

THE ULTIMATE TRILLIONAIRE BOSS

C 2

A MARRIAGE ALREADY DEAD

The Blake mansion was unusually quiet that afternoon, it was the kind of silence that felt heavy instead of peaceful.

Ethan Ward stood in the long hallway and stared at the patterned wallpaper, but his mind was far from it. His thoughts kept returning to the video call he had received from Steward James Leonard. The old man's face, the urgency in his voice, and the mention of his grandfather had lingered in the back of Ethan's mind all day. He hadn't returned the call. He hadn't even thought about doing so. The moment Steward Leonard mentioned Master Magnus Xavier, something in Ethan had tightened. A familiar bitterness, buried years ago, surfaced again. His grandfather, Magnus Xavier, wasn't just wealthy or respected. He was the kind of man people described with terms like "influential," "untouchable," and "dangerous." He was a man who controlled a vast tech business empire and believed reputation was more important than family. When Ethan's mother married a humble schoolteacher—the man Ethan called father—Magnus Xavier cut her off instantly. No visits, no medical support, no help when bills piled up. He had banished her completely, declaring that she no longer carried the Xavier name. Ethan grew up watching his parents struggle, watching them push through life with quiet dignity. They worked hard, held onto hope, and raised him without ever letting him feel the sharp edges of poverty. But they also aged too fast. Stress and sacrifice did that. His father died early. His mother followed not long after. Still the Xavier family never came. Never apologized. Never cared. So when Steward Leonard appeared on Ethan's screen the night after Yvonne's celebration, bowing respectfully and saying Magnus Xavier urgently wanted to see him, Ethan ended the call without hesitation. His grandfather Magnus Xavier had abandoned him when it mattered most. He owed them nothing. He let out a slow breath and adjusted the collar of his shirt. Today was important for a different reason. He had an interview at a mid-tier tech firm—one of the few places that might consider someone whose company had collapsed so publicly. He had spent most of his savings compensating his former employees. He didn't regret that choice, but it left him with little to rebuild with. The Blake family reminded him of that every day. Especially Margaret, Yvonne's mother. He needed this job not just for himself, but to stop them from treating him like a burden they were counting the days to throw out. He carried his folder—CV, certificates, references—and stepped out into the courtyard. The Mercedes G-Wagon waited in the corner. The car was one of the last reminders of a time when he had a thriving company, loyal employees, and a bright future. Even now, it gave him a small sense of stability. He reached for the door handle, but the deep hum of an engine approaching drew his attention. A sleek black luxury sedan rolled into the courtyard, polished to perfection. This was the kind of vehicle owned by people who lived comfortably in circles of influence and privilege. The car came to a stop. The door opened. Senator Adrian Cole stepped out

first. He looked flawless—handsome, tall, dressed in a fitted suit that spoke of power and confidence. The kind of man who had never known a setback. The kind who took what he wanted. Yvonne stepped out after him. The sight made Ethan's body become tense. Her expression, usually cool toward him, warmed instantly when she looked at Adrian. She smiled, laughed at something he whispered, and stood close enough that their shoulders brushed. Their hands touched briefly. Their eyes lingered too long. The message was clear. Clearer than any words. Then Adrian leaned forward and kissed her cheek lightly. Yvonne didn't pull away. She smiled. Ethan felt something twist painfully inside his chest. Seeing them together was different from suspecting it. Suspicion hurt. Confirmation cut deeper. They started walking toward the mansion, ignoring him as if he didn't exist. Adrian finally turned and noticed Ethan, offering a slow, mocking grin. "Well, well. Brother-in-law," he said. His tone carried no respect at all. Ethan didn't respond. There was nothing to say. Before he could open his car door, Margaret Blake swept out of the mansion. Her face lit up when she saw Adrian, her voice turning sweet instantly. "Mr. Cole, you're here again. What an honor. Please come inside. We were just talking about you." Adrian nodded politely. "Always a pleasure, Aunty Margaret." But the moment her eyes shifted to Ethan, her expression hardened into that of cold irritation. "What are you doing with those keys?" she snapped. "Please don't tell me you plan to use the G-Wagon today." Ethan held her gaze. "And what if I am?" Margaret strode toward him, yanked the keys from his hand, and held them with triumph. "I'm going out for shopping. I need the G-Wagon." "That's my car we are talking about." Ethan's voice stayed level, though annoyance simmered beneath. "I bought it with my own money." Margaret let out a sharp laugh. "And who pays the taxes? Who pays the maintenance? The insurance? Not you of course. Yvonne covers everything in this house. So practically, nothing here belongs to you." Ethan clenched his jaw. "When things were going well, you praised me. You called me the son-in-law who brought light to this family. Now that things are difficult for me, you treat me like nothing. You act like a parasite who only respects money." Margaret froze for a second, then her hand shot forward and struck him across the face. The sound echoed through the courtyard. "How dare you talk to me like that!" she shouted. She pushed him aside and climbed into the G-Wagon, slamming the door. The engine roared as she drove off. Yvonne approached, her eyes burning with anger. "Ethan, what is wrong with you? Why would you talk to my mother that way? You embarrassed us in front of Mr. Cole." "She humiliated me first," Ethan said, keeping his voice steady. "She's my mother," Yvonne snapped. "You should show respect, especially in front of a dignitary." Adrian stepped behind her and rested his arm on her waist with possessive ease. He smirked at Ethan. "Come on, babe," he said to Yvonne. "Don't waste energy on him. Losers like him don't deserve attention." He leaned in and whispered loudly enough for Ethan to hear, "Save your strength for somewhere better... like tonight." Ethan's fists tightened. He wanted to hit Adrian, to wipe that smug expression off his face. But he held back. He had nothing to gain and too much to lose if he did so. Yvonne didn't love him anymore. Their love had faded just before his company failed. Adrian had merely stepped into the empty space she left behind. "Forget it," Ethan muttered. He picked up his folder and walked past them toward the gate. Whatever pain he felt, he buried it deep. He didn't look back. He didn't want to see Yvonne leaning into another man or hear Adrian's voice again. What mattered now was escaping this house before it finally crushed him. He reached the quiet road outside the gates. For the first time in weeks, a spark of determination flickered in his chest. He would rebuild. He would find work. He would start again. Just as he took his

next step, his phone buzzed. A message appeared. And whatever hope he had felt paused in his chest as he read the screen, realizing the day was far from over.

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