

Hitched 1181

Chapter 1181

After making several phone calls, Tarquin returned to Elysia, trying to calm her down.

"Don't worry, Zane won't get away, and Winona won't be silenced. I've got it all under control."

Elysia had just hung up from a call with Zane, looking visibly anxious.

"What should I do now? Should I take the money and find Zane?" she asked.

"No need," Tarquin replied. "Wait for him to call you. Then you can meet him at the hospital."

Elysia was puzzled. "The hospital?"

"Yes, Elliot, Evan, you two will accompany your mom to the hospital. Elijah, you contact your great-uncle..."

Tarquin finished giving instructions just as Zane's call came through.

Zane's voice was heavy. "Elysia, I'm stuck for now."

Elysia glanced at Tarquin instinctively, and he gave her a reassuring nod.

She steadied herself and asked, "What happened to you?"

"I'm injured, heading to the hospital now."

"What? How did that happen?" she asked, surprised.

"I was just leaving the Newsom family when one of Winona's male fans stopped me. He thought I wasn't taking good care of Winona and attacked me with a knife."

Elysia bit her lip, secretly applauding the fan's actions.

"Which hospital are you at? I'll come over."

"Benevolent Hospital."

"Got it. I'm on my way."

After hanging up, Elysia quickly asked Tarquin, "Was that fan your doing?"

"Yeah, setting up a fan to attack him won't make him suspicious," Tarquin said with a smirk.

If Zane planned to run off with Elysia and billions of dollars, breaking his leg would ensure he couldn't go anywhere!

Elysia gave Tarquin a mental high-five for his plan. Brilliant!

Following Tarquin's instructions, Elysia took Elliot and Evan to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Tarquin made another call to Keaton, who was lamenting over his lost precious stones.

As soon as the call connected, Keaton started griping, "You abandon your friends for your wife, Tarquin. I'm telling you, I'm really upset..."

"Zane's watching me. I can't move freely. I need you to do something for me," Tarquin interrupted.

"Where to?" Keaton asked, slightly resigned.

"Go rescue Winona. I'll send you the location. Wait for my signal before you act."

Keaton sighed internally. Sacrificing his gems and now sending him on a dangerous mission? Tarquin was using his friends to fix his marital woes.

Nevertheless, Keaton got up and started getting dressed.

At the hospital, Zane lay on a bed with an IV drip. His leg had been treated, but he was clearly in discomfort.

Elysia glanced at his injured leg, her mood lifting slightly. She walked over to the bed, feigning concern.

"How could you be so careless?" she asked.

Zane's expression was grim. "A man suddenly collapsed in front of my car. I thought he was sick. As soon as I got out, he revealed it was a ruse, and he stabbed my ankle."

"Is it serious? What did the doctor say?" Elysia inquired, trying to mask her satisfaction.

"The knife went right through the ankle. It's going to take a while to heal." Elysia thought to herself, Well done!

She frowned and asked, "What about Winona? What are we going to do?"

"Is the money ready?" Zane asked.

"Tarquin is working on it. He promised it would be ready today, but... maybe Tarquin and I could help rescue Winona?"

Zane shook his head firmly. "Absolutely not. The kidnappers know Mr. Bradford is not someone to mess with. They specifically warned against involving him, or they'll harm her."

Elliot chimed in, "But my dad is the best! If he helps, he can definitely rescue Winona."

Chapter 1182

Evan chimed in, his little voice full of conviction, "My dad's the best in the whole world. Only he can save Winona. He should totally sneak in and help out."

Elysia nodded thoughtfully. "What about letting Tarquin give it a shot?"

"You're stuck here with that leg injury, and you can't leave the hospital anytime soon. As long as Winona's with those kidnappers, I can't relax," she explained.

"Besides, the kids might have a point. Tarquin's got skills. If anyone can rescue Winona, it's him."

Zane wasn't thrilled to hear this. In fact, he was downright displeased.

He wanted to tell Elysia that he was the one and only person capable of saving Winona. Depending on Tarquin was useless!

Winona was under his control, and there was no way Tarquin could find her.

Taking a deep breath, Zane said, "For Winona's safety, it's best if Mr. Bradford stays out of this. Trust me, Elysia, I'll get her back. You can count on me!"

"But you're hurt! How are you going to pull it off?" Elliot asked, his face the picture of innocence.

Evan furrowed his little brow and added, "Mom's been so worried about Winona she's barely eating or sleeping. If we wait for your leg to heal, she might end up getting sick."

Zane was at a loss for words. He glanced over at Elysia, noticing the exhaustion etched on her face.

After a moment of hesitation, he said, "The kidnappers are only in contact with me. I'll keep negotiating and find a way to bring Winona back as soon as possible."

Elysia nodded, "Alright, I'll head home to sort out the money situation. If they get in touch again, call me. Winona's safety has to be our top priority."

"Got it."

Elysia left with Elliot and Evan. At the door, Evan looked up at her and insisted, "Mommy, I still think you should ask Daddy for help. He's way better than this Mr. Zane guy!"

Zane clenched his jaw as they walked out, leaving him in a stormy silence.

Once they were gone, his expression turned cold and calculating. He picked up his phone and made a call, "The plan's changed. I'll be bringing her back soon."

"What's up? Did you get the money and the jewels?"

"The cash isn't ready yet. I've got another plan. Show her my photos and videos again..."

At the same time, over at Number One Mansion, Tarquin was glued to the computer screen, watching Elijah's tiny fingers dance across the keyboard. Suddenly, Elijah's eyes lit up.

"I've tracked it down. It's exactly where Dad said it would be!"

Tarquin exhaled, relieved, and called Keaton. "Get ready. We're moving in."

"Is she definitely in there?" Keaton asked.

"Yeah! Just be careful. We have to make sure Winona stays safe."

After getting the lead from Blake about the one-eyed man, Tarquin had been on the hunt ever since. Once they tracked down the one-eyed guy, they managed to pinpoint the location. But Tarquin wasn't taking any chances; he had Elliot and Evan rile up Zane on purpose.

Knowing Zane's personality, he'd be rattled and would contact his accomplices. Sure enough...

Using Zane's phone signal, Elijah traced the location, corroborating the intel Tarquin had already gathered. It was a perfect match. Winona had to be there.

"Don't underestimate them. Zane's got ties to some shady folks, so the ones guarding Winona won't be pushovers."

"Got it. See you later!"

As night fell, the tension in the air was palpable...

Chapter 1183

At ten o'clock at night, Tarquin's phone buzzed with urgency. It was Keaton

calling!

Everyone in the room turned their eyes to Tarquin, their hearts pounding in anticipation.

Tarquin answered, "How did it go?"

"We got her out, but she's not quite herself. Seems like she's been through a lot."

"Get her to the hospital right away! Benjamin Lawson is waiting there, I've made all the arrangements."

"Alright, see you at the hospital!"

Ending the call, Tarquin turned to Elysia, "Winona's safe!"

Elysia's eyes welled up with tears, and she let out a shaky breath, her body trembling with relief.

"To the hospital! Hurry!"

When the group arrived at the hospital, Benjamin had just completed a thorough examination of Winona.

Winona was curled up in the corner of the hospital room, looking scared and vulnerable. A young, pretty nurse was gently trying to calm her down.

Caroline was the first to burst into the room. Seeing her daughter, her heart shattered.

"Winona!"

At the sound of her mother's voice, Winona's head snapped up, her eyes wide with disbelief as she looked at Caroline.

Even in her current state, with her frail and weary appearance, Winona's striking beauty was evident. Her allure was different from Elysia's gentle and graceful charm; Winona had a commanding presence, the kind of leading lady you'd find in a bestselling romance novel, with features so sharp they seemed to demand respect.

Caroline rushed over and enveloped her in a hug.

"Winona! My baby girl, oh thank God we found you! You've been through so much, oh my darling..."

Winona's recognition of Caroline brought tears to her eyes, "Mom-"

That one word, "Mom," was enough to bring Caroline and everyone else around to tears.

Keaton watched her intently, a mix of emotions playing across his face. He let out a long, silent breath and stepped out of the room.

Tarquin joined him in the hallway, "What happened to your face?"

"She scratched me."

"Huh?"

"When I went to rescue her, she thought I was the bad guy. She clawed at me until I told her Elysia sent me. Well, she's been through a lot, so I'll let it slide."

Keaton muttered to himself, "Of all places to scratch, why the face? How am I supposed to find a girlfriend now?"

Tarquin chuckled, "Once Winona's better, have her help you out. She's a star, after all. She knows plenty of beautiful people."

"Good point. She owes me at least ten introductions to make up for this!"

Tarquin rolled his eyes playfully.

Keaton glanced around, lowering his voice, "You have to admit, Zane's something else. Marries into wealth and still isn't satisfied, almost tears the whole family apart!"

"Thank goodness Winona's Elysia's best friend. Otherwise, if Winona had died, her parents wouldn't have lasted long either. The Newsom family would have become the Livingston family."

"Luck wasn't on his side when he ran into you. With anyone else, this would've been much harder to handle."

"Do we have any evidence to tie Zane to Winona's kidnapping?" Keaton asked, his voice serious.

Tarquin's voice was calm, "No direct evidence for that, but we've got bigger fish to fry. He's been involved with Burmalia, trafficking people, laundering money."

"A real wolf in sheep's clothing! What's your next move?"

Tarquin was about to respond when Zane appeared, rushing towards them with a limp, leaning heavily on a crutch as he stumbled out of the elevator.

Tarquin and Keaton's eyes narrowed in unison, taking in the sight.

Zane froze when he saw them, a flicker of malice crossing his face for just a moment.

Winona being rescued was a twist he never saw coming.

Chapter 1184

Though he hadn't pieced the whole puzzle together yet, there was no doubt in his mind that Tarquin had something to do with it!

The reason he dared to show up was because he knew there wasn't a shred of evidence linking him to Winona's troubles.

Keaton squinted his eyes, a mischievous glint in them, as he greeted him,

"Mr. Livingston, stop daydreaming and get in there to see your wife. It's embarrassing not to be able to take care of your own spouse!"

Zane furrowed his brow slightly but entered the hospital room.

Inside, Elysia and Blossom were earnestly trying to jog Winona's memory. "Winona, it's me, Blossom! Do you really not remember me and Elysia?!" Winona looked at them cautiously, her brow furrowed in concentration.

Zane wasn't surprised in the least; he'd long since realized that Winona had forgotten many things and people.

Apart from her parents and himself, she remembered no one.

Zane's eyes welled up with emotion, "Winona!"

Everyone turned to look at him in unison.

The moment Winona saw him, she became visibly agitated,

"Zane! Cheating! Boo hoo... cheating, cheating..."

Zane froze, shocked to his core!

He had confirmed time and again that Winona had forgotten the reason behind their last argument.

So why did she remember him cheating?

Elysia's heart skipped a beat-did Winona know about Zane's indiscretion?

Tarquin and Keaton exchanged surprised glances as well. Winona wasn't supposed to know.

If she did, Zane wouldn't have been so eager to bring her back!

The room was eerily silent, save for Winona's sobs...

Suddenly, Winona ran over and clung to Zane,

"Dad... he... he cheated during the marriage, boo hoo hoo..."

Everyone: "?!"

So Winona was talking about Ridley? Not Zane?

Relief washed over Zane, his heart finally at ease. He held Winona tightly, guiding her through the confusion,

"Last year, when you suddenly quit the show, was it because you found out Dad cheated?"

Winona nodded vigorously,

"Yes! I had just signed with the cast when I found out. I was furious, too upset to act! How could he do such a thing? He betrayed Mom!"

With Zane, Winona seemed more herself.

Zane, trying to maintain a grave demeanor, eyes red from unshed tears,

"You silly girl. Why didn't you tell me? We could've confronted Dad together."

"I didn't want to. I felt so ashamed."

"But I'm not a stranger, silly. You scared Mom and me half to death! I'm just glad you're back. You're safe now."

Winona nestled against him, tears flowing freely.

Elysia watched the seemingly loving couple and then turned her gaze toward Tarquin.

The news about the affair had been Tarquin's latest maneuver; how could Winona have known about it a year ago?

Was she pretending? Did she actually know everything?

If she did, why hadn't she accused Zane when he first walked in? Why pretend not to recognize her and Blossom?

Elysia couldn't wrap her head around it and looked to Tarquin for answers.

Tarquin gave her a reassuring look, signaling her to stay calm.

Ridley rushed in, looking distraught, and Winona's emotions flared up,

"...I don't want to see you! Go away! Leave!"

Ridley's eyes were filled with tears, "Winona, it's me, your father!"

"Leave, I don't want to see you!"

Winona shouted, burying her face in Zane's chest, refusing to spare Ridley another glance.

It was clear that her animosity towards Ridley was real and intense.

It seemed like she truly believed the affair was the cause of all her troubles. Tarquin and Keaton escorted Ridley out, and Elysia followed with a frown. Winona's outburst about Ridley's affair didn't add up.

Chapter 1185

Outside the hospital room, Elysia whispered, "You guys have figured it out, right? Ridley didn't actually cheat, so why would Winona break her contract over him? Is Winona just acting, or has Zane brainwashed her?"

Tarquin replied, "Doesn't seem like brainwashing. When Winona accused Ridley of cheating, Zane looked genuinely surprised. If he had brainwashed her, he wouldn't have been so thrown off."

"You mean Winona's faking it?" Elysia asked.

"That's right," Tarquin nodded.

"Then why didn't she just come clean when she was safe before Zane showed up?"

Keaton chimed in, "Because of that pretty nurse in the room."

"Huh?" Elysia was taken aback.

Keaton narrowed his eyes with a knowing grin, "That nurse is one of Zane's people. There's definitely something going on between them, and I bet Winona knows it too. With her there, Winona probably didn't dare to be honest."

Elysia was even more shocked, "How do you know?"

"The way they looked at each other was practically sparking. I've got an eye for these things."

Elysia was speechless.

Keaton was confident, "If you don't believe me, ask Tarquin to dig into it. I'd bet my bottom dollar they're having an affair!"

Elysia frowned; she wasn't interested in Zane's messy love life. What she really wanted was to get to the bottom of Winona's situation.

Tarquin, sensing her thoughts, suggested, "If you want to know what's really going on, you should ask Winona directly."

"And how am I supposed to do that? Zane's here now, and he's not leaving her side."

"That's easy," Tarquin smirked. "You distract him, and I'll send someone to get the scoop."

The night deepened, and before they knew it, it was past two in the morning. Zane suggested everyone head home to rest, insisting he would stay and look after Winona.

Tarquin and Keaton took Elliot and Evan downstairs first. Ridley and Caroline were reluctant to leave, but Elysia gave them a subtle nod, and Blossom gently led them away.

Zane turned to Elysia, "You should head home too. It's late. Come back to see Winona tomorrow."

Elysia glanced at Winona resting on the bed, her brow furrowed. "Zane, come here. I have something to ask you."

Zane hesitated. He didn't want to leave Winona's side—not because he cared, but because he needed to keep watch. She'd just returned, and he couldn't risk any surprises.

Seeing him hesitate, Elysia pressed, "What's the matter?"

After a moment's pause, Zane followed her, "Nothing."

They didn't stray far, remaining within sight of the room's entrance. Zane wanted to ensure he could see if anyone entered the room.

Evan, taking an unconventional route, climbed through a window into the room.

"Shh—" The little guy gestured for silence as soon as he landed, aiming it at Winona.

Evan was the perfect choice for this covert mission; nimble and quick, a window climb was child's play. Plus, Winona would recognize him as Elysia's son, someone she could trust. And if she truly had amnesia, even if Zane caught him, Evan could play it off as sneaking in to surprise Blossom.

Zane never paid much attention to the kids; after all, they were just children.

Winona was startled to see Evan, sitting up quickly and eyeing him warily.

Evan hurried over to her, "Winona, don't be scared. My mom's got Zane out of the way! We've taken care of the cameras, so he won't know I'm here."

"Here, look at this. Mom wrote it."

"Mom wants to know, are you really suffering from amnesia, or is there another reason you're pretending?"

Winona quickly took the note, recognizing Elysia's handwriting instantly. Her eyes welled up, and she glanced toward the door. Lowering her voice, she said, "Tell your mom, it's all Zane's doing. That bastard! I caught him cheating and wanted a divorce, so he set me up!"

Chapter 1186

Evan looked surprised, "Wow, you already know all this, Mom? Well, Blossom's definitely awake now."

"I'm wide awake! I just couldn't let on because Zane's probably got cameras in the room, and that nurse is totally on his side!"

Before Winona had her accident, she had started suspecting Zane was up to something shady, so she hired a private investigator to dig up the dirt on him.

The results were shocking!

Not only did she discover Zane's affair with Sarah, but also a whole string of other women he was involved with!

Zane was cheating during their marriage and scheming to take over the Newsom family!

After being rescued today, she hid in a corner, trembling. Even when she saw her mom and Elysia, she didn't dare tell the truth because of that nurse!

She knew full well the nurse was in Zane's pocket!

She was terrified that after all her effort to escape, she'd end up locked away by Zane again!

Zane had wronged her and the Newsom family, and she was determined to get revenge!

So, she faked partial amnesia, swallowing her pride to make Zane drop his guard.

Her plan was to survive first, then gather evidence to strike back!

Today, she intentionally mentioned her father's infidelity to nudge Elysia into sensing something was off.

Thankfully, Elysia caught on!

Evan noticed Winona's tears and gently wiped them away.

"Don't cry, Winona. Don't worry, we'll help Blossom get her revenge! Dad says the time isn't right yet, but once it is, we'll nab that scoundrel Zane and make things right for Blossom!"

Winona's heart ached as she hugged Evan tightly, crying quietly.

"Evan, that nurse is coming over. You need to go," Elijah's voice suddenly came through Evan's earpiece.

Evan wasted no time and quickly said to Winona, "Winona, I have to leave now. The bad woman is coming."

Winona hastily wiped her tears, "Go on, tell your mom not to worry about me. I haven't lost my memory or anything."

"Okay, Blossom, see you later."

"Yeah, be careful."

As Evan was about to climb out the window, Winona remembered she was on a high floor, "Evan, you..."

"Don't worry, Blossom, I can fly."

Evan disappeared, and Winona

rushed

the window in fright, on

the little guy had leaped into

the empty hospital room

next

door.

She let out a sigh of relief, amazed at his bravery.

"Ms. Newsom, what are you doing by the window?" came the nurse's voice from behind.

Winona's eyes narrowed as she steeled herself, grabbing a vase from the windowsill and hurling it at the nurse's head.

The vase struck the nurse, leaving a bloody gash on her forehead.

The nurse shrieked, clutching her head in panic, "Ah, ah—"

Winona, with her hair disheveled and

still in her hospital gown, held a

vel

menacing expression as she advanced towards the nurs

Realizing the danger, the woman tried to flee.

But Winona grabbed her hair and tossed her back into the room!

Standing over the nurse, she

mercilessly slapped her several times before launching into a flurry

lunches and kicks!

Scumbag men deserve punishment, and so do the women who enable them!

What kind of man with any decency cheats on his wife?

And what kind of woman gets involved with a married man?!

Not one of them was worth a dime!

Fate hadn't ended Winona for a reason-it was giving her a chance to get even!

She wouldn't let any of them off the hook!

"Help, help, somebody help..." the woman cried out in terror.

Hearing the screams, Zane rushed towards the room, with Elysia following close behind.

As they burst into the room, they were taken aback by the sight, "!"

Winona was straddling the nurse, who was now a battered mess, her face bruised and bleeding.

Seeing Zane, the nurse tried to speak, but Winona let out a wail, rushing over to Zane and clinging to him.

"Darling, help me, this horrible woman tried to hurt me!"

Chapter 1187

Even Zane was baffled, and Elysia was just as confused.

"What on earth happened here?" she wondered aloud, looking at the scene unfolding before her.

The nurse was on the verge of tears, her eyes shimmering with emotion as she faced Zane. "I didn't mean any harm," she protested, her voice quivering. "I saw her daydreaming by the window and just asked if she was okay. Next thing I know, she's throwing a vase at me!"

With a sniffle, she continued, "She pulled my hair, hit me, kicked me... I didn't even fight back!"

Winona, however, was in full meltdown mode. "She's a villain! She tried to push me out of the window! Honey, do something! She wanted to kill me!" Her voice was high-pitched and urgent.

The nurse shook her head vigorously, "I didn't! I swear I didn't!"

"You did! You did! You want me gone!" Winona shot back, her voice rising with each word.

The back-and-forth continued until Winona turned to Zane with an ultimatum. "Honey, who do you believe? Me or her?"

Zane hesitated, leaving Winona feeling more distraught. "You don't love me anymore!" she sobbed, pushing him away to cry in the corner, hugging her knees tightly.

Elysia gave Zane a stern look. "Winona's been through a lot. She's bound to be fragile. She needs comforting."

Caught off guard and eager to explain himself, Zane was cut off as Elysia moved to console Winona.

Frustrated, Zane turned to the nurse, who was still looking for some sort of validation. "I really didn't mean any harm!" she insisted.

Zane sighed, offering her a tight-lipped smile. "She's been through a lot. Maybe she's paranoid. Go get your wounds looked at. We'll cover your medical expenses and offer some compensation."

Shooting him a sympathetic, if reluctant, look, the nurse limped away, leaving Zane to deal with the fallout.

Zane approached Winona, hoping to calm her down-and maybe appease Elysia in the process. "Winona, I believe you. How could I not? The nurse is gone now, and I'm here to protect you."

Winona looked up, her expression softening as she fell into his arms, still sniffing.

Just then, Tarquin arrived with Elliot and Evan in tow, a knowing look on his face. "What happened here?"

Elysia turned to him, silently seeking reassurance.

Tarquin nodded subtly, signaling all was under control. Elysia's eyes lit up briefly, a glimmer of hope

crossing her face. Winona was

acting!

She shot a furtive glance at Winona, trying to contain her relief.

Winona, however, stayed hidden in Zane's embrace, murmuring, "Honey, I'm tired.

I want to rest."

"Of course. Let's get you to bed," Zane agreed.

He turned to Elysia. "You guys should head home. I'll stay here with her."

Elysia hesitated, but it was clear Winona wanted her to leave.

Evan, ever the little diplomat, tugged at her hand. "Mom, don't worry. Mr. Zane will take good care of Winona."

The little guy gave Elysia a reassuring nod.

Elysia exhaled, feeling a bit more at ease. "Are you sure you can handle this?"

"Absolutely. I won't leave her side. I'll take care of her, protect her."

"Alright then," Elysia said, nodding. "Just be patient with her. She's been through a lot. She needs kindness."

"I understand. You go get some rest," Zane assured her.

With one last look at Winona, Elysia reluctantly turned and left the room.

As soon as they were out, Evan

pipled up,. "Mom, don't worry. Dad's

got security all over the place.

left White here. There's no way that jerk Zane can hurt Winona!

Evan had taken extra precautions; even the scarred tough guy was sticking around. If Zane dared

hurt his Blossom, the big guy was ready to step in!

Chapter 1188

"Break his hand if he dares to lay a finger on her!"

"Break his leg if he dares to step out of line!"

Elliot chimed in, "Zane's no fool. Now that Winona's back, he'll play the role of the perfect husband. He wouldn't dare harm her."

Tarquin spoke softly, "Don't worry, I've got everything under control. If you want to protect Winona, no one will lay a finger on her."

Elysia felt a wave of relief wash over her. She ruffled Elliot and Evan's hair and then reached out to take Tarquin's hand, feeling a surge of gratitude.

Before leaving the hospital, Elysia checked in with the doctor about Winona's test results. Some would only be available the next day, but from what they currently had, Winona's overall health was surprisingly good. There were scars, yes, but no internal injuries. The only concern was her stomach issues, which were quite severe, but manageable over time.

It was remarkable that Winona still had the strength to fight, given the psychological turmoil she had endured. On the drive home, Elysia asked Tarquin, "Where did you guys find Winona?"

Since Winona's rescue, Elysia's focus had been solely on her, and she hadn't had the chance to ask until now. Tarquin frowned slightly, understanding the anger this news would incite, and gently clasped her hand in his.

"At a woman named Lyra's place."

"Lyra?" Elysia's eyes widened. "Winona's old assistant?"

"Yeah, she's turned into a con artist, involved in human trafficking with some overseas rings. She scouts for pretty girls here, lures them with various pretexts and sends them off to some place like Burmalia for profit."

"She's got a modeling school as a cover to find targets and keep suspicions at bay. Her private villa was actually a hub for her trafficking operations. After Winona was moved from the Thorne family, she was kept in Lyra's basement."

Elysia's brows furrowed in anger.

She didn't know Lyra well but remembered her. Back in college, Winona had started acting and Lyra was her first assistant. Despite her poor background, Lyra was pretty, hardworking, and an excellent talker. Winona had seen potential in her and offered a salary double the market rate after her internship, hoping to give Lyra a chance and help with her financial struggles.

But it turned out Lyra was untrustworthy, sneaking around and stealing makeup, jewelry, and other items from the set and fellow actresses. Winona had no tolerance

for dishonesty and prophet

fired

her, albeit with dignity, never revealing the real reasons to the public.

But Lyra didn't take it well. Instead, she started spreading malicious rumors about Winona, accusing her of wild nightlife and even cruelty to animals. Elysia remembered a particularly shocking photo of a mangled stray cat that Lyra claimed

Winona had killed, sparking an

online uproar.

Initially, Winona ignored her, but as the rumors escalated, she sued Lyra, who

subsequently vanished from Winona's life.

Elysia asked, "And she's involved with Zane?"

"Yeah, she was one of Zane's flings," Tarquin replied.

Chapter 1189

Elysia was fuming. "They're all a bunch of lowlifes! Where is she now?"

"She's been taken into police custody."

Elysia clenched her teeth and pressed further, "Why did she keep Winona locked up instead of sending her to Burmalia?"

"Winona's a special case. She's a big-time celebrity, and moving her across borders isn't as easy as with an ordinary girl. Plus, she got lucky. A major player from Burmalia took a fancy to her and offered a fortune. That's what kept her safe from those scumbags."

Elysia felt a mix of anger and relief. Thank goodness it hadn't gone further. With Winona's personality, revenge wouldn't be enough for her to live on afterward.

"Is Zane involved with this trafficking ring too?"

"He's even more deeply involved. Lyra is just small-time compared to him."

Elysia was taken aback. "What?!"

Tarquin explained, "Zane is the head honcho of this criminal network. He's in direct contact with the top dogs in Burmalia."

Elysia's breath quickened. She knew Zane was a jerk, but she never imagined he was this dangerous! And to be mixed up with Burmalia, of all places! It's known as a hellhole, synonymous with danger, evil, and darkness.

Tarquin tried to soothe her, "Don't worry. Winona is safe now. I can ensure her safety and keep Zane in check. We're holding off on him for now to give Winona a chance to get her own back."

Zane had put her through hell, and Winona would definitely want revenge. Just tossing him in jail for human trafficking wouldn't cut it for her.

Elysia nodded in agreement. "She deserves to give him hell! Do we have any evidence to prove Zane had Winona under lock and key?"

"Nothing concrete yet."

Blake had mentioned a video, but Tarquin had seen it too, and it only implicated Sarah. It wasn't enough to nail Zane. Sarah's involvement could be a weak link; Zane probably hadn't wiped out the Thorne family to keep her from being exposed. If she was outed, it would inevitably lead back to him.

"Don't worry, Zane won't escape justice! With Winona safe, it's Zane who should be scared now, not you. You can rest easy."

Evan turned and reassured her, "Mom, don't worry. We'll make sure Winona gets her revenge."

Elysia let out a long breath, nodding. "Yeah!"

Meanwhile, at the hospital...

A psychologist was conducting a mental evaluation on Winona. As soon as Elysia and Tarquin left, Zane swooped in with another psychologist from a different hospital. He was anxious about Winona's condition and wanted a second opinion.

The psychologist spent quite some time talking with Winona before pulling Zane aside.

"Her situation is pretty bleak. She's suffering from severe psychological trauma and is convinced people are out to get her. Her state is unpredictable; she swings between paranoia and coherence. If she's well cared for, she might recover. If not, she could deteriorate and become completely unhinged."

Zane whispered, "Could she be faking it?"

The psychologist shook his head firmly. "There's no chance of that."

Zane exhaled a quiet sigh of relief. "..."

What he didn't know was that Tarquin had already put things in motion. No matter how many psychologists Zane brought in, they'd all come to the same conclusion: Winona was deeply paranoid.

If Winona wanted to play this game, Tarquin was more than happy to help create the perfect conditions for her, courtesy of Elysia, until she decided to drop the act.

After dismissing the psychologist, Zane composed himself and entered the room. For him, Winona being out of her mind was a blessing in disguise. The crazier she got, the less she'd remember, and the safer he would be.

Chapter 1190

However-

As soon as Zane stepped into the hospital room, something hit him hard on the head!

A forceful blow struck the back of his skull, making him feel like his head was

about to split open.

Grimacing in pain, Zane spun around to see what had happened.

Winona stood there, clutching a ceramic figurine, peering at him from behind the door with wide, wary eyes.

Rubbing the back of his head, Zane asked with a twisted expression, "Winona, what was that for? Why'd you hit me?"

Winona blinked, still half-dazed. "Zane? Oh my goodness, I thought you were a burglar or something! Are you okay, honey?"

She rushed over, dropping the figurine, which landed squarely on Zane's foot with a thud that might as well have been a sledgehammer's strike. Zane winced, hopping on one foot in agony.

Winona gasped, "Oh no, Zane, are you alright? Doctor, doctor..."

"I'm fine, don't shout!" Zane grimaced through clenched teeth.

Tears welled up in Winona's eyes. "I'm so sorry, honey. I didn't mean to hurt you. Did I hurt you bad?"

Zane took a deep breath, trying to swallow his irritation. "It's okay, really. Don't worry. No tears, alright?"

Despite the throbbing pain, Zane managed to coax Winona back to bed, gently soothing her until she seemed to drift off to sleep.

He lay beside her, careful not to disturb her, knowing he had a mountain of issues waiting once she was asleep. Winona had just been brought back, and he still had no idea what the situation was out there.

Winona nestled against him, her breathing steady and calm. Zane waited patiently, thinking she was finally asleep. Just as he started to ease his arm away

Winona's eyes snapped open!

She stared intently at Zane, her expression unreadable.

Zane froze, and before he could react, Winona kicked him right off the bed!

In an instant, she leaped from the bed, landing squarely on his stomach!

"Oof..." Zane groaned as the wind was knocked out of him, feeling like his gut might burst.

Clutching his stomach, Zane curled up, trying to protect himself from further assault.

Winona's eyes flashed with a cold glint as she zeroed in on his injured ankle. She began kicking it mercilessly, each blow more forceful than the last.

"Villain! You think you can hurt me while I sleep? I'll teach you a lesson!" she shouted.

Zane was on the verge of crying out in pain, "Winona, stop! I'm not a villain! I'm your husband! Winona-"

But Winona seemed oblivious, her kicks relentless. "You think you can bully me? I'll show you!"

Zane, writhing in agony, felt helpless and could only call for help. "Somebody, help! Help!"

Hearing the commotion, the on-duty doctors and nurses rushed in, startled by the chaotic scene.

They quickly pulled Winona away and helped Zane to his feet.

Seeing the crowd, Winona appeared terrified once more. She broke free from the nurse's grasp and darted back to Zane, wrapping her arms tightly around his waist, trembling against him.

"Honey, I'm scared," she whimpered. "They're trying to hurt me, I'm scared..."

Zane gritted his teeth, rage boiling inside him. He wanted to push her away, to let his anger fly!

His foot was throbbing, especially his ankle, which just hours ago had been stabbed by one of her fans. The wound barely had time to start healing before being pummeled again.

He was sure it had split open.

This woman! He was furious enough to want to end it all right there!

But reason held him back.

He had to endure this. For Elysia, he had to keep his cool.

He wanted Elysia to fall for him, to willingly choose to be with him.

So, he had to maintain his good-guy facade, especially in front of Elysia.

As for Winona, well, her time would come.