss for words. He took the card again, ready to throw it away.

“Keep it.”

A soft voice came from inside the car.

Trey froze.

That voice-

“Khloe?” he muttered, his chest tightening.

2/2

Billionaire’s Match Novel Chapter 36

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Chapter 36

But almost immediately, Trey began to doubt himself. The voice had sounded like Khloe’s, but this woman’s tone was clearer, colder.

It must have been his mind playing tricks-too many days spent wondering why Khloe hadn’t replied to his messages.

It was only two words anyway. He must have misheard.

While he stood there in a daze, the bodyguard pocketed his card and returned to the van. The vehicle didn’t pause or look back. The driver turned the wheel, and in an instant, it was gone.

Trey stared after it, unmoving, long after the taillights disappeared.

Inside the van, the bodyguard handed the business card to Khloe.

“Miss Morrison,” he said respectfully, “this is from the CEO of the Fox Group.”

There was no shortage of companies eager to partner with the Morrison Group-industry giants lined up waiting. A company of that size could never make the list.

Khloe didn’t even look at the card. Her expression didn’t shift. “Blacklist the company,” she said coolly to her assistant. “No cooperation-ever.”

“Yes, Miss,” came the immediate reply.

That night, Khloe received messages from Trey again.

He’d called-she hadn’t answered. So he texted, asking when she’d be home.

Khloe read them and said nothing.

Days passed like that.

Eventually, even Trey began to lose his composure. He didn’t want to be the one to bow his head first, but the truth was plain-without Khloe, the company was struggling.

When he returned home that evening, Angela noticed the tension in his face immediately.

“What’s wrong?” she asked softly. “Is the company still having problems?”

Her voice was gentle. She reached out, trying to ease him, but this time he brushed past her without a word and went straight to Khloe’s room.

He pushed open the door.

The room was empty.

Not just unoccupied-stripped bare. The bed, the wardrobe, the vanity-everything was spotless, hollow, untouched.

It was as if no one had ever lived there.

“How... how is this possible?”

He stood frozen, the air sucked from his lungs. He had thought Khloe was only angry, that she’d gone to stay elsewhere for a few days. But she hadn’t just left-she’d erased herself completely.

1/2

Chapter 36

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Angela, following him into the room, looked startled too.

She'd spent her days taking their son out or working from home. The villa was large enough that she rarely crossed paths with Khloe. She'd assumed Khloe was working late at the company, which suited her perfectly.

A person like that was useful. A shadow. Someone who didn't intrude on their lives.

It had never occurred to her that Khloe was gone for good.

"When... when did she move out?" Angela murmured.

Just then, little Pete darted in, clapping his hands. "Yay! The bad woman's gone! Finally!"

"Shut up!"

Something in Trey snapped. A rush of blood, sudden and hot, flooded his head. His voice roared out before he could stop it-and his hand followed.

The slap cracked through the room.

"Ah-!"

Pete's cry split the air. He stumbled back, landing hard on the floor, tears already spilling as a bright red mark spread across his cheek.

Angela's eyes widened in shock. "Trey! What are you doing? How could you hit Pete?"

She dropped to her knees, gathering Pete up in her arms. His face was swelling fast.

2/2

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Chapter 37

Angela's heart ached, and anger rose sharp in her chest.

Her eyes reddened, and before she could stop herself, tears spilled over. She shot Trey a fierce look, gathered Pete in her arms, and turned away without a word.

“Angela-” he called after her desperately.

But after taking only a few steps, he stopped. He couldn't bring himself to follow.

The frustration in him coiled into something darker. He turned instead toward the house staff, his voice suddenly cold.

“When did Khloe move out? Why was I not informed?”

The servants stood trembling, heads bowed. One finally stammered out the truth.

Khloe had packed up her things several days ago. She'd instructed them not to bother Trey, saying he was busy and shouldn't be disturbed over trivial matters.

Several days ago?

Trey's stomach sank. That was right after Angela had moved in.

So Khloe had left because of that. She was angry after all.

Upstairs, Angela held her crying son close, tears still streaking her own face. She had sobbed for nearly an hour, waiting for Trey to come-he never did.

“Mom,” Pete sniffled, his small hands clutching at her sleeve. “Does Dad not want us anymore? He hit me because of that bad woman...”

“Shh, Pete, be good. Your Daddy won't abandon us,” she murmured, stroking his hair, though even she didn't believe her own words.

She didn't understand Trey anymore. He had said Khloe was nothing but a tool, a woman he used for business. And yet, again and again, he lost control because of her.

Maybe... maybe he really had feelings for Khloe.

“But Daddy was so scary,” Pete whispered, his lips trembling. The memory of that slap still burned on his cheek.

Angela kissed his face gently. “Don’t be afraid. Mommy’s here. I won’t let him hurt you again.”

Her voice was soft but cold at the edges. As long as she was here, Khloe would never replace her-or her son.

When Pete finally fell asleep, Angela wiped her tears, smoothed her hair, and went to Trey’s study.

He sat alone at his desk. His study was heavy with silence. When he saw her, his lips twitched faintly, but his expression stayed distant.

“I’m sorry,” he said after a long pause. “I shouldn’t have hit Pete. I lost control. I’m not blaming you two, but Khloe left... it’s bad for us. For the company.”

He pressed his fingers to the bridge of his nose. His voice was unsteady. He had expected her to be angry, maybe even to lash out-but she didn’t.

1/2

Chapter 32

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“I know,” Angela said. “You’ve been under too much pressure-business, family, everything. You’re exhausted.”

She came closer and gently took his hand in both of hers. Her voice was calm, warm, flowing like water that softened every sharp edge.

Trey looked up, startled. Her face held no reproach-only sympathy and tenderness.

“Angela, you’re not angry with me?” His voice was hoarse, uncertain.

He really had lost himself lately. Khloe’s departure had left him disoriented, scattered. He’d barely noticed Angela at all.

“How could I blame you?” Angela shook her head, pressing his hand to her chest. “Everything you’ve done... you did it for us.”

“Angela...”

His head lowered, his voice heavy with remorse. “I just didn’t handle things well.”

“It’s not your fault,” she said gently. “You shouldn’t have to face everything alone. We’re husband and wife- we’ll get through this together.”

Her words, so patient and soothing, finally broke through his turmoil. Some of the weight eased from his chest.

He pulled her into his arms.

But the moment his eyes closed, another image rose unbidden in his mind-Khloe’s face.

2/2

Billionaire’s Match Novel Chapter 38

Read Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 38 -

Love Demands Honest Hearts – Yash Malhotra 38

Chapter 38

Back when the company was going through its hardest times, Khloe had always been there-standing quietly by his side, saying words like that.

And every time, Khloe had indeed thrown herself into the fire for him, taking on everything without complaint.

Trey frowned. Why was he thinking about Khloe again?

“Trey, have you forgotten that I studied finance too? I might be able to handle Khloe’s job just as well.”

After soothing him for a while, Angela finally revealed her real purpose.

Instead of letting Khloe serve as Trey’s right hand, Angela thought it would be better if she joined the company herself.

Previously, he hadn’t allowed her to do so because he was afraid his family would find out.

“That wouldn’t be appropriate,” Trey said immediately, rejecting her without hesitation.

It wasn't just because of his family. If Khloe came back and saw Angela working there, he couldn't imagine how she would react.

"I know what you're worried about," Angela said, easily reading his thoughts.

She'd already prepared for this. The position she wanted wasn't Khloe's managerial one-it was to be her assistant.

That way, when Khloe returned, it could be justified as helping out.

Besides, Khloe was the one who had asked for leave; someone had to fill the gap.

"Women understand women best. Khloe's only upset because she wants you to care about her. If she finds out I'm working by your side, she might feel a little threatened-maybe that'll make her come back on her own, just to save face."

Her words struck right at the core of Trey's thoughts. He had spoiled Khloe for years, so much that her temper had grown. She'd even moved out without saying a word to him.

Even if he managed to persuade her to come back, she would have the upper hand afterward.

Still, despite all her scheming, he had no doubt about Khloe's feelings for him. He'd spoiled her for six years- there was no way she could just walk away like that. Certainly not over something so trivial.

After thinking it through-and unable to resist Angela's repeated pleading-Trey finally agreed.

The next day, Angela officially started working at his company. Once her onboarding was completed and the system automatically processed the approval, Khloe received a text message.

Her department had a new employee. The name: Angela Thompson.

Khloe stared at the notification for two seconds before the corner of her lips curved into a faint smile.

Trey really had no patience at all. She'd only been on leave a few days, and he'd already let Angela into the company. Was he incapable of surviving without a woman by his side?

"Miss Roswell, you've already finished inspecting the Morrison family's assets. Will you be attending the shareholders' meeting later?" her assistant asked, pulling her back to the present.

Chapter 38

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“Of course,” Khloe replied without hesitation.

Even though she couldn’t take control of the Morrison Group yet-and the board clearly favored Clarice-she still needed to make her presence known.

Back in his office, Trey waited all day. His phone lit up and went dark, lit up and went dark again, until he nearly burned a hole through the screen. But aside from work messages, there wasn’t a single word from Khloe. 1

She must have seen the notification about Angela’s new position.

He’d deliberately resisted the urge to contact her all day. But Khloe-she could really hold her silence.

For the first time, Trey began to doubt himself. Was it possible Khloe could truly ignore him just like that?

All those years, she’d devoted herself completely to him-working for him, supporting him, never asking for anything in return. Her love for him wasn’t something he ever needed to question. He could feel it in his bones.

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Chapter 39

Even if Trey asked Khloe to die for him, she probably wouldn’t have flinched.

Had all that love been a lie?

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After spending the entire day wrestling with matters at Morrison Group, Khloe finally returned home at dusk.

Big companies were always trouble. If she hadn't prepared in advance, those old men at the shareholders' meeting would've eaten her alive.

Her phone buzzed suddenly. It was Tina Boswell-an old friend she hadn't heard from in years. 1

Tina had just returned to the country, she said, and wanted to see her. There happened to be a class reunion that night, and she hoped Khloe would come out for a drink.

Back in university, Tina had been the one she was closest to in the dorm.

They'd worked part-time jobs together, pulled all-nighters before exams, and used to promise each other half-jokingly that if one of them ever got rich, they'd never forget the other.

After graduation, though, Tina went to work abroad, while Khloe chose to stay-chose Trey-and settled into being the devoted wife at his side.

At first, Khloe tried to decline, but Tina insisted she'd only be in town for one night, pleading with her to come. Remembering the old days, the easy laughter and shared exhaustion, Khloe finally agreed.

The reunion was held at a music lounge downtown. When Khloe arrived, the private room was already packed.

Tina was sitting near the corner; the moment she saw Khloe, she jumped up and ran over, wrapping her in a tight hug.

"Khloe! Oh my god, it's been forever! I've missed you so much!"

Her warmth hit Khloe like a sudden gust of summer wind, stirring something inside her that had been dormant for a long time.

"Tina, you've changed," Khloe said with a faint smile. "Looks like life's been treating you well these past few years."

Back in school, Tina had been small and shy, soft-spoken to a fault. Now she was radiant, confident-her energy filled the room.

"Of course! Your girl's seen the world now," Tina said, laughing as she pulled Khloe into a seat.

Then she gave her an exaggerated once-over. “And look at you—more beautiful than ever. Must be that glow from being in love, huh?”

At the mention of love, Khloe’s expression faltered for just a moment. She wasn’t sure how to answer.

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Word of her arrival spread quickly. Classmates, some familiar, some not, gathered around her.

Back in university, Khloe had been both top of the class and one of the prettiest on campus—everyone had known

her name.

Seeing her at the reunion tonight was a small event in itself.

1/2

Chapter 39

+25 Bonus

“Yeah, Khloe, tell us about your perfect life! Must be nice being Mrs. Fox,” someone teased.

Their romance had been legendary back then—Trey’s pursuit of her had been so open, so dramatic, that their marriage after graduation became the talk of the finance department.

“By the way, where’s Trey? You didn’t bring your husband along? Come on, call him—get him over here!”

“Yeah, we all want to meet him!”

The voices grew louder, half-joking, half-prying.

Khloe was already beginning to regret coming. She was trying to think of a polite way to deflect when another voice cut through the chatter.

“I don’t know. Being a rich man’s wife doesn’t sound so easy. I heard the Fox family’s never even made their daughter-in-law public. Love between people from different worlds usually ends up in pieces, doesn’t it?”

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The voice carried a sharp edge. Khloe turned toward it and saw a face that felt vaguely familiar.

She couldn't recall the woman's name, but she remembered she'd once been Angela's student-someone from

the same class as Trey.

"Denise, you're just bitter," Tina shot back without hesitation. "You haven't had a boyfriend in years. Maybe try a blind date before running your mouth."

"Please, Tina, you don't understand anything, so stay out of it," Denise Parker sneered. "Everyone knows Trey only married Khloe because he couldn't have the woman he really wanted."

The moment those words left her mouth, the room fell silent. The laughter, the chatter-all of it evaporated like mist.

One by one, the smiles vanished from people's faces. The classmates who'd been so eager to talk to Khloe just moments ago suddenly found their drinks or their phones very interesting.

The air turned cold.

Khloe froze for a moment. She didn't need Denise to tell her Trey had someone else in his heart-she had always

known that much.

What caught her off guard was everyone else's reaction.

Normally, people would gossip, act surprised, deny it, or at least laugh it off

But this... this quiet acceptance-it was as if they all already knew.

So everyone but her knew about Trey and Angela's relationship.

α

She thought of the blessings, the envy, the congratulations she'd once received, and for a second, it all struck her as absurd."

How funny-how pathetic-that she had once believed she was the happiest woman alive.

Tina's face flushed bright red. "Denise, watch your mouth! If you're jealous, at least have the decency to admit it!"

"I'm just telling the truth," Denise said coolly. "Whether there's love or not, I think the person involved know best."

Her lips curved into a thin smile as she cast a deliberately provoking glance at Khloe.

"Besides," she added, her tone dripping with disdain, "what's there to be jealous of now?"

"You're jealous of her beauty, her success, and the fact that someone actually loves her," Tina snapped. "You've been competing with her since our university days, and everyone knows it."

Tina wasn't wrong.

Back in university, Denise had been quite the star herself. She'd been photographed during her freshman year— long legs, perfect figure, dressed impeccably-and had gone semi-viral online as the "Finance Goddess" of their department.

But somehow, she was always compared to Khloe. Every spotlight that once shone on her eventually drifted toward Khloe instead.

1/2

Chapter 40

+25 Bonus

Scholarships. Internship offers. Study-abroad recommendations. Even the admiration of others—wherever Denise went, Khloe's name followed, and Denise always came in second.

People had joked that she was always picking up Khloe's leftovers, mimicking her choices, her achievements, her path. And over time, that comparison turned into resentment.

Khloe had never known any of this. To her, Denise had simply been one of Angela's bright, ambitious students- always active, always showing up at every event.

But looking at her now, seeing the sharpness in her gaze, Khloe finally understood Tina's words. The jealousy was written all over Denise's face.

"What do you mean, competing?" Denise's voice rose, brittle with irritation. "It's not me- it's everyone else who insisted on comparing us."

Her laugh came out hollow, her expression strained. "But time tells the truth, doesn't it? Being talented isn't about a few years in school. It's about where you end up."

She lifted her chin, smug and triumphant. "I'll admit Khloe was impressive back in university. But look at us now -she's just a housewife, living off her husband's mood, while I have everything I want."

She gestured proudly at the glittering jewelry draped over her wrists and neck, her designer dress, and her expensive bag.

Tina opened her mouth to retort, but Khloe stopped her with a gentle touch and a faint smile.

"Denise," she said, "when you say 'living off a man,' do you mean that all these years at Fox Group, I've only survived because Trey kept me?"