

Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 361

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Love Demands Honest Hearts – Yash Malhotra 361

Chapter 361

Was Charlotte going out on a date?

The little white rabbit who had been pretending to be innocent in front of him... was actually a little wildcat?

Ethan had been in a low mood for days.

Repeatedly thwarted by Khloe, now even Clarice was giving him the cold shoulder. Important tasks were no longer entrusted to him, and at the company, he had almost become a nominal vice president, a figurehead in all but name.

On top of that, the things Khloe had told him still lingered in his mind, and over the past few days, he had secretly been investigating his parents' past. But too much time had passed, and the leftover official clues were practically useless.

Maybe it was human nature to hide when in a slump, but suddenly, he felt an unprecedented confusion about his life.

Then Charlotte appeared, shifting his attention.

He recalled Winnie's figure from earlier in the morning and Charlotte's expression, and a flush of heat rose to

him.

Half an hour later, the private car carrying Charlotte pulled up to a lavish hotel in the city center.

She strode quickly in high heels, her petite yet firm, perfectly proportioned figure swaying naturally with a graceful allure.

Ethan had parked on the side of the road. From where he stood, Charlotte seemed like a completely different

person.

At the office, she was always in casual hoodies with a long ponytail, or sometimes her hair cut shoulder-length. Her youthful, simple elegance, paired with a cute face, gave her the air of a naïve young woman just stepping into adulthood.

Ethan had never imagined she could transform into such a vision.

Sexy yet innocent, stubborn in spirit but ultimately a gentle little bunny-what man could resist this type of woman?

He touched the corner of his mouth, loosened his tie, paid for parking, and strode after her.

Seeing Charlotte enter a private business suite, Ethan could reasonably assume she was here on business.

He recalled passing the project department that morning and overhearing her mention a dinner tonight with a certain government department manager-likely follow-up business for the pharmaceutical project.

But wasn't Khloe known for never letting her female subordinates attend these kinds of dinners? Why was Charlotte here alone?

Ethan pulled out his phone and made a call.

Inside the suite, Charlotte found only two people waiting: a middle-aged man in his fifties across the table, and

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+25 Bonus

his assistant.

"Leonard? Just the three of us today?" Charlotte's eyelid twitched.

She knew the man's intentions in advance, but seeing him approach so directly still surprised her.

Leonard Burns was a minor manager responsible for reviewing the pharmaceutical project's packaging line, and Charlotte had dealt with him before. He had even given her a business card. During the approval process, he had messaged her almost every night, inviting her to dinner. Charlotte had always politely refused.

Now the project was complete, and Leonard was claiming to have influential contacts and promised to deliver a major performance boost to her department-hence the invitation to dinner today.

Charlotte knew Leonard wasn't serious-his "contacts" were just an excuse; what he really wanted was her.

At that moment, Ethan happened to walk past the project department, his eyes fixed on Charlotte.

Charlotte had been busy with work and hadn't interacted with Ethan much in recent days. Their last encounter had been when she tried to extract information from him that might help Khloe. Ethan, wary of her, had resisted, yet somehow managed to flirt and tease her for a while. In the end, he left a small but useful clue for Charlotte, so she could warn Khloe to watch out for Oscar.

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Later, Khloe had mentioned to Charlotte that Clarice genuinely wanted to team up with Oscar, which proved that what Ethan had said was true.

Using Ethan wouldn't be easy. Charlotte knew she couldn't rely on his fleeting interest in her, so she needed a more forceful approach.

She needed a shock-something to make Ethan completely caught up in her, even if only for a short while. She wanted him to feel the sting of being toyed with.

And if that failed, at least she could study him, discover his weaknesses, and help her friend get revenge.

Charlotte had collected all she could on Ethan-his exploits, rumors, and personality traits. She had analyzed him roughly: a habitual flirt, self-absorbed, proud, competitive, but never truly loyal to a woman.

The harder someone is to handle, the more obvious their weak points.

Ethan fit that description perfectly.

He had wandered through countless women, indulging without restraint. That only proved he craved emotional stimulation—he needed intense feelings to keep himself engaged. His pride and competitiveness only reinforced this: the more he desired but could not attain, the longer his focus would remain fixed.

Charlotte had studied psychology in college. Though she had little practical experience, her theoretical knowledge was solid.

So that morning, when receiving Winnie at the office lobby, she made sure Ethan noticed her emotions. Later, as he passed the project department, she casually mentioned an evening engagement.

Every movement he made, she watched closely. He was highly sensitive to a woman's figure and clothing, so Charlotte had deliberately dressed to catch his attention.

If Ethan followed her, her plan would succeed. If he didn't, she wouldn't have come alone to meet Leonard.

Now that Ethan was outside, the next act of her plan could unfold.

“Charlotte, I'm sorry. My friend had something come up at the last minute.”

Leonard stood and walked toward her, eyes scanning her outfit with satisfaction.

Charlotte, a junior employee with looks to spare but no flashy style, was far more restrained than her appearance suggested. In other words, quietly alluring.

“But Leonard, didn't you say you'd introduce a project lead to me? I came during work hours. If this isn't appropriate, I'll need to go back...”

Charlotte took two steps back, her voice soft and gentle. Her refusal sounded like a delicate invitation to anyone listening.

“Oh, you're already here, why go back? Take the day off, I'll cover your salary. Let's eat together, and I'll drive you home tonight...”

Leonard's voice grew warmer as he reached to pull her close. Charlotte reacted immediately, forcefully pushing

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+25 Bonus

his arm away.

“Leonard! Show some restraint! I’m leaving!”

She pivoted toward the suite door, only for Leonard’s assistant to step in first at a glance from him.

“Knock-knock-knock-”

At that moment, urgent knocking sounded.

Leonard’s attention wavered. Charlotte feigned confusion, adding to the tension. But the knocking grew louder, turning from polite knocks into a violent battering.

As Ethan lifted his leg, preparing to kick the door open, the assistant finally swung the suite door wide.

Ethan froze for a moment, but with his leg already extended, he couldn’t pull back. Without hesitation, he drove a kick straight into the assistant’s lower abdomen, sending the latter crashing to the floor.

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“Sorry, I couldn’t hold back.”

Ethan quickly steadied himself. His lazy words slipped out smoothly, even as his hands habitually adjusted the edges of his suit.

His strength was formidable-Leonard’s assistant was still rolling on the floor, grunting, unable to get up.

Leonard had assumed a disturbance was underway and was about to shout for help, but then, he recognized Ethan.

“Mr. Morrison?”

Leonard had visited Morrison Group several times a year and naturally knew Ethan’s face. Seeing him there, his expression shifted-part surprise, part panic.

“F-fancy seeing you here today. Are... are you here for a meeting?”

Ethan smiled faintly, tilting his head to glance at Charlotte. “Come here.”

Charlotte clutched her clothes, hesitated for a moment, and finally slipped behind Ethan.

Though the scene was disgusting in theory, Ethan clearly enjoyed it. In his eyes, he had once again “rescued” Charlotte.

“Mr. Morrison... you and Charlotte...” Leonard’s gaze darkened slightly as he observed their interaction. Surely they couldn’t be...?

Ethan wouldn’t be dating his own employee, would he?

“Mind your own business. Don’t ask what you shouldn’t.”

Ethan’s voice was soft, but as if deliberately, he extended his hand and grasped Charlotte’s palm.

Charlotte tried to pull away, but he didn’t let go, and she was drawn firmly to his side.

“Leonard, you arranged to meet an employee of mine alone during work hours. What exactly is this about?”

Ethan’s words made Leonard shiver. He pressed his lips together, then spoke tremblingly, “I-I just... I just wanted to get to know Charlotte better.”

“You’re not young anymore, and you have a wife and children, if I’m not mistaken? Using your position to lure a junior employee out with you-if this scandal got out, you wouldn’t just be retiring early. You’d lose everything.”

Ethan snorted, glancing at Charlotte again.

Today, she looked exquisite. Her delicate face, tilted down, was framed by long lashes that caught the light. Her skin had a soft, rosy glow. Black hair fell from her cheek to her collarbone, carrying a natural scent-her hair, not perfume.

Leonard's legs went weak. He nearly collapsed and grabbed the edge of a nearby table for support.

"Mr. Morrison! I... I apologize! My thoughts were vile! I should never have had this notion! You're right; I have a

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+25 Bonus

wife and children, and I cannot disgrace myself. I beg you, show mercy...'

Sweat drenched him, his voice shaking uncontrollably.

"You didn't anger me; you angered her."

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Ethan pushed Charlotte slightly forward with his arm. "Apologize to her. If she forgives you, we'll talk later."

"Charlotte! I'm truly sorry! I shouldn't have harassed you. I didn't know my place! Whatever you ask, anything at all, I will do to express my apology! I will never do it again!"

Leonard immediately bowed his head, repeatedly apologizing to Charlotte, his whole body crumpled in fear.

Charlotte had no intention of dealing with someone like him, but Ethan had forced her forward, so she played along.

"Your behavior is disgusting. Today, you apologize to me-but tomorrow, if you meet a girl who can't defend herself, you'll just escalate, won't you?"

Leonard had no defense. "I-I won't! I will change! I swear!"

Satisfied, Charlotte stopped talking. Ethan also lost interest in hearing more from Leonard. He glanced at her; she looked back at him, but her gaze was slightly evasive in his presence.

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“I’ll let you handle him, Ethan. I’m leaving.”

With that, Charlotte wrenched her hand free from Ethan’s grasp and strode out.

Ethan felt a twinge of irritation—he had just been about to follow her—but Leonard tried to intervene, babbling another apology.

Without hesitation, Ethan kicked Leonard squarely in the knee.

The older man crumpled to the floor in pain, unable to rise even with his assistant’s help.

“Tomorrow, hand in your resignation. People like you are a hazard to this position. Don’t blame me if I make life difficult for you.”

His words were sharp, laced with impatience. In that moment, the gentlemanly poise he usually carried vanished entirely. He sounded less like a corporate executive delivering justice and more like a villain passing

sentence.

Stepping outside, Ethan scanned the area, assuming Charlotte had already left. To his surprise, she was waiting just around the corner.

“Waiting for me?”

Without hesitation, he moved behind her, naturally enveloping her in his arms. But the moment he touched her, Charlotte pivoted with precision, avoiding contact entirely. 1

“Ethan... what are you doing here?”

Always playing her part, Charlotte immediately assumed a defensive, uneasy posture. Ethan had anticipated this reaction, and the corner of his mouth twitched in a faint smirk.

“Let’s talk outside.”

She lowered her head but said nothing. This time, however, she followed obediently, staying quietly behind him. Ethan, noting her aversion to being touched, suppressed the urge to reach for her.

By the time they stepped out of the hotel, the evening air had grown chill. Ethan noticed Charlotte shivering slightly.

She wore a pale pink, mid-thigh, strapless dress that clung to her curves. Her slender, fair limbs were exposed, her neck bare-she looked cold.

Ethan scowled inwardly. He wasn't the type to drape his jacket over a woman just for warmth-unless there was a benefit to it. But when he caught Charlotte sneaking a glance at him from the corner of her eye, he shrugged off his coat and draped it over her shoulders.

"What are you doing?" Charlotte immediately sidestepped.

"You're cold, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes, but I don't need you doing this. Between us... we should maintain some boundaries."

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+25 Bonus

The words left her mouth, scented with a polite distaste that almost made her gag-but Ethan clearly enjoyed them. A soft laugh escaped him, his eyes sparkling.

"Boundaries? And yet, just now, you kept looking at me... constantly teasing me. What was that about?"

"I wasn't teasing!" Charlotte quickly clarified. "I just... I was worried you'd do something. Your perfume is way too strong-it makes me feel dizzy, that's all."

Her voice was gentle, yet each word cut like a blade without drawing blood. Ethan's face went pale.

"This perfume... is expensive."

He murmured awkwardly, pulling the coat back onto his arm. Inside, he felt a small twinge of self-conflict. Did he really wear that much perfume normally?

When he offered to drive her home, Charlotte immediately refused.

Ethan's pride flared. He promised, on his honor, that he wouldn't touch her-and only then did she reluctantly get into the car.

Throughout the drive, he couldn't help stealing glances at her. Today, Charlotte was stunning-so stunning that he felt an unusual pull in his chest.

But the thought of actually "taking" her made things complicated. If he crossed that line, Khloe would never forgive him. And knowing Charlotte's nature, any romance between them might not end easily. The mere thought was exhausting. It seemed he would have to restrain himself.

Charlotte, meanwhile, watched the city lights blur past the window. In the reflection, she could see Ethan sneaking glances at her.

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Ethan's facial features were sharply defined, so striking that even after staring for a long while, one couldn't deny he was handsome.

But to Charlotte, that face would always be damned.

The car fell silent. Ethan casually switched on some music. When the lyrics reached the chorus, he hummed along.

He sang flawlessly a deep, magnetic voice-so good it could rival the original artist.

Yet after a long while, Charlotte didn't react at all.

"Charlotte." Finally, Ethan called her.

"Hm?" She didn't look back.

"Do I sing well?"

They were approaching a traffic light. Ethan rested one hand on the steering wheel, the other rubbing the bridge of his nose.

Charlotte pressed her lips together.

Was he seriously praising himself? She couldn't help wondering.

She didn't answer him directly. "I like men like Nick."

Ethan furrowed his brows, staring at her like she'd lost her mind.

"Hey, I'm asking if I sing well!"

Finally, Charlotte turned to look at him. "Ethan, you chased me all the way here, helped me out, and now you're trying to get my attention... isn't that your way of showing interest? But I've told you before, you and I aren't the same kind of people. I will never be your ambiguous fling, or your... outlet."

"When did I ever say I wanted to-

Ethan was momentarily speechless, caught off guard.

Then he realized: Charlotte didn't want a short-term affair with him, but the words she'd said... sounded suspiciously like a hint. He smiled again.

"Charlotte, then tell me what do you like about Nick? He's just born into a slightly better family, and... maybe a little better-looking than me."

"You don't get it." Charlotte lifted her chin slightly, proud. "Nick has many qualities, but just his loyalty and sense of responsibility? That alone is rare in this world."

Mentioning Nick, Charlotte's tone carried pride.

Ethan knew she was deliberately poking at him-she could never have feelings for Nick-but he couldn't help feeling stung. Jealousy even crept in.

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+25 Bonus

Surprisingly, he didn't retort further. He stayed quiet all the way until he dropped her off, as if sulking.

Charlotte didn't care. Making Ethan uncomfortable was exactly the point.

Yet, as she unbuckled her seatbelt, she softened her voice once more.

“Ethan... thank you for tonight. Honestly, if you didn’t always make things difficult for others, if you... behaved a little better, you’d actually be... quite...”

She trailed off deliberately, letting the words hang.

Ethan leaned forward slightly. Under the dim interior light, he traced her delicate features-eyebrows, cheekbones, lips-each contour exquisite even in shadow.

“Quite... what?” he murmured, his breath close to her face.

Charlotte forced a smile, concealing her inner discomfort. “Quite... a good person.”

Meanwhile, Khloe was working late at the Morrison Group office-not because of pressing tasks, but because during the day, she couldn’t focus at all.

Nick had called once. When he heard her claim she was busy, he didn’t push, though his tone betrayed a hint of unhappiness. After all, she had promised to take leave to be with him, but had yet to follow through.

Now, seeing she still hadn’t left, Nick sent another message. His tone was gentle, probing indirectly: had she left the office yet?

Khloe stared at her phone, feeling a dull heaviness in her chest. For the first time in a while, it felt like she was genuinely angry.

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Khloe knew that sleep-talking meant nothing.

But try as she might, she couldn’t shake the unease. Her mind kept replaying it over and over.

She wanted to move on, but the thoughts lingered longer than she expected. Yet, she couldn't bring herself to tell Nick that she was upset.

She knew exactly how he would react: worry, guilt, endless apologies.

And besides... even if he truly still held a place for Michelle in his heart, he wouldn't admit it out loud, right?

Khloe hesitated for a long while, then finally rose to gather her things, preparing to leave.

As she pushed open the office door, she saw Winnie standing in the doorway.

She had no idea how long Winnie had been there; in the darkness, she hadn't been visible at all.

As Khloe stepped into the hallway, the lights automatically flicked on. Winnie shuffled forward a couple of steps, looking uneasy.

"You're still here? How was your first day? Did everything go smoothly?" Khloe asked as she approached, her tone genuinely concerned.

Winnie nodded. "You arranged everything. Of course, it went smoothly. Everyone was nice."

"There will be training anyway, so take your time. No rush," Khloe said casually to reassure her. Then she added, "Shall we go together?"

Winnie gave a soft "Mm", then fell into step beside Khloe.

The two of them rode the elevator in silence.

Most people had already left for the day, and although their offices were on different floors, Winnie had specifically come to find Khloe.

Khloe said nothing the entire way.

Winnie didn't like being too close to others, and Khloe's own mood was heavy.

Perhaps it was because she had been browsing news about Michelle earlier, her phone buzzed with a news alert.

Michelle's live broadcast from before leaving the country had gone viral.

She had publicly announced that she was leaving for Felanche to participate in a children's charity project. The conditions there were harsh, and the work would be

grueling. Michelle didn't know when she would return. She also mentioned that her live streams would be paused for a while.

Fans quickly flooded social media with concern and messages of support.

Previously, the rumors Nick had stirred had affected her reputation. Many fans demanded clarification, and some even speculated that she had once interfered in someone else's relationship.

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Michelle hadn't responded to the criticism, but now she simply released a new work update. Her actions spoke louder than words, instantly regaining the goodwill of her followers.

Her morning broadcast had even attracted casual viewers. Nowadays, netizens focused more on deeds than gossip. No matter how convoluted her romantic rumors were, as long as she continued her charity work, support naturally followed.

Seeing the news, Khloe couldn't help but think of Nick.

Michelle had left the country early that morning.

Could Nick's gloom last night have been related? Had he known?

The elevator doors opened, and Winnie suddenly spoke.

"Khloe, I know a nice bar nearby. Want to grab a drink with me?"

Khloe hesitated before answering, "A drink? Now? What's with the sudden invite?"

Hadn't Winnie claimed she didn't want to get too close?

"I want a drink. And since I started my job today because of you, I want to thank you," Winnie said.

Seeing the crease between Khloe's brows, as if she seemed ready to refuse, Winnie quickly changed tack.

"You look like you're in a bad mood, too-working late alone, did you have a fight with your husband?"

Her words weren't delicate; they were sharp enough to sting. But Winnie didn't intend to provoke Khloe. She wasn't good at making friends, and usually spoke plainly.

"No, just a bit tired from work," Khloe replied, forcing a faint smile.

"Then you should definitely relax a little. Shall we go?" Winnie asked.

Khloe glanced at the time. It was already half past ten.

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"Okay, but just for an hour at most," Khloe said.

Before leaving for the bar, Khloe had sent Nick a message, telling him not to wait up for her and to get some rest. She was going to spend a little time with a friend before heading back.

Nick's reply came almost instantly.

Nick: [Okay.]

A pang of guilt twisted in Khloe's chest. Nick had been waiting for her, and she felt it keenly—but then she thought of Michelle, and it was like a small thorn pricked at her heart.

Better to let herself ease her emotions first, she decided, rather than risk Nick noticing anything later and worrying.

On the other side, Nick stared at his phone, his expression darkening slightly.

"I reserved the big room, for ten people."

Late at night, a stylish, retro-themed music bar welcomed a group of guests.

At the front, a married couple approached the hostess and instructed her to open the reserved private room.

The hostess led everyone inside, and the couple split up: the woman accompanied the others to the room, while the man stayed at the entrance.

“Trey.”

Trey, standing at the door with a cigarette, stubbed out the last bit in his hand when he saw the guy approach.

The dinner had just ended, and this was the second round-they were here to drink, chat, and catch up.

This time, the couple had invited several close friends-some Trey knew well, some not so much. Trey’s situation was known to a few, but he had arrived alone. Khloe wasn’t around, and everyone tacitly avoided mentioning her.

“I... actually have a favor to ask,” Trey said, hesitating for a moment.

During dinner, he hadn’t found the right chance, but now he had a moment alone with the man. He quickly explained: he and Khloe were having a quarrel, and he hoped the man could get his wife to reach out to Khloe, help contact her, maybe even persuade her to meet him.

Khloe valued relationships, and a request from an old classmate might at least get her to come out for a meeting. If the man’s wife were willing to act as a mediator, that would be even better.

The man’s eyes flickered with surprise at Trey’s words, but he agreed without hesitation. Such a small favor, he reasoned, his wife couldn’t possibly refuse.

Khloe had always been close to the couple, acting as a kind of matchmaker for them in the past. Later, she changed her number, and only Trey had kept their contact. They hadn’t been in touch until now.

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In fact, the man’s wife had been looking forward to reconnecting with Khloe. Now that the couple had returned to the country, having an old friend around would make things more pleasant.

Once the man agreed, Trey immediately handed over Khloe's contact and prepared to leave—but the man wouldn't let him go. He insisted that Trey stay for a few drinks. Unable to refuse, Trey reluctantly stepped into the bar.

Coincidentally, just before they entered, Khloe and Winnie had been shown to a table near the bar. They weren't reserving a private room—just a casual spot to have a drink.

“Khloe, why are you helping me?”

Winnie glanced at her. In the dim light, Khloe's delicate features were softened, a quiet, almost ethereal beauty enveloping her.

“You've asked me this before, and I already told you,” Khloe said lightly, her eyes drifting to the diamond ring on her finger with a casual air.

“Are you just helping me out of kindness, or... did someone else ask you to?” Winnie pressed, trying to get to the bottom of it.

Khloe was a good person, but their relationship was shallow. She wouldn't have thought of helping her for no

reason.

Winnie already had her suspicions. Some things were better left unsaid, but she couldn't let go—she had to know the truth.

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Seeing how persistent Winnie was, Khloe finally gave in. “Winnie, why ask when you already know the answer? You don't want to owe anyone, and he doesn't want you to owe him either. So don't ask anymore. Besides, overthinking it now serves no purpose. What matters most for you is leaving the Olson family. Since you already have a goal, you should grow up and move forward bravely.”

Khloe usually disliked lecturing people. Perhaps her own mood was off tonight-her words carried an unmistakable, almost disciplinarian tone.

Winnie didn't mind. She was used to hearing far harsher things. Khloe's earnest, well-intentioned advice actually felt warm to her.

She took a long gulp of her drink. "It was Michael, wasn't it? Is he really that eager to repay the favor?"

Khloe felt a weight sink in her chest. She gave a quiet "Mhm."

"He didn't want me to say anything. It's enough that you know."

Winnie's straightforward nature made things easier. Khloe had indeed agreed to help Michael, but this was the kind of lie that couldn't be maintained. She couldn't keep pretending.

Winnie had saved Michael, but their relationship was awkward. Michael didn't want to show himself personally, assuming Winnie wouldn't accept his care anyway. Khloe was merely a bridge between them.

Michael had offered five percent of his company's shares, hoping Khloe would help Winnie build a career. At the very least, staying by Khloe's side gave Winnie a reason to step out of the Olson family's shadow.

Khloe had tried to persuade them to be honest with each other. Since Winnie had feelings for Michael, and Michael clearly couldn't let her go, why complicate things like this?

But Michael had pleaded too earnestly, and in the end, she agreed.

Perhaps the deeper the feelings, the more cautious people became-hurting each other while trying not to.

Now that the answer was confirmed, Winnie wasn't as calm as she'd imagined. Waves churned in her chest. She drained her glass in one go and ordered something stronger.

"We agreed on just one drink," Khloe said.

She didn't stop Winnie, only lowered her head and stirred the fruit in her cocktail.

"When you drink, the most important thing is to drink until it feels good," Winnie said.

"If you get drunk later, should I call Michael to pick you up?" Khloe asked seriously.

Winnie froze instantly. "Khloe, don't joke about us."

Khloe smiled, propping her chin on her hand as she teased, “Winnie, I’m honestly curious. Why don’t you like Michael?”

As a woman herself, Khloe could tell how much Winnie cared about him. And Michael’s character, looks, and background-any one of them was more than enough to outshine all of Winnie’s exes combined.

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“I don’t dislike him,” Winnie said quietly, perhaps already affected by the alcohol. “I just can’t be with him.”

“Why?”

“If he stays with me, it won’t end well. In the end, he’ll come to resent me. It’s better to end things at their best and leave behind regret than to drag it out until it turns ugly.”

She spoke to her glass with solemn seriousness.

Khloe frowned. “Is that really what you think? Do you lack confidence in Michael-or in yourself?”

Winnie didn’t answer. She knew others wouldn’t understand. She only lowered her head and kept drinking.

Something immediately felt off to Khloe.

“That doesn’t make sense. If you believe anyone who gets close to you will be dragged down, then why do you have so many exes?”

By Winnie’s logic-whether it was self-loathing or self-protection-shouldn’t she have remained alone all this time?

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“That’s because I have to get married...” Winnie burst out bitterly.

She had no easy way to explain it.

There was an additional clause in her mother’s will: as long as she married, she could leave the Olson family immediately and reclaim part of the inheritance that had been held by them.

Back then, Winnie had been too young to understand any of it. Only after growing up did she realize how deeply disappointed her mother had been in her-and how little faith she’d had-entrusting control of Winnie’s life to someone else.

If not the Olson family, then a husband.

It was as if she didn’t deserve to exist in this world unless she depended on someone.

Winnie had once hated her mother intensely. Just because her father had been worthless, did that mean she was destined to be worthless too?

And so, the more her mother defined her that way, the more Winnie gave up on herself, refusing to strive for anything better.

She might as well become a mess, turn herself into mud, let everyone trample her—at least then it felt justified.

But after all these years, that self-righteous rebellion brought no response, no redemption. All that remained was her disgust with herself. Her mother’s disappointment had been carved by her own hand into her bones and soul.

“Marriage?” Khloe seemed to realize something.

Winnie stopped halfway through her sentence. She didn’t want to complain. Complaints only magnified her inferiority and pain.

Winnie knew her own limits. She didn’t have the strength to reclaim her mother’s inheritance, nor the ability to truly fight back against the Olson family she despised.

Perhaps marriage really was the only way out.

But soon, Winnie realized the Olson family was even more despicable than she'd imagined. They had plenty of dirty tricks hidden in the dark.

One by one, the men who grew close to her either met with accidents or suddenly asked to break up.

Michael's serious injury had happened because she dragged him into it.

She hadn't never considered being with Michael.

They'd grown up together, and he'd been kind to her first. Hearts were made of flesh, after all—and Winnie, starved for affection, couldn't resist that warmth.

But just as she'd told Khloe, the more someone cherished something, the less confident they felt—and the more they wanted to push it away with their own hands.

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+25 Bonus

She truly liked Michael. That's why she didn't dare accept him.

In Winnie's mind, the only way she and Michael could last was by remaining friends.

What she hadn't expected was that anyone who tried to control their feelings would eventually suffer backlash.

Now that Michael no longer liked her, she found herself unable to let go.

"You're guarding against the Olson family, aren't you?" Even without being told, Khloe guessed. "And marriage

that's also a way for you to leave the Olson family?"

Winnie looked at Khloe again, took a deep breath, and didn't deny it.

It wasn't hard to figure out.

Over the years, Winnie had been at odds with the Olson family, their conflicts ugly and public—yet she still couldn't leave.

Khloe had heard about Winnie's situation from Michael and knew that Winnie's mother's inheritance was still

in the Olson family's hands.

If Winnie left, they'd have to spit out that piece of juicy meat—and they definitely wouldn't be willing.

That was why Winnie had been trying every possible way to pass the evaluation.

If marriage was one of those paths... then the rumors about her being promiscuous finally made sense.

"Don't tell Michael," Winnie said. "I promised his father I wouldn't drag him down anymore."

11

After everything that had happened between them, Winnie knew Michael still carried feelings for her. With his generous nature, he would definitely try to help her.

Seeing Khloe hesitate, Winnie immediately added, "If Michael finds out, I won't have the strength to keep going.

She said she was trying to save herself, but in truth, she'd been giving up for a long time.

Someone who despised themselves—how good could their life really become?

In the end, Khloe nodded.

She could understand some of Winnie's thoughts. If a person couldn't face someone, then no matter how perfect that other person was, there would never be a good ending.

2/2

Billionaire's Match Novel Chapter 370

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Love Demands Honest Hearts — Yash Malhotra 370

Chapter 370

Besides, there were real obstacles between Michael and Winnie. Oscar would almost certainly never approve of them being together.

Michael was a hopeless romantic. It had taken him so long to let go of his feelings. If Winnie couldn't treat him right... the pain would fall on both of them.

Love-what a strange, impossible thing. Too little, and it fails. Too much, and it suffocates.

Khloe raised her glass and drank half of it. She had come out to relax, to drink and unwind, but Winnie's mood had rubbed off on her. Suddenly, she felt moody and sentimental, too.

She had promised herself only a drink, yet she downed three in a row. The alcohol wasn't strong, and when the time was nearly right, she called a ride and excused herself to the restroom.

Winnie leaned on the table, scrolling through her contacts on her phone. Her fingers paused over Michael's number.

Then her phone vibrated, pulling her attention back. Across the table, Khloe's phone buzzed, left unattended. Winnie squinted and saw the incoming caller ID: Nick.

Before she could react, the screen dimmed-but the call didn't end there. Seconds later, it rang again.

Winnie, a little drunk, answered immediately. "Hello? Nick?"

"Who is this?" Nick's voice was cautious on the other end.

"I'm Winnie," she said calmly. "I'm out drinking with Khloe. She's in the restroom. We'll be leaving soon."

"Where?"

That one word, sharp and cold, was like a command rather than a question.

Winnie frowned. Direct, indeed-but she told him anyway. "Nearby, close to the Morrison Group. Are you picking Khloe up? We already called a driver. There's no need to trouble yourself to come."

"I'm nearby. Ask her to wait for me."

With that, Nick hung up. Winnie opened her mouth to reply, but all she heard was the dial tone.

Nick was certainly not easy to deal with.

Though she had always thought Khloe looked happy with him, the sweetness between lovers had its limits. Winnie had no confidence in love and viewed everything with suspicion.

That Khloe had come out drinking with her tonight-regardless of Nick-made it clear something was off between them.

Winnie hesitated. Had giving him their location been the right thing to do?

By the time Khloe returned from the restroom, Trey had also stepped out of the private room for some air. Everyone had been drinking, having fun, and refusing to let him leave. To avoid killing the mood, Trey had no choice but to stick around.

1/2

Chapter 370

+25 Bonus

“Khloe?”

Just as Trey perked up, preparing to return to the room, a figure suddenly crossed his path.

Even in the dim lighting, he was certain he wasn't mistaken. It was Khloe.

The bar was noisy with loud music, so she didn't hear anyone calling her. She walked slowly forward.

The next second, a tall shadow blocked her path.

Seeing who it was, Khloe's remaining tipsy haze evaporated instantly, her expression hardening.

“Khloe, it's really you! I know you hate me right now, but I've missed you these days. I regret it all. I hate myself even more than you hate me! Please, let's talk...”

Trey lunged to reach for her, trying to pull her into his arms. Khloe quickly stepped back, but the crowded bar made it difficult to move freely.

“Get away from me! There's nothing between us anymore!”

She reached for the security guard, but Trey grabbed her arm, tugging her forward.

Anger flared, and she slapped him across the face.

The blow hurt, but this time, Trey was determined. He wouldn't let her go.

“Hit me, curse me-it doesn't matter! Khloe, I'm serious this time. I want to be with you. I've filed for divorce with Angela... Just give me one chance to start over. I'll do whatever you want!”

P