

Hitched 1301

Chapter 1301

"They spent years-decades, really-pouring their blood, sweat, and tears into this project. No way would they let some test subject just waltz in and steal it."

"And if my parents really did manage to make off with the Gen-8 virus, why would the people behind it go straight to killing them, instead of capturing them and squeezing every last secret out of them?"

"Plus, if they'd already cracked the code for Gen-8, even if someone stole it, the research team should be able to recreate it, right? So why is it that their new Gen- 8 is so flawed?"

Tracey's face was grave, her tone serious.

"There are definitely a lot of suspicious things about your parents and the real Gen-8 virus. But that last question, I think, has a pretty clear answer."

"It's been thirty-five years, and they still haven't managed to reproduce the real Gen-8. If anything, their research has gone backwards. That suggests something went wrong with the team itself."

"Think about it-these scientists have been at this since Gen-1, then from Gen-7 to the real Gen-8. All those years add up. Most of the original researchers would be either retired, dead, or—well, maybe even taken out by someone with an agenda."

"If all the crucial data was lost along the way, the whole thing would have to be rebuilt from scratch, with a new team. And if those newcomers aren't up to snuff, then of course their Gen-8 would be a pale shadow of the real thing."

Tarquin Bradford nodded. That explanation made sense, at least. But there were still so many strange coincidences between his parents and the real Gen-8 virus. Maybe they died because of the virus-or maybe for some other reason.

The mysterious figure who kept tracking him—maybe they were looking for information about Gen-8, or samples, or... something else entirely.

"Tarquin, there are thousands of deadly viruses out there," Tracey said suddenly, her voice softer now. "Do you know why I care so much about this one?"

Tarquin looked at her, shaking his head. "No. Why?"

ful

Tracey sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose You see the news. Wars breaking out all over-innocent people caught in the crossfire, lives shattered, kids growing up with nothing but fear and pain. It's right? When you see what's happening in places like Gaza, when you see the hopelessness in those children's eyes, it breaks your heart. But I can tell you, with absolute certainty, if the real Gen-8 virus ever gets released here, what we'll face will make their suffering look merciful by comparison."

Tarquin's eyes widened. He'd never seen Tracey so serious.

"Bioweapons are a hell of a lot scarier than guns or bombs," she said, voice low

and urgent. "And this virus... it's something else entirely."

She leaned in, whispering to Tarquin. Whatever she told him made his pupils

dilate in shock-he was stunned, more than he'd ever been in his life.

Tracey clenched her jaw, her fists tight.

"We all know peace is what humanity needs. But there's always someone-some country, some power, some group-who refuses to let the world live in peace!"

"They'll sacrifice anything-other people, their own children's futures-just to

satisfy their own greed or twisted desires."

"And then there are those who get their kicks from misery. The more others suffer, the happier they are."

"And don't even get me started on those jealous nations-soon as they see someone else getting stronger their first instinct isn't to improve themselves, but to tear the other guy down. Is that not the dumbest, most vicious thing you can imagine?"

Her hands were balled into fists, her voice trembling with rage.

"I had to fake my own death and disappear because of people like them!"

Chapter 1302

Tracey's face twisted in anger as she spoke, her voice trembling with outrage.

"They want me gone. I'm just an obstacle to them and their bioweapons. If I'm out of the way, nothing stands between them and wiping out my people-my home!"

She slammed her fist on the counter, her eyes blazing. "Let them keep dreaming! As long as I'm breathing, I won't let them succeed!"

"Just because I've gone off the grid doesn't mean I'm powerless!"

"As long as I'm alive, as long as I can fight, they'll never use those horrors to hurt my people or destroy my country!"

Her hands shook as her fury grew, and she started coughing from the emotion. Tarquin snapped out of his shock and rushed to refill her mug with steaming tea.

"Grandma, please. Take it easy."

Tracey took several deep breaths, but the anger didn't leave her eyes. The memories of what those people had done to her-how they'd tried to ruin her- still burned hot inside her.

"I'm a doctor, Tarquin. People call me the heir to Hippocrates. I love my country, and I love my people!"

"If I had my way, I'd spend every day in the hospital or the lab, trying to make a difference for everyone."

"But those bastards wouldn't allow it! They thought I was too good at what I do, that I got in their way, so they tried to get rid of me. Cowards! Snakes! Absolute scum!"

Right now, Tracey looked just like the die-hard fans you see at a football match— finding out their favorite team got cheated out of a win. She was fired up, filled with righteous fury.

Tarquin's brow furrowed as he listened, his face darkening.

He'd always known there were other countries who looked at theirs with envy, but he hadn't realized just how far they'd go-how ruthless they could be.

It was more twisted, more evil than he'd imagined.

When Tracey finally calmed down a little, Tarquin asked quietly, "Was it really that bad? You and Grandpa, faking your deaths and going into hiding-was it all forced on you?"

Tracey neither nodded nor shook her head.

"There's always pressure. But there's also duty."

Then, she changed the subject.

"Tarquin, Elysia may have come from Benny's side of the family, but s got a heart of gold. She raised

your kids to be just like

love

her-big-hearted and loyal

"You're her husband, and you're their dad. Don't let them down! Be the man they're proud of."

"You have to stand tall for your country, no matter what. No matter what happens,

you stick with your family and your homeland, always!"

Tarquin nodded solemnly. "I understand."

Tracey's eyes glittered with resolve.

"Our country's been around for thousands of years. What are those schemers compared to us? Just a bunch of petty crooks dreaming they can take us all down-not a chance!"

Tarquin's mind spun as he remembered what Tracey had whispered to him earlier.

"Grandma, if the real eighth-generation virus is released... could you beat it?"

Tracey's gaze turned steely.

"I cracked the first seven, didn't I? I've got a lead on the eighth. But I haven't seen the real thing yet, so I can't finish my research."

"Tarquin, I think your parents are mixed up in this eighth-generation business."

"Think, son. Try to find whatever they've got! If we can figure out how to defeat it, those creeps won't have anything left to threaten us with!"

"Let them break their backs trying to invent something new. The moment they think they've got us cornered we'll slam the antidote down on the table and wipe the smug grins off their faces. Can you imagine how satisfying that'll be?"

Tarquin grinned fiercely, "I'll do everything I can to find it!"

The two of them stayed in the lab, deep in conversation, until Elysia Thorne

finished making lunch.

Soon, Baby's voice echoed through the hallway.

"Dad? Great-Grandma? Where are you?"

The moment Tracey heard Baby's voice, she snapped back to herself, the storm

in her eyes clearing for a moment.

Chapter 1303

"Sweetheart, come over here to Great-Grandma."

The little girl darted into the lab.

"Great-Grandma, Daddy, what are you looking at?"

Tracey beamed, eyes warm with affection.

"I'm showing your dad some of my special collectibles."

"Those tiny bottles over there?"

"That's right."

Baby's big, round eyes sparkled with curiosity as she stared at the eight little vials lined up on the table.

"Great-Grandma, what's inside these bottles?"

"Monsters," Tracey replied, a hint of mischief in her smile.

"Huh?! Like, real monsters?"

"Mhm! Tiny monsters that can eat people!"

"Whaaat?!" Baby's face was a picture of shock.

She'd clearly inherited Elysia's trusting nature-anything Tracey said, she

believed, easy to amuse and even easier to fool.

The thought of people-eating monsters sealed up in those bottles made her a bit nervous. She scurried behind Tarquin and clung to his shirt.

"Daddy, I'm scared."

Tarquin turned, bent down, and scooped her up. "Don't be, kiddo. Daddy's here." Tracey chuckled.

"Monsters are scary, sure, but every monster has a weakness. Baby, want to help Great-Grandma research how to beat them?"

Curiosity lit up Baby's face. Her voice was tiny and sweet:

"Is their weakness superheroes? Like Captain America or Iron Man?"

Tracey grinned.

"We're not studying superheroes today-we're looking at legendary heroes! Like Perseus, Hercules, and King Arthur!"

Baby's eyes grew even wider.

"Wow! Were they really strong?"

Tracey nodded.

"The strongest! Perseus could

defeat the Gorgon Medusa and sea serpents. Hercules fought the Hydra and the Nemean Lion. And King Arthur? He battled dragons and evil knights. Pretty awesome, right?"

Baby's eyes sparkled.

"They sound even cooler than Iron Man!"

Tracey laughed.

"If you help me, we'll work together to send all those monsters packing and keep

our world safe. How does that sound?"

Baby's jaw dropped in excitement.

"Can I really fight monsters, too?"

"Of course! I can tell you're a brave little warrior already."

Baby was easy to flatter-one compliment and she was bouncing with excitement, nodding fiercely.

"Yeah! I want to fight monsters with Great-Grandma! I want to be a little hero!"

"Deal, deal, deal!" Tracey couldn't stop smiling.

Tarquin watched his daughter, so inspired and enthusiastic. He was proud, but couldn't help thinking to himself:

She's just like Elysia-so innocent, so sweet. Silly, adorable, and kind-hearted. Tracey finished locking the bottles in a safe.

"We'll study more this afternoon. First, let's get some lunch."

"Okay!" Baby grabbed Tracey's hand, skipping toward the door. Tracey, in high spirits, turned to Tarquin.

"Leave Baby with me. You and Elysia don't need to worry. My lab might be full of strange stuff, but I'll keep her safe and sound-she won't get near anything dangerous."

Working with viruses and chemicals always came with risks, and Tarquin's heart

ached at the thought. But he nodded.

"We trust you completely."

Baby would face risks if she studied medicine, sure. But no matter what she chose in life, there'd be challenges. No oak tree ever grew tall in a greenhouse. You can't see a rainbow without a little rain.

He loved Baby, but he wouldn't smother her. He knew that giving her real opportunities was the best thing for her future.

So he supported Baby learning from Tracey, wholeheartedly.

Tracey was strong, wise, and principled. It was a stroke of luck for Baby to have her as a mentor.

This was her great opportunity-and he wouldn't stand in the way.

Still...

Chapter 1304

Ever since Tracey's words earlier that day, Tarquin just couldn't settle his mind.

Everything seemed peaceful on the surface, but underneath, there was a storm brewing-dangerous currents no one dared talk about.

The fights between countries never really stopped. Tarquin wanted peace, always had. But there were people out there who just loved to stir up trouble, who couldn't stand the idea of folks simply getting along.

And when wars start, who pays the price? Not the politicians. Not the generals. It's regular people-folks just trying to make a living, raise families, put food on the table.

Sure, their country was prospering these days. They had the best technology, the best defense systems-missiles, tanks, fleets that could stand up to anyone who came knocking.

But it wasn't the guns and bombs that kept Tarquin up at night. It was the dirty tricks behind closed doors-the kind you couldn't see coming.

Everyone knew: biological weapons were the worst of the worst. The kind of evil that made even war look tame. Just look at history-Squad Seven's atrocities were enough proof of that.

And now, rumors were swirling about a new kind of virus, one even worse than before. If it ever saw the light of day, the devastation would be unimaginable. Worse, this thing was designed specifically to target them.

Tarquin's mind flashed with images he wished he could forget-cities in chaos, neighbors broken and desperate, Elysia clutching their kids, terrified.

He clenched his jaw, anger simmering. Just because they wanted peace didn't mean they were weak. Some countries—some organizations-kept testing just how far they could push things before it all blew up in their faces. One day, they'd get what was coming to them.

He had to find this so-called "Generation Eight" virus before they finished it. Had to figure out how to stop it before it ever hit the streets.

But where was it? His parents' deaths-no doubt, they were connected. The "mysterious person" who kept after him, what they wanted-it had to be this.

If it's that important, that dangerous... where would Mom and Dad have hidden it?

"Hey. Everything okay? You look a million miles away."

Elysia's voice brought him back. She was standing right in front of him, looking concerned.

Tracey and Baby had already gone into the kitchen. He was still rooted to the spot.

Elysia grinned, "Baby walked in and immediately told me you were outside, just staring off into space. What's going on? You look like you've seen a ghost."

Tarquin pulled himself together and fibbed, "Your grandma said she wants Baby to start learning medicine with her."

Elysia laughed, "That's what's got you all twisted up? You're worried about her?" He nodded. "A little, yeah."

Her smile grew even brighter. "You're such a softie for our girl."

She looped her arm through his, leading him toward the dining room.

"Medicine's a tough path, and not exactly safe. We're still figuring so much out, and there's all kinds of risks. But I support Baby and Grandma all the way."

"Learning medicine, it's good for her, and good for everyone else. Grandma says Baby's got talent, and honestly, I see how much she loves mixing up those herbs and potions."

"With the right guidance, she could really do something amazing. Make a difference, you know? We'll always need more doctors. The more

people who know how to heal, the better for everyone."

"Me, I was never that interested in

medicine, but I stuck with it because, well-when the kids have a fever or scrape their knee, at least I know what to do. And even if I never become a real doctor, at

help out. That counts for

Cast can

something."

"Imagine if everyone knew a little first aid-maybe folks wouldn't have to wait hours in the ER just for a cough."

Elysia chuckled, "Okay, maybe that's a little idealistic. But I'm all for Baby learning medicine. You never know when those skills will come in handy."

Tarquin looked down at her. Grandma was right—Elysia really did have a big, giving heart. Even her daughter learning medicine turned into a way to help the world.

So gentle. So kind.

He kept the virus and the darkness locked away, and just said, "You're right. I support her too."

Chapter 1305

"Elysia's smile was bright and gentle.

"Well then, stop looking so glum, let's go get some lunch."

"Yeah. Have Evan and Bernard made it back yet?"

"Nope. Those two are always like this—out early, back late. Walter's around

though, and Quincy, he—"

Before Elysia could finish, a shout rang out behind her.

"Daddy! Mommy!"

Tarquin and Elysia stopped and turned just in time to see Emmett barreling toward

them, face beaming with excitement.

"Daddy! Mommy!" he yelled again, practically bouncing.

He was over the moon, absolutely thrilled.

Elysia grinned and swept him up into her arms, planting a quick kiss on his cheek.

"What's got you in such a good mood, Emmett? Something special happen?"

Emmett proudly pulled out a pin from his pocket. "Look, Mom! Quincy gave this to me."

The pin was simple, a little old-fashioned—just a small piece of metal with a star stamped on it. Nothing fancy, no intricate designs or vibrant colors.

Some might say it was just an old badge, a relic really, but the tiny words etched under the star were anything but ordinary:

First President of the Artistry Alliance

Elysia's eyes widened as she glanced over at Quincy.

Thanks to Winona Newsom, she'd picked up a thing or two about the art and fashion scene. The first generation of the Artistry Alliance carried serious weight. It was founded by the legends—the real deal, true masters of their craft. The current President was still one of those original members, way past retirement age but holding the fort until a worthy successor could be found.

Being President of the Artistry Alliance was like being the head of the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association—practically the highest honor in the field. And the first President? That was the stuff of legend, the best of the best.

Elysia always knew Quincy was talented, but she never realized just how extraordinary he was—he'd actually been the very first President!

If Winona were here, Elysia figured she'd probably be on her knees, begging for an autograph by now.

And now Quincy had given this badge to Emmett—officially making Emmett his chosen apprentice!

Elysia held Emmett, staring at Quincy in astonishment, momentarily at a loss for words.

Emmett, not quite as sharp as Elliot or Evan, didn't really grasp the full significance of that little badge. What had him so excited was—

"Mom, Quincy said that with this, I can visit the old President of the Artistry

Alliance anytime I want!"

The current President happened to be Emmett's idol—he loved his work.

Before Elysia could respond, Emmett blurted out even more excitedly,

"And guess what, Mom? From today

on, Quincy and I aren't just family,

we're teacher and student! I even

poured him tea and bowed, just like

you're supposed to."

Elysia blinked. "You already had the ceremony?"

"Yup!"

She turned to Quincy for confirmation. "Is that right, Quincy?"

Quincy, dressed casually but with an

unmistakable air of elegance that

even time couldn't diminish, nodded

with a sparkle in his eye. You could

tell he'd been a real heartthrob in his

youth.

He looked proud and just a little smug as he answered, "Elysia, you don't mind,

do you? This just makes our family ties even tighter!"

Elysia quickly replied, "Of course I don't mind! Emmett, remember—respect your

teacher like your own father. You need to look after Quincy from now on."

Emmett nodded earnestly. "I'll take care of Quincy when he's old!"

Quincy, like Bernard, had never

married or had kids—he was

something of a bachelor. Truth be

told, guys at their level didn't really

worry about what would happen

after they were gone—whether

they'd get a grand funeral or just

fade away.

But hearing Emmett say that made Quincy genuinely happy.

"Finally, someone to carry on my legacy! Ha!"

Tarquin, standing off to the side with a faint, amused smile, watched the scene

unfold.

Wasn't Quincy the happiest of them all now that he had a student like Emmett?"

Chapter 1306

He was just like Elysia-not really interested in the world of art or high fashion.

Most days, he dressed however he liked, mixing and matching whatever felt good. His sense of style had nothing to do with trends or designer labels; it was all about comfort and his own preferences.

Anything he did know about the art and fashion scene came from Keaton Huber.

Keaton wasn't a celebrity or a supermodel, but he loved hanging out at movie premieres and chasing after models. He was a total gossip and always kept him up to date on who was dating who, or which designer was feuding with which magazine editor.

The third son becoming the protégé of a legend? That was a big deal. But...

Quincy probably had his own reasons for making it all official, didn't he?

Emmett had spent five years living up in the mountains, training under Quincy, who never once made it official or asked for any public recognition.

But now, out of the blue, Quincy handed Emmett the honorary pin and made a whole ceremony out of it. It was pretty clear-Quincy wanted things out in the open.

Why the sudden urge for recognition?

He had a hunch it was all about Emmett's grandfather.

Quincy and Emmett's biological grandfather were both giants in the art and fashion world, but their approach and philosophy couldn't have been more different.

Quincy leaned toward pure art, while Emmett's grandpa was all about high fashion.

There's a real difference between the two: art is about self-expression and creativity, while fashion is about market trends and what the crowd wants.

Quincy was a diehard fan of the classic Zhinora style—his work took the old- school Zhinora aesthetic to a whole new level.

Emmett's grandpa, meanwhile, had spent years studying abroad and brought back a wild, eclectic vibe to his designs, making them a hit on the international

scene.

Naturally, the two sides didn't see eye to eye, which pretty much split the whole industry into two major camps.

One camp was led by the Artistry Alliance, while the other followed Emmett's grandfather.

Fans from both camps were always at each other's throats online, hyping up their own favorites and tearing down the competition.

To put it simply, neither side had any respect for the other.

Quincy's hurry to make things official with Emmett? No doubt he'd learned who Emmett's grandfather really was.

He'd spent years personally mentoring a prodigy, and now he was expected to just hand him over to the other side? No way was Quincy going to let that happen.

He had to stake his claim first!

So what if Old Mr. White was Emmett's biological grandfather? Emmett was Quincy's last and most cherished disciple!

Which meant, from now on, Emmett was basically untouchable in both the art and fashion worlds.

His mentor was the founder and most respected figure of the Artistry Alliance, adored by fans and critics alike.

His grandfather was the king of high fashion—a living legend, respected by everyone, even their mother!

We're talking about the one and only Old Mr. White, beloved around the globe.

And let's not forget Emmett's own natural talent... Who could even compete? No exaggeration—soon the art and fashion world would be Emmett's for the taking.

The only headache he'd have would be figuring out how to keep both sides of his fanbase happy at the same time.

If Keaton ever found out about Emmett's new status, he'd probably latch onto him like a barnacle, no shame at all!

And Winona? She'd probably treat Emmett better than her own sugar daddy, given how easily Emmett could launch her career in Hollywood!

Tarquin mulled this over, glancing again at Elysia. No matter how impressive the kids were, they were all her children.

She was the real powerhouse behind it all!

Their eldest had trained under Gerald Morgan and, at a young age, had already made the Forbes list.

The second son had learned from the legendary "Iron Fist" and the old masters, plus had that mysterious scar-faced mentor-no wonder he was ranked second in the next gen martial arts scene. Who'd dare claim first place?

The third son-mentored by both Old Mr. White and Quincy-stood at the top of the industry.

And then there was Elijah, the

youngest, who had trained with the Patel family and was now making a name for himself in the hacking world, learning from the very best and carving out his own legacy.

No doubt about it-the future was theirs.

Chapter 1307

Youngest daughter Baby had trained under none other than Tracey, the most

renowned and powerful figure in modern medicine. If anyone was destined to take the medical world by storm, it was going to be her.

But what really mattered was that all the little ones in the family loved her to bits- each one more than the last!

So, who was the real star these days?

Elysia, no doubt about it!

You definitely didn't want to get on her bad side-she was untouchable.

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Meanwhile, across town in Jindale City...

Benjamin Lawson had just received word from Tarquin. Without wasting a second, he started working every connection he had to arrange a meeting with Old Mr. Stevenson-Victor Stevenson himself.

Not an easy man to get ahold of.

Sure, the Lawsons had a legacy in medicine, running the biggest and most prestigious private hospital in Jindale City, and Benjamin's family had been respected names in the field for generations.

But compared to Victor Stevenson, their influence was a drop in the ocean.

Benjamin couldn't get an appointment at first, but once he mentioned Tarquin's name, Victor finally agreed to spare him a few minutes-ten, to be exact.

And it wasn't even face-to-face. Just a video call.

Victor was in King City, not Jindale City at the moment.

The threat of the virus wasn't widely recognized yet-there hadn't been any serious outbreaks-so Victor wasn't about to drop everything and get involved personally.

As soon as the call connected, Benjamin greeted him with the utmost respect.

"Hello, Victor. It's good to see you."

The old man, with his shock of white hair, nodded back.

"Hello. I hear Mr. Bradford has a message for me?"

Benjamin nodded, hesitating briefly-after all, the message wasn't exactly pleasant. He did his best to put Tarquin's words as delicately as possible.

But even with Benjamin's careful phrasing, Victor's face immediately darkened. He looked about as far from pleased as you could get.

Tarquin was a big shot in the business world, but Victor was a giant in medicine. He felt he had every right to be just as forceful as Tarquin.

After all, Victor was the personal doctor to the highest-ranking officials in the country. When it came to influence, he was no lightweight.

Victor spoke in his usual, calm-but-cold tone.

"Mr. Bradford sure has a temper. My granddaughter says a few things about his wife, and he storms straight over to give me a piece of his mind!"

"He's a Bradford, we're the Stevensons. Whatever happens, it's not his place to lecture my family on how to raise our kids."

Benjamin could see Victor was getting worked up and tried to smooth things over.

"I think you should know, Tarquin is

crazy protective of his

family especially his wife. Ms.

Stevenson said some things that got venson

back to him, and, well, you know

how he is."

Benjamin chuckled, trying to lighten the mood.

"Honestly, if it had been anyone

J

just

other than your granddaughter, Victor, Tarquin wouldn't have talked—he would've acted. But he's got a lot of respect for you.

Victor was no fool—he knew Tarquin was not someone to cross.

After a brief pause, he finally said, "You tell Mr. Bradford, look, girls will be girls they bicker, it's no big deal. But, since he's so concerned, have a word with Sabrina and

remind her to watch what she says."

Victor made it clear he wasn't about to make Sabrina Stevenson apologize, and Benjamin knew not to push it further.

He simply nodded. "Alright, I'll let Tarquin know what you said."

The moment Benjamin finished speaking, Victor ended the call.

With a frown, Victor turned to his assistant.

"Sabrina's at odds with Tarquin's wife?"

The assistant shook his head. "I'm not entirely sure, sir. All I've heard is that Ms. Stevenson's been publicly criticizing a woman named Elysia."

"She's in medicine, too?"

"No, sir. But a few days ago, she and Ms. Stevenson both came up with a cure for the same illness-at the exact same time."

Victor raised an eyebrow. "If she isn't from the medical field, how'd she manage that?"

The assistant hesitated. "Well... Ms. Stevenson claims Ms. Thorne stole her research."

Chapter 1308

Victor frowned, silent for a moment before he asked,

"You're sure this Ms. Thorne isn't from the medical field?"

"Positive. Folks in Jindale City said she only did a year at college, and it wasn't even anything close to medicine. Her family's in business-not a single doctor among them. But she does seem to have a knack for child psychology."

The assistant paused, then suggested,

"Should I call Miss Stevenson now and get more details?"

"No need. I'll just ask Sabrina myself."

At that moment, Sabrina was still over in Jindale City. When Victor's call came through, she sounded thrilled.

"Grandpa! Missed me already?"

Victor's face was still stern, but seeing his granddaughter, he couldn't help but

smile a little, feigning annoyance.

"Miss you? Not a chance!"

Sabrina giggled, "But I miss you, Grandpa!"

"Oh, you do? Well, just don't go causing me any more trouble, you hear? Did you

get into it with Tarquin's wife again?"

Sabrina frowned. "You mean Elysia?"

"I don't care what her name is. All I know is she's Tarquin's wife."

Sabrina was clearly annoyed now.

"She's something else, isn't she? Complaining about me all the way to you! I didn't pick a fight with her, I just can't stand her attitude."

"She throws her weight around just because her husband's a big shot. Acts like she's royalty and I'm supposed to bow and scrape!"

"Sure, the Bradfords are a powerful family, but that doesn't mean the Stevensons are pushovers! If I just rolled over and took it, it'd be an embarrassment to all of us. No way I'm letting that happen."

Sabrina wasn't exactly known for her medical skills or her people skills-but she knew how to play her grandpa.

Victor was highly respected in the medical field. He was honest, humble, and genuinely valued talent.

But as the head of the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association, he was surrounded by people eager to flatter him. Over the years, all that praise had gotten to his head a bit, and he couldn't stand to hear anyone say a bad word about the Stevenson family.

Plus, with Sabrina being his only granddaughter, he was always a little soft on her.

"She gave you attitude?"

"Yeah, she's always looking down her nose at me."

"But why? You two barely even know each other."

Sabrina didn't miss a beat.

"She's just jealous, Grandpa. Sure, her husband's loaded, but at the end of the day, money's all he's got."

"But look at me-I've got you, the head of the Medical &

Phanical Association! net

Your

work does way more for people than her husband's money ever could."

"Plus, she's not even as good a doctor as I am. She's jealous, that's all!"

"Even if I didn't have the Stevenson name or you backing me up, I could make it on my own."

"But her? If she lost her husband, she'd just be another trophy wife with nothing going for her!"

Victor's tone turned serious. "What about that antidote formula from last time? What's the story there?"

Sabrina lied without even blinking. "She stole my research, Grandpa!"

Victor hesitated. "But during the last online meeting, nobody mentioned anything about stealing research."

Sabrina huffed, "I was afraid her husband would go after the Stevensons if I said anything. That's why I kept quiet."

"Then why grumble about it behind her back?"

"Because it's so unfair! Grandpa, imagine working your tail off on some breakthrough, only to have someone else claim it as their own and you can't even call them out. I had to vent somewhere."

Victor paused.

"There's one thing I still don't get. She's not even in the medical field-why would she steal your research?"

Sabrina replied, "She's trying to pave her way into medicine, obviously! She wants a foot in the door."

Victor went quiet for a moment. "Sabrina, you're not lying to Grandpa, are you?"

Sabrina sounded indignant. "Of course not! Why would I lie to you?"

Victor let out a long sigh.

"I've told you

Steven before, even though the

lead the medical

can't just hand everything to

a silver platter."

"I'll always support you, but if you want to stand at the top, you'll have to earn it yourself."

Chapter 1309

"First of all, you've got to work hard, Sabrina. Really put your head down and get the kind of results that'll make everyone respect you-enough that they'll want you leading them."

"And second, you need to build strong relationships with people who matter. Doesn't matter if it's in medicine or any other field-having a solid network of accomplished people will do wonders for your future."

"And unless it's absolutely necessary, don't get into fights with the big shots."

"Of course, I'm not saying you should let people walk all over you. If Tarquin's wife really picks on you, don't be afraid of her. Even if it means going all the way to the top, I'll make sure you get justice!"

Sabrina bit her lip, determined.

"I'm not lying, Grandpa. She started it! She's not just rude-she's shameless!"

"She stole the credit for my work and claimed it as her own. I could've just sucked it up, but I didn't."

"I called her, mainly out of respect for Mr. Bradford, tried to make peace, and even offered to bring her into the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association if we pulled this off together."

"But instead of being grateful, she just mocked me!"

"She said she didn't need my help to get into the Association-that her husband could get her in with a single phone call."

"And she said even if she could help develop a cure, she'd never work with me." "She's off on summer vacation now, taking her kids to Disney World or whatever, doesn't care at all about patients or medical ethics!"

"She even threatened that once she's back from vacation, she'll see to it that you get kicked out as president, Grandpa. Said she'll take your place."

"She's out to wipe the Stevenson family name from the medical community!"

"That's outrageous!" Victor fumed. "Everything we've done for medicine-and she thinks she can erase it, just like that?!"

"Exactly, Grandpa! If someone like her-no morals, no sense of right or wrong- gets into the medical field, it'd be a disaster! The whole profession would fall apart!"

Victor's face darkened. "Ignorant. She doesn't know her place."

Sabrina kept going, adding fuel to the fire.

"She's just riding on Mr. Bradford's coattails. Has no idea who she really is."

Then she turned, a touch more cautious, "Grandpa, did Mr. Bradford call you to complain about me?"

Victor nodded, "He did. Told me to warn you, not to mess with his wife."

Sabrina pulled a face, her tone dripping with sarcasm.

"Elysia's just a conniving gold-digger, Grandpa. She's got Mr. Bradford wrapped around her finger. He's actually a decent guy-you shouldn't be mad at him. If you want to be angry, be angry at that witch Elysia!"

She couldn't stand Elysia, but she kind of liked Tarquin. Maybe even had a little crush on him.

Her dream? Get rid of Elysia, make Tarquin see her for who she is, divorce her-

-kick Elysia out with her brood of kids-

—and maybe, just maybe, see if things could work out with Tarquin.

Victor had no clue what Sabrina was plotting. He just frowned and said,

"Look, whatever the case, the warning got all the way up to r

Weed to chill out for now net

You

focus on your work." Conte

"If you and your team can develop the cure, the Association will give you top

honors."

Sabrina muttered, "But what if she keeps giving me trouble?"

"If she dares, I'll handle her myself," Victor promised.

Sabrina's mood instantly brightened. "Okay!"

To her, Grandpa was everything. If

he stood up for her and put Elvenet

Not Tarquin, not even the most powerful folks in the country-her grandpa's reputation was untouchable.

Elysia might have business connections, but in medicine, she had no one.

Sabrina hated her guts. She had to make sure Elysia never got back up again. Let her lose, and lose for good!

Chapter 1310

"Achoo-"

Elysia sneezed again as she and Tracey studied the antidote together.

She'd already sneezed several times in a row!

Rubbing her nose, Elysia grumbled, "Ugh, is someone out there talking smack about me?"

Tracey glanced at her, saw her rosy cheeks, and shook her head. "You definitely don't look sick. Did you make an enemy out there?"

Elysia thought for a moment. Well, every woman crushing on Tarquin probably hated her guts. They were practically chanting online: "Homewrecker! She's public enemy number one!"

But if she had to name names, it'd be Nola Slater and her daughter, Daphne Thorne and her daughter.

Oh, right-Sabrina, too.

Before she went back to the countryside, Sabrina had made it pretty clear she wasn't a fan.

Suddenly remembering Sabrina, Elysia frowned. "Grandma, have you ever heard of the Stevenson family?"

Tracey turned to look at her. "You got beef with the Stevensons?"

"No, just curious."

Tracey let out a deep sigh. "Yeah, I know the Stevensons. Actually, I was about to ask you—if we're dealing with this virus, shouldn't Victor Stevenson be able to handle it?"

For a regular doctor, it was understandable if they couldn't solve this. And Elysia, still learning, wasn't expected to crack it either.

But Victor was the head of the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association—the best doctor around. If he couldn't do anything about this virus... well, that was pretty worrying for the whole medical field!

Sure, this virus was tricky, but it was somewhere between a fourth and fifth generation strain. If even that was unbeatable, then forget about ever dealing with something truly dangerous in the future.

Elysia shrugged. "I honestly don't know if Victor can solve it. Far as I know, he hasn't even joined the research team. The Association put together a special task force, but Victor's not in it. Do you know him, Grandma?"

"I worked with him a long time ago, before I retired. I know what kind of person he is, but we're not close."

"So what do you think of him?"

Tracey thought for a moment. "Hard-working, talented-he's a natural when it comes to medicine. He loves it, lives and breathes it."

"So you think he deserves to be president of the Association?"

Tracey frowned, considering. "Honestly, I don't see anyone else who could do the job right now."

Our country's medical field wasn't exactly booming; even with all the funding, good doctors were in short supply. Victor was basically the flag-bearer for the whole

community.

Elysia asked, "Is that job hereditary? Is it always going to be the Stevenson family?"

"Of course not!" Tracey replied. "They hold a vote. Whoever's best for the job gets it."

"Oh, good." Elysia looked relieved.

Tracey watched her closely. "Why do you ask?"

Elysia kept her eyes on the herbs she was mixing, muttering, "I'm just worried Victor might try to hand the job to his granddaughter. I've met her-she's really not cut out for it."

"She's not capable, she doesn't care

about patients, and honestly, her

morals are out of whack. If she ever

rue Association, we're imbig

trouble!"

"And not just the Association—the whole medical community would go backwards, not forwards."

Elysia wasn't one to gossip, but she genuinely worried about the future of the Association—and medicine itself.

Tracey asked, "This is Victor's real granddaughter?"

"Yeah, her name's Sabrina. From what I've heard, Victor's been grooming her for the position."

Tracey's face darkened. She didn't care if the whole world agreed—if she said no, Sabrina wasn't getting the job!

But... it was a bad sign for the future.

"If even Victor can't train a worthy successor, who's going to lead us in the next generation?"

Elysia frowned, too. It was a real problem.

Without someone to carry the torch, even if the field didn't collapse outright, it would definitely fall behind.