

Hitched 1161

Chapter 1161

After what felt like an eternity, Tarquin finally broke the silence with a comforting tone, "You've got to take care of yourself first. Winona is counting on you to save her."

Ridley sank onto the couch, his face buried in his hands, tears streaming down his cheeks. He sobbed for a moment, then suddenly lifted his hand and slapped himself hard across the face, twice.

"I've failed Winona," he cried out, his voice cracking with sorrow. "I can't believe I fell for Zane's lies! I trusted him!"

"She's been in trouble for so long, and I haven't even looked for her! My poor Winona..."

"That bastard Zane! Winona was so good to him, and we, the Newsom family, treated him like one of our own. How could he do something so... so monstrous?"

"If he didn't love Winona anymore, that's fine, they could have just divorced! No one forced him to love Winona forever!"

"When they got married, I even said, if there ever comes a day when he no longer loves my daughter, I wouldn't blame him. Just return her to me safe and sound!"

"How could he... that bastard! I... I'm calling him right now!"

Overcome with emotion, Ridley fumbled for his phone, intent on confronting Zane.

Tarquin quickly intervened, "We can't alert him until we find Winona. If he senses we're onto him, he might do something drastic."

The mention of "drastic" stopped Ridley in his tracks, his face turning ashen. He hesitated, then put his phone away, nodding slowly.

"Yes, yes, you're right. We can't risk tipping him off."

Tarquin continued, "I came to you in private because I didn't want to arouse Zane's suspicion. If he's capable of this, he's likely watching your every move."

"I'd wager the Newsom family is crawling with his spies right now."

Ridley, seething with anger, struggled to catch his breath. "I trusted him too much! Thank you, Mr. Bradford, for telling me the truth. I need to find a way to save Winona."

"I've already thought of a plan for you."

Ridley was taken aback. He had assumed Tarquin's visit was solely to inform him about Winona. He hadn't anticipated that he'd already have a plan in place.

Ridley was overwhelmed with gratitude. "The Newsom family owes the Bradford family a great debt."

Tarquin smiled reassuringly, "No need to thank us. Winona is like family to us. She's my wife Elysia's closest friend, as close as sisters. Her troubles are ours."

Ridley's eyes glistened with emotion. "Thank Elysia for us! Knowing her has been a blessing for Winona!"

Both he and his wife had always liked Elysia, but they never imagined she was capable of such great influence. She was the only child of the Hawkins family, heir to Hawkins Sea-freight, and the most esteemed woman in their social circles.

Born into privilege, married into prestige, she truly was a woman of destiny.

Ridley wiped his tears, then eagerly asked, "Mr. Bradford, what's your plan to save Winona?"

Tarquin laid it out, "There are three ways Winona could come back to us." "One, she gets lucky and escapes on her own."

"Two, we gather clues, piece by piece, to find her location and rescue her."

"Three, Zane brings her back himself."

"The first option is unrealistic. It's been over a year, and she hasn't returned, so she can't do it alone."

"The second option is feasible but slow."

"I'm leaning towards the third option, getting Zane to bring her back himself."

Compared to searching aimlessly, finding a way to make Zane return her would be much faster!

Ridley was puzzled. "But Zane's already kidnapped Winona. Why would he ever bring her back?"

Tarquin gave him a knowing look, hinting at a plan yet to be revealed.

Chapter 1162

"I've got a plan, but it might be a bit rough on you."

Ridley responded without missing a beat, "No worries, no worries. As long as we can save Winona, I'd give my life for it! Just tell me what to do."

Tarquin paused for a moment before speaking again.

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By the time Tarquin got home, it was already late at night. Before he even got out of the car, his phone buzzed with a message. [Tarquin, are you still awake?]

He called back immediately, "Talk to me."

"We've scoped out the Thorne estate. There's nobody guarding it, but there is a cellar."

"But the cellar's empty. I've sent the pictures to your phone."

Tarquin glanced down, opening the pictures. The cellar looked damp and dark, exactly as Sarah had described, with heavy iron chains clinging to the walls. There was also a stainless steel bowl, crusted with dirt, as if it hadn't been used in

ages.

It seemed Winona had indeed been kept at the Thorne estate. But she'd been moved elsewhere since.

"Search the cellar thoroughly. Look for hair, anything that could be used as evidence. Bring that food bowl back."

"Got it!"

Tarquin headed upstairs to the bedroom. Elysia was still awake, her eyes full of questions. As soon as he walked in, she asked anxiously, "Any news about Winona?"

Seeing her so fragile broke his heart. He gently touched her cheek, speaking softly, "We've got leads from the Thorne estate. Winona isn't there now, but there's a cellar where she might have been held."

"I've got someone collecting DNA samples. If we find evidence that Winona was kept there, the Thornes won't be able to deny involvement."

"We can use them to trace Winona's whereabouts and hopefully make them testify against the real culprit."

Elysia frowned, "What about the Thornes? What are they saying?"

"They're tight-lipped, just like Sarah. They clam up at the mention of Zane."

"But they haven't lost their minds. Don't worry, I've got a way to make them talk."

"I visited Winona's father this evening."

Elysia's eyes widened in surprise, then her brows furrowed in concern.

"Ridley must be devastated. He loves Winona so much, and he's always treated Zane like his own son!"

To Ridley Caroline, Winona was his world, with Zane a close second. With his daughter missing and his son-in-law a suspect, Ridley's heart must be in turmoil.

Tarquin sighed quietly, "He's really upset, but don't worry too much. For Winona's sake, they'll hold on."

"You need to take care of yourself too. Be strong and healthy for when Winona comes back. We don't want her worrying about you."

Elysia nodded, her voice catching in her throat, "Yeah. Did you tell Ridley about what happened to Winona?"

"Not just that. The next part of the plan requires Ridley to play a role, so I had to talk to him first."

"Ridley needs to play a role?"

"Yes." Tarquin explained the plan.

Elysia listened, surprise and worry etched across her face, "Are you sure this will work? What if Ridley gets put in harm's way and the bad guys don't even take the bait? He's no spring chicken, and he's got his pride."

"It'll work, trust me."

After all, Zane only cares about money and power unless he's somehow innocent of this whole mess. If he's involved, he'll definitely take the bait!

Chapter 1163

The next day, the Newsom family found themselves the subject of two explosive news stories.

First, it was revealed that Ridley had been unfaithful during his marriage, and even had a secret daughter who was already in her twenties!

Second, Ridley planned to give the family heirloom to this daughter in order to acknowledge her as part of the family!

With Winona's celebrity status and ElliotElijah stirring the pot, the news about the Newsom family quickly became a hot topic on social media.

Pictures of the secret daughter started circulating online, with comments like:

#Gotta admit, the daughter looks so much like Winona, it's hard not to believe it!#

#Winona's father cheated? How's Winona supposed to handle this?!#

#This girl must be a schemer, waiting for Winona to be away to claim her inheritance!#

Then, someone leaked high-resolution photos of the Newsom family heirloom, causing quite a stir.

It was an incredibly rare gemstone. Even people with no expertise in gemstones could see it was worth a fortune. It was breathtakingly beautiful!

Experts claimed its value could surpass the entire Newsom family estate!

People rallied around Winona, expressing their outrage:

#Has Winona's father lost his mind? Such a precious thing should be saved for Winona, not an illegitimate daughter!#

#If this gemstone goes to the mistress's daughter, I'll be the first to boycott the Newsom family!#

#Count me in, I'll boycott too!#

Others flooded Winona's social media, urging her to return home:

#Winona, hurry back, your family's being robbed!#

#Winona, it's your time to shine as the rightful lady of the house! Come back and take charge!#

#Forget career for now, the gold-diggers are at your doorstep!#

Even Zane was tagged:

#Mr. Livingston, Mr. Newsom's had an affair! Contact Winona fast, or the Newsom family will be lost!#

The online uproar began to affect the Newsom family's business. By evening, Ridley issued a statement.

He admitted the daughter was an unexpected result of his past mistakes. He asked people to blame him, not the daughter, as she was innocent and had done nothing wrong.

Ridley announced plans to host a gathering to formally introduce her to the family and said that the family's assets and heirloom would be split between Winona and the daughter.

This statement only added fuel to the fire, and Ridley was harshly criticized. His image as a good husband and father was shattered, and he was labeled a scoundrel.

Moreover, his defense of the daughter seemed like defending the mistress, which infuriated people even more.

Rumors started swirling:

#If Winona goes missing, wouldn't all the assets go to the daughter?#

#If the daughter gets everything, Zane ends up with nothing. That's too unfair!#

#Zane's done so much for the Newsom family, and Mr. Newsom's being heartless!#

#He isn't a Newsom, so it's normal not to get anything. What belongs to Winona is his, but if something happens to her, he's out of luck.#

#Winona's been out of touch for over a year. What film keeps someone away that long? Could something have happened to her?#

#What about that rumored body from two months ago? Was it Winona's

manager? If so, things are getting seriously spooky!#

Inside the luxurious Number One Mansion, Elysia was worried about Ridley as she read the news online.

"Poor Ridley," she sighed.

Ridley and Caroline had been a loving couple for years, much like Clayton and Pamela, so the idea of him cheating seemed absurd. It was all part of Tarquin's plan.

Tarquin was using the Newsom family's assets and the valuable gemstone as bait.

This rare gemstone was real but wasn't actually the Newsom family's. It was on loan from Keaton, who had recently acquired it from an overseas mine and hadn't yet made it public.

Chapter 1164

He hadn't even gotten comfortable with it yet when Tarquin decided to put it to

use.

Tarquin was worried that just using the Newsom family's assets wouldn't be enough to catch the big fish.

He planned to use this exquisite gem to sweeten the bait.

Tarquin reassured Elysia, "If we've got nothing to hide, then we've got nothing to worry about. Once we find Winona, we'll clear Ridley's name and restore his honor."

"Don't worry, Mom. Mr. Newsom's sacrifices and all the trouble he's going through right now will be counted on Zane's tab!" Elysia said through gritted teeth. "Once we find Winona, we'll settle the score with him!"

Meanwhile, in an underground office near the border in a no-man's land, Zane was seated at his desk in a crisp white shirt, eyes glued to his computer and the Newsom family's trending news.

His handsome eyebrows knitted into a frown, clearly displeased. He scrolled with his mouse and clicked on the picture of the gem.

His mind wandered back to the time when he presented a set of dazzling jewelry to Elysia, and she gasped in delight, hands covering her mouth. A hint of warmth flickered in Zane's eyes.

After some hesitation, he made a call, "Is that illegitimate daughter real?"

"Not sure yet. We've collected samples and sent them to the lab. We'll have the results by tomorrow morning."

"Let me know as soon as the results come in."

"Got it."

Just as Zane hung up, a foreigner walked in. Upon spotting the gem photo on the computer screen, he exclaimed in broken English, "Wow! That's perfect! Is this yours?"

Zane narrowed his eyes, saying nothing.

"If you made a piece of jewelry out of this, women everywhere would go crazy for it! Beautiful! So beautiful!"

A smile crept onto Zane's face, "Not everyone is worthy of it. In the whole world, only she is."

"She? Your dream girl?"

Zane chuckled, "My future wife."

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The next morning, Elysia was still in bed when her phone rang. She glanced at

the caller ID and was instantly wide awake!

She quickly sat up, "Tarquin, Zane's calling!"

Tarquin leaned in to look at her phone screen. The words "Zane" flashed across it.

"Don't panic. Just do what I taught you and answer it."

Elysia took several deep breaths to calm herself, resisting the urge to yell at Zane. Until they found Winona, she had to keep her cool and play along with this jerk!

Once she felt composed enough, she picked up the call. "Hey Zane, where are you? Are you with Winona? I've been going out of my mind trying to reach you both. You need to come back; something's happened with the Newsom family!"

Zane's voice came through, raspy and tired, "I only got cell service today. I've been out here in the no-man's land searching for Winona."

"Did you find her?"

"No, she might be in trouble."

Elysia bit her lip, feigning shock, "What are you saying?!"

Zane explained, "I heard Winona came out here to film a movie, so I came looking. I searched the no-man's land for ages, nearly got lost out there, but I couldn't find her or the crew."

"After I got out, the locals told me they hadn't seen any film crew around."

"I didn't want to take any chances, so I reported it to the police here. They got in touch with Winona's crew."

"They said Winona had terminated her contract ages ago and paid a hefty breach of contract fee."

"If she ended her contract, why hasn't she come home or contacted us for over a year? I'm worried something might've happened to her."

When Zane finished speaking, there was silence on the other end of the call.

He paused for a moment, then called out, "Elysia?"

Chapter 1165

Elysia felt a lump in her throat and tears began to spill over, even though she was just putting on a show for Zane. But her tears were genuine.

She couldn't bear to hear anything about something bad happening to Winona!

Just the mention made her heart ache!

And hearing it from Zane only made it worse.

Zane wasn't surprised to hear her cry; he knew about the bond between Elysia and Winona. It just tugged at his heartstrings a little. "Don't cry just yet, the police are already looking for her."

Elysia choked back a sob and asked, "Winona's still alive, right?"

Zane paused for a moment but quickly replied, "Yes, she's definitely alive. Winona

is the main character, smart and resourceful. She wouldn't go down easily."

He assumed Elysia was just seeking comfort from him.

Elysia pressed on, "And the police will surely find Winona, right?"

"Absolutely! We have faith in them!" Zane reassured.

Standing next to Elysia, Tarquin didn't want her talking much with Zane, whom he considered a scoundrel, so he took the phone from her, taking over the call himself.

"Hello, this is Elysia's husband, Tarquin."

Zane's eyebrows furrowed at the sound of Tarquin's voice, his expression turning stormy. He collected himself before responding, "Hello, I'm Zane, Elysia's old classmate."

"I know. You're Winona's husband," Tarquin replied coolly.

Zane was momentarily speechless. Tarquin continued, his tone measured, "Did you catch the evening news?"

"Yeah, I just saw it," Zane admitted.

"Don't you think you should head back? You don't want to wait until Winona returns to find the Newsom family in shambles. That illegitimate daughter is a force to be reckoned with."

Zane was already planning to return, eager to see Elysia.

"I'll be back today," he stated.

"Good." Tarquin ended the call promptly.

Setting the phone on the bedside table, he hugged Elysia, wiping away her tears. "Don't cry. His call means he's taken the bait. That's good news."

Elysia, her eyes still red, asked, "Do you think he'll bring Winona back with him?"

"Whether he does or doesn't, as long as he returns, we have a lead. We'll find Winona, don't worry."

With the mastermind under control, finding Winona would be much easier. Once Zane set foot in Jindale City, he wouldn't be leaving anytime soon! Tarquin's phone buzzed with a message from Elijah:

[Dad, you should come over. Zane's phone has a signal. I just tracked his location!]

The little guy, not wanting to disturb Elysia, had sent a text instead of calling. Tarquin, understanding, comforted Elysia before heading over to Elijah's room. Elijah and Elliot were together, both wearing matching pajamas, bouncing with excitement.

"Dad, look, Zane's here!"

"I know. He already called your mom. He'll be back today. Is the surveillance on the Newsom estate all set up?"

"All set!"

Elijah switched the screen display, showing various locations. "This is Winona and Zane's villa, this is Mr. Newsom's residence, and this is Zane's mother's place!"

"This is the Newsom family company, here's Mr. Newsom's office, and this is Zane's office."

The screens showed clear, live feeds of each location.

"In places where cameras weren't feasible, we've planted listening devices."

Tarquin asked, "Will they be discovered?"

If Zane discovered the surveillance, he might get suspicious, putting Winona in grave danger of being silenced.

Elijah, brimming with confidence, replied, "They won't find them. I even got Uncle Gregor to help. He set all this up."

"Good." With the Patel brothers involved, taking on Zane would be a piece of cake.

The net in Jindale City was cast, waiting for Zane to walk right into it!

By evening, Zane had returned!

Elysia received the news while she was keeping Caroline company at the Newsom family estate. Her eyes locked on her phone, her heart raced, and her entire being felt electrified with adrenaline.

Chapter 1166

She was worried that the Newsom family was being watched by Zane, so she didn't dare to call and ask. Instead, Elysia slipped into the bathroom and sent a quick text to Tarquin.

"Has Winona come back yet?"

Tarquin replied almost instantly, "No, he came back alone."

Elysia felt a pang of disappointment but understood. If Zane had brought Winona back with him, it would have raised suspicions. Zane was smart enough to avoid that.

Tarquin sent another message to reassure her, "Don't worry, he's back. Winona will be too, soon enough. When you see him, don't lose your head. I'm on my way to the Newsom family."

"Okay!"

Elysia took a deep breath, put her phone away, and stepped out of the bathroom to continue keeping Caroline company.

Ridley was out, spending time with a supposed "illegitimate daughter" to make the act convincing. It was all a facade-Tamsin, Baby's bodyguard, was playing the part. Emmett had even given her a makeover to resemble Winona.

Before Zane's return, a DNA test had been faked to show that Tamsin and Ridley were father and daughter. Tarquin had tampered with the results.

Elliot and Evan were also at the Newsom family house, acting as Elysia's little bodyguards. They had come with her.

More than half an hour later, Zane arrived.

Even though Elysia had mentally prepared herself, seeing Zane made her seethe with anger. She wanted to storm over and slap him hard, grab him by the collar, and demand answers.

Where had he hidden Winona? Why was he treating her so cruelly? The Newsom family and Winona had been nothing but kind to him. How could he do something so despicable? Did he even have a heart?

Elliot, noticing the cold glint in his eyes when he looked at Zane, quietly tugged on Elysia's hand to calm her down, signaling her to stay collected. They had to play their parts for now. Once Winona was safe, they could deal with Zane.

Elysia took her son's cue, inhaling deeply and turning her gaze away from Zane. Out of sight, out of mind-or at least, out of rage.

Zane walked in wearing a dark gray tracksuit and a black backpack, his clothes and shoes dusted with dirt. He looked like he'd been through a long journey- exhausted, dejected, and utterly worn out.

The moment he saw Elysia, he noticed her anger. He didn't realize it was hatred; he assumed she was mad at him for failing to take care of Winona.

Caroline, upon seeing Zane, was overwhelmed with emotion. "You... you..."

With a dull thud, Zane dropped to his knees in front of Caroline. "I'm sorry, Mom. I failed to take care of Winona. I failed to meet your expectations. I've let down both you and Dad."

Caroline burst into tears, her sobs filled with anguish. The perpetrator who harmed her daughter was right there, performing for her, and she had to restrain herself from exposing him or demanding answers about her daughter's whereabouts.

Elysia empathized with Caroline's turmoil, her own heart aching. "Caroline."

Zane remained on his knees, his focus solely on Elysia. "I'm sorry. I was incompetent and couldn't bring her back."

Elysia gritted her teeth and glared at Zane. She knew she had to keep up the act, but she couldn't bring herself to utter the words "I don't blame you."

Watching his expression of remorse only fueled her anger. She stormed over to him, and with a swift movement, slapped him hard across the face-twice.

The room fell silent. Everyone was stunned.

Zane was utterly shocked.

Chapter 1167

Elysia stood beside Zane, her voice trembling with anger as she bit out her words.

"When you and Winona got together, you stood right in front of everyone and declared you'd take care of her, that if anything ever happened to Winona, we'd hold you accountable!"

"And now, Winona's been missing for over a year, and you just realized it?!"

"Today you text me saying that you were deceived all this time too, huh!"

"You claim to love her so much, yet you couldn't even tell if the woman on the other side of the camera was your own wife?!"

"How exactly do you love her, huh?"

Zane faced Elysia's wrath, his expression filled with guilt and pain. "I'm sorry."

Elysia's voice rose to a near shout, "I don't want to hear your apologies. I just want to know how you loved her! Speak up!"

"You jerk! Give us Winona back! You should never have been with her in the first place!"

"Winona loved you so dearly, she treated you so well!"

"Such a wonderful person Winona was, sob... You jerk! Zane, you're not even human! Sob..."

Elysia's anger boiled over, and she broke down into tears.

Her sorrow was palpable, and Zane felt a pang of regret, just as he was about to reach out to console her.

Suddenly, a forceful blow sent him sprawling backwards!

Zane staggered, landing hard on the ground with a groan of pain.

Tarquin stepped in, shielding Elysia, shooting Zane a look that could kill!

Zane's brows knitted in frustration!

But when Tarquin turned back to Elysia, his demeanor shifted entirely, his gaze soft and comforting.

"Don't cry, sweetheart. I'm here now."

Elysia buried her face in his chest, sobbing harder, "He's not even human, sob..."

Tarquin echoed, "Right, Zane's not even human!"

"He's a jerk, sob..."

"Right, Zane's a jerk!"

"He's a total scumbag, sob..."

"Right, Zane's a total scumbag!"

Zane: "..."

Just then, Zane's mother, Priscilla, arrived, having heard her son was back.

Seeing Zane on the ground, she rushed over with a gasp, "Oh my goodness, why are you sitting on the floor? What happened to your face? Who hit you?!"

Elysia glared at the older woman with reddened eyes!

She had done her homework and knew this woman was aware of Zane and Sarah's little secret!

Not only did she not oppose their actions, but she also helped keep it hidden from Winona!

She treated Sarah far better than she ever treated Winona!

Despite Winona's kindness, this woman spread vicious rumors about her!

Rumors that Winona was infertile and unfaithful were all her doing!

Priscilla pointed accusingly at Caroline, shouting,

"Was it you who hit him? What gives you the right to hit my son? What does your daughter going missing have to do with him?!"

"I haven't even called you out on the real issue-maybe your daughter ran off with some other guy?!"

"Always dressing up like a floozy, flirting with every man she sees, shameless!"

"I'm telling you, if your daughter dares to make a fool of my son, she'll never set foot in the Livingston family again! We'll cut her loose!"

Zane, eyes wide, got up and yelled at Caroline, "Mom! What nonsense are you spewing?!"

The older woman was like a wildcat,

"Am I wrong? She's been gone this long, it's obvious she's run off with some other

man! For all we know, she could have a love child by now!"

"You..." Zane was so infuriated he couldn't even form words.

Priscilla was a blunt force; she'd moved to the city from the countryside only after Zane and Winona got together.

With her improved living conditions, she thought herself a queen bee!

Not able to control Winona, her daughter-in-law, she resorted to slander!

"I'm sorry, Mom, I'm sorry, Elysia, my mom she..."

Zane was still apologizing when Caroline suddenly lost it, shrieking and charging forward.

Chapter 1168

Caroline had grabbed a fistful of Priscilla's hair, and they were tangled up on the floor in a full-blown brawl.

Zane stood frozen for a moment before rushing in to break it up.

The two little ones, witnessing the chaos, hurried over too.

Earlier, Elysia had slapped Zane twice and given him a good talking-to, venting some of her pent-up frustration. Seeing her cry so bitterly tugged at the heartstrings of the little ones. Now was their chance to even the score!

In the midst of the chaos, Evan's boots came down hard on Zane's toes, almost crushing them!

Priscilla's ankle got twisted, and she howled in pain, sitting on the floor in tears.

Elysia, helping Caroline to the couch, turned to Zane with fury in her eyes, "Zane, your mother is just too much!"

Zane, flustered, scrambled to apologize, "I'm sorry, it's all because they disagreed about having a baby. That's why she said those things. I promise I'll have a stern word with her when we get back!"

Elysia ignored him and turned her gaze to Priscilla, "I was the one who hit your son. If you're angry, take it out on me. Caroline had nothing to do with it!"

"You? How dare you-"

"Mom, enough! Do you want to drive me to my grave?!"

Seeing Zane genuinely angry made Priscilla fall silent.

"Elysia, my mom, she "

"You don't need to explain, Zane. You know how much Winona means to me. If anything happens to her, I'll hold a grudge against you forever!"

Zane looked troubled but didn't argue. He figured Elysia's anger was because, as Winona's husband, he was responsible.

"Don't worry," he vowed, "I'll do whatever it takes to find Winona and bring her back!"

With that, Zane knelt in front of Caroline, offering a deep apology, then left with Priscilla.

Inside, everyone was still seething, but Zane's final promise was like a balm to their souls.

Outside, as soon as they got into the car, Zane exploded, "Who told you to go to the Newsom family and cause a scene?!"

"I... I saw online that the Newsom family fortune was going to that illegitimate girl. There was nothing left for you."

"So, I figured, why not just cut the ties? No point in being nice if we're not getting anything. And you could finally ditch Winona and find someone new-a decent girl. I can't stand that Winona!"

"She's always flaunting herself, and she won't even give you a child! Isn't that what women are for? If she won't have kids, what's the point of keeping her around? Divorce her already!"

Zane was furious, "Divorce? Do you think this is the Middle Ages?!"

"Stay out of my business with Winona! Don't you dare go to the Newsom family again without my permission!"

"And you'd better think about how to apologize to the Newsom family! If you don't, I'll cut off your allowance and send you back to the countryside!"

After giving Priscilla a piece of his mind, Zane closed his eyes and rubbed his temples, feeling the weight of the chaos around him.

Everything was a mess, nothing was going as planned!

He'd thought that Caroline and Elysia wouldn't know about his connection to Winona's situation. He figured they'd see him as a pillar of support.

After all, with Winona gone, he was the only one who could stand against the illegitimate daughter for the family fortune!

But instead...

Elysia had slapped him, and her eyes were filled with disappointment!

His mother had insulted Winona in front of her, making things even worse!

The image of Elysia crying in Tarquin's arms made his heart ache!

Zane clenched his jaw, his face twisted in rage.

So what if Tarquin was the richest man around? So what if he had all the power? He still couldn't find Winona!

Only Zane could fulfill Elysia's wish.

Only he could help her find Winona.

With Winona under his control, he was sure Elysia would have no choice but to rely on him.

As a plan formed in his mind, a sly, calculating look crossed Zane's face...

Chapter 1169

That evening, Elysia brought Caroline back to Number One Mansion. Caroline only had one daughter, Winona, and now that Winona was in trouble, Ridley was too busy playing house with that "illegitimate daughter" to be there for her. Elysia couldn't bear the thought of Caroline being alone in that house under Zane's

watchful eye.

Bringing her to Number One Mansion meant she had company and could speak freely without the fear of being overheard.

As soon as they got home, Elysia reassured her, "Caroline, you don't have to worry about Zane spying on you here. In my house, you can say whatever you want, and he won't be able to hear a thing."

Tears welled up in Caroline's eyes, "Thank you, Elysia. Thank you so much."

"Please, there's no need to thank me. Winona is like a sister to me, and her family is my family. Consider this place your home, truly."

Caroline, overwhelmed with emotion, hugged Elysia tightly, sobbing, "I regret it so much. I should never have let Winona marry that beast Zane!"

"If I'd known how cruel he was, I would never have let him into the Newsom family! I'm so regretful, so regretful..."

Finally, she could let out all the words she had been holding inside. Elysia understood her pain, holding Caroline like a daughter comforting her mother, gently patting her back.

Elysia was determined to help Caroline because Winona had always been so good to her.

Once Caroline had let it all out, Elysia said, "Good things happen to good people, and bad things catch up with bad ones. It may take time, but justice will be served."

"Winona is a good person, and she will come back safe. Zane is not, and his time will come."

Elliot and Evan quickly joined in to comfort Caroline as well, "Mrs. Newsom, don't cry. Winona will definitely come back."

"Please take care of yourself, Mrs. Newsom. You need to stay healthy and strong for Winona's return."

Caroline looked at the two youngsters fondly, "Such good kids, really good kids!"

"Mrs. Newsom, let us take you to meet our grandma and the little ones. They'll be so glad to see you."

"Alright, let's go."

Elliot and Evan each took one of Caroline's hands and led her toward the main house. Elysia and Tarquin followed closely behind.

Elysia's eyes were red from holding back tears. Caroline's sadness had touched her deeply. Tarquin took her hand and squeezed it reassuringly.

"Blossom is almost in Jindale City," Tarquin informed her. "I've arranged for someone to pick her up and bring her straight here. She'll stay with us for the time being."

Blossom had been frantic with worry after hearing about Winona and had immediately booked a flight back. She was due to arrive tonight.

Knowing how close the two women were, Tarquin had asked Heath to prepare a guest room for her. With both Caroline and Blossom staying here, Elysia could be with them, talk, and find some comfort in their company.

"Thank you, Tarquin," Elysia said, truly grateful. Winona's troubles had nothing to do with him, yet he was going out of his way to help, all because of her.

Tarquin playfully pinched her cheek, not missing a beat, "I'll remember this 'thank you' and collect on it later."

He gave her a meaningful look, then took her hand and led her towards the main house.

Elysia was left a bit speechless but followed along.

An hour later, Blossom arrived. As soon as she saw Elysia and Caroline, tears started to flow.

"I can't believe he'd hurt Winona! He put on such a good act! And to think I used to praise him for treating her well! He's worse than scum!"

"Caroline, please don't be sad. Once we get Winona back, Elysia and I will make sure he pays!"

Caroline hugged Blossom, both of them crying, while Elysia sat beside them, joining in their tears. It was as if the two daughters were comforting their mother.

Chapter 1170

Pamela and the little ones were all tearing up.

Winona was the kind of woman everyone admired: smart, brave, and fiercely protective. Back in college, she was always the one standing up for Blossom and Elysia whenever they needed it. And now, she was in trouble. The worst part? The perpetrator was none other than her husband, Zane!

Blossom and Elysia were a storm of emotions, torn between anger and desperation, itching to confront Zane and make him pay for what he did. The air in the room was thick with tension, but at least they didn't have to hold back here. This was a space where they could speak freely, curse Zane's name as much as they wanted, without having to bottle up their feelings.

That evening, Elysia and Blossom stayed with Caroline and Pamela in the living room, chatting to keep their minds off the situation. Meanwhile, Tarquin and Elliot Elijah headed upstairs to the study.

On the computer screen was footage of Zane under surveillance. At the moment, he was with Ridley.

Elijah noted, "After he dropped his mom off, he went straight to Mr. Newsom to apologize and offer comfort. He even inquired about the situation with the illegitimate daughter. Mr. Newsom was more composed than Mrs. Newsom and said he'd discuss it further once Winona returns. He didn't criticize Zane, only showed concern for Winona."

Tarquin watched the screen closely as Zane spoke to Ridley, "Winona's family means everything to her. She'll be surprised by a new sister, but for your sake, she'll come around. And, as for Mom being upset, that's understandable. When Winona's back, she'll talk to her."

"As for Winona," Zane continued, "don't worry too much. We trust the police, and we trust that Winona will be back."

Ridley, knowing Zane was the culprit, couldn't contradict him and simply bowed his head, silently crying. Zane comforted him a bit longer, saying, "Dad, I'm heading to the station to check for any news about Winona."

"Alright, if you hear anything, you must tell me immediately."

"Of course, take care of yourself."

After leaving Ridley, Zane went straight to the police station. No matter who he was with, or even when he was alone, he looked the part of the worried husband, seemingly consumed with concern for Winona.

Tarquin had a realization: Zane was able to deceive everyone because he was an outstanding actor. Anyone who didn't know his true nature would think he was a good man through and through.

Later that night, as they were getting ready for bed, Elysia turned to Tarquin, "I want to invite Zane over tomorrow."

"Hmm?" Tarquin was surprised.

Elysia mumbled her plan quietly, and the more Tarquin listened, the more complex his expression became. When she finished explaining, he didn't immediately respond, just watched her with furrowed brows.

Elysia added, "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. He won't suspect a thing."

Tarquin was fully aware of her expertise, but some things were so vile he didn't want her to have to deal with them. He was afraid she would be disgusted by what she might uncover.

Unable to read his thoughts, Elysia pressed on, "I don't want to wait any longer. Every day we don't find Winona is another day we're on edge, playing this charade with Zane. Who knows how long until he reveals where Winona is?! Plus, what if he's not even interested in the Newsom family's assets or that precious heirloom?"

Tarquin sighed, pulling Elysia closer, "Alright, we'll do it your way."

He knew Zane was definitely interested in the Newsom family's assets and the heirloom. If he weren't, he wouldn't have come back at all.