

What makes a power couple

Chapter 1:

“Be good. Hold me. Don’t move.”

A deep, gritty voice, edged with an irresistible allure, whispered harshly against Nicole Wilson’s ear, his breath scorching her skin in the pitch-black darkness. Heat radiated relentlessly from his body, enveloping Nicole entirely, causing every muscle in her body to stiffen in fear. Her breaths grew shorter and more frantic. Her mind screamed at her to escape, yet her body remained frozen.

The sensation consumed her, pulling her deeper, as though she were slipping beneath the surface of dark, icy waters.

His kisses landed on her skin like drops of fire, one after another, each one burning. Sweat slipped from his forehead and traced a slow, burning path along Nicole’s neck. With a mix of care and possessiveness, his fingers chased away the dampness on her collarbone, leaving behind a trail of warmth.

It felt like the weight of him could crush her spirit entirely.

Softly, yet undeniably seductive, he murmured close to her ear, “There’s no need to be afraid—I’ll make you my wife.”

Tenderly, he brushed the tears from Nicole's cheeks, treating her like something incredibly precious, only to claim her lips fiercely the very next moment.

Suddenly, Nicole jolted awake, her breath coming in sharp gasps. Looking around, she realized she was still in the car.

The same nightmare—the one that relentlessly haunted her—had returned once again. That suffocating room. The edge of danger in the air. His distinctive, raspy whisper... It always felt too vivid, too real to be just a dream.

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Taking slow, deliberate breaths, Nicole fought to steady her trembling nerves, though the memories from five years ago stubbornly lingered.

Beyond the car windows, sunlight spilled generously over the city. Ariosa had grown busier, more alive than she'd ever recalled it being.

She hadn't even noticed how much time had slipped by—five years locked away in that mental hospital.

It all began when her younger sister, Marissa Wilson, plotted against her five years ago and sent her to spend the night with a stranger, costing Nicole her virginity.

Within a month, Nicole discovered she was pregnant, though the father's identity remained an agonizing mystery. That same year, her child was born lifeless.

During that time, her father's business, Brody Wilson's empire, soared. Every family member had a stake in it—even her, the daughter he had discarded and sent off to rot in the countryside.

Together, Cathy Wilson, her own mother, and Marissa schemed to cast her out, locking her away in the mental hospital. Taking advantage of her weakened state after childbirth, they had stolen her rightful ten percent of the shares in the Wilson Group.

Now, Marissa was set to marry into the prominent Moore family through an arranged marriage—to become Aidan Moore's wife. Rumors painted Aidan, the Moore family's second son, as disabled and repulsive, condemned by a fortune-teller to die young, before reaching twenty-eight. Very few people had ever laid eyes on Aidan in person.

Someone like Aidan had never been what Cathy had in mind for Marissa. That was when they suddenly remembered her.

Under the cover of night, they sent a driver to drag her out of the mental hospital. If Marissa's future hadn't been hanging by a thread, they would've let her rot behind those locked doors forever.

Reclining in the back seat, Nicole shut her eyes, her face carved from ice. Everything they had stolen from her, she was ready to take it all back. This time, the ones who had once crushed her wouldn't get away without damage.

Soon enough, she reached the Wilson family's residence. Five years had stripped this place of any affection. For her, it was nothing more than a shell.

Her steps were steady as she walked up the driveway. Just as she reached the doorway, she caught sight of Cathy and Marissa, laughing over walnut ice cream as if the world was perfect.

"If you hadn't come up with the plan to make that useless girl stand in for you, I swear I would've cried myself to sleep."

Marissa replied softly, "Please, Mom. Don't talk about Nicole like that. I'd be completely lost without her. I'm just scared she won't say yes to any of this."

Cathy let out a short laugh. "She got pregnant by some guy no one even knows and ended up giving birth to a corpse."

She should be grateful that anyone is offering to marry her at all. And it's the Moores. She doesn't even have the right to utter a rejection."

"Think about it—your mother's not wrong. You're going way too easy on her. Have you really forgotten what she put you through five years ago?" Brody said, his jaw tight.

Marissa finally gave a small nod. “You can count on me, Dad. I’ll never be a burden like Nicole. Marc and I will always be the ones you and Mom can brag about.”

Just hearing the name of Marc Wilson—his son—made Brody’s expression soften.

Back when the Wilson Group was drowning in debt, Marc had pulled them out of it. He kept the company going when everyone thought it was over.

“And what makes you so sure I’ll go along with any of this?” Nicole’s cold voice suddenly broke through the living room.

The three froze and turned as one toward the sound.

Cathy’s mood soured at once. “What are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be on your way to the Moore family?”

“Grandmother set up a will before her passing, leaving me and Marissa each with ten percent shares in the Wilson Group. Don’t you think it’s about time I got my shares back?” Nicole retorted.

Brody slammed his hand down on the table and stormed toward her. “You humiliated this family. The stock price tanked because of your mess. I took those shares for a reason. After all that, you still have the nerve to ask for them?”

Unshaken, Nicole met his furious glare with a smirk. “It’s fine if you don’t give them back.”

She made her way to the couch, dropped into the cushions, crossed one leg over the other, and continued without a hint of rush. “Then I’m not getting married today.”

“You little—” Brody raised his hand, ready to strike.

There wasn’t the slightest twitch from Nicole. She raised her chin, met his eyes, and spoke in a voice cold enough to freeze the air. “Go ahead. Hit me. The second you do, I’ll walk away from the shares, and this marriage deal dies right there.”

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What makes a power couple

Chapter 2:

A sudden chill rooted Brody to the spot. Had five years truly transformed Nicole into someone daring enough to defy him openly? Rage surged through his veins, causing his raised hand to shudder violently.

Eyes glittering sharply, Nicole's voice was deceptively calm. "Think again. Are you sure you can handle the consequences?"

"Oh, so you think threatening me is a good idea? Let's see how you like it when I knock some sense into that head of yours!" Brody roared, his hand swinging menacingly.

"Dad, stop!" Marissa shrieked desperately, rushing forward in a panic. Stunned by her plea, Brody's hand wavered uncertainly in mid-air.

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Grabbing his sleeve, Marissa pleaded in a voice rushed with panic, "Dad, please, don't hit Nicole!"

Though unsure why, Marissa sensed something different in Nicole—this time, the threat was genuine.

If Nicole refused the arranged marriage, Marissa realized she'd be forced into it instead. She couldn't bear the thought of marrying that sickly, monstrous man from the Moore family. Death seemed preferable to such a fate.

Fingers curling into a tight fist, veins throbbing visibly, Brody finally lowered his hand, spitting words angrily. "You insolent girl! What exactly do you want?!"

Ignoring his outburst, Nicole reclined casually, swaying her leg with ease. Though her posture stayed relaxed, it carried a quiet authority. Her gaze turned cold. "Give me back my shares."

Seeing Nicole's confident demeanor, Cathy felt a sudden stab of fear. What on earth had happened to transform this once pitiful girl into someone so intimidating?

Noticing Marissa near tears, Cathy's heart tightened, prompting her to step forward protectively. "Four years ago, after the company went public, I signed your shares over to your sister. You've had plenty of time to reflect on your mistakes. Yet the moment you're out of that hospital, you start causing trouble? Do you have no shame at all?"

A mocking smile curved Nicole's lips, her voice heavy with sarcasm. "And what reason do I have to give up what's mine?"

Cathy's voice shot up as she snapped, "She's your sister, that's why!"

"If you adore her so much, why don't you marry her off to that noble Moore family instead?"

"You—"

Nicole interrupted swiftly, her voice sharp as ice. "I'll ask only once more. Will you return my shares, yes or no?"

Nicole's fierce tone caught Cathy off guard, leaving her speechless for a moment.

Despite decades of experience in the business world, Brody was also caught off guard and left at a loss for words.

Biting her lip anxiously, Marissa jumped to defend her parents. "Nicole, they're your mom and dad. I'm your sister. Why must you act like we're enemies?"

Nicole's gaze slowly shifted toward Marissa as she rose purposefully, stepping forward and towering above her sister with an intimidating presence. "So now you're the one telling me how I should act?"

Marissa faltered, speechless. Five years ago, Nicole wouldn't have dared oppose her.

"I—I was just trying to—"

Without warning, Nicole's hand shot out, delivering a stinging slap that silenced Marissa immediately.

Eyes wide with shock, Marissa clutched her face in disbelief. "Did you just hit me?!"

With a subtle narrowing of her gaze, Nicole's mouth curled into a mocking smile. "So what?"

Instantly, Marissa burst into tears.

Rushing forward, Cathy wrapped her arms protectively around Marissa, whispering comfort. Today, it was painfully clear that Nicole was determined to get her way.

Brody glared, his expression thunderous, fingers twitching violently as if considering another attack. Yet Nicole stood undaunted. She said coldly, "Return my shares immediately, and I'll disappear quietly. Keep stalling, and perhaps the Moore family will find out your little game sooner rather than later."

Brody nearly exploded, but for Marissa's sake, he swallowed his pride, forcing his anger down like bitter medicine.

Eventually, Brody gave in and said, "Fine! I'll return your shares. But you're heading straight to the Moores, no more delays!"

With visible reluctance, he pulled out his phone, accessed the company accounts, and began the transfer of Nicole's ten percent stake.

Not long after, Nicole's phone buzzed softly, signaling Brody's confirmation that her shares would fully revert to her within three to five working days. A satisfied smile appeared on Nicole's lips. "Now, was that so hard?"

Rather than immediately taking her leave, Nicole shifted her gaze toward Marissa, dark eyes glittering mysteriously as she asked, "Marissa, think carefully. What else do you still owe me?"

"What are you talking about?" Marissa asked.

Nicole's voice turned colder, sharper. "Five years ago—remember clearly. How exactly did I end up in bed with that man?"

Marissa's blood turned cold as panic set in. Nicole was clearly accusing her, yet had no evidence. Clenching her jaw fiercely, Marissa silently swore she'd make Nicole pay for this slap.

Avoiding Nicole's piercing eyes, Marissa said defensively, "Wasn't it your own reckless lifestyle that landed you in trouble? Don't pin your mess on me!"

Nicole's face remained expressionless. With a faintly raised eyebrow, she replied evenly, "No hurry. I'll give you exactly two days to refresh your memory."

Marissa trembled involuntarily, unable to hold Nicole's unwavering gaze. Those five years must have dragged Nicole through something horrible to leave her this fierce and unshakable.

Casting a final meaningful glance at Brody and Cathy, Nicole turned gracefully and walked out.

Seated in her car moments later, Nicole glanced again at the confirmation message. Rather than satisfaction, a profound chill deepened inside her heart. For Marissa's happiness, they were willing to sacrifice anything. Back then, if anyone had cared for her the way they did for Marissa now, her child might still be alive.

Her bitter reverie was abruptly interrupted by her phone's shrill ringing. Checking the caller ID quickly, Nicole answered curtly, bringing the phone close to her ear. "What is it?"

"You've finally resurfaced. A little ahead of schedule."

Nicole's response was cold and direct. "Cut the chatter. Get to the point."

"Just as you planned, everything at the mental hospital is perfectly under control. Those five years were fruitful. The latest batch of orders is already secured."

This didn't surprise Nicole. Calmly, she instructed, "Go straight to the bank and retrieve my belongings from the safety deposit box."

Inside that box rested an emerald thumb ring, given to her by the mysterious man five years ago. It was her solitary lead to finding him, and she would hold onto it at all costs.

Nicole abruptly ended the call and shut her eyes in contemplation.

Suddenly, the car lurched violently to a stop, jolting her forward despite the traffic light glowing green ahead.

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Chapter 3:

Eyes flicking nervously toward the road, the driver explained apologetically, “Ms. Wilson, there’s an elderly woman collapsed on the road. But honestly, it looks fake—probably one of those scammers hoping for a quick payout. I’ll take another route.”

He immediately started steering the car in the opposite direction.

Through the window, Nicole noticed the elderly woman trembling on the road, her hand stretched weakly toward something beyond her reach, her face pale as a ghost.

The woman wore elegant clothes, clearly expensive; she hardly fit the description of someone desperate enough to fake an accident. She appeared genuinely unwell, perhaps dangerously so.

Frowning slightly, Nicole ordered sharply, “Pull over now.”

Without argument, the driver quickly stopped the car.

A small crowd had already formed around the woman. Phones were out, recording every second, yet not a single person moved to help.

Without hesitation, Nicole strode purposefully through the crowd and knelt gently beside the woman.

Soft murmurs began to ripple through the crowd. “She’s asking for trouble. These scammers prey on sympathy, and she’ll be stuck paying compensation.”

“You’d think people would learn after all those stories on the news.”

Ignoring the whispers entirely, Nicole reached for a small medicine bottle that had rolled away, checking it quickly yet thoroughly. Once satisfied, she shook out a pill. Carefully lifting the elderly woman’s head onto her arm, Nicole whispered reassuringly, “Ma’am, here’s your medicine.”

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As if hearing Nicole’s gentle encouragement, the elderly woman weakly opened her lips, accepting the pill. Moments passed, and gradually the violent trembling lessened.

The ambulance arrived swiftly afterward, and Nicole carefully transferred the woman into their capable care.

As paramedics placed the woman onto the stretcher, her eyes opened slightly, focusing briefly on Nicole's departing back. Weakly, her hand twitched, longing to reach out, but lacking the strength, her eyes soon fluttered shut once again.

After that, Nicole stepped...

Back into the waiting car, which carried her safely to Riverside Haven—the Moore family's estate.

No family in Ariosa held more power than the Moore family, and this estate was solid proof of that. Just one rare plant here could cost a small fortune. Sunlight spilled gracefully across polished gray marble flooring in the luxurious living room, giving the entire space a refined yet solemn atmosphere.

Leading Nicole down a lengthy corridor, the butler politely guided her into an elegant guest room. "Ms. Wilson, please wait here for a moment. If you need anything, just call."

"Thank you," Nicole replied evenly.

When the door closed behind the butler, Nicole sank into the plush leather sofa. Her fingers tapped rhythmically against the armrest, her mind consumed by thoughts and memories.

Suddenly, the faint, hurried sound of footsteps broke her concentration, raising an immediate warning in her senses.

Whirling sharply, Nicole saw a massive arctic wolf barreling straight toward her, its movements swift and deadly. With its eyes fixed on her like a predator closing in, the wolf lunged, claws stretched toward her throat, ready to rip her apart in an instant.

Nicole's eyes hardened immediately. With lightning reflexes, she rolled sideways to evade the wolf's lethal strike. Springing gracefully to her feet, she faced the beast, her expression colder and sharper than steel.

Angered by its failure, the wolf bared its teeth viciously, releasing a menacing growl filled with rage and hunger. Instantly, it lunged again, its anger making it twice as fast.

Nicole held her ground this time, meeting the attack without hesitation. Right as the wolf launched itself, she caught its head in a firm grip. In one fluid move, she turned and slammed it to the floor, her knee locking down on its neck while her hands held its thrashing head still. Her eyes blazed fiercer than the wolf's own wild rage.

In one fluid motion, she drew a silver needle, expertly driving it into a nerve point just behind the beast's ear.

The wolf howled sharply in agony before collapsing helplessly, strength rapidly fleeing from its body.

Without pausing, Nicole drew another needle, ready to neutralize the threat permanently. “Enough.”

A smooth, commanding male voice sliced through the tension, carrying authority that demanded obedience. His words lingered, smooth and deep. At the sound of his voice, Nicole froze, slowly lifting her eyes to meet his penetrating gaze. She wasn’t certain if his appearance was deliberate or merely a coincidence.

There was something unreadable in his eyes. They were deep, unmoving mirrors that gave nothing away, yet hinted at shadows lurking beneath the surface.

He studied her silently, his presence overwhelming, looking just like a judge about to decide her fate.

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Chapter 4:

This man stood with impressive height, his crisp white shirt accentuating a refined and sophisticated presence. His skin was unusually pale, almost like someone who'd just risen from a long, difficult illness.

But instead of diminishing his appeal, this paleness gave him an edgy allure, hinting at an untamed nature lurking beneath the surface. One look at him, and those sharp, chiseled features were burned into memory—impossible to forget. Nicole wondered if the man was that “legendary” Aidan Moore. For a brief moment, Nicole gave him a thorough once-over.

Seriously, this man was not ugly at all. He had broad shoulders and stood tall, without any visible sign of disability.

With a decisive movement, Nicole finally released her hold on the wolf. Even though it was no longer restrained, the wolf continued to stare fiercely at Nicole, its aggression clearly undiminished.

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In a commanding tone, Aidan called out to the beast sharply, “Come.”

Instantly, the wolf's hostility vanished, and it padded submissively to Aidan, settling obediently at his feet. The wolf even nudged at the hem of his pants, putting on an act of innocence as if afraid of reprimand.

Nicole could hardly believe what she was seeing. The wolf, vicious just moments ago, now behaved like a tame pet obeying its master. Never before had she witnessed such absolute obedience from a creature so clearly wild.

With a mere sideways glance from Aidan, the wolf lowered its head submissively, slowly slinking toward the exit. As it reached the door, it cast one final, resentful glance at Nicole, clearly promising future retribution. A faint smirk crossed Nicole's lips; she understood perfectly—this wolf wouldn't soon forget her.

Aidan's intense gaze returned to Nicole, assessing her with quiet dominance. His lips moved slowly, forming a statement rather than a question. "You're not Marissa Wilson."

His very presence seemed dangerous, powerful enough to suffocate the air in the room.

Nicole's heart skipped a beat. She hadn't expected him to figure her out this fast.

Pressing her lips together firmly, Nicole answered without hesitation, "I'm Nicole Wilson, her older sister."

He took a moment to study her closely. She appeared delicate, petite, almost fragile; her thin figure hardly reached his shoulder.

Had he not witnessed the earlier struggle himself, he would have doubted someone so small could subdue an animal like the wolf bare-handed. Not only had she fought, she'd convincingly won.

The fierce woman who had just battled the wolf—Fang—seemed entirely disconnected from the delicate girl now standing before him. He raised an eyebrow slightly. “A substitute bride? You’ve got nerve.”

Nicole swallowed, her throat tight as the pressure in the room thickened. The moment Aidan had stepped inside, he'd taken absolute control over everything within it.

Though she couldn't read his exact thoughts, Nicole realized something undeniable—the wolf's attack had clearly been orchestrated by him.

She was uncertain what exactly he intended, but the cold look in his eyes conveyed one clear message—her arrival was unwelcome.

Without warning, Aidan closed the distance between them in a single stride.

The subtle scent of sandalwood surrounded Nicole, slipping gently past her defenses and setting off a frantic rhythm inside her chest. A buried memory surfaced abruptly. It reminded her of the mysterious man she'd met five years earlier. The fragrance was hauntingly similar.

Distracted by the memory, Nicole didn't notice when Aidan's arm circled her waist, drawing her swiftly and securely into his hold. Before she realized it, he'd lifted her effortlessly and pressed her onto the bed. Within seconds, he pinned her beneath him, leaving no space between them.

Nicole's breathing hitched sharply as she instinctively struggled against his hold. She'd believed the years spent isolated in the mental hospital had hardened her heart entirely, yet meeting his gaze now shattered that illusion instantly. Accepting the role of substitute bride had never included surrendering her body. Moreover, she'd lost her virginity five years ago; if a man as proud as a Moore discovered that his bride had been with another man, he might be furious.

Aidan gently tilted her chin upward with a single finger, forcing eye contact. His voice dropped, carrying an arrogant amusement edged with cold disdain. "Your family is really willing to do anything for that ten million dollars. Even marrying a dying man and risking widowhood—is that truly worth the price?"

Nicole steadied her breathing, boldly meeting...

His gaze met hers head-on. "Don't talk like that, Mr. Moore. You're not going to die anytime soon, and I'm not here to be a widow. Perhaps I can even help you overcome whatever ails you."

Aidan absently twirled a strand of her hair around his finger, his expression cool and unreadable, yet undeniably alluring.

“Oh? Are you suggesting you’re capable of curing me?” His words slid out smoothly, a dangerous promise behind their seductive tone.

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Chapter 5:

A sudden, sharp warning prickled in Nicole’s chest, alerting her to danger looming close by. Keeping herself composed, she said earnestly, “I’ve done some research on you and discovered that you’re infected with a toxin you’ve probably had since birth. Unless you treat it soon, you’ll become paralyzed, your muscles will waste away, and no amount of training will stop it.”

Instantly, Aidan’s gaze turned ominous, eyes locking onto hers with deadly intent. His voice emerged slow yet piercing. “And you actually dared to investigate me?”

“Because I want to help you.”

A cold smirk formed on Aidan’s lips. “And what exactly do you expect in return for your kindness?”

Meeting his stare directly, Nicole replied candidly, “I’ll be honest. If you reject me, my mother plans to toss me back into that mental hospital. Saving you is the only way I save myself. So, in a sense, I’m using you.”

Never before had a woman been bold enough to openly declare such intentions right in his face.

Eyes narrowing slightly, Aidan said in a low, dangerous voice, “Do you have any idea what happened to the last person who dared speak so boldly?”

Nicole bit her lip, suddenly aware she might have stepped right into danger without realizing it. Still, words spoken were words that couldn’t be taken back. For several intense seconds, Aidan studied her silently, unreadable thoughts flickering behind his cold stare.

Without warning, his fingers brushed against her collarbone, sending a tense ripple across her skin.

“How determined are you?” His hand moved slowly downward, resting lightly on the zipper at her waist.

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The unexpected intimacy of his touch sent Nicole's pulse racing, momentarily stealing her breath.

Just what was he implying? Did he actually intend to let her stay, suggesting they immediately make their relationship that intimate?

Growing visibly impatient, Aidan stared straight into her startled eyes. "So, will you do it yourself, or shall I handle it for you?"

"Damn! This wasn't part of the deal!" Nicole panicked internally.

An idea sparked instantly. Softening her posture, Nicole gracefully slid her arms around Aidan's neck, her voice becoming charmingly sweet as she teased, "I couldn't possibly trouble you. Allow me."

Without hesitation, Aidan's grip tightened around her waist, smoothly flipping their positions until Nicole found herself pressed firmly atop his chest. He watched her closely, as though daring her to continue.

Nicole froze in astonishment. This definitely wasn't how she had thought things would proceed.

She had thought those superior and aloof men would reject women's filthy touch. After how cold Aidan had been earlier, she figured he'd push her away with a glare and a harsh warning to stay out of his space.

However, Aidan's patience was clearly waning. "What are you waiting for? Didn't you say you could handle this yourself?"

Nicole was rendered momentarily speechless.

Slowly, she reached out and started unbuttoning his shirt. Despite her best efforts to remain composed, a subtle trembling betrayed her nerves.

With two buttons undone, his sharply defined collarbone and flawlessly toned chest were suddenly visible.

While she was still trying to figure out a way to slip free, Aidan's breathing suddenly quickened. His normally pale complexion drained even further, sweat glistening on his forehead, eyes turning glassy and unfocused.

Alarm flashed in Nicole's expression. This looked serious—possibly a medical emergency.

Quickly sliding off him, she asked urgently, “What’s wrong? Are you having an attack?”

Pressing a hand tightly to his temples, Aidan clenched his jaw, clearly battling to control himself. With visible strain, he gestured towards the door, “Leave now!”

Nicole shook her head firmly. This was her chance to stay; she couldn’t abandon him now.

Taking his hand confidently, she instructed firmly yet gently, “Aidan, stay calm. Breathe slowly.”

At that moment, the door flew open abruptly, and Lilah Buckley, Aidan’s childhood friend, rushed into the room. She instinctively moved toward Aidan, reaching to comfort him before catching herself mid-motion. Pulling back anxiously, she asked hesitantly, “Aidan, what’s wrong?”

His eyes turned colder, practically freezing Lilah in place with an indifferent glance.

Noticing Aidan’s deteriorating state, Nicole acted decisively, grabbing his hand and applying firm pressure to his fingertip.

Lilah quickly intervened, cautioning, “Ms. Wilson, you shouldn’t touch him like that. Aidan can’t stand women touching him—he usually reacts very badly.” Yet in the very next

instant, Aidan's hand suddenly tightened around Nicole's, his fingers gripping hers so firmly that his knuckles turned white.

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Chapter 6:

Shock filled Lilah's face, her expression frozen in disbelief. Never had she seen Aidan allow any woman's touch willingly—not once, even in all their years of growing up together.

At that exact moment, the butler rushed in, only to stop abruptly, stunned by the bizarre scene unfolding before him.

Aidan struggled for air, his breaths growing rough and frantic, his hand clamping around Nicole's with such force it seemed like he might crush her bones.

Pain shot through Nicole, and sweat quickly gathered on her forehead. Yet, she held her ground. Staying calm, she reached into her bag and pulled out a slim silver needle, aiming it straight for the pressure point between Aidan's thumb and forefinger.

Noticing this, Lilah quickly stepped forward, her brows furrowing as she asked, "What exactly do you think you're doing?"

Keeping her head lowered, Nicole's lashes cast long shadows that masked the determination in her eyes. Her response was quiet but unwavering.

"Saving his life."

With precise determination, Nicole positioned the needle.

Lilah immediately grabbed Nicole's wrist, her eyes sharp with urgency as she warned, "Stop! Don't touch him. No one's ever treated Aidan like this before. His grandmother is already in the hospital—if anything happens to him, neither of us can bear the consequences."

Pulling free from Lilah's grip, Nicole lifted her gaze, her voice steady and calm. "If anything goes wrong, I'll take full responsibility."

Before Lilah could respond, Nicole pressed the needle in with firm precision. Left stunned, Lilah could only stare, thrown off completely by Nicole's calm boldness and unshaken resolve. Even the butler appeared visibly shaken.

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Barely conscious, Aidan felt a quick sting—no sharper than a mosquito bite. When he looked down, his eyes caught the glint of a needle lodged in his hand. Through the fog in his mind, Nicole's bold expression flickered, and his hand shifted.

Observing this subtle reaction, Nicole quickly prepared another needle, targeting a crucial point on his head.

Lilah's face turned pale with panic as she cried out, trying to stop her. "Have you lost your mind, Ms. Wilson? Do you even know what you're doing?"

Annoyance flickered in Nicole's eyes at Lilah's outburst. Her tone became cold and firm as she replied, "If you actually want him to live, stay quiet. Never seen how I work? You're seeing it now. If it's too much for you, the door's right there."

Temporarily stunned by Nicole's forceful retort, Lilah quickly recovered, her surprise melting into simmering anger. "I'm his friend, and you're endangering his life—I have every right to stop you."

With cold authority, Lilah pointed towards the door, ordering sharply, “Leave this instant.”

Ignoring her completely, Nicole acted without hesitation, pressing the needle into the pressure point at the top of Aidan’s head. His eyes fluttered shut, and he lay there, unmoving, lost in a daze.

Across the room, the butler—Duran Archer—turned pale. If anything happened to Aidan now, how on earth was he supposed to answer to the man’s grandmother?

Frustrated, Lilah snapped impatiently, “Duran, hurry up and get security to throw her out!”

Duran turned to carry out the order.

However, Nicole remained utterly unbothered, continuing with complete calmness. Seeing clear signs of Aidan’s recovery, she carefully began removing the needles.

Slowly, Aidan’s eyes opened again. Though a lingering darkness remained, his gaze was undeniably clearer, more alert than before.

Unable to restrain herself, Lilah approached anxiously. Ignoring his usual aversion, she sat down near Aidan, her voice filled with genuine concern. “Aidan, are you alright?”

As she spoke, Lilah cautiously extended her hand toward him.

His eyes fell onto her hand, regarding it as though it were something filthy. He flinched away harshly, his tone biting and disdainful. “Don’t touch me. Get out.”

Humiliation flooded Lilah’s face, her hand frozen awkwardly in place. She’d mistakenly believed, after seeing him tolerate Nicole’s touch earlier, that perhaps he’d finally overcome his distaste for women.

She hesitated before withdrawing her hand, reluctantly stepping back, yet lingering anxiously nearby out of continued concern.

Nicole quietly disinfected her silver needles and neatly stored them away before finally addressing Aidan. “Are you feeling any better?”

Aidan studied Nicole silently, his gaze growing more thoughtful. There was no mistaking it now—her skills were genuine.

The calm efficiency she had shown during his crisis reminded him of the unwavering courage she had displayed against Fang. Yet, instead of aggressive strength, her actions had been meticulous and precise. Nicole certainly didn’t act like someone who had spent years confined to a mental hospital—or like any ordinary woman, for that matter.

Lowering his voice, Aidan’s words carried a subtle menace. “Your needles are effective enough to subdue beasts and heal. Can they also end lives?”

Nicole’s movements slowed slightly as she continued packing her supplies. The implication wasn’t lost on her. Clearly, Aidan was becoming suspicious.

Frankly, she wasn’t surprised. A woman who appeared as a substitute bride, fearless against wolves, and proficient in medical treatment—any man in his place would naturally begin questioning her motives.

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Chapter 7:

After sliding the last needle into its case, Nicole turned to Aidan and offered a faint smile. “These needles are only meant to heal, not harm.”

Instead of answering, Aidan dropped his gaze, staring at her hand with an unreadable expression.

Framed by thin beams of sunlight streaming through the blinds, her fingers appeared elegant—almost too delicate for the room they were in. A faint pink imprint still lingered on the back of her hand, where his grip had been moments earlier. Something about it made her seem strangely fragile.

From across the room, Lilah exhaled quietly, the tension in her chest finally easing now that Aidan seemed more like himself.

It was surprising how a few needles from Nicole were all it took to snap Aidan back to his senses. Under normal circumstances, his episodes could last from one to three hours—or sometimes even longer.

Just then, the door opened, and Duran stepped inside, flanked by two bodyguards. He froze in place the moment his eyes met Aidan's—sitting up, clear-headed, and speaking. The sight hit him like a shockwave.

“Ms. Wilson... do you think it's possible? Can you really cure Mr. Moore?”

“That's enough, Duran.” Aidan's voice was low and firm, and with that single line, Duran immediately fell silent.

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Without changing his tone, Aidan turned to Nicole, his voice steady but detached. “Take Ms. Wilson to the guest room. Let her rest.”

“Yes, sir.”

Though she wasn’t entirely sure what he meant by it, Nicole chose not to question anything. She simply followed Duran out, quiet and composed.

“Guess I’ll just go along with it. No use trying to figure him out,” Nicole thought.

Inside the bedroom, Aidan finally seemed to register Lilah’s lingering presence. His brows furrowed, and there was a sharp edge to his voice. “Why haven’t you left yet?”

“I came to tell you something important. Your grandmother collapsed earlier—right there in the street. She’s at the hospital now.”

The moment the words sank in, a subtle shift came over Aidan’s face. “Go ahead. I’ll meet you there shortly.”

“Alright.”

Once she was gone, he headed for the wardrobe, pulled it open, and grabbed his phone from inside.

“Mr. Moore?”

“Any word on the woman from five years ago?”

Leonel Gibson let out a weary breath. “Still nothing. That ring you gave her hasn’t shown up anywhere—not even on the black market. Honestly, sir, she’s like a ghost. This won’t be easy.”

A flash of something fierce crossed Aidan’s eyes—brief as lightning, gone in an instant.

“Keep searching,” he said, his voice turning cold. “I want her found.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Pick me up. I’m heading to the hospital.”

“Right away.”

Perched upright against a stack of pillows, Analia Moore recounted the entire rescue to Lilah. “You have to help me find that girl. I need to thank her properly. If she hadn’t stepped in, I would’ve just died there.”

Lilah reached over and lightly rubbed her back, her voice low and calming. “Don’t get yourself worked up, Analia. I would’ve gone looking for her anyway. She saved your life; she deserves gratitude.”

Footsteps echoed down the hallway before Aidan and Leonel entered the room. Analia’s entire expression lifted the moment her grandson walked in. She motioned him over, her tone suddenly serious. “You’re just in time, Aidan. I’ve got something you need to hear.”

Without a word, Lilah shifted to the side and settled onto a small stool near the wall.

As Aidan approached, his eyes briefly dropped to the IV hooked to Analia’s hand, then to the pale lines of exhaustion on her face. His brows furrowed, and his voice carried a quiet reprimand. “It’s scorching outside. What were you doing out there alone?”

Rolling her eyes, Analia shot him a look of mild annoyance. “You think I was out enjoying the weather? Please. I heard you were thinking of marrying the Wilson girl. That’s not some minor decision. So yes, I wanted to discuss it personally with the Wilson family.”

A tiny muscle twitched at Aidan's temple. He turned slightly and sent Lilah a brief glance. His stare was cold, his disapproval loud even without words.

Lowering her gaze under the weight of his cold stare, Lilah mumbled, "I'm sorry, Aidan. I shouldn't have opened my mouth."

Analia's expression soured as she turned toward him, clearly displeased. "Don't take it out on her. Even if Lilah had stayed quiet, I would've found out about the Wilson family's little stunt sooner or later. Swapping brides behind our backs? They must think we're idiots. You're not marrying into that circus. End it today."

The sharpness in her voice didn't faze Aidan, though his eyes narrowed just a touch. There was something unspoken buried in her words, and he picked up on it instantly. Tugging slightly at his tie, he spoke evenly. "Grandma, if you've got something to say, say it."

For a moment, Analia hesitated. Then she reached for his hand, her fingers firm and steady. "Earlier today, I crossed paths with a Gypsy woman, a fortune teller. She warned me that the Wilsons' eldest daughter would bring danger into your life. The kind you might not walk away from."

Her grip tightened. Her eyes didn't waver. "You have to trust me on this. I'm doing this for your future. I've already found someone else for you, and she's the reason I'm still breathing. If you don't marry that girl, something terrible will happen. I can feel it."

Without needing confirmation, Lilah understood who Analia meant. There was only one woman in this story who'd saved her life.

Aidan's brow arched ever so slightly, but his composure didn't slip. He didn't challenge her. Instead, his voice came quietly and composed. "Good. That saves me the trouble. I already planned to end it."

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What makes a power couple

Chapter 8:

Analia's fist tightened, fully prepared to knock some sense into Aidan if he even considered refusing. To her astonishment, Aidan readily agreed, causing her lips to stretch into a delighted smile as joy danced in her eyes. "That's the spirit! Girls like her are a rare gem these days. That kind-hearted beauty who rescued me? The second I laid eyes on her, I knew she was the sort who brings luck and prosperity wherever she goes. Truth be told, she's exactly the granddaughter-in-law I've dreamed about all these years."

With her head dipping low, Lilah's fingers clenched, and a tense stillness settled over her face.

She knew that Aidan wouldn't openly reject Analia while she was still ill. When the time was right, he would plan to properly thank the woman who had saved Analia. Be it wealth or influence, he was willing to offer her anything—anything but the title of Mrs. Moore.

Sensing Aidan's quiet agreement through his silence, Lilah nibbled her lip, gaze lowered in disappointment.

"Well? What are you waiting for? Hurry up and find her!" Analia demanded impatiently, waving Aidan toward the door as if every second wasted risked losing the girl forever.

Afraid that delaying any further would cost her the chance to properly thank her savior, Analia snapped sharply, "You heard me, didn't you? Within ten minutes, I want her entire life story on my desk!"

Aidan let out a long sigh, pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration at the impossible demand. "Grandma, it can't be that fast."

Instantly, Analia's face clouded over in irritation. "What's that supposed to mean? Are you being reluctant now? I know how capable you are, ten minutes is definitely enough."

Aidan replied coolly, “Maybe you have the wrong judge of me.”

Trying not to burst out laughing, Leonel stepped forward to calm things down. “Madam, digging into someone’s background takes at least three full days and nights.”

Analia paused for a moment, then pressed her lips together—clearly not pleased, but willing to accept the truth.

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“Alright, I’ll give you three days—but within that time, you’d better clean up that mess with the Wilson family’s marriage arrangement.”

Aidan’s lips tightened, holding back further objections. “Grandma, please rest now. I’ll handle the rest.”

“Alright, fine. Do whatever you must.”

After checking the time, Aidan shifted his attention toward Lilah, his voice quietly authoritative. “Stay and keep an eye on her.”

With a quiet nod, Lilah reassured him, “Relax, Aidan. I’ll personally see to Analia’s comfort.”

Once Aidan was gone, Lilah resumed her seat next to Analia, gently saying, “Analia, maybe lying down for a bit would help.”

Analia refused firmly, a worried wrinkle forming between her brows. “Rest? How can I possibly rest until we’ve found my precious savior?”

Giving her hand an affectionate squeeze, Lilah smiled reassuringly. “She must be quite remarkable to have you this restless.”

Excitement lit Analia’s face immediately. “Absolutely! I chose her personally as my future granddaughter-in-law. If she’s single, it’s perfect.”

A pause followed, and Analia suddenly seemed troubled, realizing she hadn’t even confirmed if the girl was already spoken for.

Lilah comforted her. “Even if she isn’t single, we’ll still owe her our gratitude.” Then, almost casually, Analia added with a sly smile, “Marrying her into our family would be the best way to thank her properly.”

Choosing her words carefully, Lilah pressed her lips into a thin line before saying, “From what I’ve heard, Mrs. Wilson doesn’t have the warmest reputation. Maybe that stubborn

edge runs in the family? It could be simpler to nudge the Wilson girl into leaving on her own.”

Considering this seriously, Analia nodded slowly. “You might have a point. But how do we convince her without causing unnecessary drama?”

After a brief hesitation, Lilah suggested, “You could play the harsh grandmother role, making things uncomfortable. Meanwhile, I’ll step in as Aidan’s intended. If she feels unwanted, maybe she’ll leave quietly on her own.”

At this, Analia’s eyes sharpened instantly, fixing Lilah with a piercing stare. “Listen, child, my memory might fade occasionally, but I haven’t lost my mind. You’re my own god-granddaughter. And Aidan always treats you like his own sister. Acting as his fiancée isn’t just nonsense; it’s downright inappropriate, even as an act.”

Without realizing, Lilah’s fingers clenched involuntarily. “I’m sorry. I spoke thoughtlessly.”

Waving dismissively, Analia moved on. “Forget about it. Lilah, your network is extensive. Help Leonel track down my angel. I can’t leave everything solely in his hands.”

Immediately complying, Lilah stood up and headed toward the door, already dialing her phone. Just as she stepped into the corridor, her voice grew firm and urgent. “Today, on Loveless Avenue, there is...”

Satisfied, Analia listened to Lilah’s purposeful voice fading as the door clicked shut. Honestly, when it came to efficiency, Lilah surpassed even Aidan. Analia felt pride swell within her. Perhaps spoiling Lilah all these years had truly been worth it. With so many eyes searching, relief finally began easing her anxious heart.

After the door closed behind Lilah, a puzzled voice echoed from the phone.

“Ms. Buckley, what exactly happened on Loveless Avenue?”

“Oh, never mind.”

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What makes a power couple

Chapter 9:

“Reach out if you need anything at all. No need to act like we’re strangers,” the voice on the other end of the line offered.

“Got it.” Without another word, Lilah ended the call, her expression clouded with thought.

Later that day,

The maids mentioned that Analia had shown up at the villa gates. Upon hearing that, Duran abandoned his tasks in a flash and made his way outside, eager to share the hopeful news about Aidan’s condition.

Even before he got close, he spotted Lilah steadying Analia, leaning in to murmur something to her.

Picking up his pace, he called out, “Ma’am, you’re finally back! Do you know the bride-to-be? She might be the key to...”

Analia’s expression turned cold. “Bride? What bride? Go fetch Ms. Wilson. I need a word with her.”

“Actually, Ma’am, there was something significant that happened with Ms. Wilson today...”

Before he could continue, Lilah calmly stepped in. “Take your time, Duran. Analia just wants to speak with her about what went on today. Kindly go and invite her over.”

It seemed clear to Duran then that Lilah might have already explained what Nicole had done—those silver needles, how she’d helped Aidan. That would explain it.

Holding back his thoughts, he said, “Understood. I’ll go get her now.”

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Arriving outside Nicole’s room, Duran gave a courteous knock. “Ms. Wilson, it’s Duran.”

After spending some time buried in her book, Nicole had started considering asking Duran about Aidan’s condition. But before she could get up to find him, he showed up right at her door. Rising from her seat, she walked over and opened the door for him.

He gave her a respectful nod. “Ms. Wilson, Analia is back. She wishes to speak with you.”

“Of course.” With a simple nod, Nicole stepped out and pulled the door shut behind her.

As they walked, she asked, “Has Mr. Moore been having more frequent attacks?”

Duran responded respectfully, “Lately, it’s been happening once or twice each week.”

The moment Nicole’s eyes narrowed, it was clear—this illness was getting worse. It couldn’t be ignored for much longer.

“Tell me, Ms. Wilson—do you truly believe you can heal him?”

With a calm gaze and an unwavering voice, Nicole replied, “I believe he has a real shot. But only if he’s willing to fight for it too.”

Duran gave a quiet nod. “He’ll cooperate.”

They reached the living room just as the conversation settled between them.

Upon entering, Nicole’s gaze immediately drifted to the couch, where Analia sat with her back turned. The posture alone spoke volumes. The room felt stifled under the weight of her presence. Next to Analia, Lilah was quietly peeling an apple.

Something about the shape of Analia's shoulders stirred a strange memory in Nicole. There was something oddly familiar in the way she sat, though the memory danced just out of reach.

"Analia, the apple's ready. Want me to slice it up for you?" Lilah offered, her voice low and careful.

"That won't be necessary." The usual warmth in Analia's voice had vanished, replaced by a calm, commanding edge.

Without protest, Lilah passed her the apple. It was only then that she looked up and acknowledged Nicole. "Did you manage to get some rest this afternoon, Ms. Wilson?"

There was a subtle hint of possessiveness in Lilah's tone, something Nicole didn't miss—like she was quietly staking her claim. Meeting her gaze with a steady smile, Nicole replied, "I did, thank you."

Her attention then shifted toward Analia, who still hadn't turned to face her. The air was tense. Nicole chose her words with care. "Good afternoon, Ma'am. My name is Nicole Wilson."

A subtle shiver ran through Analia's shoulders. That voice was so familiar! The moment she turned to see Nicole, her breath hitched. That face—gentle, striking, and oddly familiar—unleashed a bolt of recognition straight to her chest. Nicole's serene smile only deepened the impact. Standing there was the woman who had once saved her.

The surprise hit Nicole just as hard. She never imagined the frail woman she'd helped that day would turn out to be Analia.

In an instant, Analia's usual cold pride faded. She rose from her seat and gripped Nicole's hand firmly. The apple she had been holding now felt like a bother, so she dropped it onto the coffee table and reached out again, this time holding Nicole's hand with both of hers.

Spotting the apple now resting, slightly soiled, on the coffee table, Lilah pinched her fingertips without even thinking.

Meanwhile, Analia was bursting with excitement. The joy hit her so fast and hard that, for a second, she was completely at a loss for words.

Across the room, Lilah stared at Nicole, her chest tightening.

"Is this real? Was Nicole the one who saved Analia? The one Analia's been searching for all this time?" Lilah wondered.

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What makes a power couple

Chapter 10:

Nicole didn't show much emotion, but she was clearly caught off guard. Her tone held a note of concern as she asked, "Why are you out of the hospital already? Did you recover completely?"

A soft laugh bubbled out of Analia. "I heard that Aidan's arranged bride was visiting today, so I rushed back to meet her. Never in a million years did I think the bride would be you! First, you saved my life, and now you're going to be part of the family? That's no coincidence, that's destiny."

For Analia, it felt like winning a trophy she hadn't even competed for. Whatever reason she had for coming home had long slipped from her mind.

In the corner, Lilah's fingers curled into tight fists, her nails biting into her palms. This so-called "destiny" was the last thing she wanted.

Out of nowhere, Analia recalled what Aidan had muttered at the hospital—the part about breaking off the engagement. Her chest tightened, and her tone grew sharp. "Nicole, tell me the truth. Has Aidan done anything to upset you?"

This wasn't the greeting Nicole had prepared for. She'd entered expecting judgment, maybe even rejection, not this strange, unexpected warmth. Without adding more, she gave a small nod and said softly, "No."

Analia released a heavy breath, visibly relieved. "That's good. But hear me, sweetheart. If he ever pulls anything, if he even breathes wrong in your direction, you come straight to me, I'll deal with him."

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Caught off guard, Nicole blinked. "That really won't be necessary."

Beaming, Analia studied Nicole—her clear skin, gentle demeanor, and the calm way she stood her ground.

"Nicole, I want you to feel like it's home."

Nicole offered a quiet nod. "Alright."

"Lilah, where is Nicole staying?"

That single question struck Lilah harder than expected. The tenderness in Analia's voice when she said Nicole's name twisted in her chest.

With effort, Lilah mustered a thin smile. "Ms. Wilson stays in the guest room."

Analia's expression shifted immediately, her eyes narrowing. "The guest room?"

And why the formality? She is Aidan's future wife; you should be calling her Nicole."

A flicker of tension crossed Lilah's jaw before she quickly replied with another forced smile. "Understood."

Analia instructed, "Now go ahead and have her things moved into Aidan's room."

For a second, Lilah didn't move. Her teeth pressed into her lower lip as she stalled. Then, cautiously, she said, "But you know how Aidan gets. If we go ahead without asking him, he might not take it well."

"If he's got a problem, he can take it up with me," Analia retorted.

With nothing more to add, Lilah turned and gave instructions to the butler.

Nearby, Nicole shifted uncomfortably. This wasn't what she'd signed up for. Sharing a room with Aidan, especially under these conditions, didn't feel right. Quietly, she said, "Ma'am, I—"

"Oh, come on. You should be calling me Analia by now."

Caught off guard, Nicole pressed her lips together, unsure for a moment, then gave in with a soft nod. "Analia." That one word seemed to brighten the room.

"Now that's what I like to hear," Analia said with a grin.

Politely, Nicole smiled back. "I'll go get my things together."

Analia gave an approving nod. "Smart. You've had a long day. Once everything's moved, get some rest."

"Alright."

Nicole turned to leave, her steps light but her chest tight. Once she was out of sight, she exhaled slowly. So far, everything was falling into place.

Right as Nicole sank into the couch, her phone lit up with an incoming video call. Without hesitation, she tapped the screen and leaned back, letting the call connect.

The moment it did, a man appeared—late twenties, maddeningly attractive, stretching like a cat that knew it was being watched. His voice was smooth and lazy as he said, “So? What’s it like living under the Moores’ roof?”

A smirk tugged at Nicole’s lips. “It’s decent—aside from one unpleasant loudmouth who never shuts up.”

Cloud Ortega, cigarette between his fingers, exhaled a slow stream of smoke that curled artfully around his face. The haze only sharpened his features, turning him into the kind of man people couldn’t help but stare at.

With a glint of mischief in his eye, he raised an eyebrow. “Want me to fly over and knock some sense into them?”

Casually, Nicole lifted one shoulder in a shrug. “That won’t be necessary. Now tell me—why the call?”

A guy like him, always tied up with international business, didn’t waste time on casual check-ins.

His mood shifted in an instant. “Someone’s sniffing around. I think it ties back to what happened five years ago.”

The humor drained from Nicole’s face. She paused, quiet for a beat, then replied with measured calm, “They won’t find anything. I made sure of it.”

“Are you that confident?” he asked, eyes narrowing. “If something is going down, you better let me handle it before it explodes.”

Nicole’s gaze sharpened just slightly. “Everything’s under control. By the way, any progress on that ring? Have you tracked down who it belongs to?”

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