

Hitched 1601

Chapter 1601

Elysia was completely lost. "What do you mean, 'something fishy'?"

Tarquin explained, "Keaton's been a wreck lately. He's drunk all the time, just totally out of it."

"What does him being a wreck have to do with Winona?" Elysia countered. "Maybe he's just stressed about how to handle this whole 'pregnancy' rumor."

Tarquin shook his head. "I don't think so. From what I hear, the night before Winona flew out of the country, she spent the night at Keaton's. And when she left the next morning, she was wearing his clothes."

"Winona's sudden trip abroad might be to get away from Keaton."

"And Keaton's been on edge lately, probably because of Winona."

Elysia processed this, her eyes widening. "Are you suggesting Winona and Keaton slept together?"

Tarquin nodded honestly. "Yeah."

Elysia gasped in sheer disbelief. "But Winona doesn't even like Keaton, and he doesn't like her! How could they possibly hook up?"

"...A drunken mistake," Tarquin offered.

"Did Keaton tell you that?!" Elysia gasped.

"No, I'm just guessing," Tarquin admitted. And it was a guess. Keaton had never mentioned a thing about him and Winona. But it wasn't a wild guess; he had his

reasons.

The day Winona left, Keaton had dragged him out for drinks. Even then, Tarquin sensed something was off. He'd initially thought it was the pregnancy scandal. The rumor had spread like wildfire, and now the entire high society circle thought the Huber family was expecting. If they came clean now, Richard Huber and Janelle would become the laughingstock of their world, and their health probably couldn't take the shock. But during the last drinking session, a drunk Keaton had mumbled Winona's name, muttering something about her needing to come back and explain herself. Explain what? Whatever it was, it was enough to prove something was going on between them.

Winona's sudden departure had to be linked to Keaton, and Keaton's bizarre behavior had to be linked to Winona. To make matters worse, Janelle and Richard actually believed Winona was pregnant and were blowing up Keaton's phone, telling him to fly out and take care of her. Normally Keaton would've jumped at the chance. Even if he didn't go see Winona, he'd use it as an excuse for a vacation with some other girl. But this time, he refused to go, which was completely out of character. Where there's smoke, there's fire.

So, he suspected something was up. But it was just a suspicion. Since neither Keaton nor Winona had said anything, it was clearly a private matter they didn't want to publicize, which is why he hadn't told Elysia. He only brought it up now to distract her.

And it worked. Just moments ago, her mind had been racing, worrying that something terrible had happened to Elliot and Evan. Now, all she could think about was Winona and Keaton. Good grief, if they really did sleep together, how would they ever face each other again? Elysia's heart went out to her friend; she knew all too well how much Winona must be struggling. Elysia couldn't spare a thought for Keaton; her mind was entirely on Winona. If Winona left to get away from Keaton, she must be miserable and

overwhelmed. The thought of

Winona being unhappy made Elysia unhappy too. She frowned, glaring at Tarquin.

Tarquin got the message and, with his self-preservation instincts kicking in, immediately declared, "Don't worry. Winona is your best friend. If something unpleasant really did happen between her and Keaton, I'm on Team Winona all the way."

Seeing his cooperative attitude, Elysia's expression softened. She was about to say something when her phone rang. It was Winona, her voice frantic. "Elysia..."

Chapter 1602

Hearing the tone of her voice, Elysia asked urgently, "What's wrong, Winona?"

"Do you have any idea how much Keaton spent on that fall/winter haute couture collection he ordered for me from Old Mr. White?" Winona asked.

"I don't know, I never asked. Why?" Elysia said.

"Can you please ask Mr. White for me? Or maybe Emmett? I need to know the exact amount," Winona pleaded.

"Okay, hold on a second."

Elysia went upstairs with her phone to find Emmett. He knew the figure because he'd been with Old Mr. White when it was discussed. Emmett said, "Uncle Keaton gave Mr. White a staggering sum. After Mr. White found out about our connection, he didn't want to take it, but Keaton insisted. He said he was atoning for his sins and needed to spend the money to ease his conscience."

Elysia was stunned. "He spent a staggering fortune on that collection?"

"Yeah. What's wrong, Mommy?"

Elysia was speechless. This wasn't just haute couture; this was an insane amount of money. She swallowed hard. "Nothing, honey. I'm just asking for Aunt Winona. You boys keep playing. I'll call you when dinner is ready."

Elysia walked back downstairs, phone in hand. "Winona, did you hear that?"

Winona was just as shocked. "I heard. Hundreds of millions? Oh my God! I heard people at work talking about that figure today, but I thought it was just a rumor. I knew Old Mr. White's collections were expensive, but I never thought Keaton would spend that much on me."

Elysia found it incredible too. Even for a billionaire, spending hundreds of millions on a single collection was an insane indulgence. And Keaton had never spent that kind of money on any of his other girlfriends. Thinking back to what Tarquin had said, she couldn't help but ask, "Winona, do you think Keaton has feelings for you?"

"Huh?!"

"He's incredibly generous with you," Elysia said. "And the three hundred million is just the start. Tarquin told me a few days ago that you broke that priceless emerald masterpiece of his, and he didn't even ask you to pay for it. He never even told you."

Winona's eyes went wide. "You mean his most prized piece of jade?" "Yep."

"Oh my God! When did that happen? How do I not know about this?!"

"Tarquin said it was the night you brought him dinner after he got in trouble with his family."

Winona thought back, and her

breath hitched. "Oh no!" After getting caught by his parents that night, è she'd been so mad she had secretly kicked something off the bed. She'd felt it fall but didn't think anything of it. She never imagined it was the jade artifact! Now that she thought about it, that's exactly what it was She had even placed it by the bed herself! Oh, good grief.

"It's over, it's over, it's completely over!"

"What's wrong?" Elysia asked quickly.

Winona's voice was tinged with tears. "I was planning on transferring him the money for the collection and cutting ties with him for good! Now how am I supposed to do that? can't afford this! There's no way I can ever pay him back!" A diamond ring of a few carats costs a fortune; that thing was a massive, naturally formed masterpiece. Priceless! Even a tiny chip or scratch would drastically lower its value. Whether she meant to or not she had broken She was supposed to compensate him! But it was so expensive, she couldn't afford it even if she sold herself. And if she

couldn't pay, she was in his debt. How could she cut ties with someone she was indebted to? She'd been hiding out for half a month, wondering how to handle her relationship with Keaton. After much thought, she decided that cutting ties was the best option. She'd give

him the money for the clothes, let bygones be bygones, and they'd go their separate ways.

Chapter 1603

If they couldn't avoid seeing each other, a polite nod would suffice. But then she found out the clothes cost over three hundred million. She was a famous actress, but she'd only just made it big and didn't have that much cash. Three hundred million was already a struggle, and now a priceless artifact was added to the bill... She couldn't pay it back. She really couldn't. Even if she spent three lifetimes working off the debt, she'd never be able to pay him back.

In other words, her dream of cutting ties with him was impossible. She had no right to even suggest it. He was her creditor.

"Don't worry about the money," Elysia said. "I have some, and my dad and Tarquin do too. Just say the word, and I'll transfer it to you anytime. But... why do you want to cut ties with Keaton? I thought you two were friends."

Winona stammered, "He and I... we... Ugh, my head hurts. Elysia, can we talk about this in person when I see you next?"

Elysia knew not to push. "Okay," she said. "If anything is bothering you, just tell me and Blossom. Don't keep it all bottled up."

"You're the best, love you. I've got to go now."

"Okay, bye."

After hanging up, Elysia immediately turned to Tarquin. "You were right! Something is definitely going on between them! Winona wants to cut ties with Keaton completely!"

Tarquin, who had been lost in thought about the situation in the mountains, wasn't surprised. "Why does she want to cut ties?"

"I don't know, Winona didn't say, and I didn't dare ask too much." Even with the closest of friends, you had to respect boundaries. If Winona didn't say it outright, it meant she didn't want to talk about it yet, and it would be rude to press her.

"When you get a chance, you should talk to Keaton," Elysia said. "And let me make this clear: no matter what happened between them or how he plans to handle it, he is not to make Winona upset."

Tarquin nodded. "Alright. I'll talk to him when he's feeling a bit better."

"What's wrong with him?"

"He hasn't been feeling well lately. He's always nauseous and throwing up. He pukes up anything he eats, and he dry-heaves on an empty stomach."

"...Has he seen a doctor?"

"Benjamin checked him out. He said there's nothing seriously wrong."

"It's probably his lifestyle then. Staying up all night and drinking is terrible for your body. Tell him to take better care of himself."

"I will. And don't you worry about Winona and Keaton. Knowing Keaton's personality,

no matter what happened, he would never let Winona suffer. You can relax."

Elysia let out a long sigh. Her

attention was now completely

diverted, and she thought her earlier anxiety must have been because of Winona. Her nervousness had eased, but her chest still felt tight, her breath was short, and her heart ached with sharp, stabbing pains. It's been two weeks. Elliot should be contacting you soon. When he does, please ask him if everything is okay in the mountains."

"I will. Let's have Heath arrange dinner. I'll take you upstairs to rest for a bit. Elysia looked terrible, her face pale and sickly. Unsettled Tarquin helped her up to their bedroom to lie down.

In the mountains.

Evan didn't stop crying until it was completely dark and he had no tears left. He asked Elliot, his voice choked with sobs, Elliot, tell me the truth. Was Bernard murdered? The blood he coughed up... it wasn't normal. And his lips were purple, like he was poisoned."

Elliot frowned and looked at the scarred man beside them. The man's eyes were

red, his brow deeply furrowed. "He was poisoned..."

Chapter 1604

The scarred man didn't hide the truth. He told Evan everything.

Evan clenched his fists, his jaw tight. His chest heaved with fury, and his eyes burned with rage.

Elliot watched him, worried, expecting another outburst now that he knew the truth. But Evan didn't lose control. He was furious for a moment, then he stood up and said in a hoarse voice, "Let's go back and spend a little more time with Bernard. Then we'll find a good place to bury him."

"Evan..." Elliot and the scarred man said his name in concern.

Evan sniffled forcefully. "Don't worry about me. I'm devastated, but I won't be impulsive. Mom and Bernard both said that acting in the heat of the moment only leads to ruin. I will get revenge for Bernard, but not now! I'll listen to him. I'll grow up first, become stronger, and then I will avenge him, and his mentor, and his mentor's wife, and the entire Warner legacy!"

Evan then looked at the scarred man. "Great-uncle, you shouldn't be sad either. Bernard is gone, but you still have me. I'll stay with you. I'll take care of you when you're old, I'll help you get your revenge, and together, we will restore the Warner family to its former glory! Just give me a little more time. I'll try to grow up fast. Trust me, I will find the killer, and I will avenge Bernard!"

The man pulled the little boy into his arms, his eyes welling up with tears again.

...

Bernard was laid to rest three days after his passing. His grave was on a mountaintop, a spot Evan and the scarred man had chosen together. Not only was the view beautiful, but it was also a high place Bernard loved. He often came here to rest when he was alive. For three days, Evan had been incredibly strong, only breaking down in tears when the casket was sealed.

After Bernard was buried, Evan fell ill, his fever spiking to over 104 degrees, making him delirious. With the old woman there, there was no fear of permanent damage, but he wouldn't be leaving the mountain anytime soon. So, Elliot went back to the signal station to call Tarquin.

Tarquin was at the hospital with Keaton when he saw the call. He had been waiting for Elliot's call for days. He quickly stepped out of the infusion room. "Elliot."

At the sound of Tarquin's voice, Elliot's composure shattered. His eyes reddened, and tears streamed down his face. He'd been through so much, was so sad and worried about Evan, that his nerves were stretched to their breaking point.

"Elliot?" Tarquin called out again.

Elliot sniffled. "Daddy."

Tarquin heard the strain in his voice and asked immediately, "What is it? Did something happen in the mountains?"

"I miss you and Mommy," Elliot said, his lip trembling.

Tarquin's heart melted. "We miss you too. Are you coming home today?"

"We can't yet. Evan's sick."

Tarquin froze. "What's wrong with Evan?"

"He has a high fever, but

Qu

Great-Grandma is here, so he'll get

better soon it's just. it'

Bernard is gone. Waaah...

Tarquin's breath hitched. He was stunned for a moment before he could ask, "Gone?"

"He's gone," Elliot confirmed. "Bernard is dead. Waaah..."

Tarquin felt a tightness in his chest. "How?"

"When he faked his death all those years ago, the bad guys injected him with poison," Elliot explained through his sobs. "All these years... Great-Grandma has been helping him suppress the toxins. But as he got older, his body got weaker, and he couldn't fight it anymore. The poison took over. Waaah..."

Tarquin's face darkened. "When did this happen?"

"Three days ago."

Tarquin fell silent. Three days ago. That was the day Elysia had cut her hand. After that, she hadn't been herself. She was always distracted, suffered from insomnia, and

when

she finally did sleep, she'd wake up from nightmares, crying. It seemed there really was such a thing as a psychic connection.

Chapter 1605

So, Bernard was the reason...

Tarquin hadn't known Bernard as well as Elysia or the boys, so his grief wasn't as profound. Still, thinking of the man's face and his booming laughter, he felt a lump in his throat. Such a brilliant, powerful man, gone just like that. A legend had fallen. The world had truly lost Bernard, the man who single-handedly challenged martial arts schools across seven countries and struck fear into the hearts of his rivals. It was a loss not just for them, but for the whole country.

"...Are you all okay?" Tarquin finally asked.

"We're all very sad," Elliot said, his voice hoarse. "Evan is taking it the hardest... But don't worry about us. Bernard has been laid to rest. We're not as sad anymore."

Tarquin took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. "Is he buried in the mountains? Should we move his body?"

"No," Elliot said. "Before Bernard passed, he said he wanted to rest in the mountains forever. Oh, and Great-Grandma told me not to tell Mommy about his death yet. It will only make her sad."

"Okay," Tarquin said. "I understand." He took a moment to compose himself, then asked, "Any progress on the virus?"

Elliot knew he was asking about the 8th-generation virus. "Not yet. Great-Grandma says it will take time. She hasn't even figured out all the components yet."

Tarquin wasn't surprised. A bioweapon like the 8th-gen virus wouldn't be easy to crack.

"Did you receive the supplies I sent in?"

"Yes, we got everything."

"...Good. Don't worry about your mom; I'll take care of her. You stay there and spend time with your great-grandparents. And comfort Evan. Don't come down the mountain until he's completely better."

"Okay!"

After hanging up, Tarquin was heavy-hearted. Bernard's sudden death was something he'd never expected. He couldn't even imagine how devastated Elysia would be when she found out.

Suddenly, he saw Benjamin rushing toward the infusion room. Tarquin forgot his sadness for a moment and walked over. "What's wrong?"

"The nurse called me," Benjamin said. "She said Keaton's IV slipped again. I'm here to see what's going on."

Tarquin rubbed his temples. Keaton's IV had slipped again—for the third time in a single hour.

They entered the private infusion

room together. Keaton was the only patient. He was hunched over a trash can, gagging, while a young nurse stood by helplessly. He'd been throwing up constantly lately after eating, after drinking a sip of water, even at the slightest strange smell. Tarquin had been so worried that he'd dragged him to the hospital today for a nutritional IV just to keep him going. The needle kept slipping because he wasn't careful when he was retching.

Benjamin walked over, gently patting Keaton's back. He glanced into the trash can. "You're not throwing anything up."

"He already threw up the little he ate this morning," Tarquin said. "He had no appetite for lunch, so he didn't eat a bite. Of course there's nothing to throw up."

Benjamin frowned at Keaton. "Keaton, what exactly is wrong with you?"

Keaton took a moment to recover, then looked up at him. Before he could speak, another wave of nausea hit him. "Ulp..."

Benjamin was baffled. "We did an

endoscopy ran all the other tests... you're not seriously ill. What is wrong with you? Anyone who didn't

know better would think you were

pregnant. These are just like

morning sickness symptoms."

Tarquin went rigid, his brain struggling to process the sheer absurdity of the

statement. "You're telling me a grown man is having morning sickness?" he asked, deadpan.

His question was so earnest that Keaton was utterly speechless.

"What the hell, who's preg— Ulp..."

Chapter 1606

The young nurse at his side was Benjamin's assistant, who also happened to be his cousin. So she wasn't a stranger to Tarquin and Keaton. Hearing their discussion, the young woman's eyes went wide. "Men can't get pregnant!" she said. "But they can get sympathetic pregnancy symptoms. It's called Couvade syndrome. Mr. Huber, is your girlfriend not having any morning sickness?" The high-society gossip mill had been churning with rumors that Keaton's girlfriend was pregnant. Being from the Lawson family, the young nurse was in the loop. And since Keaton had never bothered to deny it, she believed it was true. Keaton's face was sallow. Before he could even think of an explanation, she continued, "The symptoms can transfer. A lot of pregnant women feel light as a feather, full of energy, and can eat anything in sight, while their husbands are the ones throwing up their guts. It's a real thing, I swear." Keaton rolled his eyes, breathing heavily. He believed symptoms could transfer, sure, but the key point was that he didn't have a wife or a girlfriend! He was single! No woman was carrying his child! Just as Keaton was about to protest, Janelle and Richard rushed in. Seeing their son had lost so much weight and his face was so pale, the couple's hearts broke. "Honey! What's wrong? You look so sick!" This was the first time they had seen their son since the Huber family gathering. Keaton had been avoiding them, not knowing how to handle the pregnancy rumors. Keaton was taken aback. "Mom, Dad, what are you doing here?" Richard explained, "Someone from the Windham family mentioned they saw you at the hospital. I called Benjamin to ask and found out you were on an IV. What is it? What's wrong?" Janelle's gaze filled with a mother's frantic concern for her son. "We haven't seen you in just over two weeks, and you've gotten so thin! Don't hide anything from your mother, sweetie. If you're sick, we'll get it treated right away! We'll

sell the house if we have to, Mom will get you the best care!" "...Don't worry, I'm not sick," Keaton managed. "I just... can't stop feeling nauseous." Richard frowned. "Not sick? Did they run tests?" Benjamin quickly chimed in, "We ran a full panel. He's perfectly healthy." Richard was confused. "Then why does he look like this?" Benjamin explained, "He's been vomiting constantly and has no appetite. Anything he forces himself to eat comes right back up. That's why he seems so weak and listless. He's on a nutritional IV right now." Janelle couldn't understand either. "If he's not sick, why does he keep throwing up?" The young nurse interjected, "Mr. Huber might be having morning sickness!" Janelle and Richard: "?!!" The nurse elaborated, "It's not that uncommon for the husband to get morning sickness when his wife is pregnant. Some men just have it for a month or two, but others can have it for the entire pregnancy." "!" Benjamin was speechless. Pursing his lips, he sent his cousin away on the pretext of fetching some medication. He'd asked Keaton and Tarquin about this whole pregnancy thing-it was pure rumor! But still, Keaton's symptoms were uncannily similar to morning sickness. How could a grown man have morning sickness when no woman was even carrying his child? Benjamin tried to explain logically. "Sometimes, environmental and psychological changes can cause vomiting. You shouldn't worry too much. As long as there's no underlying illness, it's not a major problem." He then administered another injection for Keaton and left to attend to his other patients. With no outsiders present, Janelle turned to Keaton. "So, is Winona eating like a horse?" Before he could respond, she answered her own question. "Yes, she must be. I video chat with her every day, and her appetite is fantastic. Not a single hint of morning sickness. It really must have transferred to you!" Keaton and Tarquin: "...". Tarquin, wanting no part in this drama, shot Keaton a sympathetic look and made an excuse to leave. He left Keaton to face the music alone. Keaton, still completely at a loss for how to handle this mess, wore a look of pure misery. "...".

Chapter 1607

Janelle suddenly chuckled. "Well, if it's really morning sickness, then there's nothing to worry about. It's not a serious illness. It's awful, I'm sure, but it's better you feeling sick than Winona." Huh?! Keaton stared at his own mother in disbelief. What did she mean, 'better him feeling sick than Winona'?! A second later, Richard added, "Winona's a young woman. It would be too hard on her to go through this, especially after all the hardships she's already faced. It's only right that Keaton shares the burden." Keaton: "...". He pressed his lips together. "So it's not hard on me? I'm supposed to suffer?!" He regretted it the moment the words left his mouth. Winona wasn't even pregnant. What was he even arguing about? By arguing, he was just playing into their delusion. Before he could backtrack, Janelle said, "Of course it's hard on you, sweetie, but you can't compare it to what Winona would go through. I've been there. A woman carries a baby for nine months. Life becomes so inconvenient and uncomfortable; it's awful!" "And childbirth itself is risky," she continued. "When a woman gives birth, she's putting her life on the line." Richard chimed in, "Winona is carrying the next generation of the Huber family. That makes her a true blessing to us. It's your duty to take on some of her morning sickness for her." Keaton: "...". Good Lord, were these really his parents?! Keaton couldn't help but retort, "When Mom was pregnant with me and my sister, did you suffer for her?" Richard put his hands behind his back, looking at his son with disdain. "I'm not a playboy like you, jumping from one girlfriend to the next. Your mother is the only woman I've ever been with! I'm telling you, this morning sickness is divine intervention, a punishment for your past indiscretions!" "You endure this suffering for Winona, and maybe then you'll finally be worthy of her." The jab from his own father was the most brutal of all.

Keaton was floored. "Mom, are you hearing what Dad is saying?! Am I even his son? He just said I'm not worthy of Winona!" Janelle playfully slapped Richard's arm. "Why are you telling him the stone-cold truth right now? No matter what, our son has thrown up so much he's lost a ton of weight. Have some pity on the boy." The stone-cold truth... The truth... His own mother had just twisted the knife. Keaton felt completely defeated. Janelle had Richard pour a glass of water and handed it to Keaton. "Here, drink some water. Later, Mom will get you some ginger chews to help settle your stomach. I heard there's a great holistic doctor downtown who's an expert on pregnancy-related issues." Keaton took the water. "It's not morning sickness. I don't need it." The moment the water hit his stomach, he started retching again. "Ugh..." It was so bad now that even a sip of water made him sick. Janelle quickly patted his back gently. "If I had known your morning sickness was this bad, I wouldn't have pushed you to go find Winona. You just disappeared on us without a word. Your father and I were so mad at you." "You can't do that again. If something's wrong, you have to tell us!" "We may nag you, but we love you. You're our son!" Keaton's stomach gave another violent heave, the strain leaving him breathless and stinging his eyes with tears. He rinsed his mouth and leaned back against the bed, panting. All he could think was, how on earth was he going to explain this pregnancy situation to his parents? Seeing he'd settled down a bit, Janelle asked, "Keaton, be honest with me. Did Winona leave for this job because you two had a fight?" A flicker of something crossed Keaton's face. They hadn't fought, but Winona had indeed left because of him. She was avoiding him. A heavy sigh escaped him internally. One second he was feeling sentimental and melancholic, and the next...

Chapter 1608

"Ugh..." Keaton bolted upright, as if propelled by a spring, and lurched over the edge of the bed to gag again. By now, there was nothing left to bring up; he was just dry-heaving. Keaton wanted to cry. What had he done to deserve this? He wasn't even sick, so why all the vomiting? His own parents just twisted the knife. "He's vomiting so badly, it's painful to watch. Thank God it's not Winona." "This baby is certainly making its presence known. When I was pregnant with Jessamine and Keaton, my morning sickness wasn't nearly this bad. Looks like this little one is going to be a handful. Heh, well, let them be a handful. As long as they're bothering their dad and not their mom, they're a good baby in my book." Keaton: "...". He felt like he was the free prize in a cereal box. He also felt like he actually was pregnant. Spotting a kiwi in the fruit bowl, Keaton waited a moment for the nausea to pass, then leaned back and said, "Mom, can you hand me a kiwi? A hard one." Janelle replied, "The hard ones are so tart. Let me pick a softer one for you." Keaton refused, "No, I want something sour." Janelle turned to look at him, a glint in her eye. "They say craving sour things means it's a boy. Honey, do you think you're carrying a boy?" Richard stood by, a man in his fifties, rubbing his hands together in excitement at the mere mention of a baby. He grinned foolishly. "A boy or a girl, either would be wonderful! If it's a boy, he'll be the spitting image of his grandpa! If it's a girl, she'll look just like her grandma and her mom!" Anything but looking like his father, the playboy. Keaton rolled his eyes and deadpanned, "Why don't you two put your ears to my stomach and have a listen? I've got a whole litter in there! Boys and girls!" Janelle chuckled and gave him a light slap on the arm. "You and your nonsense!" She picked out a kiwi and began to peel and slice it for him. Keaton devoured it, his appetite suddenly returning. "Mom, can you cut another one? That was delicious." Janelle tasted a slice herself. It was incredibly tart! She turned to Richard and whispered, "It's definitely a boy!" Richard smiled. "A boy is great. We're not old-fashioned, a boy or a girl, they're both treasures." Keaton couldn't be bothered to respond. He just focused on his

kiwi. It was strange, really. He never used to like kiwis, and he definitely didn't like sour things. But today, it tasted absolutely divine. If he didn't know his own biology, even he would start to suspect he was pregnant. Seeing how much he was enjoying it, Janelle cut up two more for him. Then she sat on the edge of the bed and asked, "You still haven't answered my question from before. You and Winona didn't have a fight, did you?" Keaton didn't dare tell the truth. If he admitted Winona had left to avoid him, his parents would be heartbroken. "You two need to stop overthinking things. She's just busy." Janelle persisted, "But her health is the most important thing! She's just barely..." Keaton cut her off. "Winona is career-driven. Acting is her dream. And now that she's suddenly blown up, she wants to ride this wave of fame. Nobody can stop her." "I'm not trying to stop her," Janelle said. "I'll support whatever she wants to do. I'm just worried she'll overexert herself. Being pregnant is hard enough without adding work on top of it. It's just heartbreaking to think about." "As long as you two didn't fight, that's what matters. But you need to take extra good care of her. She's just newly pregnant, she needs her rest." "Also, does Winona's family know she's pregnant?" "And what about the wedding? Shouldn't you two start planning?" "Your father and I have already set aside the money for you. Wherever you want to get married, whatever kind of wedding you want, where you want to have the baby, it's all up to you two. We'll pay for it!" Richard, excited by the topic, looked at Keaton with a new warmth, like a truly loving father. "Don't even think about trying to save us money. This is a celebration! We don't care how much it costs! We're happy to spend this money! It makes us happy!" Keaton: "..."

Chapter 1609

Watching his parents get more and more excited, Keaton felt a knot form in his stomach. As much as he didn't want to hurt them, this couldn't go on forever. The bigger the hope, the bigger the disappointment. He couldn't think of a gentle way out, so maybe it was better to just rip the band-aid off. Keaton took a deep breath, ate another bite of kiwi, and looked up at Janelle and Richard, ready to lay his cards on the table. "Mom, Dad, calm down for a second. You need to listen to me..." Before he could continue, a knock sounded, and the door swung open. Two wealthy-looking women stood in the doorway, peering into the room. Janelle's face immediately soured. The women at the door were Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Sewell, both from her social circle, and Janelle couldn't stand either of them. They were always gossiping about Keaton, not just behind her back, but often right to her face. She could criticize her own son, but she wouldn't stand for anyone else doing it. The dislike was mutual. Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Sewell were jealous of Janelle, mostly because Janelle's husband actually loved her. Keaton might be a womanizer, but Richard was a faithful, doting husband. Their own husbands, on the other hand, had a string of mistresses. They were either catching their husbands cheating or on their way to do so. So, yes, they were jealous. They all knew they despised each other, but for various reasons, they hadn't yet reached the point of open warfare. Out of politeness, Janelle stood up and greeted them coolly. "Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Sewell. Are you here to see a doctor?" Mrs. Miller smiled. "We were just visiting a friend and heard Mr. Huber wasn't feeling well. We just wanted to pop in and see what's wrong." Mrs. Miller continued, her eyes scanning Keaton. "My, Keaton has lost a lot of weight. He loves his late nights, his drinking, and he's always surrounded by beautiful women. He really should be more careful. He might be young and resilient now, but that lifestyle will catch up to him when he's older." Janelle's face was ice. "My son is perfectly healthy!" Mrs. Miller pursed her lips, and Mrs. Sewell picked up the thread. "Why is it just you two here? Isn't Keaton's girlfriend with him?" Janelle replied, "A hospital is no place for her to be. Why would we have her come here?!" Mrs. Sewell pressed, "Isn't she worried that

Keaton's sick?" Janelle glared at her. "That's precisely why we didn't tell her. We didn't want to worry her." Mrs. Sewell narrowed her eyes again. "I just don't understand what the Huber family is thinking. The girl is pregnant with your grandchild, but you won't say who she is? You won't even announce the happy news? Is there some secret you're hiding?! The rumors are flying, you know. Some say the pregnancy is a hoax, just a publicity stunt. Others say the girl had the baby by accident and doesn't want to keep it, and the Hubers are desperately trying to negotiate. And then there are those who say... you're actually using a surrogate!" "Janelle dear," she added with faux concern, "surrogacy is a legal minefield. You should be careful. You wouldn't want to get yourselves into a lawsuit just for the sake of a grandchild." Janelle frowned. "...Rumors die with the wise. Only fools gossip!" Mrs. Sewell put on a fake smile. "Oh, I don't believe the rumors, of course. But since there's a baby on the way, when's the wedding? We're all waiting for our invitations." Mrs. Miller immediately jumped in. "You really should get involved. Haven't you heard what happened with the old Watson family? Their daughter-in-law was pregnant, but after a small argument with her husband, the girl went straight to the clinic and had an abortion!" "Old Mr. and Mrs. Watson were heartbroken, but by then it was too late. The baby was gone!"

Chapter 1610

Mrs. Sewell nodded eagerly. "I heard about that! And I heard Mrs. Watson was so devastated she even tried to kill herself a few times!" "Sigh, young people today are so different," she went on. "They're so open-minded they don't even want children. They get pregnant and have miscarriages, or just get abortions, it happens all the time! That's why I always say, getting pregnant isn't the real good news. A healthy baby in your arms, that's the good news. You can't celebrate too early!" Janelle was furious. This was practically a curse on the Huber family. She completely lost her temper and fired back, "How is getting pregnant not good news? Anyone who gets pregnant should be happy! After all, not everyone gets the chance to have grandchildren!" "Instead of standing here being sour, why don't you two go home and have a talk with your own sons? Tell them to get busy! And before you talk to your sons, maybe you should have a chat with your husbands. Make sure you don't end up with an illegitimate child before you see a legitimate grandchild!" With that, Janelle slammed the door shut. From the hallway, they could hear the indignant voices of Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Sewell. "What's she got to be so smug about? It's just a pregnancy! It's not like she's holding a grandchild yet!" "She's so secretive about the girl's identity. It's obvious her son is having second thoughts!" "Just you wait. She'll be crying her eyes out soon enough. Does she not know her own son? A man who refuses to get married isn't going to want a baby!" "I bet he'll make her get rid of it. It'll never be born!" "Or maybe she's not even pregnant at all! It's all just wishful thinking, haha!" "Exactly. We'll just wait and watch her make a fool of herself!" Janelle was so angry she yanked the door open again, ready to unleash a torrent of abuse, but Richard stopped her. "They're just two gossiping hens. Don't pay them any mind." Richard was angry too, but he suppressed it to comfort his wife. "They just can't stand to see you happy. It's pure bitterness. They're just jealous!" Janelle nodded. "You're right. They're jealous. Jealous that I'm going to have a grandchild and they're not!" Keaton: "...". He frowned deeply. The confession he'd prepared dissolved into ash on his tongue. How could he shatter their joy now? Did he want to break their hearts, only to watch them be humiliated by their so-called friends? Looking at the memory of Mrs. Sewell and Mrs. Miller's smug faces, he almost wished he could actually have a baby, just to shove it in their faces and make his parents proud. The thought shocked him. Actually have a baby? What was he thinking?! He was a sworn

bachelor, a commitment-phobe! What was he doing even thinking about having kids? No kids. Definitely no kids! Just as he was having this internal crisis, his stomach churned violently again. He lurched over the side of the bed. "Ugh..." This time, the retching was worse than before. He brought up all the kiwi he had just eaten. It was excruciating. The great Mr. Huber, brought to tears by nausea. ... Number One Mansion. When Tarquin got home, only Elysia was there. The kids were at school, and Clayton Hawkins and Pamela Patel were still in Oceanopolis. She was sitting on the terrace, enjoying the breeze and the sun while video-chatting with Winona. Elysia looked up as she heard him approach. Tarquin smiled at her, motioning for her to continue her call. He walked over, ran a hand through her hair, and sat down beside her. On the screen, Winona had just brought in a delivery. It was a massive order: a huge bowl of spicy noodle soup, a bunch of kebabs, a large container of sweet pudding, and a towering four-layer slice of cake. Elysia asked, "Why are you just eating lunch now? It's after three in the afternoon." Winona replied, "Oh, I already had lunch. This is a snack." Elysia was surprised. "A snack?" "Yeah, my appetite has been incredible lately. I'm always hungry, and everything tastes amazing. I feel like I'm eating six meals a day!" Elysia was even more surprised. "Six meals? Are you serious?" Winona nodded emphatically. "Totally. Besides my regular three meals a day, I need a second breakfast around ten, another snack in the afternoon, and then I always have to have something before bed."