

Hitched 1101

Chapter 1101

Elysia Thorne's lips quivered as she glanced between him and the photograph repeatedly, her eyes filled with turmoil and confusion. "I... If she really is Emmett's mother, then... do we have to give Emmett back to her?" she murmured, her voice laced with desperation. Tarquin Bradford didn't answer immediately, instead, he wrapped his arms around her, pulling her into a comforting embrace.

If Claire Yeager was indeed Emmett's biological mother, according to the law, they would indeed have to return Emmett to her.

"I... I can't..." Elysia's voice broke as tears streamed down her face.

She clung to Tarquin's shirt, her sobs making it hard to breathe.

She had often wondered, feared, what she would do if Emmett's real parents ever came looking for him. But she never allowed herself to think too deeply about it.

She admitted to herself that she was selfish; she couldn't bear the thought of being separated from Emmett, of giving him to someone else.

Emmett might not have been her biological child, but she had raised him from infancy.

When she found Emmett, he was so tiny and fragile, his body bruised and barely clinging to life.

She had watched over him day and night, fighting to bring him back from the brink.

Over the years, she loved Emmett just as much as she loved her son, Elliot Evan, but with an added sense of protectiveness.

Emmett, unlike Elliot Evan, wasn't as quick-witted or physically strong. Elliot Evan was as sturdy as a little ox by the age of one, while Emmett was still delicate, often falling ill.

She had invested far more time and energy into Emmett than she ever had with Elliot Evan.

No one could blame Emmett for being curious about his origins; if he knew he was adopted, he'd surely want to know about his real parents.

And while finding out about his biological parents should have been a joyous occasion for Emmett, Elysia couldn't help but feel anything but happy. Instead, she felt an overwhelming sense of sorrow.

"Tarquin, I'm scared," she wept into his chest. "I'm so, so scared..."

Tarquin's heart ached for her, holding her closer, his hand gently cradling the back of her head to soothe her.

"I know, I understand. Let's not worry

just yet. Nothing's confirmed, and

we'll talk to Claire to get to the

bottom of this. Even if she is, we might still have a chance. She hasn't tried to acknowledge Emmett yet, and she even pushed you to take Emmett away from Silver City. That might mean she isn't looking to take him away from you."

Elysia nodded eagerly at his words, clinging to a thread of hope.

"You're right, she hasn't tried to owledge him. As long as

to let Emmett stay

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do anything." Content bele With Sheet

"If she really is Emmett's mother, I'll talk to

Eer," Tarquin said, his b a and Emmett. Contextoval?

furrowed with concern for both

belongs

Claire's living situation wasn't ideal, and Emmett might not find happiness with them...

Meanwhile, Claire was huddled in a deserted alley, her body wracked with sobs. The pain was unbearable.

That was her child, her own flesh and blood, born after nine months within her.

But now, she could only watch him from a distance, too afraid to acknowledge him.

Not only could she not acknowledge him, but she also had to push him away from her.

Her heart ached, the pain almost too much to bear.

"Mommy, what's wrong?" Maria tugged at her sleeve, her small face etched with concern.

Claire pulled her daughter into her arms, her cries echoing in the quiet alley.

"Mommy's heart hurts, Maria... That's your brother, your little brother... He's a part of mommy too..."

Chapter 1102

Mom could only watch, helpless and heartbroken, as her son called another woman "mom." She watched as he grew closer to this stranger, and even... defended her over his own mother. "He's my flesh and blood, my baby," she sobbed.

"Do I have a little brother?"

"Yes, your own brother!"

"Why didn't Mom bring my brother back?"

"I... I... I was scared. Scared that if I did, your father would just sell him off again, to some horrible place where he would suffer!"

"Was my brother sold by Dad?"

"Yes! Sold by him! That liar, it's all his fault!"

A fierce light flashed in Claire's eyes as she thought about it, her whole body trembling with rage.

Wiping away her tears, she picked up her daughter and left.

Before long, they stood in front of a dilapidated, abandoned bar.

Claire would have never dared to come here before, but today, blinded by fury, she acted without thinking.

As she attempted to enter, two burly men blocked her way. "What do you want?"

"I'm looking for Cecil White! Cecil! I'm his wife!"

"We don't care who you are. Got any money? Show us your cash. No money, no entry. Beat it!"

Claire's pockets were empty. She had just gotten her paycheck yesterday, and after a trip to the doctor and paying for a DNA test, she was broke. Even her only gold necklace had been snatched by Cecil.

When Claire tried to push past them, the men shoved her back, kicking her. "Crazy lady, looking for trouble? Get lost!"

Unable to enter, Claire sat on the ground, holding her daughter, both crying,

"Cecil, you bastard! Come out! You're not human, you deceived me, you bastard..."

Her loud crying drew the attention of passersby.

The bouncers, worried she might attract the police, reluctantly let her into the bar.

The bar, now a gambling den, was filled with card players instead of drinkers.

The bouncers kept Claire from wandering around, while one of them went to find Cecil.

Cecil was gambling, the gold necklace in question on the table.

"Pause the game," a bouncer grumbled. "Your wife's here, making a scene. Sort it out before she brings the cops down on us. The boss will have your head!"

"My wife? Impossible, she wouldn't dare..."

Before Cecil could finish, Claire charged at him.

Furious, she started hitting and

Ying him, "Liar! You're a liar! no human, you're a mo

swho

Cecil..."

Cecil was stunned!

Since when did Claire dare to hit him?

It took him a moment to react before he kicked her away,

"Damn you, how dare you hit me! Have you lost your mind?!"

The crowd at the gambling table laughed,

"Weakling, you're just like your name,

Cecil,

t even keep your w

line. She's beating you up in

everyone, ha!"

Cecil, unable to save face, angrily grabbed a chair and slammed it on Claire's head,

"Wench, you've crossed the line!"

Claire's head bled from the impact, blood streaming down her face.

Little Maria White screamed in terror, but nobody cared or tried to comfort her.

Chapter 1103

Claire was knocked senseless, dazed for what felt like an eternity.

Once she gathered her wits, she scrambled back to her feet and charged at Cecil, eyes blazing, neck strained as she shouted,

"You think you're tough? Then finish me off! Do it! If you don't, you're nothing but a coward! Come on, kill me!"

Claire seemed unhinged, her eyes red with fury as she advanced step by step towards Cecil.

The crowd at the casino stopped laughing, their brows furrowing in concern.

Someone called out,

"Cecil, you better get her out of here. Looks like she's got a death wish. Don't let her drag us down with her!"

Cecil too noticed that Claire was not her usual self today!

With a dark look, he gritted his teeth, grabbed Claire by the arm, and headed for the exit.

Maria hurried after them, her body weak. She hadn't run far before she tripped and fell.

No one showed sympathy, no one helped her up. The little girl, trembling, picked herself up and continued to chase after her parents.

But she hadn't gone far before she fell again, this time hurting her knee badly.

Cradling her mouth, she whimpered, "Daddy, Mommy..."

No one responded; she could only try to stand up on her own, but she couldn't muster the strength.

Someone shouted from outside,

"Cecil, your daughter's still here! She's fallen and can't get up. You better come back and help her!"

Cecil stormed back, cursing under his breath,

"Dealing with you two is a curse. I must have sinned in a past life, damn it!"

He picked up Maria like an eagle snatching a chick, devoid of any fatherly demeanor.

Seeing the pain on Maria's face didn't bother him in the slightest.

People say a father's love is as high as a mountain, but some mountains are just mirages!

Once home and the door shut behind them, Cecil slapped Maria across the face.

He knew just how to manipulate Claire!

Claire was stoic, accustomed to the beatings over the years, numb to the pain.

Even if it killed her, she wouldn't speak unless she wanted to.

But harming Maria would get a reaction out of her.

Maria, terrified and in pain after her father's harsh slaps, cried, "Mommy, mommy..."

Claire, heartbroken, rushed to protect her daughter,

"You can't hit Maria! If you want to hit someone, hit me, but not Maria!"

Cecil, teeth clenched in rage,

"If you want me to stop, then tell me

come into you today?! If you c , I'll end you both tot

There was definitely something off with Claire's behavior today.

Cecil then walked into the kitchen, grabbed a kitchen knife, and threw it on the table,

"I've been too soft on you, letting you embarrass me at the casino! If you don't give me a reason today,

swear I'll chop up this vers

Claire, horrified at the sight of the gleaming knife, held Maria tightly, her eyes wide with fear.

Maria curled up in her mother's embrace, too scared to even cry.

Claire, protective and furious, confronted him,

"Why did you lie to me?! Our son,

he's not dead, why did you tell me he died at birth?! You bastard! You

must have sold him! For money,

you'd sell your own son, you're no human!"

Cecil, catching the gist of her accusation, was shocked, "You saw our son?"

Claire glared at him in silence.

Cecil frowned, silent for a moment before reaching out to grab Maria.

He tried to pull Maria away from Claire's embrace!

Maria, terrified, screamed, clinging tightly to Claire,

"Mommy save me, mommy, mommy..."

Claire's eyes filled with bloodshot rage as she clutched her daughter tighter,

"Let go of Maria! You beast! Let her go! Ah, ah..."

Unable to shake Cecil off, Claire bit down on his hand with all her might.

Cecil yelped in pain and released Maria, glancing at the bite marks on his hand, then slapped Claire hard,

"You dare bite me! I swear I'll send you and your daughter to heaven today!"

Chapter 1104

Cecil reached for the kitchen knife with a swift motion.

The blade glimmered menacingly, reflecting a cold light that flashed into Maria's eyes. "Ah-"

Terrified, Maria screamed and fainted on the spot.

Claire's pupils dilated in shock.

"Maria! Maria! Oh my, Maria, wake up, please don't scare me, Maria, Maria!"

Cecil showed no concern for his daughter, brandishing the knife at Claire threateningly.

"Listen here, I'm running out of patience. I'll ask you one last time, have you seen our son?"

"Cecil, our daughter has fainted, please, she's fainted. Help our daughter, please, take her to the hospital." "Answer my question first! If you're not straight with me, we're going nowhere, and I'll let her lie right here!" Claire was petrified.

"I saw him, I did. I saw him at the hospital... Oh, Cecil..."

Cecil frowned, a flash of panic crossing his eyes, remembering that it was he who...

"Why did he come back? Did he reach out to you?"

Claire quickly shook her head.

"No, he didn't look for me. He doesn't even know me! He's living a good life, his foster parents clearly adore him. Cecil, let's not disturb him. We don't have the means to take care of him, he's better off with them!

Cecil, let's get Maria to a doctor, please, let's take her to the hospital..."

So the son's foster parents weren't out to cause trouble?

Cecil's anxiety eased.

Narrowing his eyes, he pondered for a moment, a gleam of cunning shining through.

"Are you sure that's our son?"

"Absolutely, I'm a hundred percent sure. I even got a paternity test done."

"You had the money for a paternity test, you..."

Cecil was about to explode in anger but then paused, a thought striking him.

"The foster parents, they're wealthy?"

"Yes, they are. They're living much better than us. Our son hasn't been mistreated."

Cecil's eyes narrowed further, glancing at the unconscious Maria.

"I don't have the money for her

an

treatment right now, but I've got idea to get some. If you really want

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to save her, you'll do as I say

"Anything, just to save Maria, I'll do anything."

"Take her to the hospital, to your son."

Claire was stunned. "What... what are you planning?"

Cecil, growing impatient, retorted, "Do you want to save your daughter or not? If you do, then listen to me!"

Claire looked down at her unconscious daughter, biting her lip in silence.

All she could do was cry.

An hour later, Claire appeared at the doorstep of Blossom Blythe's hospital room, holding her daughter.

She didn't know where Elysia and

had gone, nor did she

recognize Blossom, but she

knew

Blossom knew them. Con

belongs to

Claire knelt at the door, weeping.

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"Please, save my daughter, I beg you, save her. She's the sister of the child you saw today, for his sake,

please save her, oh POV

Blossom and Hollis were taken aback.

Putting everything else aside, they immediately called a doctor to attend to Maria.

After Maria was rushed to the emergency room, Hollis asked her,

"The child you mentioned, is he the one who visited our room this morning?"

"Yes, he... his name seems to be Emmett. I heard that beautiful woman call him Emmett."

"You are Emmett's..."

"I'm his mother, his biological mother. I carried him for ten months!"

Blossom and Hollis exchanged a look of astonishment. Blossom quickly stepped aside to call Elysia.

"Elysia, you need to come to the hospital. Emmett's biological mother has shown up!"

Chapter 1105

Elysia and Tarquin rushed into the hospital, their hearts pounding, only to find out that Maria was still fighting for her life in the emergency room. Claire was a wreck, sitting on the cold, sterile floor outside the emergency room, sobbing uncontrollably.

Hollis and Blossom stood by, brows furrowed, offering no words of comfort, their faces etched with concern and frustration.

As Elysia stepped out of the elevator with Tarquin by her side, the sight of Claire stopped her in her tracks. She trembled, rooted to the spot near the elevator, her heart racing with fear.

She hadn't done anything wrong!

She hadn't wronged this woman in any way!

Emmett wasn't stolen; he was found and taken in by her!

For over five years, she had poured all her love into raising Emmett, giving him every ounce of maternal affection she could muster.

She was guilt-free, facing this woman with nothing to hide!

In fact, this woman should be grateful for the life-saving care and love she had provided Emmett!

Yet, at this moment, fear engulfed her.

She feared that this woman would take Emmett away from her!

She couldn't bear the thought of parting with Emmett.

But the decision wasn't hers to make!

In front of this woman, she felt like a mistress facing the rightful wife.

She was the foster mother; this woman was the birth mother!

The custody of Emmett was in this woman's hands, and she felt powerless to fight or even argue for it!

This feeling of being overwhelmed and helpless made it hard for her to breathe.

It also stirred fear in her; she was afraid of this woman, she didn't want to face her, she wanted to escape!

She even began to regret bringing Emmett to Silver City!

Emmett might not have been her biological child, but she had raised him from a baby!

The mere thought that Emmett could be taken away by this woman was unbearable, pushing her to the brink of collapse.

Tarquin, understanding her turmoil, wrapped an arm around her shoulders, offering his comfort.

"Elysia!"

Blossom hurried over.

Seeing Elysia's red, tear-stained eyes, Blossom immediately felt a surge of empathy.

She knew the depth of Elysia's

feelings for Emmett and understood

what the sudden reappearance of

Emmett's biological mother meant for her.

Blossom, frowning, lowered her voice to say,

"She came with a DNA test report, saying if we doubted her claim, we could get Emmett tested any time.

She said she was desperate, that

she had no money for her daughter's medical treatment and couldn't bear to watch her daughter die. That's why she came to us.

She hopes we can help her daughter, but she didn't mention taking Emmett away."

Before Blossom could finish, Claire suddenly threw herself at Elysia's feet!

With a thud, she knelt down, tears streaming down her face,

"I know I shouldn't have come to you, but I had no other choice. If I don't get my daughter to the hospital, she will die!

But I don't have the money, I... I know you're wealthy, and this amount means nothing to you Please, for Emmett's sake, save her. She is Emmett's real sister, please.... please help us..."

Claire begged, her forehead banging against the floor repeatedly, making a resounding thud with each contact!

Elysia, already in a state of panic, froze, unable to react as she looked down at Claire.

Blossom, frowning, bent down to help Claire up, saying irritably,

"Talk properly, don't do this!"

It wasn't that she was biased against Claire, but there was a way to ask for help, and this wasn't it.

Before Elysia had arrived, Claire had already made quite the scene, pleading for her and her daughter's life.

Chapter 1106

It was like this, relentless pleading, almost as if she'd drop dead right there if they didn't step in to help.

It was an unsettling feeling, like being strong-armed with guilt!

As if not helping her was a personal attack!

And her daughter was already rushed into the ER, plus they had just forked over a hefty \$20,000 for the admission fees. Wasn't that helping?

Yet, she continued to beg relentlessly. What more did she want?!

Shouldn't she be grateful?!

Moreover, Blossom noticed this woman had a talent for tears, from the moment she appeared, she hadn't stopped crying!

Understanding her daughter was sick, they sympathized, but this was a hospital after all.

Her endless wailing could disturb others.

They tried to console her for a long time, to no avail.

Even the doctors had tried to calm her down multiple times, but she wouldn't listen.

It seemed crying was all she knew how to do.

Blossom couldn't help but dislike this kind of behavior...

Elysia was utterly baffled, her brain just now catching up, allowing her to think clearly.

She could never just stand by and watch someone die, especially when the little girl was genuinely sick, she knew that.

If there was a way to help, she would.

Elysia first inquired about the little girl's condition, "She was fine this morning, how did she suddenly become so ill?"

Claire avoided eye contact, refusing to admit it was Cecil's fright that caused it,

"I...I'm not sure."

"What about her father?"

Claire looked even more distressed, "He's too busy, he can't make it for now."

Blossom frowned, interrupting,

"Her daughter is this sick and he can't make it?! What could be more important?!"

Any normal father would rush to the hospital at the news of his daughter's critical condition.

Too busy? What does that even mean!

What could be more important than your child?!

Claire remained silent, her head hung low, not answering Blossom's question.

Elysia mustered the courage to ask,

"You know Emmett is your child, why didn't you acknowledge him immediately? And why did you want us to leave Silver City?"

Claire looked up at her, eyes red, lips quivering as if she had been dealt a great injustice.

The next moment, she burst into tears again,

"I can't, I want to, but I can't support

him! I'm not a good mother, I can't

give him happiness, staying with me

would only make him sob sob

sob..."

Hearing this, Blossom quickly asked,

"So, you mean, you never planned to claim Emmett back, you just wanted us to help your daughter?"

"...Yes."

Claire nodded with difficulty, visibly distressed.

Blossom's eyes sparkled with a

-

moment of realization - people are inherently selfish, and she was naturally more concerned about her

sisters.

This woman not wanting to claim Emmett back was good news for Elysia!

Blossom turned to look at Elysia.

Elysia was staring at Claire in shock, clearly not expecting her to give up on Emmett so easily!

Claire then collapsed to the floor, sobbing uncontrollably, her cries echoing down the hallway.

Blossom realized no amount of consoling would help, so she pulled Elysia back to their room, leaving the rest to Tarquin to handle.

"Staying there is pointless, nobody

can calm that woman down. Let's

wait for her daughter to come out of the ER before we talk to her again."

Elysia, coming back from the shock, took a deep breath.

Claire not wanting to reclaim Emmett was beyond her wildest expectations! Part of her felt sorry for Claire, yet she couldn't help but feel a sense of relief!

Chapter 1107

Back in the hospital room, Blossom comforted her, "Elysia, don't stress yourself out. It's a relief she's not trying to take Emmett back. Her situation... well, it's not one that could make Emmett happy. If Emmett went back with them, he'd definitely suffer."

Their home situation wasn't the best, and Emmett's mom seemed a bit off.

Hollis added, "If they don't stir up trouble, then the authorities won't get involved. Emmett can stay with you without any issues. Try not to worry too much. By the way, does Emmett know about this?"

Elysia shook her head, "Not yet."

"Let's keep it that way."

After all, Emmett's birth family was a complicated topic.

If Emmett found out, he'd surely worry about his birth mother.

That would put him in a tough spot.

If he went back to Claire, he'd have to leave Elysia. But if he chose to let go of Claire, he'd struggle with guilt.

Better to keep the little guy in the dark for now. When he's older, they could tell him.

For a child, growing up happy and healthy is what matters most.

Elysia nodded. She knew she'd have to tell Emmett about his origins someday, just not now.

But what scared her was the thought that Emmett's biological parents might beat her to it and tell him themselves!

Even though things were looking up, Elysia couldn't shake off her unease.

Two hours later, Tarquin arrived.

Elysia immediately asked, "How did it go?"

"Emmett's birth mother was clear. She just wants to save her daughter and isn't looking to take Emmett back. The little girl's out of the ICU now, and she's stable, but the doctors say she has a congenital disease that can't be cured."

Elysia felt a weight lift off her shoulders, but she couldn't quite celebrate.

First, because of Emmett's sister.

The poor girl had a congenital disease and was born into a struggling family.

She couldn't even get the basic nutrition she needed, let alone any happiness. It was truly sad.

Second, because of Claire.

The fact that Claire could force them out of Silver City and resist acknowledging Emmett showed her love for him.

Regardless of what kind of person

she was, from a mother's

perspective, finally seeing her son but not being able to recognize him, and having to push him away, was cruel.

"Let's find a way to help that little girl as much as we can."

Helping the little girl would also be a way to help Claire.

It would be their way of thanking her for her sacrifice.

Tarquin nodded, "Once we've settled Emmett's situation, I'll donate some money to help the girl live a

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worry-free life for as long as she's with us."

"Yeah! What about Emmett's father? Did you see him? What's his stance?"

For Emmett's case to be truly resolved, not only his birth mother but also his father needed to agree not to reclaim Emmett.

At the mention of Emmett's father, Tarquin clenched his jaw, "He hasn't shown up yet."

"What? He hasn't come to the hospital yet?"

"Yeah."

Elysia frowned. His daughter was nearly lost, and the father didn't even come to the hospital to check on her?

And with Claire knowing about Emmett's existence, was he unaware?

He must know. So why didn't he care?

Something felt off to Elysia.

"I'm going to visit Emmett's sister and have another chat with his mom."

"Alright, I'll come with you."

"No need, I'll go alone. Can you look into Emmett's father, see what he's up to, why he hasn't visited his daughter in the hospital?" Tarquin's lips twitched, hesitating.

He had already looked into Cecil and could sum him up in two words: deadbeat!

But Cecil was still Emmett's biological father, and Tarquin didn't want to say too much just yet. Saying more would only worry Elysia.

She was already struggling with the

thought of being separated from Emmett, if Emmett's biological family were warm and loving, it

might have been a little easier for her

Chapter 1108

If Claire found out about her family's situation now, she'd be worried sick!

After hesitating for a moment, Tarquin decided to keep Cecil's information to himself.

"Alright, I'll look into it and let you know what I find."

"Okay."

Elysia said goodbye to Blossom and Hollis and headed to the pediatric ward.

Inside the room, Maria was awake.

Claire sat by the bed, her eyes red as she gently caressed her daughter's face, whispering softly, "Maria, you nearly gave mommy a heart attack. If anything happened to you, mommy wouldn't want to go on. I'm so sorry, Maria. It's mommy's fault for not being able to protect you or take care of you properly."

The little girl, with an IV needle in one hand, reached up with her other hand to gently wipe away Claire's tears, "Don't cry, mommy. It's not your fault." Claire's voice choked up, "Mommy won't cry. Are you in pain, Maria?"

The little girl, wise beyond her years, shook her head, "No pain. Are you, mommy?"

"As long as you're not in pain, mommy's fine."

Maria blinked up at Claire, "Mommy, can't we leave daddy?"

Claire froze, then her smile faded and her brows furrowed, "No!"

Maria, sensing her mother's displeasure, bit her lip and didn't dare to speak further.

Elysia walked in just in time to catch the tail end of their conversation.

Elysia was puzzled. Why would Emmett's sister want to leave her father?

They say daughters are their father's past life lovers, and the bond between father and daughter is often stronger than that between father and son. Why would she want to leave her father?

After a brief silence, Elysia knocked on the door.

and

Claire came to open it, surprised at first but then quickly inviting her in, repeatedly expressing her gratitude, "Ms. Thorne, I can't thank you enough for today. I heard from the doctor that Maria's treatment cost a lot, and it was you and your friend who took care of it. And your husband even instructed the hospital to use the best medication for Maria, and this room, it's the best the hospital has. I don't even know what to say, I..."

"You don't have to mention it," Elysia cut her off, fearing she might start crying again and they wouldn't get the chance to talk properly. Claire sniffled, "Please, have a seat. Maria, say hello."

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She pulled up a chair for Elysia, coaxing her daughter to greet their guest, then busied herself getting water and slicing fruit for Elysia.

Her every move was tinged with a sense of humility.

This humility wasn't an act; it seemed to emanate from her very being.

The little girl, lying in bed, obediently greeted, "Hello."

Elysia smiled gently at her, "Hello."

Maria didn't look much like Emmett, but when she spoke, she was as gentle and well-behaved as Emmett.

After all, they were siblings; there were bound to be similarities.

This similarity made Elysia feel even more compassionate towards her, softly offering, "How about I take your pulse?"

Maria looked towards Claire, seeking her opinion.

Claire managed a weak smile, stepping forward to tuck her daughter's hand under the blankets, "The doctor just examined her

there's no need to trouble yourself."

It was clear she was trying to divert Elysia's attention away from taking Maria's pulse. Elysia was suspicious. In the morning, Claire was grateful when she offered to take Maria's pulse.

Why was she refusing now?

Elysia didn't show her suspicion, took the glass of water but didn't drink, "Sit down, let's talk, about Emmett."

Chapter 1109

Claire fumbled with her words, "He... he was taken by traffickers."

Elysia didn't think much of it, "Does Emmett's father know about this?"

Claire quickly shook her head, "He doesn't know."

"You didn't tell him?"

"No."

"Why wouldn't you tell him something this big?"

"He... he's always wanted a son. If he found out about Emmett, he would never let Emmett leave with you guys, so I kept quiet."

Elysia was skeptical, "..."

Claire continued, "Please, take my advice. While Emmett's father is still in the dark, take Emmett and leave!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes! Just... before you go, could you leave me some money?"

Claire knew she was in the wrong. After saying her piece, she quickly lowered her head, unable to meet Elysia's eyes.

She was asking for money from the people who saved her son's life and had been taking care of him for years without offering anything in return. Wasn't this just like selling her son?

But she couldn't not ask for it. She was too scared not to, because it was Cecil who had demanded it.

If she didn't ask, Cecil would lash out at her daughter!

Cecil would also forcibly keep Emmett, not letting him leave!

Their family was toxic; Emmett staying would only bring him misery.

So, she had to ask for the money. With it, she could protect her daughter and ensure her son could leave safely.

Worried Elysia might refuse, Claire quickly explained her reason for asking,

"My son will be leaving with you, and I can't lose my daughter too. I need this money to pay for my daughter's medical treatment. I... I... hope you can help me..."

She finished speaking and again lowered her head, fidgeting with her hands, looking very uneasy.

Elysia frowned at her, knowing she would offer help regardless.

Tarquin had already mentioned donating a sum of money to ensure Maria could live a worry-free life. And since Claire was Emmett's biological mother, helping her was also a way of honoring Emmett.

It just never occurred to her that Claire would outright ask for it...

Seeing Elysia not responding, Claire hurriedly added,

"I don't need much, just... just ten thousand will do. Rest assured, with this ten thousand, you can peacefully take Emmett with you, and I promise not to disturb your lives again."

Elysia was silent.

Ten thousand wasn't a small amount, but it wasn't much for them either.

For Emmett and Maria, she was willing to pay.

And what they planned to donate was much more than that amount.

Elysia pulled out a wad of cash from her pocket,

"We came in a hurry, didn't prepare in advance. This is a little something from me and my friend, take it and buy some good food for Maria."

"I'll deposit a sum into Maria's hospital account later, taking care of her future needs."

"Next time you come for Maria's

treatment, just use that account

You won't have to worry about not having money for her treatment anymore."

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Depositing money into the hospital account was Tarquin's idea.

After digging into Cecil's background, he concluded that giving cash or transferring money would just end up being gambled away by Cecil. Depositing into the hospital was the safest option.

As for Claire, they would give her an additional sum as a way of showing filial piety for Emmett.

Upon hearing she wouldn't have to worry about her daughter's medical bills anymore, Claire was overjoyed!

Tears in her eyes, she knelt before Elysia, thanking them profusely,

"Thank you, thank you. What goes around comes around. In my next life, I'll do anything to repay you! You are good people, truly good, sob..."

Elysia quickly helped her up,

"Maria's been malnourished for a long time. Buy her some nutritious food to help her recover."

"Of course."

After parting ways with Claire, Elysia's mood didn't improve; it became even more somber! When she handed Claire the tissue, she noticed the scars on Claire's arms.

Layers of new and old scars, the result of long-term abuse.

Perhaps Maria's sudden hospitalization wasn't an accident.

What kind of life had this mother and daughter been living?

Seeing Tarquin approach, she urgently asked,

"When you inquired about Maria's condition, did the doctor mention any injuries on her?"

His silence prompted Elysia to press further,

"Has Maria been a victim of domestic abuse?!"

Tarquin initially didn't want to tell Elysia; the more she knew, the more worried she'd be about Emmett, the more anxious she'd become.

Emmett's biological family was a topic fraught with complexities.

As Claire said, Emmett returning would only bring him suffering.

"Speak up, have they been undergoing domestic abuse?!"

Tarquin finally spoke,

"The doctor mentioned Maria had injuries likely caused by long-term

abuse, but her mother for

the

doctor from discussing it publicly."

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The doctor, fearing repercussions, informed Tarquin instead.

Elysia was shocked and couldn't understand.

Claire clearly loved Maria deeply. Why wouldn't she let others know about the abuse?

Didn't she want to seek justice for her daughter?

She must have been frequently abused herself, yet she kept silent too!

Was she a victim of abuse or was there something else at play?

Regardless, it was clear Emmett's biological family was far from normal!

Elysia grew even more anxious and unwilling to let go.

She had raised Emmett with so much effort; she couldn't let him return to a life of suffering!

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Elysia steadied her heart and continued, "Claire mentioned that Emmett's dad still has no clue about Emmett's situation. She wants us to take Emmett and leave as soon as possible the sooner, the better."

Tarquin asked, "What do you think?"

"I believe sneaking Emmett away isn't a solution."

What about next time? If Emmett's dad suddenly finds out about Emmett, he'll surely come knocking.

And if we don't clear up the issue of Claire and her daughter being harmed, she won't be at peace leaving.

If Claire didn't care about Emmett, she could easily wash her hands off the matter.

But Claire loves Emmett!

For Emmett's sake, she can't just stand by-after all, she's Emmett's biological mother!

"Emmett's dad is already aware of the situation."

"Huh?" Elysia was taken aback.

Tarquin sighed, "I've done some digging."

Elysia, trusting Tarquin implicitly, was shocked. "Then why would Claire lie?"

"It must be Cecil's doing. Whatever their plan, it ultimately revolves around money, which is why I reminded you to transfer the funds to the hospital account."

"Is Emmett's father a piece of work?"

"Yeah."

"The bruises on Maria and Claire... Did he cause them?!"

"Yeah."

Elysia's brows furrowed, her breathing grew rapid, and soon, tears started streaming down her face.

"Emmett is like my own. If his biological family was happy and welcoming, and Emmett wished to return, I would let him go."

"But under these circumstances, I can't bear to send Emmett back to suffer! I can't allow it, I... oh..."

Tarquin, feeling her pain, pulled her into an embrace again.

"He's not going back, not if you don't want him to. We won't let Emmett return."

Elysia sobbed, "But Cecil holds Emmett's custody. If he disagrees, what can we do?"

"I'll find a way. Trust me, I won't let Emmett jump into a fire pit."

"You love Emmett, and so do I. The moment Emmett called me 'Daddy,' he became my son, Tarquin's son!"

"I'll take full responsibility for him, fight tooth and nail for his future!"

"Just stay

and be there for

Emmett Leave everything to me. make sure Emmett stays by you

, as you wish."

He didn't care about blood ties; if Elysia didn't want it, nobody could force Emmett away from her!

...

Claire stood in a corner, witnessing the scene.

She had returned hoping to ask Elysia for a photo of Emmett, wanting something to remember him by.

Seeing Tarquin and Elysia together, she didn't approach hastily.

From a distance, she couldn't catch their

but she

was comforting Fuld tell

Claire's face showed no jealousy, no envy, just a gentle smile and warm memories.

Once, she and Cecil were just as loving, just as happy.

Cecil treated her well, just like Tarquin did Elysia.

Even though Cecil had changed, even resorting to violence, she didn't blame him.

Cecil hitting her... had its reasons.

The problem wasn't Cecil; the issue lay elsewhere...

Claire's thoughts turned sour, her brow furrowing.

After a moment, she took a deep breath, deciding not to interrupt.

asked

Instead, she adjusted her emotions and called Cecil, "Hey, where are you? I've finished what you me to do. I'm coming to see you."