

Hitched 1541

Chapter 1541

Tarquin frowned. "You've actually fallen for her?"

Keaton said, "I really like her. She's different from the other girls."

Before Tarquin could respond, Keaton continued.

"She reminds me of someone. It's like I see a glimpse of Clementine in her."

Tarquin froze.

At the mention of Clementine, he winced, biting back the stinging lecture he'd been about to give Keaton.

He suddenly craved a cigarette, patting his pockets, but they were empty.

Lately, it wasn't just Elysia; even the kids were on his case about it. He could barely sneak in a few a day.

After a moment of silence, Tarquin said, "Winona's the victim here. You owe her an explanation. Shifra is your girlfriend, and Winona is only putting up with this because of you. You need to take responsibility."

Keaton said, "Don't worry, I'll definitely make it right with her."

Tarquin reminded him, "She's a celebrity; her reputation is everything. This is even more serious than the time you landed her in the hospital getting stitches. You need to think this through carefully."

Keaton sighed again. "Got any bright ideas?"

"Nope. I can't help you with this one. You're on your own!"

With that, Tarquin hung up.

When it came to handling problems with women, Keaton was the expert. Tarquin only knew how to sweet-talk Elysia, but Keaton could charm just about any woman on the planet!

The thought of Keaton saying Shifra was like Clementine made Tarquin's frown deepen. What a headache!

Keaton had always been the golden boy, pampered by his parents and shielded from the world's harsh edges by a life of pure luxury.

The few times he'd felt wronged as a kid were usually at the hands of his sister.

She had that classic older-sister authority over him, not hesitating to give him a good smack now and then. But could you really call it being wronged by your sister?

Jessamine Huber loved him to death!

If it weren't for love, he might never have suffered at all.

It just goes to show you, fate is fair. If you don't have other hardships, it'll punish you with the pains of love...

In a private villa in Jindale City.

Keaton sat on a lounge chair, watching the sunset with a heavy heart.

He knew, clear as day, that there was something off about Shifra, but he didn't want to break up with her.

It had been years since he'd felt that spark again. Even if she was just a substitute, for him, it was enough.

Then his thoughts turned to Winona, and Keaton sighed.

It was so obvious. She was the victim in all this. He'd done her wrong.

Keaton glanced back. Inside,

the floor-to-ceiling window

still crying, looking

completely heartbroken. Sontent

If it had been any other girl, he would have broken up with her on the spot.

But... she just had to look like *her*.

Keaton let out a long breath and went back into the living room.

Shifra's eyes were red as she looked up at him pitifully.

Keaton pulled a tissue from the box and handed it to her. "Wipe your tears. We need to talk."

Shifra asked, "Are you breaking up with me?"

Keaton replied, "Whether we do or not is up to you."

Shifra was confused. "?"

Keaton sat down across from her.

"If you still want to be with me after you hear what I have to say, then we'll continue.

As for Winona, I'll handle it."

Shifra asked quickly, "What do you have to say?"

Keaton lit a cigarette and took a couple of drags before speaking.

"I'll tell you my part later. First, let's talk about you and Winona. If you're honest the decision to break up is in your hands But if you dare to keep lying, were done right now. No more discussion."

Shifra bit her lip, seeing he wasn't joking. She quickly weighed the pros and cons, then, with red-rimmed eyes she clenched her jaw and said, "...I did set her up on purpose."

Keaton already knew the answer, so he wasn't surprised. He just frowned and

asked, "Why? Tell me your reasons."

Chapter 1542

Shifra said pitifully, "She lives next door to you, and it made me insecure."

"Even though she's been married before, she's just so beautiful and successful. And you and your parents are all so nice to her. I was afraid she'd try to steal you from me."

"So I deliberately leaked her address. I just wanted her to move."

Keaton tapped the ash from his cigarette. "I figured that much. What else? Just making her move isn't enough to ruin her."

Shifra's lips trembled. She was silent for a long moment before bursting into tears. "I'm jealous of her."

"She comes from a good family, she's got it all, and she's so lucky! She was held captive by her husband for over a year and still made it back alive!"

"The main thing is, after she came back, she managed to make a comeback, and she's even more famous than before!"

"Do you have any idea how hard it is for someone like me to make it in the entertainment industry without a benefactor?"

"I've spent countless hours in the dance studio, starved myself to stay thin, and spent every waking moment sucking up to the right people."

"Sometimes, just for a few seconds of screen time, I've had to drink until I was literally sick to my stomach and couldn't stand up."

"But no matter how hard I work, I just can't get my big break!"

"I have the looks, I have the work ethic, what does Winona have that I don't?"

"Why does she get to escape death and then come back to thrive in the industry, while I can't?"

"I'm so, so jealous of her!"

"Jealousy turns into hate, so I wanted to destroy her!"

"I never had the chance before, but after I got involved with you, I finally had my opportunity..."

"From posting her autograph, to dragging you to her house, even inviting her to my best friend's birthday party—it was all part of my plan, step by step."

"I used her to generate buzz, get myself more followers, and then during the livestream, I pretended to accidentally throw her under the bus."

"I just wanted to ruin her."

Keaton frowned, smoking his cigarette in silence. After a while, he finally spoke.

"If you were just fighting with other girls out of jealousy over me, I would have defended you."

"If you were just getting close to Winona to ride her coattails, to network and pave

the way for your own career, I wouldn't have been angry either."

"I don't mind if you use my connections to build your own network while we're dating."

"You're my girlfriend. That's a perk you're entitled to."

"But for you to hurt my friend like this... I'm not happy about it."

Shifra's eyes were red and swollen from crying. "I'm sorry..."

Keaton said, "The person you should be apologizing to is Winona, not me. Make a public apology and a clarification Get on a livestream and repeat everything you just told me."

Shifra's eyes shot wide open. "A public apology? My life will be over! The entire internet will hate my guts..." She broke into a fresh sob.

Keaton frowned and said, "Everyone in this world has their own struggles, not just you."

"You only see Winona's glamorous public life, not the suffering she endures behind the scenes."

"Just because you confessed doesn't mean this is over. Winona shouldn't have to pay the price for your jealousy."

Shifra's voice was hoarse from

crying. "I was wrong, I really know I

was wrong. I can apologize to

Winona but can we please not make it public? My biggest dream is to make it in the entertainment industry, and I've given so much for this dream, I..."

Shifra cried about all the efforts she had made for her dream.

Keaton waited quietly for her to finish before saying, "But your Maths

efforts have nothing to do with

Winona. You hurt her, and you have

to take responsibility."

Chapter 1543

Seeing that Keaton wouldn't budge, Shifra wiped her tears and said, "I will definitely apologize to Winona. She's the victim. I'll do whatever she wants regarding the

apology. Just let me talk to her first, okay?"

Keaton didn't answer, so Shifra added, "If Winona also demands a public apology, if that's the only way to resolve this properly, I'll do it!"

Keaton let out a long breath and finally nodded.

Shifra sniffled. "Can we talk about us now?"

Keaton lit another cigarette and confessed, "The reason I was into you is because you reminded me of someone from my past. You look a lot like an old friend of mine."

"To put it bluntly, you're a stand-in. It's not you that I like."

"If you can't accept that, we can break up right now. I won't force you."

Shifra stared blankly at Keaton, completely stunned. She thought he was attracted to her because she was talented and beautiful, because she'd gotten lucky. She never imagined she was just a substitute!

Keaton's confession was blunt, but his words were devastating to her.

The room was quiet for a moment before Keaton spoke again.

"I'll give you some time to think it over. Let me know when you've decided."

He stubbed out his cigarette in the ashtray and got up to leave.

As soon as he got back to his car, Janelle called again.

Ever since the news about Winona broke, Janelle had been bombarding him. Dozens of missed calls, hundreds of texts, and hundreds of WhatsApp messages! Keaton didn't dare answer her calls or reply to her texts, but he was afraid he'd give his own mother a heart attack, so he called Jessamine. "Jess, can you help me calm Mom down?"

Jessamine said furiously, "You're really going to be the death of Mom! If I didn't have to stay here with her, I'd come over there and slap you myself!"

"What is wrong with you? What is going on between you and Winona? And why is that two-faced snake Shifra targeting her?!"

Keaton said, "It's a long story. I can't give you the answer right now."

Jessamine didn't press him for details, but her tone was firm. "I'm telling you, if you get together with Winona, you have my blessing. As for that Shifra girl she can hell"

"You can tell just by looking at her that she's fake. It's one thing to ride someone's coattails, but to go and hurt them like that? She's got that?, She's got

serious character flaws

"Didn't Winona put off moving just to take care of you?"

"I heard from Winona before that she was planning to move. It was only after you were seriously injured and moved in next door that she stayed to look after you!" "And what does she get for it? Your girlfriend claims it was because of Zane!"

"First there was Alicia, now this Shifra pops up. You're nothing but trouble! What does Winona owe you, huh?!"

"I don't care what's really going on between you two, Winona is the victim here. You'd better fix this, and fast. Don't make me come over there and smack you!"

Keaton sighed. "...I know. Just help me calm Mom down. All this anger is bad for her health, and you need to take it easy too, you're pregnant."

Jessamine shot back, "If you really want us to calm down, then solve the problem!"

"Mom has me here, so don't you worry about her! Just focus on Winona!"

"And another thing, don't even think

about coming home until this is

resolved. Dad's already on the

warpath. He's ready

to tear tear you a

new one the second you walk

through the door!"

Angry as she was, he was still her little brother. Jessamine could slap him around herself, but she couldn't bear to see him get a real beating from their father.

After all, when Richard got involved, things tended to get ugly.

Chapter 1544

After hanging up, Keaton sat in his car scrolling through the news.

Seeing the online abuse and calls to boycott Winona, he frowned deeply, then after

a moment's thought, he called her.

Winona answered, "Keep it short."

Keaton asked, "Busy?"

"Binge-watching a show."

"You're in the mood to binge-watch a show right now?"

"What else am I supposed to do? Cry about it? My publicist is handling it, I don't need to worry."

Keaton apologized, "...I'm sorry about what happened today."

"You already said that. Get to the point."

"...Shifra confessed. She did set you up on purpose. First, because you live next door to me and she felt threatened, so she plotted to make you move. Second, because she's jealous of you."

Winona gave a dry laugh and sniped, "You have terrible taste. Each girlfriend is more problematic than the last!"

Keaton had no comeback. He'd dated so many women before without a hitch. This year, Mercury must be in retrograde.

"I told Shifra to make a public apology and clarification, to go live and set the record straight. She wants to talk to you first. Are you willing?"

Winona tightened her jaw. Talk to her first, huh.

She just wanted Winona to let her off the hook with a public apology for Keaton's sake.

Before Winona could speak, Keaton added, "If you do talk to her, you don't have to forgive her for my sake. We're friends, but you don't owe me anything."

"Back when I helped you, it was all because of Tarquin."

"It was Tarquin who asked for my help, so I stepped in. If anyone owes a favor, it's Tarquin to me. It has nothing to do with you."

"With this Shifra business, you do whatever you need to do to feel better."

Winona's lips twitched. "So you two broke up?"

Keaton told the truth. "Not yet."

Winona was puzzled. Keaton always protected his girlfriends. Why wasn't he defending this one, even though they were still together?

Before she could ask, Keaton said, "I may be a player, but I'm not unreasonable. I can't just let her get

away with murder were all adults

here you make a mistake, you face

the consequences."

"I know right from wrong. Even if the victim weren't you, I'd handle it the same way."

Winona pointed out, "If she makes a public apology, her career is over. The internet never forgets. They won't give her a chance to make it in the industry."

Keaton said, "She brought this on herself. She can't blame anyone else. But... if she does apologize publicly and takes responsibility, then as her boyfriend, I'll help her find another way to make a living."

Winona studied him for a long beat, her gaze unreadable, but she remained silent.

Keaton... what could you even say about him? He was hard to figure out.

She let out a breath after a moment of silence.

"I understand what you're saying, and your attitude is decent enough. I won't hold this against you."

Keaton smiled. "I'll buy you a drink sometime to make up for it."

"Okay. By the way, Janelle called me. I overheard Mr. Huber talking about

teaching you a lesson again. You should probably lay low and got go" home for a bit."

Hearing this, Keaton felt a pang of guilt. He had royally screwed her over, and here she was, still worried about him.

It was one thing for Jessamine to warn him, but Winona...

After everything that had happened, it was a miracle she wasn't screaming at him. Instead, she was warning him not to go home and get beaten!

"...I will. You go on and finish your show. And don't worry about today, I'll definitely take care of it."

Winona assumed he just meant he'd make Shifra apologize, so she didn't think much of it.

"I know."

Just as she hung up with Keaton, Shifra called.

This time, she didn't hang up. She answered.

Shifra's voice was hoarse. "Winona, I'd like to meet and talk."

Chapter 1545

Winona narrowed her eyes. "A meeting isn't necessary. If you have something to say, say it on the phone."

Shifra started crying again, her sobs soft and pitiful.

Winona wasn't buying it. She said bluntly, "Sorry, I'm busy. I don't have time to listen

to you cry. If you want to cry, call Keaton and let him listen."

Shifra sniffled. "Winona, I was wrong... what happened today, it really was on purpose. I was just..."

Shifra then repeated the same story she had told Keaton.

Including all the hardships she had endured for her dream.

"I'm so sorry, I was wrong. Can't you forgive me? I'm young and I was foolish."

Winona's reply was swift. "No."

Shifra was stunned. "..."

Winona said, "I don't care if you rode Keaton's coattails to get some buzz, but now you're trying to ruin me. Why would I forgive you for that?"

"Go do your livestream and set the record straight. Once you've clarified everything, we'll be even. And for Keaton's sake, I won't sue you."

Shifra pleaded, "I know I was wrong, but I can't go public! It'll ruin me. This career is my entire dream..." she choked out between fresh sobs."

Winona was completely unsympathetic. "The entertainment industry is your dream, but my acting career is **my** dream. If you don't clarify this, you're destroying my dream. I'm not going to sacrifice myself for you. I'm no some martyr!"

Seeing that Winona wasn't giving her an inch, Shifra choked out, "But Winona, think about it. If I do clarify, will anyone even believe me?"

"They'll just say you forced me to do it, that I was scared of you and that's why I was willing to throw away my future to apologize on a livestream."

Winona gave a cold laugh. "Shifra, I'm several years older than you and I've been in this business for a long time. I've seen more than my fair share of manipulative little actresses who play the victim. Don't even try those pathetic little tricks on me."

"Either you set the record straight publicly, or you can prepare to be buried in lawsuits."

Shifra gritted her teeth. "Winona, I'm Keaton's girlfriend, you..."

Winona cut her off. "Don't bring Keaton into this. He's already spoken to me. The issue between you and me has nothing to do with him."

Bet

"But I will give you one piece of advice, for his sake. It's not easy to get into a dance academy. Don't throw your éducation away over this."

With that, Winona hung up.

Shifra gripped her phone, her breathing ragged with anger.

"Bitch!"

After cursing viciously, she thought for a moment, then made a call.

"I'm going to do a livestream in a bit. I need you to get some people to steer the narrative..."

After laying out her plan, Shifra started the livestream.

Without washing her face, she went live with her red, swollen eyes, looking pitiful and wronged.

"Hi everyone, I'm Shifra. I want to make a public clarification... The

things said today weren't

deliberately hurt Winona because I was jealous... It was all my fault..."

Before her stream even ended, people started steering the narrative in the comments:

"Shifra must have been forced to do this, right? She's ruining her own future!"

"This is so obvious. Winona is just making Shifra the scapegoat to protect her own reputation!"

"Wow, Winona is ruthless. The

moment she's in trouble, she throws

her

to completely destroy Shifra!"

Sally, friend under the bus

The viewers looked at the sobbing Shifra, then at the comments.

For a moment, no one knew what was real and what was fake.

Chapter 1546

After Shifra's clarification, she dropped another bombshell: she had initiated the breakup with Keaton! The internet went wild again. A breakup wasn't surprising, but her being the one to do it? That was unheard of! Keaton had dated so many women, and he was always the one to end things. Shifra was the first to ever dump him! The internet was buzzing with questions, wondering why Shifra would ever walk away from such a massive meal ticket. They flooded the live stream with questions, but Shifra offered no explanation. She only said she was the one at fault, gave a respectful nod to the viewers, and ended the stream. The web was buzzing. Some were focused on the reason for the breakup. Others started stirring up trouble, claiming Shifra's clarification was obviously forced and redirecting the hate toward Winona. Shifra's live-streamed apology did nothing to salvage Winona's reputation. Nor did it cause Shifra's own career to tank. In fact, because she was the one who broke up with Keaton, her popularity soared, and her follower count skyrocketed. Everyone was watching her, waiting for the next chapter. After the stream, Shifra was in high spirits, filled with smug satisfaction. Meanwhile, Winona was lounging on Blossom's bed, munching on an apple and scrolling through the comments. She had expected Shifra to pull a stunt like this, so it wasn't a shock. She just hadn't anticipated the pre-emptive breakup. Keaton sent her a text: [Don't pay any attention to the online comments. I'm working on a solution.] Winona narrowed her eyes and took another bite of her apple. In the girls' group chat: Elysia vented, [I really hate snakes like her. What was Keaton thinking, falling for her?!] Blossom added: [She's so manipulative. I bet she hired those trolls in advance!] Winona typed: [I knew she'd suddenly announce the breakup to steal the spotlight, but I'm curious... why would she be willing to break up with Keaton?] Keaton was a cash cow. How could she let him go? Elysia couldn't figure that part out either, but she was more concerned about Winona. [What now? This is getting worse for you.] Winona replied, [Don't worry. Keaton just texted me. He said he's handling it and told me not to get involved. I'll see what he comes up with.] Elysia frowned. How could Keaton possibly fix this mess? Since she had dinner plans with Old Mr. White that evening, she typed a few more complaints before leaving the chat. At dinnertime, she took the kids to the most famous restaurant in Silver City. Old Mr. White had made the reservation. As soon as they met, he asked, "Keaton and Winona are your friends, aren't they?" Elysia was slightly taken aback. "Yes, why?" Old Mr. White smiled. "Keaton's people reached out to my office today. He wants to discuss a collaboration. He wants to commission a bespoke winter couture collection exclusively for Winona-clothing, bags, jewelry, perfume, lipstick, the works. I'm not very familiar with them, and I have Maria to look after, so I was planning to decline. But then my assistant told me that Keaton said Winona is Emmett's godmother. He said Winona is in a difficult situation and hoped I could help out for Emmett's sake. He mentioned that the brands currently working with Winona are spooked by the online backlash and are considering terminating their contracts. He was hoping I would step in to help restore her reputation. Since he brought up Emmett and was so humble, practically begging me, I asked Emmett if he knew them. Emmett excitedly told me that Keaton is his daddy's best friend and Winona is his mommy's best friend! Emmett even said Keaton is his actual godfather, and Winona is his beloved godmom! He begged me to help them, so I accepted the commission." Tarquin and Elysia were speechless. Keaton certainly knew how to pull the right strings. Everyone knew Old Mr. White was an aloof and principled man; money and power couldn't sway him. But bring Emmett into it, and he would never refuse. Keaton's strategy was brilliant. Having Old Mr. White publicly support Winona was the perfect move. As a living legend and a titan of the fashion world, Old Mr. White's position was unassailable. His endorsement was golden.

Having him take on a commission for Winona was a powerful endorsement. It was common knowledge that Old Mr. White, a living legend in the industry, refused to work with scandal-plagued celebrities or anyone of questionable character. Now that the great man himself was creating an exclusive collection for Winona, who would dare say she had a character problem? Old Mr. White was sending a clear message to the world: Winona's character is impeccable! And other brands always followed his lead. If Old Mr. White supported Winona, they would too. You had to admit, it was a masterful move by Keaton. Old Mr. White looked at Elysia with a gentle expression. "Although I move in fashion and entertainment circles, I rarely pay attention to the industry gossip or the private lives of celebrities. Even if I see some news, I don't follow it. So, I didn't know about Keaton and Winona's situation on Twitter, or that they were your friends. After finding Emmett, I've been so focused on Maria that I haven't even looked at Emmett's Twitter. It's a good thing Keaton mentioned Winona is Emmett's godmother, otherwise I really would have refused! Really, you don't have to be so formal with me. If your friends need my help, I'll help. If I see a need, I'll offer my help proactively. It's just that sometimes I don't see it, so if you ever need anything, just let me know. I'll definitely help." Elysia's lips parted. This time, it wasn't about being polite; it was that the thought had never even crossed their minds. They had never considered asking Old Mr. White to save the day. "Thank you for your help. Winona is my best friend." Old Mr. White smiled. "Emmett told me. He said he has two godmoms-one is Winona, and the other is actually named Blossom. He said they both love him very much, and he loves them too. In fact, I should be the one thanking you. You all love Emmett so much, and I'm truly grateful." After a few pleasantries, while the waiter was serving the food, Elysia quickly checked her phone. Sure enough, with Old Mr. White making a move, the internet had been turned upside down. A short while ago, Old Mr. White had posted two consecutive updates. The first one: A public announcement that he had accepted Keaton's private commission and would be creating a bespoke collection for Winona. He would not be accepting any other orders this year. The second one: He stated that Winona's personal qualities and character were a perfect fit for his aesthetic, and he intended to collaborate with her long-term, hiring her as his permanent muse. The two posts sent the Internet into another frenzy. A private commission from Elder White came with a price tag that could buy a small island-a luxury reserved only for the world's elite. And Keaton was willing to order an entire collection for Winona. In all his years of dating, this was the first time he had spent so much on one person. And the key point was, Winona wasn't even his girlfriend! The public immediately began to speculate that Shifra must have initiated the breakup because Keaton had already privately ended things with her. By the time Shifra went live, she was already an ex-girlfriend! They also theorized that Keaton had likely fallen for Winona and was planning to pursue her. On this matter, the internet split into three camps with differing opinions: One group thought Keaton and Winona were a total power couple and gave them their full support. Another group, mostly Winona's fans, felt Keaton was too much of a player and didn't deserve her. A third group argued that Winona was divorced, while Keaton had never been married. She wasn't good enough for him! However, when it came to Winona's character, everyone was in agreement: With Old Mr. White's strong endorsement, her character had to be solid! Old Mr. White hadn't posted anything in six months, and today he posts twice, both about Winona! Especially the second post, he intended to collaborate with her long-term, naming her as his permanent muse.... The word 'envy' didn't even begin to cover it.

Everyone, including Shifra, who had hoped to use today's events to ruin Winona, collectively... imploded. They were stunned, dumbfounded, and green with envy.

Chapter 1548

A netizen left a comment for Old Mr. White: [Hello, Mr. White. Do you know about the situation between Winona and Zane?] The usually aloof Old Mr. White personally replied: [I don't know every detail, but I know Winona loved him once. Now? He's nothing more than a ghost to her.] A user asked: [Mr. White, if Winona doesn't like Zane anymore, why is she still living in their marital home? It's not like she can't afford a new place.] Old Mr. White replied: [I can't comment too much on personal matters, but I am certain her reason for not moving has nothing to do with Zane. Everyone, please consume your gossip rationally. Don't believe everything you hear.] Another user asked: [Mr. White, is Winona the type to lose her head over love?] Old Mr. White replied: [From what I know, she is not. She has her head on straight. She is passionate and decisive, daring to love and to let go. Her public persona isn't an act; that's genuinely who she is.] Someone else commented: [But everyone says Winona has character issues.] Old Mr. White's response was direct: [Winona is my grandson's godmother. If she had character issues, how could he love her so much? I vouch for Winona's character. If you question her, you are questioning me.] Old Mr. White even went to Winona's account and left a comment: [Don't worry about brands terminating their contracts. My grandson's godmother deserves better, and we've both got your back. Any brand that drops you will be dead to me forever.] This series of moves from Old Mr. White didn't just leave the public dumbfounded; the brands themselves were in a panic. No longer silent, they scrambled to release statements, each trying to be the first. They began by lavishing praise on Winona, then declared their company's full confidence in her talent and character, and expressed their desire for a long-term partnership. Even brands that hadn't worked with Winona before started speaking out, hoping for a future collaboration. The public were shocked. Winona had this kind of connection! She was the godmother of Elder White's only grandson. That was an insanely powerful connection! If any other powerful man had come out to support Winona, there would have been ugly rumors about an affair. But this was Old Mr. White, a man even our mothers deeply respected. Who would dare spread malicious gossip? There was no slander, only pure envy. It was a blessing in disguise. Not only did Winona avoid being canceled, but she skyrocketed to the very top of the A-list. Her manager was so ecstatic he nearly had a heart attack. The CEO of Winona's agency personally took over, treating her like a queen. Winona herself was stunned. She hadn't expected Keaton to pull this move. She thought his solution would be to have Shifra issue a public apology. She never imagined he would contact Old Mr. White and spend a fortune commissioning a collection for her. He had seen the power of Old Mr. White's influence in the entertainment industry and deliberately used a collaboration to get the man to back her up. It was a brilliant tactic. Keaton missed his calling in PR, Winona thought. He really knew how to handle a crisis. She was even more surprised that Old Mr. White had accepted the commission and honored her by asking her to be his permanent muse. This was Old Mr. White! Without a second thought, Winona released the audio recording of her phone call with Shifra. She had recorded it when Shifra called her earlier that day. Since Shifra's people were pushing the narrative that she was forced to clarify, let them hear for themselves whether she had been forced at all. Now that Old Mr. White had stepped in for her, she absolutely could not let him be dragged down. She had to prove her innocence and show everyone that Old Mr. White's judgment was flawless. Instantly, another wave of fervor swept the internet. With the facts laid bare and Old Mr. White's powerful endorsement, Winona's reputation

shot straight up. Correspondingly, Shifra's situation became dire. The public flooded her social media accounts, tearing her to shreds. When that wasn't enough, they stormed the official account of her dance academy, demanding the expulsion of such a morally corrupt student.

Chapter 1549

Elysia looked at the news on her phone, the knot of worry in her chest finally dissolving. She looked up, her eyes filled with gratitude for Old Mr. White. She knew full well he was supporting Winona so fiercely because of her. She was truly lucky. Not everyone she met in life was good, but the good ones far outnumbered the bad. Winona texted her a bunch of heart and kiss emojis. [I'll come and properly thank you both when you and Emmett get back!] Elysia smiled and replied, [I'm having dinner with Old Mr. White. See you tomorrow.] Winona quickly typed back, [Please thank Old Mr. White for me, like, a million times!] [Got it.] Winona sent another kiss sticker, then thought for a moment and called Keaton. "Thank you for the whole thing with Old Mr. White. But you don't have to pay for it. Just tell me how much the order is, and I'll transfer you the money." "It's my treat," Keaton said. "The money has already been transferred to him. I told you I'd handle the aftermath for you." Just as Winona was about to say something else, Keaton asked, "Are you free tonight?" Winona replied, "Do you need something?" Keaton said, "Come home with me for a bit. Come help me run interference with my parents. And while we're there, we can grab some wine. I just got dumped, I'm in a bad mood. You can have a few drinks with me tonight." Winona was speechless for a second. Going to his house wasn't a problem. Even if Keaton hadn't asked, she was planning on visiting Janelle and Richard. They cared a lot about her; today's incident had nearly made Janelle faint from anger. But the breakup... "You really broke up?" Winona asked, curious. Keaton let out a long sigh. "She announced it on a live stream. What am I supposed to do, pretend we're still together?" Winona narrowed her eyes. "Why was she willing to break up with you? Playing hard to get?" "Yep." Keaton was no fool either. He could see right through Shifra's little games. Winona paused. "Really? That trick might have worked when you were still in the flirting stage, but you've been together for a few days now. Does it still work?" It was common knowledge that Keaton was a player. His interest in a girl usually only lasted a few days. Normally, his infatuation with Shifra should have been fading by now. What was the point of playing hard to get to hook him again? But Keaton said, "It works. I won't be able to forget her right away. When I can't stand it anymore, I'll go looking for her." "You're planning to chase her again?" Winona asked in surprise. "No way," Keaton said immediately. "I don't do reruns. I know exactly what she's playing at, and there's no way I'm going back for seconds. It's over. I'm a straightforward guy. It's over." This made Winona even more curious. "A straightforward guy who can't forget her right away? Did you actually have real feelings for her?" "No, I... ugh, let's talk about it in detail later. Send me your location, I'll come pick you up now. First, help me calm my parents down, then we can find a place to drink. We're not going home sober." Winona decided to put the money issue aside for now. "...Fine!" After hanging up, Winona went to touch up her makeup. Blossom leaned against the bathroom doorway. "You're going out?" "Yeah, Keaton asked me to go to his place as backup, to see his parents." "Mr. and Mrs. Huber have always been really good to you," Blossom said. "It's right to go see them. Did you find out about the Shifra breakup thing?" "Keaton said Shifra was playing hard to get." "What? Ha! Does she not know how fickle Keaton is? That works during the flirting stage, but now? Does she really think that'll work?" "Keaton said it will." Blossom's eyes widened. Just as she was about to complain, Winona added, "But Keaton also said he doesn't go back to his exes. He's not going to chase her again. They're done." Blossom

pressed her lips together. "If he went crawling back to Shifra, I'd have to call them a match made in hell." "Winona, what's really going on with you and Keaton? Why does every single one of his girlfriends end up dragging you into it?",

Chapter 1550

"We're just friends, that's all. Close friends," Winona said, touching up her makeup. As for the drama? I guess I'm just a magnet for trouble." Blossom said, "He just dropped a fortune on you without a second thought. The internet is losing its mind. Tell me the truth, is there really nothing going on between you two?" Winona laughed. "If there was something going on, don't you think you and Elysia would be the first to know? We're completely platonic." Blossom let out a sigh of relief. "As long as there's nothing going on. I'm just worried about you getting hurt again." Winona knew Blossom was concerned for her. After finishing her makeup, she stood up and gave Blossom a hug. "Don't worry. From now on, I'm the one who breaks players' hearts, not the other way around." Blossom smiled and nodded. "Mm-hmm!" Winona wanted to ask about her and Axel, but she knew mentioning his name would just make her friend sad, so she let it go. She had brought a few outfits with her and chose a long dress paired with a chic tweed jacket. She slipped on a pair of white casual sneakers, which, combined with her light makeup, created an elegant and graceful look perfect for meeting parents. About half an hour later, a head-turning Rolls-Royce Cullinan appeared in the underground garage of Blossom's apartment building. Some people saw the car before they saw the driver and stared in awe. Blossom's building was a normal residential complex; the most expensive car in the garage was maybe a couple hundred thousand dollars. The sudden appearance of a Cullinan was a rare sight. An older man who loved cars spotted it, his eyes lighting up. He grabbed his wife's arm and deliberately walked past the front of the car, trying to get a look at the driver. The garage lighting was dim, and through the windshield, it was hard to make out the driver's face. All they could tell was that it was a handsome man wearing sunglasses. Sitting in the driver's seat, Keaton saw the elderly couple staring at him. He grinned, gave a little wave, and smiled. The couple was pleasantly surprised. What a polite, handsome young man! Whose son or son-in-law was this? So impressive! The couple waved back with a smile and walked away, praising him as they went. "What a charming young man. Handsome, successful, and such a gentleman! Whoever ends up with him is one lucky girl." Just as they left, Winona came out, wearing sunglasses and a mask. As a celebrity, she was always heavily disguised when she went out. She didn't see Keaton's car at first and stood to the side, pulling out her phone to call him. Keaton honked briefly and flashed his lights. Winona walked over, opened the passenger door, and got in. "When did you get a new car? I didn't even recognize it." The last time she saw him, he wasn't driving a Cullinan. Keaton said, "Cars are like girlfriends. Sticking to just one gets boring." Winona's expression hardened, placing her gift bag and purse in the back seat before buckling her seatbelt. As Keaton started the car, he commented, "Why are you dressed so demurely today? When you walked out, I almost didn't recognize you. I had to take a second look before I called out." "I'm not going clubbing," Winona said. "I don't want to show up looking too intense and overwhelm your parents." She looks exactly like the kind of girl you'd bring home to meet the family, Keaton thought. As Winona took off her mask, Keaton's mischievous eyes scanned her face. "Gotta say, you're really beautiful." Winona rolled her eyes. "Don't even go there. I'm not interested in being another notch on your belt." Keaton just chuckled and pulled the car out. "You look like you're in good spirits. The drama today didn't get to you?" Winona replied, "At first I was speechless, then I was thrilled. You're the hero for the whole Old Mr. White thing. The first three rounds are on me tonight!"

By the way, were that old man and woman just now praising you?" "What did they say?" Keaton asked. "That you're rich, handsome, and polite! And that whoever marries you will be the happiest girl in the world! What did you do?"