

Hitched 1081

Chapter 1081

Larry knew Clayton was a man of his word, so he rushed to say:

"Back in the day, Ms. Hawkins was kidnapped through Helen's plotting! She bribed a maid, and while Ms. Patel and Betty were distracted, she sneaked away Ms. Hawkins, with Roger orchestrating the escape from the dock.

Helen also manipulated Roger into killing Ms. Hawkins and secretly recorded it.

She aimed to kill two birds with one stone: eliminate Ms. Hawkins and use the video to blackmail the Murphy family, securing her untouchable status within them.

I accidentally stumbled upon these secrets and even managed to copy the video of Roger abusing a child, which is why the Murphy family was willing to go to great lengths to save me!

But now, it seems Roger must have killed the wrong person, otherwise Ms. Hawkins couldn't possibly have come back alive."

Clayton clenched his jaw tightly, his brow furrowed in suspicion.

He had suspected Helen but never found any proof!

"Where's the video?"

"If... if you promise to spare me, I'll give it to you."

Clayton stared at him for a few seconds, "Deal, I promise!"

His daughter's safety was his top priority!

Larry's heart, which had been hanging by a thread, finally relaxed. He let out a sigh of relief before saying:

"The USB with the video is buried at the bottom of the large flower pot in my room. Empty out the soil, and you'll find it." Clayton made a call, and someone went to search.

Soon, a call came from home, confirming the discovery of the USB.

The video was transferred to Clayton's phone, and his expression turned stormy!

This was indeed evidence of Roger abusing a child!

Had it not been for his daughter Irene's luck, she would have been Roger's victim drowned in water!

A murderous look gleamed in Clayton's eyes!

Without another word to Larry, he left the hospital room.

No sooner had Clayton left than a scar-faced boss appeared in Larry's room.

Larry was startled, too late to scream before the boss clasped his mouth, swiftly slashing his mouth with a knife a few times.

After inflicting a series of wounds, he then forcefully poured a concoction down Larry's throat.

A special blend by Evan, consisting of mustard, chili peppers, sea salt, pepper, and hot oil!

After the concoction, following Evan's instructions, the boss rubbed a substance into Larry's wounds.

It was the same substance Larry had once used on Pamela, designed not to heal wounds but to rapidly worsen and fester them!

But what Evan and the boss used was an enhanced version!

This application on wounds was pure agony!

Larry lay on the hospital bed, his body convulsing, in so much pain his eyes seemed about to pop out!

His stomach churned, his throat felt as if it was being ripped apart, and his mouth as though it had been lacerated a thousand times!

At the site of his wounds, it felt as if millions of venomous insects were gnawing at his flesh and bones!

He tried to scream but couldn't; even breathing was excruciatingly painful!

All Larry could do was lie helplessly on the bed, staring wide-eyed at the ceiling, tears streaming down his face.

Evan, hiding outside the window, thought to himself: Why cry? You brought this upon yourself.

His grandfather had promised to spare him, but that was his grandfather's personal decision; Evan had made no such promise!

After dealing with Larry, Evan went to find Helen.

Helen, having been terrified by the boss the previous day, was now admitted to the psychiatric ward.

Evan arrived just after Clayton had left.

Helen, perhaps triggered by something, mumbled to herself,

"It's impossible, Irene was supposed to be dead, she can't be back! Liars, all lies! Ah, surely, it's all a lie.

Pamela, that wretch, won't be happy either. She made me miserable; why should she be happy?! If it weren't for her, Clayton would surely love me, I could have been Mrs. Hawkins!

I killed her daughter, let's see how she can be happy now!

Haha, she'll never be happy again, she's exhausted herself searching for her daughter and will never find her! Her daughter is in hell, hahaha...

Crying all the time, she must be in so much pain, that wretch must be suffering, haha.

She's just a crazy woman anyone can bully, I can torment her however I want!"

Chapter 1082

"I'll make her suffer, I'll break her, I'll stick her full of needles until she's nothing but a bloody mess, hahaha..."

Muttering to herself in a disjointed frenzy, it was clear Helen had lost touch with reality.

Evan's lips were pressed tightly together, his small fists clenched hard, his breathing rapid and shallow.

That damn viper!

After scouring the hospital, Evan leaped into Helen's room.

He orchestrated the revenge, and a scar-faced enforcer made sure Helen experienced the agony Pamela had endured-twofold!

By the time the nurse found her, Helen was more porcupine than human, her body festooned with long needles everywhere but her eyes. The ghastly image of Helen and Larry's condition went viral online, shocking viewers but also earning a unanimous nod: karma at work! The commotion was too big to ignore, prompting police investigation.

But with surveillance sabotaged and not a trace of Evan or the enforcer captured on camera, the investigation hit a dead end.

Soon, the Murphy dynasty crumbled!

The eldest son of the Murphy family was arrested for child abduction and murder, Bobby for tax evasion, and Mr. Murphy for corruption and bribery!

With a bit of clout, the Murphys were exposed one after another and apprehended!

In just one afternoon, dozens of the Murphy family's diners shut down, their food factories sealed off!

The Murphy family was no more.

A dynasty that had monopolized Oceanopolis's food industry for decades had fallen!

As for Helen, her multiple crimes would normally warrant severe punishment, but her insanity led her to a mental hospital instead.

Clayton made arrangements, assigning her several maids for care-all of whom had been persecuted by Helen before.

Their deep-seated hatred for Helen ensured Clayton could rest easy with them in charge.

With the Murphy family dealt with, he next swept through his company, rewarding the loyal and punishing the deceitful.

Some soared to new heights, entering high society like Alden, while others plummeted into oblivion.

Hawkins Sea-freight underwent a major overhaul.

Betty, too, was busy reorganizing the Hawkins family's affairs.

Those involved in Pamela's mistreatment were sent to the police, while those who stood by indifferently were expelled from the Hawkins Mansion.

She even revised the Hawkins family tree, erasing Carl and others from it, stripping them and their descendants of their inheritance rights.

No longer would they or their offspring be considered part of the Hawkins family, nor would they have a claim to its wealth.

After a tumultuous day of retribution, the wicked faced their comeuppance, and the righteous found peace.

Dinner that evening was exceptionally lively, with Betty at the head of the table, flanked by Pamela and Elysia.

Clayton sat next to Pamela, and Tarquin beside Elysia, joined by the Patel brothers and their kids.

The family's joy and laughter filled the air.

Clayton was moved to tears by the scene, a happiness he'd never dared to dream of.

After surviving the storm, he understood what true happiness was.

Life, in its brevity or length, is best lived in good health, surrounded by loved ones, well-fed and warm.

And if one is lucky enough to have a few close friends, all the better!

After dinner, the kids joined Betty and Pamela for a stroll in the yard, helping them digest.

Elysia, after several heavy phone calls, seemed preoccupied.

"What's wrong?" Tarquin inquired.

Elysia pondered, "With today's news making such waves online, accessible to everyone, could Winona possibly have missed it? Blossom and Jess called after seeing the news, but Winona hasn't."

"Winona Newsom?"

Chapter 1083

"Yeah," Elysia nodded, her mind swirling with thoughts.

Winona was a celebrity, always under the spotlight. Surely, she kept an eye on the trending news online, right?

Even if she was bound by a non-disclosure agreement during filming, it shouldn't stop her from catching up on the news, should it?

But if Winona had seen it, why hadn't she gotten in touch?

Knowing Winona's fiery spirit, she would have called the moment she saw today's headlines.

Speaking of Winona, Tarquin thought of Zane,

"Has Zane reached out to you?"

"No, it's been a while since I last heard from him."

Only then did Tarquin realize that Zane had indeed been out of touch with Elysia for quite some time.

Back when Elysia had first returned to Jindale City, Zane would seek her out every now and then.

According to Keaton Huber, who had done some digging, Zane, despite being married to Winona, had harbored feelings for Elysia during their college years.

An unrequited love!

Elysia was his unattainable dream.

Their sudden loss of contact was unusual.

"Zane's not in Jindale City lately?"

"No, he went to find Winona. It's been a while now."

Tarquin was silent.

Winona could go off the radar for over a year because of a movie shoot.

And now, Zane had also vanished without a trace after going to the set to find her.

Something didn't sit right.

Before Tarquin could voice his concerns, the Hawkins family's new butler approached them.

The butler greeted them politely,

"Sir, the master requests your presence in his study."

Tarquin looked at Elysia, who said, "You should go see Dad in the study."

"Alright, don't worry too much. We'll discuss this when I get back."

"Okay."

Tarquin went off to see Clayton, leaving Elysia alone with her thoughts. Still uneasy, she decided to call Zane.

But Zane's number was 'out of service.'

She then called Callum, and although the call went through, nobody picked up.

However, Callum soon sent her a message, [Can't talk right now. Is it urgent?]

Elysia replied: [Have you heard from Winona recently?]

[No, but I heard their crew went to a remote area for shooting.]

Elysia was surprised, [To a remote area for shooting?!]

[Yeah, don't worry. They've got a professional team with them. They should be done by the end of the year.]

Elysia quickly asked, [Will Winona be back in Jindale City before New Year's?]

[If all goes well, yes.]

Elysia felt a surge of excitement. This was good news!

[Great, thanks for letting me know. By the way, was there any issue with that video I sent you?]

Winona had been out of touch for so long, she couldn't help but worry. Zane had sent her a video of Winona to reassure her.

The video showed Winona, her assistant, and her agent in the makeup room at the set.

But something about Winona in the video seemed off to her, so she sent it to Callum for a second opinion.

Callum assured her, [The video's fine, don't worry. I'll let you know immediately if anything comes up.]

Elysia finally felt relieved.

[Thanks, I appreciate it.]

[No problem. I'll get back to my work now. Let's catch up later.]

[Sure.]

After ending the chat, Elysia screenshot the conversation and sent it to Blossom Blythe.

Blossom, learning that Winona might be back for the holidays, was just as thrilled as Elysia.

The best friends hoped their trio would soon be reunited. However, they couldn't foresee the harsh reality awaiting them.

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Inside the main house's study.

Only Clayton and the Patel brothers were present.

As Tarquin entered, he could sense a tense atmosphere.

"Dad, uncles."

Chapter 1084

The four nodded and gestured for him to take a seat.

Charles dove straight into the matter at hand, "A few days ago, Elijah hit me up online, inquiring about a newspaper in Karl Town called Alerasia. You got any beef with them?"

Tarquin frowned, choosing honesty, "The murderer of my parents is likely connected to that newspaper. My mom used to work there."

"Do you know what your parents did for a living?"

"I always thought they were just ordinary writers."

The elders exchanged glances before Charles spoke up, "When Elijah asked me about it, I had no clue about your ties to the Hawkins family. I just warned him that the newspaper was no simple affair and it'd be best to steer clear."

"Yeah, Elijah mentioned that, but it's about my parents' death. I have to dig deeper!"

Charles nodded in understanding, "I was the lead on the security system for that place, but I don't know much. Just that the newspaper is a front for something much bigger. There's a massive secret lab beneath it, with lots of scientists working down there."

Tarquin's brow tightened, "An underground lab?"

"Yeah, I've never been down there myself, and my team was only responsible for the newspaper's security. The lab's security is top-notch, designed by Alerasia's military."

Alerasia's military?! The severity of the situation was suddenly laid bare. Alerasia, a dominant superpower with a strong military-any lab tied to them was no ordinary place!

Tarquin's expression darkened, "Uncle, do you have a list of the researchers there?"

"No, but I can get you the newspaper's staff list easily since we did their security."

"However, the newspaper staff might not be connected to the lab. That level of lab usually has scientists working under code names, not real names." Tarquin nodded, "Thanks, Uncle."

Clayton chimed in, "Because of Hawkins Sea-freight, I've had many dealings with the Ministry of National Security. Before calling you here, I also looked into your parents' case."

According to the Ministry of National Security, just before your parents' incident, they were in contact with them.

The leadership at the Ministry took it very seriously, immediately reporting up to the higher echelons of the government!

The top brass took even greater notice, quickly coordinating a response. Not only were the armed forces alerted, but a special ops team was also dispatched to assist your parents.

But before the team could reach Alerasia, your parents were murdered abroad.

Their deaths were certainly no accident, but whatever secret they held that garnered so much attention from the government, I'm not clear on."

Tarquin's expression turned grave. No wonder the mystery man had such extensive reach, alarming international powers.

His parents must have been involved in something significant to cause such a stir domestically, elevating it to an international concern! Then, Tarquin thought of Verity Bradford.

Before her death, Verity hinted that the mystery man had been circling her, searching for something.

Now, it seemed whatever he sought was related to this underground lab!

But what exactly?

He hadn't heard his parents mention anything, and there was nothing suspicious among their belongings.

Moreover, if the mystery man wanted to use him to find that something, why attempt to kill him the day Baby was kidnapped?

Was it because he had already found what he was looking for, rendering Tarquin expendable?

Chapter 1085

Tarquin's brow was furrowed with deep concern when Joshua spoke up, "I work for the National Security Agency, and I really want to help you. But since your parents' situation involves state secrets, I can't just go snooping around.

However, I've already asked for guidance from my superiors. I'll let you know as soon as I hear anything."

Robert added, "I work in military intelligence, and I can't investigate your parents' case on my own steam either. But I've reported it up the chain. We're waiting on word."

The Patel brothers, one in politics, one in the military, and one in business, all excelled in the realm of cyber technology.

They were top-tier talents in the digital information sphere!

The higher their rank, the more low-key they became. Coupled with their line of work, it made the Patels seem all the more enigmatic to outsiders. Tarquin snapped back to the present, grateful, "Thanks, dad. Thanks, uncles."

"Family doesn't keep score."

The room filled with their voices until well past eleven before everyone called it a night.

Everyone else had turned in when Tarquin returned to his bedroom, stirring Elysia awake. She sat up, asking, "What did your dad want to talk about for so long?"

Tarquin walked over to the bed, tenderly stroking her cheek, "Just some work stuff. Have you reached out to Winona?"

"Couldn't get through. But I talked to Callum. He said Winona's production team went off the grid but should wrap up before the holidays. If all goes well, Winona will be back by then."

Tarquin and Callum were close friends, so he had no reason to doubt.

Heading off the grid explained why Zane hadn't been in touch with Elysia for so long.

Seeing Elysia stop fretting, Tarquin didn't worry further.

He kissed Elysia's forehead, telling her to get some sleep while he went to freshen up.

Before heading to the bathroom, he made a call to Jindale City to check on Verity's illegitimate child.

No matter what the mysterious figure was after, whether they found it or not, it was directly linked to his parents' death!

A vendetta for murder, a debt greater than the heavens!

He must find that person, see who they really are, and then avenge his parents!

The next morning, Elysia woke to find her father and uncles' gazes odd.

Tarquin noticed it too, and it was unmistakably clear!

Yesterday, Clayton and the Patel brothers looked at him with affection, satisfaction, pride, like they were truly pleased with him as their son-in-law. Today, their warmth seemed dialed back.

Not that they were displeased, just... not as enthusiastic as before.

Elysia was the first to voice her concern, "Dad, uncles, what's wrong?"

Tears welled in Clayton's eyes, "These years, my Irene has suffered."

The Patel brothers also had misty eyes, "Those people from the Thorne family, worse than beasts!" Tarquin instantly understood.

They had looked into Elysia's past years and learned of her struggles, feeling heartbroken for her.

Elysia, though narrowly escaping death, had a tumultuous life filled with hardship.

Later, being married off to the Bradford family didn't turn her fortunes; life remained bitterly hard.

Others might just sigh at her misfortune, but those who truly loved her felt deep empathy.

Tarquin knelt down, taking responsibility, "The hardships Elysia faced these years are my doing. I am at fault."

Clayton and the Patel brothers frowned, their expressions complex as they looked at him, silent.

Elysia, finally catching on, quickly intervened, "I thought something serious happened. That's all in the past. Life was hard, but it's behind us now. About us..."

It was all a misunderstanding, and he's already apologized. He's been wonderful to me since.

If you didn't bring it up, I'd have forgotten all those unpleasant times. I'm happy now, that's all that matters, not the past."

The room fell into a hushed stillness...

Chapter 1086

"Dad, Uncle!"

That tone had a hint of whining.

Clayton was the first to cave, quickly saying,

"Tarquin, get up. We're not blaming you. It's just that we feel for what Irene has been through."

The Patel brothers also chimed in,

"Stand up, man. We've looked into what happened in Jindale City, and it's clear you're not at fault."

After a pause, they added meaningfully,

"We're not dwelling on the past, but looking forward. Irene is the only child of the Hawkins and the Patel families, she's our treasure. We can't stand to see her hurt again. Anyone who messes with her in the future will have us to answer to!"

Their message was a warning to Tarquin.

The subtext: We might not have your power, but if you dare hurt our Irene, we'll go to the mat for her!

Tarquin understood and wasn't angry. Instead, he said,

"Elysia is the darling of our family. The kids all look up to her. In our house, she's the one who teases me, not the other way around. I wouldn't dare." These were people who genuinely loved Elysia, just like him. How could he be angry at them?

Elysia's family was his family!

Clayton and the Patel brothers were pleased with his response, sharing a satisfied look and nodding in agreement.

Clayton helped him up, "No need to stay on the floor, it's cold."

Just then, Tarquin's phone rang. It was Lowell calling.

He politely excused himself from Clayton and the Patel brothers before taking the call outside.

Lowell was excited, "Tarquin, have you seen the news? Your sister-in-law is trending again!"

Tarquin hadn't seen it yet, "Get to the point."

"Mr. Hawkins just made a post announcing that your sister-in-law is the next heir to the Hawkins family, including Hawkins Sea-freight. It's all hers! The Patel family made a post too. Your sister-in-law has rights to the Patel inheritance, meaning she'll share the wealth with the Patel descendants. And Charles went all out, saying he's so happy and doesn't know what welcome gift to give your sister-in-law to express his joy, so he decided to start with ten billion!"

Tarquin was speechless.

This was the Hawkins and the Patel families showing their support for Elysia after learning about her past struggles!

They were telling Elysia that she had a strong family backing, a family that loved her dearly.

They were also reminding him:

Despite his noble birth and wealth, Elysia was no mere catch herself, marrying him wasn't her punching above her weight!

And to the world:

Elysia was the heir to the Hawkins and the Patel fortunes, a warning to anyone who dared cross her to think twice!

Especially to those in Jindale City who had looked down on Elysia's background:

They couldn't hold a candle to her!

This was the love the Hawkins and the Patel families had for Elysia, giving her a solid backing.

"I heard Jindale City's all abuzz. Those who once looked down on her are now biting their tongues, terrified of her return."

Tarquin didn't comment, feeling warm inside.

Elysia had more people who loved her, and he was happy for her.

After breakfast, the family set off to visit the Patel estate, to see Elysia's grandparents and aunts.

Despite the tears, they were all tears of joy.

For a long time after, they lived happily in Oceanopolis. As long as Elysia didn't mention returning to Jindale City, Tarquin didn't press her.

After all, home was wherever his wife and kids were. He was content to be wherever they were, even if it meant being the son-in-law who moved in with his wife's family.

They spent their days in happiness and joy.

But life is a mix of joy and sorrow. Just as they were basking in their happiness, the first day of August brought devastating news.

Chapter 1087

Blossom was in deep trouble.

Someone had set their sights on the ancient artifacts that had just been unearthed and hatched a plan to kidnap her.

The kidnappers threatened Blossom's parents, demanding the ancient artifacts in exchange for her safety, or else they threatened to harm her! Blossom's parents were renowned professors in the field of archaeology, and they were responsible for the excavation of these artifacts.

The dig site was massive, filled with numerous artifacts, and it took nearly two years to complete the excavation.

The artifacts that were unearthed were invaluable!

Among the most noteworthy finds were a box of seeds that hadn't sprouted but hadn't spoiled, and a plate of well-preserved cakes.

There was also a body that hadn't decomposed!

The preservation of the body was comparable to the Lady of the Hanning in terms of its incredible condition.

Even more astonishing was the discovery of a thriving green plant in the main burial chamber.

The conditions of the tomb were hardly suitable for plant life, making the survival of this plant a miracle!

This burial chamber had a history of over a thousand years, with undecayed bodies, unspoiled seeds, intact cakes, and a living plant - all of these were marvels!

The research value contained within was self-evident!

This was another milestone in human archaeological history!

Selling these items abroad would be a great loss and a disgrace to our nation!

These items were left by our ancestors, filled with their wisdom and cultural heritage. Why should other countries have the privilege to study and learn from them?!

Our national treasures ought to remain within the country; other nations are not entitled to possess them!

And once artifacts are taken abroad, it's nearly impossible to reclaim them!

Aware of the seriousness, Blossom's parents, of course, wouldn't hand over the artifacts to the kidnapers.

But they couldn't just disregard their daughter's well-being.

The kidnapers warned them not to call the police, threatening immediate harm to Blossom if they did. If they wanted their daughter back, they would have to exchange her for the artifacts!

Blossom's parents didn't want to betray their country, nor could they bear to abandon their daughter.

Thus, they found themselves in a dire predicament!

Left with no choice, they reached out to Tarquin.

Tarquin had connections with the Blythe family, and Blossom was Elysia's best friend. Right now, he was their only hope for help.

When Elysia heard about Blossom's kidnapping, she burst into tears, wracked with worry.

Several youngsters, upon hearing the news, clenched their fists in anger, gritting their teeth: "Who are these jerks daring to mess with our Blossom?!"

Axel leaned against a tree outside the main building, hands in his pockets, expressionless.

His mind was filled with images of Blossom's starry-eyed gaze and her unabashed adoration...

Birds chirped in the tree, reminiscent of Blossom's chattering presence.

Tarquin was nearby on the phone. Hearing the words "harm her," Axel's expression turned even colder.

Tarquin's brow was furrowed; he understood the gravity of Blossom's kidnapping and knew about the close bond between Elysia and Blossom.

After calming Blossom's parents, he made further arrangements.

Hanging up the phone, he turned to Axel, "Get ready, we're heading to Silver City."

Entering the house, Tarquin saw Elysia crying, his heart ached, but he was at a loss for words.

Telling her not to worry seemed pointless. She and Blossom were as close as sisters; of course, she was worried.

"The kidnappers are after the artifacts, not Blossom's life. They won't harm her easily. We have enough time to save her. I've already coordinated with Folly, and I'm heading to Silver City now. I'll keep you updated on any developments."

"I'm coming too!" Elysia and the four youngsters said in unison.

Baby, unfamiliar with Blossom but hearing her siblings' concerns, piped up in her babyish voice, "Me go too."

Before Tarquin could respond, Elysia turned to Clayton, "Dad, Blossom has been my best friend for years, always there for me. Folly and Hollis have been great to me too. Now that they're in trouble, I must go and help."

Chapter 1088

Clayton frowned slightly, nodding to show he understood the gravity of the situation.

When they delved into Elysia's past, they discovered Blossom and Winona, two girls who had been nothing short of angels to their daughter. Gratitude filled Clayton's heart.

"I've got friends over in Silver City. I'll come with you," he announced.

At his words, Pamela clutched Elysia's hand tighter, reassuring her, "Don't worry, Irene. Mom's coming too."

Tarquin just sighed, seemingly resigned.

Seeing the family's determination, they all agreed to make the trip to Silver City together.

Clayton arranged a private jet, and they arrived the same day.

Silver City was renowned as a tourist hotspot, famed for its ancient ruins and historic architecture.

They arrived under the guise of tourists.

Once in Silver City, they didn't head straight to Blossom's parents. Instead, they checked into a hotel close to the archaeological site to settle in first.

With the family spanning from the elderly to the young, and one member in a wheelchair not fully present mentally, no one suspected they were on a mission to save someone.

After settling in, Evan wasted no time slipping out of the hotel.

Following the plan they had laid out on the flight, Evan sneaked into the archaeological site under the pretense of being a playful kid.

He accidentally stumbled into the living quarters of the archaeologists.

And then, quite by accident, he barged into the room where Blossom's parents were staying.

At that moment, Hollis was sitting in a chair, tears rolling down her face, while Folly Blythe paced the room anxiously, frowning deeply. Seeing Evan, the couple was taken aback.

They mistook Evan for Elijah!

Before they could get a word out, Evan gestured for them to be silent.

The next second, Folly's phone rang. The voice of a kidnapper boomed through,

"Who's the kid that just entered your room?!"

Evan shook his head, flashing a note he had prepared earlier.

Folly glanced at it and quickly replied,

"I don't know him. Just a kid came in, no adults."

The kidnapper, of course, couldn't imagine that a child could be part of a rescue operation,

"I'm warning you, no tricks. We're watching every move. Try anything, and we'll end this!"

"We're not playing any games. Where's my daughter? Don't hurt her!"

"As long as you cooperate, your daughter will be fine. Just get those artifacts out!"

Evan then showed another note, written by Tarquin: requesting a video call with Blossom.

Folly immediately told the kidnapper,

"I've got a plan. We can act tonight. Arrange transportation, and I'll bring you in to pick up the artifacts. But first, I need to see my daughter alive! I want a video call!"

The kidnapper hesitated for a moment, "Wait! And get that kid out of there!"

Folly looked at Evan, who mimed reassuringly,

Don't worry, we'll save Blossom!

Tears welled up in Blossom's parents' eyes. Fearing the room might be bugged, they remained silent, watching Evan leave.

Evan, playing his part to the hilt, cried out in the courtyard, "Daddy, Mommy, where are you?"

Soon, a security guard approached, mistaking him for a child separated from his parents, and escorted him out.

The kidnappers, watching Evan leave, dismissed him as a non-threat and hung up.

After a while, using Blossom's phone, the kidnappers initiated a video call to her parents.

On the screen, Blossom was tied to a chair, her mouth sealed with duct tape, tears streaming down her face as she whimpered.

Her parents broke down, crying out, "Blossom, oh Blossom..."

Meanwhile, the Patel family had tracked Blossom's phone signal, quickly pinpointing her location.

For them, such tracking was a piece of cake!

Axel, upon receiving the news, didn't wait for Tarquin's command and sprung into action!

Chapter 1089

In an abandoned construction site on the outskirts of Silver City, a group of kidnappers were deep into their card game.

One of them, having lost a decent sum, was in a foul mood, cursing under his breath, "Damn it, what rotten luck! Can we not get a bit of fun with the girl? I'm all wound up here, needing some release!"

"Cut it out," another snapped. "Boss said she's off-limits until the artifact is in our hands."

"So what? We're going to off her once we get it anyway. What's the harm in a little fun now?"

"Just drop it, will you? You want the boss to blow his top and put a bullet in you?"

The man who lost money scowled even darker and made his way over to where Blossom lay, unleashing a vicious kick and punch combo on the man on the ground beside her.

Blossom struggled harder, crying and shaking her head, emitting muffled sobs.

Clearly, she didn't want the kidnappers touching the man on the ground.

After a few more brutal kicks and spitting on the man, the kidnapper grabbed Blossom by the chin, "Damn it, keep it down, will you? My luck's been crap all night because of your blubbering. Make one more peep, and I swear I'll end you right here!"

Blossom's tears flowed even more freely, her face flushed from fear and her messy hair sticking to her tear-streaked face.

The kidnapper licked his lips, making a swallowing gesture, then turned to his mates, "A little rubbing against her won't hurt, right? She's got the looks, and I can't hold back any longer."

His companions were too engrossed in their game to pay him any heed.

Ignoring them, the man began unbuckling his belt, hurling obscenities all the while.

Blossom's eyes widened in terror.

Desperately struggling, she shook her head, tears streaming down her face, feeling utterly hopeless.

"Look at you, all cute and tempting. A real tease, huh? Let me have a little taste before we get our hands on the artifact," the man sneered. Suddenly, a knife flew through the air, striking the man's groin with deadly precision!

He froze, then screamed, his agony echoing throughout the dilapidated building.

The other kidnappers spun around, alert and searching, "Who's there?!"

Stones flew, hitting some in the eyes, others in sensitive spots...

Before they could react, a shadowy figure appeared, moving with lightning speed among them.

After a brief commotion, all the kidnappers lay defeated.

Blossom, her face a mask of terror, recognized her rescuer and immediately broke down, "Axel!"

Axel frowned and removed the tape from her mouth.

Blossom burst into tears, like a child finding solace in the arms of a parent.

Axel's lips twitched, but he remained silent, bending down to untie her.

The moment her hands were free, Blossom wrapped them around Axel's neck, clinging to him and sobbing uncontrollably.

Axel stiffened, unaccustomed to such closeness with a woman, yet he didn't push her away, gently freeing her legs from their binds.

Once free, Blossom threw herself into his arms, wrapping around him like an octopus.

"I was so scared," she sobbed into his chest.

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Axel stood there, frozen in confusion, as if pushing her away was wrong, but so was not pushing her away. After a moment of hesitation, he blurted out,

"There's a line we shouldn't cross."

But Blossom, as if she hadn't heard him, clung to him even tighter.

Axel, with his headset on, heard Tarquin's voice in his ear,

"If you've reached the spot, don't rush in. They've got guns, you..."

"I'm already on it."

No sooner had Axel spoken than he sensed danger behind him. He swiftly scooped up Blossom and dodged.

Bullets whizzed past them as Axel furrowed his brow, clutching Blossom tightly and taking cover behind a pillar,

"Close your eyes and stay put."

Obediently, Blossom shut her eyes, trembling in his arms.

After a second's hesitation, Axel gently pushed her aside and darted away.

Gunfire echoed all around as Blossom curled up behind the pillar, covering her ears, her whole body shaking with fear.

Eventually, the gunfire ceased. Sensing someone approaching, she quickly opened her eyes.

Axel reappeared in front of her, dressed in a black tracksuit, his expression stern.

Yet, Blossom wasn't afraid. She quickly got up and threw herself into his arms again, sobbing uncontrollably.

Axel grunted but didn't push her away.

"It's safe now, I'll take you out of here."

Blossom nodded eagerly, refusing to let go. Axel hesitated for a moment, then lifted her in his arms and walked out.

Police cars and ambulances arrived simultaneously. Axel tried to hand Blossom over to a medic, but she clung to him desperately.

It wasn't until she saw Hollis that she burst into tears again and threw herself into her mother's embrace.

The sight of mother and daughter crying together was heart-wrenching.

Axel watched as Hollis and the medics helped Blossom into an ambulance, which then drove away from the dilapidated building.

He also noticed a young man being carried out, frowning slightly.

This was the person Blossom had tried to protect.

Tarquin surveyed the scene, his brow furrowed, finally relaxing once he was sure the situation was fully under control.

He walked over to Axel, noticing blood on him, and asked, "You hurt?"

"A bullet grazed my shoulder during the shootout."

"You need to get that checked at the hospital?"

"No, it's just a scratch. I can handle it."

There was a brief silence before Tarquin suddenly asked, "You like Blossom?"

Axel turned, his frown deepening, clearly annoyed, "No."

"Why the rush then? You acted on your own before backup arrived. That's not like you."

Axel said nothing, then added, "Her sister was worried sick. Just wanted to get her to safety, that's all."

With that, he walked away, leaving Tarquin staring after him thoughtfully.

Upon hearing that Blossom was safe, Elysia rushed to the hospital.

Baby was with Pamela, and Evan was still out.

Elliot, Emmett, and Elijah came with her.

As they hurried to Blossom's ward, a woman carrying a child bumped into Emmett, knocking him over.

"I'm so sorry, it was an accident," the woman apologized repeatedly.

Elysia quickly helped Emmett up, "Are you alright, sweetheart?"

Emmett shook his head, "I'm fine, Mommy."

"I'm really sorry, I was in a hurry and didn't see your little one," the woman continued.

But before she could finish, her gaze landed on Emmett's face, and she froze, her eyes widening in shock!