

Hitched 1371

Chapter 1371

That morning, Zane had just reached out to someone and told them to meet him in his hospital room. Axel got wind of it almost immediately.

Not wanting to spook anyone, they decided to lay low and wait. Only after the mysterious visitor left Zane's room did they dig in and start their investigation.

It didn't take long to find out: the hit on Tarquin had come from someone in Wayborn.

Wayborn was a semi-autonomous region on the edge of Mariana Land, just across the border from their own country. The place was a mess-full of scam call centers, black market organ dealers, and every kind of sleaze you could imagine.

Criminals flocked there. Human trafficking, drug smuggling, contract killings- Wayborn was a hellhole, no better than the infamous Ghost Towns you read about

in the papers.

Tarquin frowned. "So the guy's with the Bauer family?"

Axel nodded. "The guy calling the shots goes by Thunder on the streets. He mostly runs scams and organ deals—plus, he's got a hand in the sex trade."

"He's the one who had his eye on Winona. That's the only reason she got away with just a scratch and wasn't hurt worse."

"He's got ties with the Bauer family, but I can't say for sure if they're in on the hit. What I do know is Thunder's definitely involved."

The Bauer family was Wayborn's top dog, pretty much running the whole region. Every shady character in Wayborn owed them something.

If it was just Thunder causing trouble, they could handle it. But if the Bauers were involved...

Tarquin's face darkened.

"If Thunder had the guts to take this job, he'd better be ready for the fallout. He can disappear for good."

If those lowlifes across the border didn't get the message, they'd just keep coming -thinking Tarquin was easy prey.

"I get it. I'll handle it," Tarquin said.

"Not this time," Axel shot back. "I'm going."

"It's not just for you. It's for me, too."

Axel's eyes burned with determination.

Tarquin scowled. He knew Axel had been itching to get to Mariana Land. Axel had unfinished business there—a ghost from his past, and a grudge that ran deep.

But Mariana Land was a death trap. Going after revenge there was like walking into a lion's den holding a steak. The odds of making it out alive were next to nothing.

"You"

"I've made up my mind. Don't try stop me

I'm not asking for your

permission; I'm just giving you

heads up

Axel cut him off again.

Tarquin's brow creased. "You sure about this?"

"Yeah."

"When do you leave?"

"Now."

"You got your new ID and everything?" Tarquin asked.

"Yeah."

"You have contacts lined up in Wayborn?"

"Yeah."

Tarquin fell silent, jaw clenched. He knew Axel had carried this pain for years the wound still festering in Way born, waiting for him to come and rip it out.

Axel had been following Mariana Land's underworld for ages, laying the groundwork for this day.

Tarquin lit a cigarette, took a drag, and finally asked, "Will you make it back alive?"

Axel hesitated, saying nothing.

Tarquin's voice turned cold. "If you're

not sure you'll make it back, don't

go.

break your damn legs myself

and keep you locked up here in Jindale City."

He'd rather see Axel crippled than dead.

Axel frowned, silent for a few moments, then said quietly, "I'll make it back. I promise."

He looked dead serious, like he was swearing an oath.

Tarquin flicked his ash, his expression softening a bit. "A real man keeps his word."

"...Yeah."

Chapter 1372

Lowell stood off to the side, his eyes already rimmed red.

He knew exactly what Axel was walking into with this trip to Mariana Land-it was a one-way ticket, a near-suicide mission.

But there was nothing he could do to stop him. Even if he tried, Axel wouldn't let anyone hold him back. Until he pulled out that thorn in his side, he'd never find peace.

Lowell's voice was rough with emotion.

"We'll throw you a big party when you get back, all right? Just promise me, whatever happens-don't be a hero. Your life comes first!"

Axel looked at him, nodded once. "Yeah."

Elysia came over, helping Blossom limp along. Lowell quickly wiped his eyes, and Tarquin stubbed out his cigarette.

Elysia called out from a distance,

"Blossom twisted her ankle. We need to get it checked at the ER."

Blossom looked at Axel with big, pleading eyes. She clearly hoped Axel would be the one to take her.

Tarquin glanced at Axel, asking,

"You're heading back to the city, right? Mind giving Blossom a ride to the hospital?"

"Nope," Axel replied flatly.

He turned and walked straight to his car, not sparing Blossom a glance or a word about her injury.

Blossom's face crumpled,

"Hey, what's your problem? I really hurt my ankle. It hurts like hell!"

Axel didn't even look back. "..."

Elysia frowned, but she couldn't blame Axel. Matters of the heart were never that simple.

Just because Axel didn't return Blossom's feelings didn't make him a bad guy.

Still, her heart ached for Blossom.

Love always made the one who fell first look so small.

Tarquin stepped in, "He's got a long trip ahead, and he's on a tight schedule."

Blossom quickly asked, "Where's he going?"

Tarquin hesitated, "Somewhere far away."

Lowell couldn't hold back, "Go say goodbye, Blossom. Wish him luck. Tell him to come back safe."

Blossom saw the look on Lowell's face and felt a jolt of dread.

She knew Axel worked as Tarquin's personal security, always in the thick of some dangerous mess.

"He's going on a job, isn't he?"

Lowell replied, "Yes and no."

Blossom frowned, "What's that supposed to mean?"

Lowell sighed, "He's got a job to do, but there's personal business involved, too."

Personal business?

Blossom's nerves spiked. "Is it... is it really dangerous?"

Lowell didn't nod or shake his head, but his red eyes said enough.

Blossom's heart jumped into her throat. If even Lowell, usually tough as nails, was about to cry, it had to be bad.

She turned and hobbled as fast as she could after Axel.

Panting, she caught up to him at his car, grabbing the door handle.

"Where are you rushing off to?!"

Axel was already in the driver's seat, his voice icy, "None of your business."

Blossom pressed, "When will you be back?"

"...That's none of your business, either."

Blossom puffed out her cheeks, trying to look fierce. "None of my business, huh? Well, if you won't tell

me, I'll just stick to you like glue! You can't get rid of me that easy-not with Elysta and Mr Bradford around You wouldn't dare!"

Axel squeezed his brow, frustrated. "I don't know when I'll be back."

Blossom shot back, "Then at least tell me where you're going?" "Can't say."

"Is it dangerous?"

Axel's lips pressed together. "I'm in a hurry."

Blossom pouted, then slipped off

silver locket she always wore and

little horseshoe charm for

good

luck-and pressed it into his hand.

"Take this, okay? Keep it with you. For good luck."

Axel tried to hand it back, but she forced it on him.

"If you don't take it, I'm not letting you leave!"

He sat there, stony-faced, silent for a long moment before finally muttering,

"I told you before I don't like you."

Blossom sniffled, "Can't we at least be friends?"

Axel: "..."

Her eyes shone with tears.

"Just take it, please. I won't bug you to like me anymore. I'll even think e

about.. about moving on But let me do this, okay?"

Chapter 1373

Axel was quiet for a moment, then took what she handed him.

Blossom immediately added, "Hey, just so you know, I've had that with me since I was a kid. It means a lot to me! Don't you dare lose it! You better give it back when you're done, got it?"

Axel didn't respond. He just slammed the car door shut, started the engine, and drove off.

Cold. Ruthless.

It wasn't until the car was far down the road that he finally glanced in the rearview mirror. Blossom was still standing there, crying her eyes out like a little kid.

He frowned, tore his gaze away, and looked down at the old silver locket in his palm before tucking it into his pocket.

As he was driving away from the ski lodge, he happened to spot those girls who'd been picking on Blossom earlier.

They'd already ditched their ski gear and were just about to leave. Each wore some wild thrift-store jacket, their hair dyed every color of the rainbow, laughing and joking like they didn't have a care in the world. Couldn't have been more than twenty, Axel guessed-kids who'd never had a real taste of how hard life could hit.

A few scruffy boys were hanging around with them, swaggering and loud.

Axel's eyes narrowed. He watched as they piled into their SUV and drove off.

A few minutes later, Axel caught up to them and forced their car over on the side of the road.

The guys jumped out, swinging metal pipes and shouting, "What's your problem, man? Looking for trouble or just blind?"

Axel stepped out, stone-faced and silent. He didn't bother with words. He just showed them what a real lesson looked like.

When he was done, the boys were left groaning in the dirt, faces bruised and bloody, sobbing like toddlers.

Axel picked up one of the discarded pipes and tossed it to the girls. "If I did it, you'd be dead. You do it yourselves-break your own right leg. That's enough."

He said it with that annoyingly handsome face and a voice so smooth you almost didn't notice how terrifying the words were.

And then, just to be clear, he added, "The right leg."

He remembered Blossom had twisted her right ankle.

Back at the ski lodge, Blossom was sitting in the snow, bawling her heart out, her face a mess of tears and snot.

Elysia, who had no idea where Axel had gone, tried to comfort her. "Hey, Axel's tough. He'll be fine, trust me. Don't work yourself up."

Blossom sobbed even harder, "If he comes back hurt, I'll take care of him. If he dies out there, I'll go with him. I swear, I can't—"

Elysia frowned and shot a look at Tarquin. "Where did Axel go, anyway?"

Tarquin could only answer, "He'll come back alive. He promised."

Axel didn't talk much, but when he gave his word, it meant something. If he said he'd come back, he would.

That was why Tarquin had made him promise before he left.

Elysia could read the worry on Tarquin's face, and she knew better than to ask more. She hugged Blossom tighter. "Did you hear

Tarquin? Axel's coming back. Don't think the worst."

But Blossom seemed gripped by some awful premonition. She just sobbed, shaking all over, unable to speak.

Lowell, watching her, couldn't hold it together anymore and started crying too, fat tears rolling down his cheeks.

He couldn't take the gloomy mood, so he wiped his face and said, "I'm gonna check on Mr. Hawkins and the kids. It's getting dark. We should pack up and head home."

The ski lodge had two slopes-one for adults, one for kids. Elysia had made sure the little ones stayed in the kids' area Clayton and Pamela were over there keeping an eye on them. ,

After Lowell left, Tarquin's brow stayed furrowed as he made call after call six in a row. He checked in with folks both local and backin Mariana Land, making

arrangements to keep Axel safe

once he arrived.

He'd just finished when his phone rang. It was Benjamin.

"Tarquin, you'd better tell Elysia to brace herself. I think she's gonna have to make

a trip to the hospital tonight."

Chapter 1374

"What's going on?" Tarquin asked.

Benjamin's voice was practically vibrating with frustration.

"This whole virus mess-Elysia can't dodge it anymore!"

"That woman, Sabrina, she's lost her mind!"

"She actually went to the cops and filed a report-using her real name! She claims Elysia deliberately poisoned them. The police are on the case now, and they'll be reaching out to Elysia soon."

Tarquin's face went cold. "She reported Elysia? Seriously?"

"Yep."

"...Does she have any proof?"

"She says she does, but I have no clue what it is. She's keeping me out of the loop."

"Got it."

Tarquin had barely hung up when Elysia's phone rang. It was the police.

By seven that evening, their whole family was back in the city.

Clayton and Pamela, sensing Elysia was dealing with something big, took the kids home to get some rest.

Elysia took Blossom to get her foot checked out, then dropped her off at Winona's place—she didn't want Blossom alone at home.

Once Blossom was settled, Elysia and Tarquin headed for the hospital.

Because of how hush-hush the virus was, the police didn't ask Elysia to come down to the station. Instead, they interviewed her at the hospital that night.

On the way, Winona texted her:

****Blossom's been crying non-stop. Is Axel really not coming back?***

Elysia frowned and turned to Tarquin. "Where exactly did Axel go?"

It was just the two of them in the car, but Tarquin hadn't mentioned Mariana Land at all.

Mariana Land was a living hell-if Elysia found out, she'd be worried sick.

"He went straight to enemy territory," Tarquin said.

Elysia's eyes widened. "Are you serious? Did he have to go?"

"Yeah."

Axel had been holding back for years, and now, with Zane's situation tied up with Mariana Land, he wasn't going to sit still any longer. No one could stop him.

Elysia bit her lip. "Winona said Blossom's been crying like crazy, asking if Axel's never coming back."

Blossom wasn't a little kid anymore; she could handle goodbyes. This kind of crying felt like she already knew something bad was coming.

Tarquin was silent for a moment, then said firmly,

"Tell Blossom: Axel will come back. No matter what, I'll bring him back myself if I have to."

Elysia felt a bit of relief at his unwavering tone.

She texted Winona back, asking her to comfort Blossom for now-she'd come over once she finished up.

At eight, they arrived at the hospital.

Benjamin spotted them and quickly pulled them aside.

"I just found out-Sabrina's got witnesses lined up, people who claim they can prove Elysia poisoned them."

"And since this involves the

Stevenson family, plus folks from the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association, the whole medical community is up in arms. The government is taking it seriously."

"The news isn't public yet, but behind the scenes, it's chaos. If they actually stick

this on Elysia, even you won't be able to protect her."

Elysia fumed. "What the hell is wrong with Sabrina? Why is she so obsessed with me?!"

Benjamin frowned. "You figured out

the antidote's formula. She felt

threatened. She wants to be the Association president, and you're in her way

Elysia gritted her teeth.

"With her ethics? If she ever runs the Association, the whole medical world's doomed!"

Tarquin asked, "Who's making these false statements? People from your hospital?"

Benjamin shook his head. "No idea, but my guess is yes."

Tarquin pressed, "What about Victor? Where does he stand?"

Benjamin replied, "He's said nothing. He's leaving it all to the police and government. He's totally focused on researching the antidote."

Elysia perked up. "Any progress?"

"Yeah! The first group of infected can't wait any longer, so I sped things up behind

the scenes, just like you said. Victor's work is moving fast."

Elysia nodded. "And what about Dr. Lambert and those two nurses?"

"They're improving. It's still not clear if there'll be any long-term effects, but their lives aren't in danger anymore."

Chapter 1375

Elysia exhaled slowly, but the thought of the virus still weighed heavily on her.

Humans were so fragile against something like this. Even if you survived, your body could be left weaker, the sickness was absolute hell, and there was always the risk of long-term effects afterward.

And then there was the mess with those monkeys from Alerasia-they'd escaped carrying the virus, and just thinking about it made Elysia angry and anxious all over again.

Some people respected life. Others just trampled all over it.

Turning to Tarquin, Elysia spoke with determination.

"If it gets out of hand, don't hide it from me. No matter what, we cannot let Sabrina take over the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association!"

She'd rather expose herself than see Sabrina as president. If Victor retired and no one else could handle it, Elysia would step up herself.

Sabrina didn't deserve that position. And the future of the Association meant the safety of so many people.

Tarquin looked relaxed. "Don't worry. It won't come to that."

He had solid evidence-enough that no matter what Sabrina tried, she'd only end up digging her own grave.

Elysia's time would come-just not yet.

"When they ask you questions, just..." Tarquin ran through the details with her before sending her in to meet the police.

In the hospital conference room, it wasn't just the police-it was Victor and some government officials, too.

Sabrina was stuck in quarantine, so she could only join by video. The moment she saw Elysia, she practically spat out her words:

"It's her! She's the one who poisoned us! She hates me and dragged us all down with her!"

Elysia frowned. "Excuse me, what grudge do you think we have?"

Sabrina shot back instantly, "You stole my formula for the antidote, then after I called you out on it, you poisoned us out of spite!"

She went on, "You're afraid I'll outshine you in the Association, so you tried to kill me with the virus!"

Elysia pressed her lips together. "You can't heal a paper cut, but you sure know how to twist a story."

She turned to Victor.

"Victor, can I ask you something? Do you really believe your granddaughter

Sabrina has the skills to analyze an antidote formula?"

Victor's brow furrowed. He didn't agree or disagree.

"We haven't seen much of each other lately. I'm not sure how far her skills have come."

He paused, then asked,

"But you're not a doctor either, Elysia. How did you figure it out?"

Just as Tarquin had coached her, Elysia answered calmly,

"I didn't figure out the formula myself. I got it from Central Pharmaceuticals."

Victor looked skeptical. "Central Pharmaceuticals?"

"Yeah. The police can check it out if they want. I'm not lying."

On the screen, Sabrina's face was a picture of shock.

"You didn't analyze the antidote formula yourself?!"

Elysia shot her a look of disdain.

"Oh, come on. You've always known it wasn't my work. You just accused

me

of

copying you a

ng you a minute ago

Sabrina stammered, then switched tactics,

"That's not the point! The point is you poisoned us!"

Elysia's face went steely.

"You're an adult, Sabrina. You need to take responsibility for what you say. If you're making false, accusations, there are consequences."

Sabrina grit her teeth. "I don't need you to remind me. I know." Elysia looked back at Victor.

"Victor, I respect everything you've done for this country. But I have to ask-if your granddaughter is falsely accusing me can you be fair and let the law handle it?"

Elysia wasn't going to let this go. Someone like Sabrina had no place in medicine.

If she had her way, Sabrina would be facing a long time to reflect-behind bars.

Chapter 1376

Seeing Victor's frown, Elysia spoke up right away.

"If you can prove I'm guilty, I'll accept whatever punishment the law hands down- no complaints, no arguments. I won't let Tarquin or my father cause any trouble over it, either."

Victor gave Elysia a complicated look. Deep down, he knew exactly why she was saying this-she wanted him to take a stand.

Uncertain, Victor turned to his granddaughter.

"Sabrina, what you're accusing her of is incredibly serious. If you're lying, you'll have to face the consequences of the law-your grandpa won't protect you this time."

He paused, fixing her with a stern gaze. "I'm going to ask you one last time. Did you lie?"

Victor was no fool-he knew just how grave this situation was. Deliberately exposing healthcare workers to a contagious virus wasn't just a personal crime; it could threaten public safety, even the whole country. If the virus spread, it could affect the entire world.

If Sabrina was telling the truth, Elysia was finished. But if Sabrina was lying, then she'd be the one to go down-and there'd be nothing anyone could do to save her.

Even though Sabrina was a Stevenson, Elysia had Tarquin and Clayton in her corner. Those two could move mountains in both business and politics. There was no way they'd let Elysia take the fall for something she didn't do. If Sabrina really framed her, not even the top brass could persuade Tarquin and Clayton to back down.

After all, everyone knew-Tarquin was notorious for spoiling his wife, and Clayton was just as famous for doting on his daughter. If anyone messed with Elysia, those two would never let it go-unless the evidence was ironclad.

But in the end, not even they were above the law.

Sabrina, however, stood her ground, gritting her teeth.

"I'm not lying! I have witnesses who can prove she did this to us!"

Victor let out a heavy sigh, finally making his position clear.

"I'll make sure this is handled fairly and justly. Whoever's guilty will face the consequences. I won't interfere."

Elysia nodded.

"I trust Victor's integrity. I know you'll keep your word."

She turned to Sabrina.

"Ms. Stevenson, if you claim you have witnesses, then let's have them come forward and confront me face-to-face."

And the witnesses came a whole crowd of them. There were security guards, janitors, nurses, and staff from the lab.

One said they saw Elysia sneaking into the hospital that day. Another insisted they saw her go into the lab. Someone else claimed they saw her enter the conference room before, Sabrina and the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association group arrived on the day of the infection.

Basically, everyone was pointing fingers at Elysia, each with their own version of the story. The security cameras had conveniently broken that day, so it was all just their word against hers.

Of course, these stories were all carefully rehearsed-Sabrina had coached them herself.

Sabrina, watching remotely via video call, raised her voice.

"Grandpa, you heard them! I'm not

lying! So many people are testifying against Elysia-she's obviously

guilty! And by the way

these are all

Benjamin's people, Benjamin's

good friend of Elysia's, so his people

wouldn't just side with me. That makes their testimony even more credible!"

Elysia glanced at the witnesses. Sure enough, they were all Benjamin's employees. If they were lying, she wouldn't even need to lift a finger-Benjamin would deal with them himself.

She narrowed her eyes at Sabrina. "Do you have any other evidence?"

Sabrina looked smug.

"The police will definitely find more evidence soon. But with all these witnesses, it's enough to have you taken into custody for now!"

Sabrina wasn't stupid. She knew that witnesses alone weren't enough to convict Elysia. Her real goal was just to get Elysia locked up as a suspect, at least for the time being.

Chapter 1377

Once Elysia was locked up, Sabrina planned to use the Stevenson family's influence to pin all the blame on her. If the charges stuck, no one would be able to save Elysia.

But Elysia knew exactly what Sabrina was up to. She rolled her eyes, pressed her lips together, and turned to the officers. "I'm being set up," she said calmly. "And I have proof."

First, Elysia played an audio recording of a phone call between her and Sabrina. Then, right in front of everyone, she showed video footage of Sabrina sneaking out with the stolen virus samples. To top it off, she played a clip Benjamin had provided-evidence from their team meeting the night before.

These weren't just words. Unlike Sabrina's sketchy witnesses, Elysia's evidence was solid.

Victor, Sabrina's grandfather, watched the video of her stealing the samples. He froze, his breath caught in his throat, utterly speechless.

Sabrina was visibly rattled. It took her a moment to recover, and she finally screeched, "That's fake! It has to be fake! The security cameras were down that night-how could you possibly have video?"

She glared at Elysia, her voice rising. "This is all a setup! Elysia is framing me!"

Elysia's brows knit tightly together. "Whether the video is real or not, the police will have their experts verify it. So, good luck trying to deny it."

She stepped closer, voice steady and strong. "If you really thought I stole your research notes and wasn't up to the task, why did you keep trying to recruit me into your virus project? You're Victor's

granddaughter, but instead of supporting Dr. Benjamin's reasonable proposals, you shot them down. Is that really how the Stevenson family should use its influence?"

"And as a doctor, you're supposed to save lives. How can you call yourself a physician if you don't care about your patients?"

Elysia's words left Sabrina gasping, at a complete loss for what to say.

Elysia turned to the officers. "You can verify every bit of evidence I've provided. I stand by every word I've said. Frankly, I don't think Sabrina deserves to be a doctor-she doesn't even belong in the medical field"

She then looked directly at Victor. "What do you think, Victor?"

Victor's lips pressed into a hard line, his face drained of color. Of course, he wanted to protect his

granddaughter, but the evidence net

was overwhelming. Anyone with half

a brain could see Elysia was telling the truth, Sabrina was the one twisting things and falsely accusing others.

Just the audio between her and Benjamin would ruin her reputation if it ever got out-let alone the video of her stealing the virus. Even though Elysia hadn't spelled it everyone was already thinking it the outbreak among the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association team was on Sabrina. Whoever took the virus was responsible for the whole mess.

Sabrina was finished. Not only would the outside world shun her, but even the Medical & Pharmaceutical Association would cut her loose.

Victor was anxious and furious. He stared at his granddaughter, who looked like a deer in headlights on the video call, and felt his anger bubble over. She'd brought this on herself.

He had asked her, time and again, if she was telling the truth after she filed the report. She'd always denied it-just moments ago, she was still denying it. Now...

Victor's heart couldn't take it. Pain seized his chest, and suddenly he slumped forward, unconscious.

Elysia rushed to his side. "Victor!"

Sabrina, catching this over the video call, broke down sobbing. "Grandpa! Grandpa! Elysia, you bitch, if anything happens to my grandpa, I'll kill you! Grandpa..."

The police frowned and quickly cut the video feed. Victor's collapse who caused it, really? Sabrina still had the nerve to blame someone else!

Chapter 1378

By the time Elysia and Tarquin left the hospital, it was already past midnight.

Victor was fine-he'd just gotten all worked up, so now Benjamin was looking after him.

Once they got outside, Elysia finally saw Winona's message.

Winona had texted her about half an hour ago.

Blossom was already asleep. Winona told her not to worry, just to finish up and head home to get some rest.

Not wanting to disturb anyone, and knowing the kids had school early in the morning, Elysia decided not to swing by Tanhe Manor. She just asked Tarquin to drive her straight home.

On the way, Elysia stared out the window and let out a long breath.

Tarquin glanced over. "Feeling down?"

"Not really. Honestly, it felt good to put Sabrina in her place. She's a disaster for medicine. Kicking her out of the field is a relief."

"Then why the frown?"

Elysia sighed again, turning to Tarquin. "I just—suddenly, I get where Grandma was coming from."

"No wonder she worries so much about the future of medicine, even at her age. It's kind of sad."

"These days, Victor's the best we've got, but he's not even close to Grandma's level! The Stevenson family doesn't have anyone to carry the torch, and it's not like there's some new prodigy out there. What's going to happen to medicine when Victor's gone?"

"Benjamin told me our standing in the World Pharmaceutical Organization keeps slipping lower and lower. We barely have a voice anymore."

"Our traditional medicine used to be so respected, but now, most countries just look down on it..."

"No, no, I have to keep working at this. We come from a huge country with thousands of years of history—there's no way we can lose out to the rest of the world!"

"I've got to do my best, and so does Baby. We have to make our country proud. That's everyone's responsibility!"

Tarquin listened to her rambling, his eyes full of warmth.

How amazing was Elysia? She was the best woman in the world!

Did she even like traditional medicine that much? Not really.

But for the greater good, for her country's dignity, she'd push herself to work harder!

She was just an ordinary woman, but her heart carried the weight of a whole nation.

She loved her country, and she was raising her kids to do the same!

She had more grit and responsibility than plenty of men he knew.

She was a true daughter of her homeland.

And she was one hell of a mom.

Sabrina's drama was finally over.

The next day, the kids headed off to school.

For Elliot, Evan, and Emmett, it was their first day at the new school.

And for Elijah and Baby, it was their very first day of kindergarten.

Elijah had never gone before-his anxiety had always been too much.

And Baby? She'd always been raised by Keith out in Spirit Village, so this was her first real day, too.

Everything went smoothly when they left the house.

But as soon as Elysia dropped the kids off and had to say goodbye, things took a turn.

Just like any other kid on their first

day, Baby wrapped her arms around

Elysia's neck and wouldn't let go sobbing her heart out.

"I want Mommy! I don't wanna leave Mommy! I don't wanna go to school, waahhh..."

Seeing Baby cry made all four grown-ups tear up.

Elysia hugged her tight and tried to comfort her.

"Baby, you have to go to school. But you're going to have so much fun! As soon as school's over, Mommy will be right here waiting for you,, okay?"

Baby's big eyes were all red and puffy from crying.

"But... but Mommy should come to kindergarten, too! You and Baby can go together, waahhh..."

Elysia wiped away her tears and soothed her.

"Kindergarten is only for little kids, sweetie. Mommy's too big for school now."

The moment Baby realized her mom

couldn't stay with her, she broke

down completely crying so loud

was heartbreaking.

Clayton and Pamela were both hurting for her. They shot a meaningful look at Tarquin.

Clearly, they wanted to just take Baby home with them.

They hoped Tarquin would say something to Elysia.

Tarquin stood off to the side, heart aching, feeling the same way. Maybe they should just skip school today!

But as a dad, that was as far as he dared go-he didn't have the nerve to actually say it out loud.

Chapter 1379

He was terrified that Elysia would blame him!

Elysia had her own rules when it came to raising kids-she was definitely loving, but never coddling.

Whenever the kids cried, she felt it in her bones, but she'd never let their tears become an excuse for bad behavior.

She believed, except for the exceptionally wild ones, most kids were born good- a blank slate.

Whether they grew into mighty oaks or ended up as deadwood, a lot depended on how the parents raised and guided them.

Tarquin, Clayton, and Pamela stood off to the side, wide-eyed, watching Elysia comfort the baby.

They had opinions, sure-but nobody dared voice them.

In their family, Elysia's word was law.

Especially when it came to the kids. She was the undisputed boss.

Thankfully, Elysia actually knew a thing or two about child psychology, and with Elliot, Evan, and Emmett helping out, the baby calmed down pretty quickly.

The little girl still hiccupped from crying,

"Mommy, you have to remember, okay? Don't forget to pick me up."

"I promise, sweetheart! Mommy will never forget."

"Mommy, you have to be the very first one to pick me up, okay?"

"Deal! Pinky swear!"

Once Baby was soothed, Elysia turned to Elijah.

He was mostly okay now, but since he'd never really been around other kids before, he was a little nervous.

As soon as Elysia looked his way, he piped up,

"Don't worry, Mommy, I'm fine. Really."

Elysia gave him a warm smile.

"If anything happens at school, you can always ask the teacher to call me, okay?"

"Okay!"

Elliot then tried to comfort Elysia,

"Don't worry, Mom. I'll look after my little brother and sister. You can count on me."

Elysia's heart melted. "Thank you, Elliot. I hope you all have fun at preschool." The kids waved goodbye,

"Bye, Mommy! Bye, Daddy! Bye, Grandma, Grandpa!"

"Bye, sweethearts! Have fun!"

The four adults watched as the kids disappeared into the school building.

The moment the little ones were out of sight, Elysia spun around and buried herself in Tarquin's arms, muffling her sobs.

She was miserable.

The kids missed her, but honestly, she missed them even more.

But she couldn't keep them wrapped up in her arms forever. They needed to leave the nest, learn to be in the world without their parents constantly hovering.

Clayton and Pamela saw what was happening. They felt for their daughter, but

they knew better than to crowd her, so they quietly headed back to the car.

Tarquin gently stroked the back of Elysia's head, trying to soothe her.

"Elliot and the teachers are there. The kids will be fine. We'll come pick them up early this afternoon, okay?"

"...Elliot, Evan, and Emmett will be fine. I just worry about Baby and Elijah. It's their first day. What if they don't fit in?"

"They'll be okay. And even if they aren't, Elliot, Evan, and Emmett are in the same class. I already talked to the school about it."

Elysia sniffed, about to say something, when she suddenly heard Blossom's voice.

"Elysia!"

Elysia quickly wiped her tears and looked up. Blossom had just hopped out of her

car and was hurrying over.

Elysia was surprised. "Weren't you taking the day off?"

Blossom, still catching her breath, nodded.

"I was, but I kept thinking about the kids' first day at school and got too anxious to

stay away. So I cancelled my day off."

"I called you, but you didn't answer. The kids already inside?"

Elysia replied, "Just went in. My phone's in the car, sorry. Are you feeling better?"

Blossom nodded hard.

"I called my mom again last night. She told me that lucky charm she gave me is the real deal! Apparently, a bunch of priests blessed it together, its guaranteed to keep Axel safe!"

Elysia hesitated, "Does Hollis know you gave it to Axel?" "Nope! And you'd better not tell her!"

Elysia just shook her head, half relieved Blossom was in good spirits, half worried. She liked Axel so much and Elysia was afraid, was setting herself up for heartbreak.

Axel's feelings were... complicated.

And besides, the Blythe family already had other plans for their precious son-in-

law.

Chapter 1380

"Oh shoot, I'm gonna be late! I'll catch up with you later. Don't worry about the kids, I've got it covered!"

Blossom called over her shoulder to Elysia, then waved at Tarquin before hurrying into the preschool.

Elysia let out a deep breath, finally pulling herself back to the present.

The next few days went by smoothly.

The kids were busy with school, while Clayton and Pamela were up to their ears in renovating the new house.

Tarquin was slammed at work, and Elysia threw herself into studying holistic medicine.

A few days later, thanks to Benjamin's hard work, Victor managed to crack the cure for the virus ahead of schedule.

The entire medical community cheered-it was a huge breakthrough. No one suspected Elysia or Tracey had anything to do with it.

It was the best possible outcome. Exactly what they'd been hoping for.

After dropping the kids off at school, Elysia came home, ready to dive back into her research. But then her phone rang-a call from an unfamiliar number.

She answered, only to hear Zane's voice on the other end.

Her first instinct was to hang up, but Zane was faster. "Elysia, please don't hang up. Just let me say what I have to say. If you hang up, I'll keep calling until you're sick of it."

Elysia frowned. "What do you want?"

"A lot... There's so much I want to say to you."

Zane's voice was low and a little broken, heavy with regret.

"I never thought we'd end up like this. I thought if we just toughed it out for a few years, I'd make enough money to give you the life you deserved. I never imagined..."

"Elysia, I was so close! Just a little more and I would've made it! But then Tarquin ruined everything. He ruined it all!"

"He's destroyed me "

As soon as he mentioned Tarquin's name, Zane's words became jagged, forced through clenched teeth.

He'd mapped out a dozen backup plans for himself, and Tarquin had snuffed out every single one.

Tarquin had been ruthless-no mercy, not even a sliver of hope left.

With the cure for the virus hitting the

market, Zane's whole

scheme antidote-ha

spreading the virus and

then selling the

completely collapsed.

That big payoff was the reason he'd signed that insane bet agreement with Alpha Thorne in the first place.

Now, with the deal dead, there was no way he could bring in billions in just three months.

Which meant he was doomed to lose the bet.

And that meant he'd have to hand over Central Pharmaceuticals, the company

he'd poured his soul into for years, straight to Alpha.

On top of that, he owed Alpha a massive payout.

But he didn't have the money-not even close.

And losing Central Pharmaceuticals meant he no longer had the leverage to run his human trafficking ring. Thunder, his dangerous associate, would turn on him in a heartbeat.

He'd planned to survive off the shady network he'd built over the medku

years But Tarquin had team

with the police and wiped out every single operation.

Now, Thunder wanted his head. The cops wanted him locked up. And when the three months were up, Alpha would unleash the hounds and hunt him down.

And Tarquin... Tarquin was certainly lying in wait, ready to pounce at the first sign of him.

He was worse off than a rat in an alley.

At least a rat could hide in a sewer. Zane had nowhere left to run.

No country was safe-he had enemies everywhere.

And it was all Tarquin's fault.

"Elysia, you think Tarquin's some great guy, but he's more ruthless than anyone

I've ever met. No one's as cold-blooded as him!"

"He's left me with nothing-not a single way out!"

"He didn't just destroy my life and my happiness. He destroyed yours, too!"

"I spent years planning, scheming, doing everything I could-all for you! All for your happiness! I..."