

Hitched 1531

Chapter 1531

The only problem was... "We have to find a good excuse for Mom. If she finds out, she'll be worried sick." Tarquin Bradford frowned, not saying anything. Elliot added, "You don't have to worry about our safety. Evan, Snowy, and my grandfather are all really tough. Plus, with the environment up in those mountains, if the mysterious man dares to follow us, he'll be the one in trouble." That mountain forest was to Elliot and Evan what Karl Town was to the mysterious man. Home turf advantage! If the mysterious man went into the mountains, he'd definitely be the one at a disadvantage. "Besides, it's less suspicious if we go. He'd never guess you'd entrust something so important to me and Evan." "He'll be watching you, not us. It makes the most sense for me and Evan to go." Tarquin frowned and thought for a long time before agreeing with Elliot's plan. It really was the best option for Elliot, Evan, and White to go together. "Get Evan back here. You two will leave today. I'll figure out what to tell your mother." Elliot nodded and quickly contacted Evan. Elijah looked up with his small face and said, "Daddy, I want to go too." Tarquin shook his head. "Not you. You have another mission. I need you to help me investigate some people." Tarquin sent all the photos of the people from the video recording to Elijah. There were researchers who worked on the 8th generation virus back in the day, and also members of the evil organization that masterminded this whole conspiracy. Tarquin said to Elijah very seriously, "These photos and information were provided by your grandparents. They're all connected to the 8th generation virus. Besides them, there are others we don't know about. We need to dig them all up and take them all down in one fell swoop! This is a huge, important mission, just as important as Elliot and Evan delivering the virus." Hearing this, Elijah immediately said, "I promise to complete the mission!" Tarquin gently ruffled Elijah's hair. "Thank you, Elijah!" A while later, Clayton Hawkins and Pamela Patel returned with Evan and Baby. The two little ones were thrilled to see Tarquin. "Daddy!" Baby was wearing a little princess dress Pamela had bought for her. Baby had her hair in cute space buns and wore a sparkly face gem on her forehead. She looked like a little princess straight out of a fairy tale. She ran over to Tarquin, hugged his leg, and looked up at him. "Daddy, uppies!" Tarquin's heart instantly melted. He quickly picked up his daughter. "Did you miss Daddy?" "Yes!" the little girl said, leaning in to give Tarquin a peck on the cheek. Tarquin laughed out loud, his grin so wide you couldn't have wiped it off his face. "Daddy missed Baby too!" Clayton asked with a smile, "There's food in the kitchen. Have you eaten?" Tarquin replied, "I'm not hungry. I'll eat with Elysia later." "Is Irene still sleeping?" "Yeah, she went to bed late last night." It wasn't that she went to bed late; it was that he had thoroughly worn her out that morning. The two elders tactfully didn't press the issue and said, "Well, you watch the kids for a bit. Your mom and I are going out for groceries. We'll cook lunch ourselves." Tarquin smiled and nodded. "Thanks, Mom and Dad." "What's there to be formal about in a family? We're heading out." "Bye, Grandpa! Bye, Grandma!" "Okay, bye- bye." After they left, Tarquin had Elijah entertain his sister while he talked to Evan about the trip to the mountains. When Evan heard he was going into the mountains with a mission, he was beyond excited. For him, this was a dream job! "Did Mom agree?" "I'll handle your mom. You guys just go." "Okay, deal!" Evan quickly contacted the scarred master. The master, of course, had no objections. Wherever Evan went, he would follow. Soon, the old man, two kids, and a pet set off.

Chapter 1532

After they left, Tarquin kept Baby company while trying to figure out how to smooth things over with Elysia Thorne. Around noon, Elysia woke up. Tarquin was in the living room playing with Baby. Elysia came downstairs. "How come it's just you two here? Where is everyone else?" Tarquin looked at her, his gaze gentle. "Mom and Dad went out for groceries, Elijah is in the study upstairs, and Elliot and Evan left with my grandpa. You must be hungry. Dad left some food for you, I'll go get it." Elysia first kissed her daughter, then asked him, "Where did Elliot and Evan go with Grandpa?" Tarquin acted nonchalant. "I'm not sure. All I know is they might be gone for a few days." Elysia was taken aback. "Gone for a few days? And you don't know where?" Tarquin said, "Elliot and Evan said Grandpa was in a bad mood and they wanted to keep him company for a few days. I couldn't really say no, so I agreed." Elysia quickly asked, "What's wrong with Grandpa?" "I don't know that either. Elliot and Evan know, but they said it's Grandpa's secret and they can't tell anyone." Elysia was speechless. Seeing her worried expression, Tarquin comforted her, "Grandpa can handle himself. Elliot and Evan will be safe with him, you don't need to worry. And from the way they talked, it doesn't sound like a huge problem. They just feel bad for him and want to be there for him." Elysia naturally trusted her grandpa; she knew he was highly skilled. Tarquin said, "Why don't you give Elliot, Evan, or Grandpa a call and ask for more details?" Elysia immediately shook her head. "They said it's a secret. It wouldn't be right for me to pry." Tarquin smiled. "Then don't overthink it. It's not a big deal. Just think of it as Great-Grandpa taking his great-grandsons out for a few days. They'll be back once he's feeling better." Men are natural-born actors; they don't need any training. Tarquin's performance was flawless, and he successfully fooled Elysia. Seeing that he wasn't tense, Elysia stopped worrying too. "Grandpa doesn't really interact with outsiders. What could be bothering him?" Tarquin said, "He's quiet, but he definitely has things on his mind. Elliot is thoughtful and Evan is adorable. They'll surely cheer him up. Don't worry." Elysia let out a long breath. "I wonder how many days they'll be gone?" "At least a week, I'd say." Elysia's eyes widened. "That long? They're missing school." Tarquin said, "It's a worthwhile sacrifice for Grandpa's sake." Elysia was speechless. Although she didn't want the kids to miss class, he had a point. Grandpa was more important. "Stop thinking about it. I'll go get you something to eat." "Okay." Having successfully deceived his wife, Tarquin breathed a sigh of relief. At noon, Clayton and Pamela cooked lunch together. It was a lively and warm atmosphere. Tarquin's mood had been good, but when he suddenly received news that Lowell was in trouble, his heart skipped a beat. He stepped away from Elysia, found a quiet place, and called Lowell. Lowell was in a pretty bad state. He hadn't suffered like this in years, but his trip to Border City had put him through hell. First, to get close to Dane, he had played the victim, rolling down a hill and injuring himself, swelling his foot. Then, to test the madman, Dane had stomped hard on his foot, making the injury worse. Who would have thought that while rushing to save Diaz last night, he'd forgotten he was injured and, in a moment of carelessness, got stabbed by an enemy. The knife wound was in his abdomen; it missed his vital organs, so it wasn't life-threatening. Blood gushed from the wound-a steady, terrifying crimson stream.

Chapter 1533

Dane was there too, and his face went pale with fright. He threw himself over to protect Lowell, trembling all over. He tried to stanch the bleeding with his hands, but the blood just streamed through his fingers. Dane was both terrified and heartbroken, crying so hard he couldn't even speak... Lowell

didn't want Tarquin to worry, so he told his men not to tell him. But the bodyguard was still concerned and couldn't help but tell Tarquin today. As for the informants planted by the mysterious man, they naturally met a bad end. You reap what you sow. Since they dared to be the devil's minions, they had to have the courage to face the consequences. Lowell didn't call the police; he just had them thrown into a psychiatric hospital. He even had a good word with the doctors, asking them to give the men 'extra special' care. Whatever intensive therapy or "behavioral correction" they required, the hospital had free rein. With that stab wound, Lowell wouldn't be leaving Border City anytime soon. It was a good chance for him to stay there and oversee the construction of the school and library. When Lowell spoke to Tarquin, his tone was light, and he kept making fun of himself. Tarquin listened with a deep frown, said nothing, and hung up. The moment he hung up, he called another number with a dark expression. "Clean out all of his spies. From now on, if you find any, deal with them immediately. Don't ask me again. If they end up dead, I'll take responsibility!" After giving the order, he was still furious and turned his attention to Karl Town. He decided to go after the leaders in Karl Town: the mayor, the hospital director, the police chief, the school superintendent, Social Services, and so on. They weren't in the video from Kendrick and Elizabeth Gonzalez, but Karl Town was the mysterious man's territory, so these people had to be his. Tarquin sent all the dirt he had collected to dozens of media outlets in Alerasia. He paid a high price for the Alerasian media to give it high-profile exposure. That afternoon, Karl Town was all over the news in Alerasia, causing a massive uproar. The mysterious man called him. "What's gotten into you?" Tarquin warned through gritted teeth, "I'm putting this on your tab for what happened to Lowell. We'll settle it all later!" The mysterious man sighed. "And here I thought you were starting your counterattack! You care so much about Lowell, it's making me a little jealous." Tarquin couldn't be bothered to waste his breath and hung up. Looking at the photo sent by the bodyguard in Border City, Tarquin's expression was grim. Lowell was lying in a hospital bed in his gown, his eyes closed, looking very weak. Tarquin was agitated. His concern for Lowell wasn't spoken, but felt deep inside. Just like their brotherly bond-understated and real. ... Meanwhile, Elliot and Evan arrived at Darkfort City airport at 2 PM. They entered the mountains at 4 PM and stepped into the uninhabited zone a little after 5. They ate something at the edge of the zone and continued on their way. The scarred master, afraid of tiring out the two boys, wanted to set up the tent before it got dark so they could rest. Elliot was in a hurry. "Let's go a bit further. I'm not tired yet." Evan also said, "If my brother's not tired, I'm definitely not tired." The master could only nod and keep walking. It wasn't until around 9 PM, when Elliot truly couldn't walk anymore, that they finally stopped to rest. The master was in charge of setting up the tent and starting a fire. Evan said to Elliot, "Tomorrow morning, let's go a little deeper. If we run into a bear, I'll have it carry you so you won't be so tired." Elliot smiled. "It's fine, I'm not that tired." Among the three of them, he was the one who wasn't as strong, and his stamina was a bit lower. That night, the two boys rested while the master stood watch outside. In the middle of the night, he would occasionally step into the tent to pull the blankets over them, treating them like his own great-grandchildren. The night passed peacefully. They continued their journey at dawn and set up camp again at night to rest. But in the dead of night, something strange happened in their surroundings!

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Pairs of large, glowing green eyes had them completely surrounded! The master frowned. He had experienced this scene on his last trip to the mountains, so he didn't make any rash moves. He watched his surroundings warily, went into the tent, and woke Evan up. "Those things outside, are they looking

for White?" Evan quickly got up, ran out of the tent, and took one look. His little brow furrowed, and he clenched his fists! White was awake too, coiled around Evan's wrist, its head raised, flicking its tongue at whatever was in front of them. The eyes in the darkness stirred when they saw White. Evan confirmed again, asking White, "Are they all enemies?" White turned to look at him and flicked its tongue. "..."

Evan clenched his jaw and said to the master, "Master, help me protect my brother. I'm going to take care of some personal business." Without giving the master a chance to reply, he darted forward in a flash, disappearing into the dense woods in seconds. The master was worried. "Evan!" Evan's voice echoed back, "Don't worry, I won't get hurt." The master wanted to chase after him but couldn't leave Elliot alone, so he could only frown and stare into the distance. White remained wrapped around Evan's wrist, constantly flicking its tongue as it watched him. Evan said, "You don't worry either. I've been holding it in since I didn't get to avenge you last time. I have to teach them a lesson this time, or they'll think you have no one backing you up and are still as easy to bully as when you were little!" Evan charged into the middle of the glowing eyes and scanned the area. He frowned, grabbed a venomous snake, and in front of all of them, driving his blade clean through the serpent's skull. Though he was young, his presence was formidable! He didn't hesitate, slicing the snake in two! The atmosphere immediately changed, becoming even more sinister and terrifying! The pairs of eyes stared intently at Evan and White, watching them like predators. Evan grew up in the mountains and wasn't afraid of them. He was worried about waking Elliot, so he led them further away. But Elliot woke up anyway. Seeing Evan wasn't there, he quickly got out of the tent. "Old Master, where's Evan?" The master glanced toward a flashing light in the distance. "Over there." Elliot frowned. "What's he doing?" The master said, "He went to fight. White's kind showed up, just like last time." Elliot was speechless. He knew Evan was getting revenge for White. When Evan had found White, the snake had been on the verge of death, likely attacked by its own kind. Animals, like people, had their own struggles. Evan had always kept White's grudge in his heart; he saw White as his best friend. The master asked with a frown, "Will Evan be in danger?" Elliot shook his head. "No. Evan can be impulsive, but he knows his limits. After we got back last time, he was always tinkering with new weapons specifically designed for them." A long time later, Evan returned. He had no injuries, but his face was smeared with dirt. Elliot handed him a tissue. "Wipe your face." Evan asked curiously, "Bro, how did you wake up? Did I wake you?" "No, I just woke up on my own. Did you get your revenge this time?" "Yep! I taught them a lesson for now. When I grow up, I'll take White and we'll charge right into their den! They think they can bully White just because there are more of them? White has me!" White flicked its tongue at him and lowered its head. Evan smiled and gently bumped White's head with his small fist. "Partners for life! You just wait. When I grow up, I'll get your revenge!" Elliot didn't know the details of White's grudge, so he didn't ask. "Alright, hurry up and get some rest. We have to get an early start tomorrow."

Chapter 1535

They had to get the virus to their Great-Grandma as soon as possible. The sooner she had it, the sooner she could develop a cure! Once the cure was ready, the crisis would be over, and they could act without restraint, getting their revenge and settling all scores! ... On October 6th, Elysia and Tarquin flew to Silver City with Baby and Elijah. They were going to pick up Emmett and fly directly back to Jindale City from there. Clayton and Pamela didn't go with them. Something came up at the Hawkins family company, so Clayton had to return to Jindale City a few days later. On the plane, Elysia asked Tarquin, "Have Elliot and Evan contacted you today?" There was no signal in the mountains. The communication

devices Howard had rigged up only worked within the mountains and couldn't contact the outside world. Tarquin couldn't reach them, so he lied, "They contacted me this morning. Said everything's fine, but they'll be back in a few more days." Elysia sighed. "I wish they'd give me a call. I miss them so much. Don't they miss me?" Tarquin said with a smile, "Of course they do. They ask about you every time they contact me. They're probably just a little scared you'll scold them since they left without talking to you first, kind of a 'better to ask for forgiveness than permission' situation." Elysia sighed again. "They left because of Grandpa. Of course I wouldn't scold them. I'm not unreasonable." Tarquin smiled. "The kids are growing up. They can't stay by our side forever. Just think of this as getting used to it early." Elysia felt a bit down but didn't suspect anything else. After arriving in Silver City, they went straight to the hospital. Emmett was overjoyed to see them. "Daddy, Mommy!" Tarquin scooped the little boy up into his arms. "I haven't seen you in a few days, and you're looking more like a little gentleman every day." Emmett said, "Grandpa taught me a lot these past few days!" Tarquin's smile was full of affection. "Have you had a good time?" "Yeah, but I really missed Daddy, Mommy, and my brothers and sister." "We missed you too." Old Mr. White was deeply moved and grateful to see how close Emmett and Tarquin were. A child's heart is simple; they'll cling to you if you're good to them and avoid you if you're not. The fact that Emmett liked Tarquin so much was proof of how well Tarquin treated him. As his biological grandfather, he was naturally grateful that Tarquin treated the boy as his own, even though he wasn't. After the greetings, Old Mr. White said, "Dinner's on me tonight. I'd like to treat you all." Tarquin and Elysia didn't refuse. "Okay." Maria was very weak now, unable to eat and surviving on an IV drip. But she had a positive attitude and was happy to see Elysia and the others. Although Elysia had medical skills, there was nothing she could do; no one could cure Maria's illness. They spent the afternoon at the hospital, then headed back to their hotel to settle in before dinner. Just as they got to the hotel, Elysia received a text from Blossom Blythe: [Elysia, are you coming back tomorrow?] Elysia replied: [I am. We'll be in Jindale City tomorrow afternoon.] Blossom asked again: [Is Mr. Bradford coming back with you?] Elysia replied: [We're coming back together. What's up?] It was a moment before Blossom replied: [Can you ask Mr. Bradford to have a talk with Mr. Huber? His girlfriend is going way too far!] [Mr. Huber did Winona a huge favor, so she's been swallowing her pride and putting up with it out of respect for him. Winona can take it, but it breaks my heart to watch!] The moment Elysia heard that Winona Newsom was being bullied, she frowned. She didn't text back. Instead, she exited the chat and called Blossom directly to ask what was going on.

Chapter 1536

said Winona was still living in the house she had shared with Zane. She claimed Winona couldn't bear to move out because she cherished the memories of their time together. The internet exploded. What happened to her boss-girl image? She sounds like some pathetic, boy-crazy teenager. The guy almost got her killed, and she's still in love with him? Is she crazy? Besides, Zane was a fugitive. Her being in love with a fugitive... that was... Winona's fans panicked and flooded her social media comments. [Ms. Newsom, is what that bitch Shifra said true?] [Ms. Newsom, it's not like you can't afford a new house. Why are you still living in the one you shared with Zane?] [Ms. Newsom, Zane nearly destroyed your family! Are you really still in love with him?] [Ms. Newsom, that monster doesn't deserve your love!] [Ms. Newsom, just come out and make a statement! If you just say that bitch Shifra is trying to frame you, we'll go tear her apart!] While the fans were in a frenzy, the trolls jumped at the chance to attack: [Make a statement? Go look at Shifra's posts from a few days ago. The background is clearly the house

Winona and Zane lived in! People have already posted side-by-side comparisons. It's solid proof!] [To put it nicely, she's love-obsessed. To put it bluntly, she's pathetic!] [Winona must have a victim complex. She deserves to be mistreated by scumbags! She should just tie herself to Zane and let him abuse her every day!]

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Chapter 1537

[And she's supposed to be a role model? I'm going to report her to the major networks. A pathetic person like her has no right to be a public figure. She needs to be canceled!] Shifra's one live stream had thrown Winona into a storm of controversy. What's more, Shifra had also revealed the detailed location of Winona and Zane's former home. Before her live stream even ended, paparazzi were already staking out Riverview Manor, waiting to snap photos of Winona. Some even pretended to be delivery drivers to sneak into the community and peer through Winona's windows. With a massive headache, Winona quietly slipped out of the complex and went to hide at Blossom's place. The internet was in an uproar. With trolls fanning the flames, Winona's public image was nosediving. As the situation escalated, Shifra started crying on her live stream, begging netizens not to attack Winona, acting as if she'd accidentally wronged her dear friend. Blossom was about to explode with anger. "She has the nerve to cry? I refuse to believe a grown woman like her didn't know what kind of impact those words would have on Winona!" "Winona has always had this image of a clear-headed, strong woman, and now she's been painted as some annoying, love-obsessed fool!" "And the subject is Zane, of all people! Zane is a wanted fugitive!" "The way she framed it, if I didn't know the truth, I'd be out there attacking Winona too!" "In just a few hours, Winona lost tens of thousands of followers, real ones too, while Shifra's fame skyrocketed!" "She's dating Mr. Huber, so why is she constantly dragging Winona into things? What's her problem with Winona?!" "And Winona, she's infuriating too! She's being bullied like this, and she still says it's no big deal! Yes, Mr. Huber helped her out, but she can't just let herself be humiliated like this!" Elysia had been at the hospital all afternoon with Emmett and Maria and hadn't seen the news. Listening to Blossom, she quickly opened TikTok to check. The situation was even worse than Blossom described! Some uninformed netizens, egged on by others, weren't just leaving hateful comments on Winona's accounts. They were also flooding the pages of the brands Winona endorsed, threatening to

boycott them. If the brands continued to work with Winona, the public would stop buying their products. They also went to the social media pages of production companies and directors Winona worked with, demanding she not be cast as the lead. If they dared to film with her, everyone would boycott it! Many people were also tagging major news networks and media outlets, accusing Winona of having zero principles and demanding she be permanently deplatformed. Elysia quickly scanned the news and then specifically looked up Shifra's account. Shifra's latest video had been posted an hour ago: she appeared without makeup, crying her eyes out, and choked out an explanation that she was just heartbroken for Winona and trying to stick up for her, never intending to cause her any trouble. She even bowed in the video, apologizing to Winona and her fans. Her attitude was incredibly sincere, and her tearful appearance was designed to evoke pity. Elysia was both speechless and furious. What was Shifra's game? Was she playing the victim or just being a two-faced snake? If she was worried about Winona and Keaton living next door to each other, she could have just told Winona directly! Pulling a stunt like this clearly wasn't just about making Winona move; she wanted to completely destroy her! In this day and age, everyone admired people who were level-headed and self-aware. Who would like a foolish, love-obsessed girl? Forget that Zane almost destroyed Winona's family; even if he hadn't, it would still be unacceptable for her to love him! Zane wasn't just a scumbag; he was a fugitive! The police had announced that he was involved not only in financial crimes but also human trafficking, organ selling, and murder! What female celebrity would dare to publicly say she was in love with someone like that? This wasn't just a matter of being love-obsessed anymore; it was a fundamental question of her moral compass!

Chapter 1538

It was fine that Winona used to love Zane, because she didn't know his true nature back then. But to still love him after knowing the truth? That meant her values were all messed up! Could someone with a twisted moral compass be a public figure? She refused to believe Shifra didn't understand the severity of the situation! Suppressing her anger, Elysia asked Blossom, "Is Winona with you right now?" "Yeah, her agent is here. They're talking in the study." "Did Shifra call Winona?" "Of course she did, but Winona didn't pick up. So she had Mr. Huber call. The second Winona answered, Shifra started crying and apologizing. I almost threw up listening to it! If Winona hadn't stopped me, I would have grabbed the phone and cursed her out up and down!" Elysia frowned. "What did Keaton say?" Blossom was fuming. "What could he say? Apologize on behalf of his girlfriend, of course! And then he said he'd take responsibility for the damages caused to Winona! How is he going to do that? Pay her? Winona might not be as rich as him, but she's not short on money!" Elysia was angry too. "You take care of Winona for now. I'll have Tarquin go talk to him!" Just then, Tarquin came out to the terrace looking for her. Hearing the tone of Elysia's voice, he was puzzled. And she had used his full name, which clearly meant she was angry! Tarquin had no idea what he had done to upset her and cautiously walked over with an apologetic smile. "What took so long? Aren't you cold?" Elysia shot him a look that could kill, her eyes burning with fury. Tarquin was even more confused. "Blossom, I'll talk to you later. Let's catch up later." Elysia hung up the phone, her brow furrowed as she glared at him, grinding her teeth. "Do you know about what happened with Winona?" Tarquin genuinely didn't. "What happened to her?" Elysia opened TikTok and pulled up the trending topics. "Take a good look!" Tarquin quickly scanned through them and finally understood. That jackass Keaton—he's the ultimate liability! He'd been implicated by him yet again! Because he and Keaton were close, whenever Winona got hurt because of Keaton, Elysia would

take it out on him! Last time it was because of Beatrix Sutton, and Elysia had chewed him out. Then it was Alicia, and Elysia had chewed him out again. It had only been a few days, and now Keaton had unleashed a Shifra! Tarquin mentally cursed Keaton a few times, then said with a frown, "That son of a bitch Keaton needs to be taught a lesson again. You wait. When I get back to Jindale City, I'll beat him up! After I'm done, I'll hand him over to Winona. I wouldn't even care if she decided to have him neutered!" Elysia's brow was still furrowed in anger. "What good would beating him up do? What good would neutering him do? Can that make up for what Winona has been through?" "Tarquin, does our Winona owe your friend something? Ever since she met him, she hasn't had a moment of peace!" "First, Beatrix came to our door to provoke her. Then Alicia smashed her head open, forcing Winona to get stitches! Her wound isn't even fully healed, and now Shifra has thrown her into the eye of a public storm!" "No one cares what kind of girlfriends Keaton dates, but can he please not drag our Winona into it?!" "He helped Winona, sure, but he can't just keep tormenting her like this!" Tarquin frowned, his expression serious. "Don't you dare call him my friend. He's not my friend anymore! A scumbag like that doesn't deserve to be my friend!" "Calm down first. Ask Winona how she wants to handle this. She just has to say the word; she won't have to lift a finger. I'll arrange for people to do it." "If she wants Keaton gone, I'll handle the dirty work and make sure no one ever finds the body. Tonight." Elysia was speechless. Tarquin's attitude was so cooperative that her anger subsided a little.

Chapter 1539

"It's not that I'm being unreasonable. Tell me, shouldn't I blame him? Even though he didn't do these things himself, they were all caused by him!" Tarquin nodded. "You should! It's not just you, I'm angry too!" Elysia said, "If he didn't date those trashy girlfriends, how would Winona have gotten hurt?!" Tarquin replied, "Exactly! The guy's got zero standards-he'll sleep with anyone." Elysia: "This is the third time! How long has it been, and Winona has been dragged into his mess three times!" Tarquin: "That's why I'm saying he's not a decent person. He's got major problems!" Elysia: "I'm so angry. The whole internet is attacking Winona, and she's still putting up with it out of respect for him!" Tarquin: "Winona doesn't have to put up with it. She should curse him out and fight back. I'll take responsibility for all the consequences. I'll clean up the mess for her! My wife's best friend can't be treated like this!" Elysia glared at him a few more times and let out a heavy sigh. "I'm so mad! Keaton is really a piece of work!" Tarquin saw that she was only scolding Keaton and not him, so he knew her anger towards him had faded. He quickly pulled her into his arms, affectionately ruffling her hair in a comforting pat. He soothed her, "Don't be angry, don't be angry. It's not worth getting upset over that son of a bitch." (Keaton: "...You backstabber!") Elysia mumbled against Tarquin's chest, "You call him. Make him figure out how to clean this up! I don't care what method he uses, he has to restore Winona's reputation!" Tarquin said, "Just restoring it isn't enough. It has to be even better than before!" Hearing this, Elysia looked up at him, giving him a satisfied look. Her resentment towards him completely vanished. "You better not learn from him! Attracting trouble and drama all day long!" Tarquin immediately replied, "My wife is the most beautiful woman in the world. No other woman could ever tempt me. I'd have to be an idiot to sneak around behind my gorgeous wife's back to get close to those shady women." "Don't worry, I definitely won't be like him. I dislike him just as much as you do." Elysia knew Tarquin was just saying that to make her happy. If he really disliked Keaton, they wouldn't be friends. The two of them were as thick as thieves! But everyone loves to hear sweet nothings. Elysia's heart felt sweet, and her mood stabilized. "Keaton isn't completely useless. He risked himself to save Winona back then and even

took out that precious emerald artifact to help fool Zane. We all remember that favor." "If it weren't for his girlfriends constantly bothering Winona, I definitely wouldn't say anything bad about him." Tarquin took the opportunity to speak up for Keaton. "He just has a thing for attracting drama, but his character is decent enough. He treasured that piece of emerald. Someone once offered him a sky-high price, but he wouldn't sell it." "But then Winona kicked it under the bed, and it broke into several pieces. Its value and beauty were greatly diminished." "Keaton was heartbroken. He was down about it for a long time, but he never asked Winona for compensation. He never even mentioned it to her." Elysia was surprised. "Keaton's emerald was broken by Winona?!" "Yeah, it was that night when Winona went to the Huber family's private chapel to bring him food." "...Why doesn't Winona know?" "The thing was in a corner. Winona didn't do it on purpose; she didn't notice." Elysia was speechless. She knew the value of that emerald. If it weren't for that piece, Zane might not have even come back then. That emerald wasn't just priceless; it was one of Keaton's most cherished possessions. And Winona had broken it, but he never even mentioned it to her...

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Elysia let out a long sigh. "Keaton... he's a hard one to judge." If you said he was a good guy, his reputation in relationships was terrible. If you said he was a bad guy, he was actually very loyal and a great friend. Tarquin said, "Keaton, aside from being unreliable in relationships, is impeccable when it comes to his family and friends. He's a good son, and he's loyal." Elysia didn't deny it. In front of Richard Huber and Janelle, Keaton was indeed a filial son who wouldn't fight back or talk back. And to his friends, he was indeed loyal! As for being unreliable in relationships... he never forced anyone, never two-timed, and he was serious about every relationship. He just had very short relationships and changed girlfriends too quickly! But his ex-girlfriends all gave him rave reviews. Elysia sighed again. "His love life has nothing to do with us, but he can't let it drag Winona down. Winona has been through enough." "Zane was her first love. From high school sweethearts to the altar, she loved him for so many years, only to find out he never loved her for a single day. She was just a pawn in his game." "A pawn that was to be eliminated after being used!" "To be harmed like that by the person she loved, and then held captive for over a year... how much pain must she be in?" "She doesn't like to spread negativity, so she's always upbeat and optimistic in front of family and friends, but I know she's hurting inside." "The wounds Zane gave her might never heal in this lifetime." "We all try to avoid mentioning anything about Zane around her now, but Shifra just had to drag it out for public discussion. That in itself is a form of harm to her." "The topic of her and Zane was just starting to fade from the public eye, and Shifra threw it back out there for everyone to gossip about! Isn't that just ripping open old wounds?" "Every time she reopens those old wounds, she has to relive the agony all over again." "Shifra isn't just ruining Winona's reputation; she's stabbing her in the heart!" When Winona hurt, Elysia hurt. When Elysia hurt, Tarquin hurt. He frowned, his eyes filled with a chilling anger. "Don't worry. Winona won't suffer for nothing. Keaton will take care of this." Elysia took another breath. Just then, Baby came out looking for her, so she said to Tarquin, "Contact Keaton. Handle this immediately!" "Okay." Elysia went back inside, and Tarquin stood on the terrace, calling Keaton. Keaton picked up instantly, clearly scrolling on his phone. Tarquin asked with a frown, "How are you going to handle the situation with Winona?" Keaton shot back, "You know about it too? Did Elysia get to you?" Tarquin's voice was cold. "Let me be clear. If this keeps up, our friendship is over. You've infuriated Elysia, and she definitely won't let me hang out with you anymore." "If she says the word, I'll cut you off for good. I can't make my wife unhappy because of

you." Keaton clutched his chest dramatically. "Listen to yourself. Are those the words of a human? My heart hurts. You're a terrible friend!" Tarquin rolled his eyes. "Have you figured out a solution yet?" Keaton sighed. "She's a total nightmare." "Serves you right. You brought this on yourself! Is this related to Beatrix?" "Probably not. Shifra did this on her own." "You and Winona have no issues, so why is she so hostile towards her? Do they have a private grudge?" "No grudge. I haven't figured it out either. I asked her, but she just cries and says it was an accident." Tarquin snorted. "And you believe that?" Keaton sighed. "Of course not. But every time I ask, she just cries. I don't know what to do with her."