

Hitched 1621

Chapter 1621

"Winona, are you really with Keaton?!"

"Yeah! We were even talking about marriage and kids. It's just that with Zane Livingston still out there, I couldn't relax, so we put the wedding on hold."

Richard and Janelle's eyes lit up in disbelief. "Is... is that true?!"

"It's true!"

They quickly asked, "And you really don't mind his... past?"

Winona smiled. "He doesn't mind that I'm divorced, so why would I mind his past? He's dated a lot of girls, sure, but he's no heartbreaker. He's got a good heart, and he's the only one who can make me laugh. Since we got together, he's been utterly wrapped around my finger. He's been amazing."

Their hopes, which had been completely dashed, were suddenly revived!

Even though Winona wasn't pregnant, they were really in a relationship!

And they were planning on getting married and having kids-for them, this was absolutely wonderful news!

But just as their spirits lifted, they thought of Beatrix, and their hearts sank again.

Their son was dating Winona, but Beatrix was carrying their son's child. How were they supposed to handle this?

Janelle looked uncomfortable as she began, "Winona, did Keaton tell you... about Beatrix?"

"Yes, he did."

Janelle's expression was pained. "This whole thing..."

Winona was very upfront. "It's not Keaton's fault. He was set up by Beatrix."

Janelle sighed. "I'm so moved that you see it that way, but Beatrix has made her demands. She doesn't want money. She just wants to marry Keaton. If he refuses, she said she's going to get rid of the baby."

Winona comforted her. "Keaton and I will handle this. You two don't need to worry. As for the baby, Keaton and I have already talked about it,

The baby is innocent. If ne

is

really pregnant with Keaton's child, I don't mind helping to raise it. If she'd rather raise it herself, that's fine too. I will make sure Keaton is a good father to that child, and I won't let it come between us."

Hearing Winona be so understanding and reasonable, the couple felt both relieved and guilty, feeling an overwhelming sense of guilt for doubting her.

Winona leaned against Janelle playfully. "Janelle, you and Richard wouldn't try to break Keaton and me up just because Beatrix is pregnant, would you?"

Janelle was taken aback for a

second before quickly replying, "Of course not! We absolutely adore

you! We've been dreaming of you

becoming our daughter-in-law

we know Keaton doesn't like Beatrix. This pregnancy was the last thing we ever expected! And... to be

honest we really don't like her now. We don't want Keaton to marry her. We used to like her. If this had happened back then, we would have been thrilled and grateful that she was carrying a Huber baby, but now... We're not fools. First, she tried

to trap Keaton by threatening to accuse him of assault! Now she's using a baby to threaten him! She wouldn't be a good wife or a good mother! She doesn't love Keaton, and she doesn't love the unborn child she's carrying. She just wants to be Mrs. Huber! How can you expect us to like her or be grateful to someone so selfish?"

Janelle and Richard were good, honest people. Even if Keaton didn't like Beatrix, even if she had trapped him into getting her pregnant, if she were truly carrying their grandchild, they would have been grateful from the bottom of their hearts. They would never have mistreated her. But now she was threatening to get.. rid of the baby if Keaton didn't marry her. After hearing such a cruel threat, how could they possibly like her anymore?

Chapter 1622

This time, Richard made his stance clear. "Winona, don't worry. We will absolutely not force Keaton to marry her this time! Even though I... I desperately want a grandchild to carry on the Huber family line, and I truly want this baby! But I would rather the Huber line end with him than break you two up!"

Richard's eyes welled up. He really did want a grandchild! The idea of the family line ending with his son was a constant weight on his mind, a heavy burden to carry. It didn't matter who the mother was; as long as the child was a Huber, that was enough. But he and Janelle both loved Winona and disliked Beatrix, which was why he was making such a noble declaration. He would rather give up his dream of holding a grandchild than ruin the happiness of his son and Winona.

Winona knew how much this meant to Richard, and hearing him say that truly touched her. Beyond the emotion, she felt a pang of sympathy for him. People from his generation, especially from prominent families, took continuing the family line very seriously. Every word he spoke was like a dagger to his own heart.

She felt so sorry for him that, overcome with emotion, she blurted out without thinking, "Richard, don't you worry. If Beatrix is really carrying a Huber, I will find a way to make sure she has that baby! And if she's not, I'll have one for you two. I promise you'll get to hold your grandchild in your lifetime!"

Richard and Janelle froze. Their eyes went wide. "W-Winona, what... what did you just say?"

Winona's tone was serious and determined. "I said, if Beatrix won't have the baby, I will have one for Keaton. I promise you'll get to hold your grandchild in your lifetime!"

Richard and Janelle's eyes lit up instantly! Their hopes, which had been dashed, were now fully restored!

Richard was so moved that his eyes welled with tears. He grasped Winona's hands as if she were the savior of the Huber family, his lips trembling. "Good! Good! Good!"

Janelle brushed his hand aside and took Winona's hands in her own. "You wonderful, wonderful girl. I don't even know what to say. How can you be so good? Keaton is the luckiest man in the world to have met you! We must have a guardian angel looking out for us! I'm just so moved..." Janelle was so emotional she started to cry.

Winona pulled a hand free to wipe her tears, then gave her a hug. "You and Richard shouldn't be sad over Beatrix anymore. You two need to stay healthy. I'll be counting on you to help with the baby in the future, you know."

Janelle laughed through her tears. "Yes, of course!"

Richard started rubbing his hands together excitedly. "Don't you worry, Winona. Once you and Keaton have a baby, you two can do whatever you want. We'll be full-time grandparents! We'll take care of everything!"

Winona smiled and nodded. "...Okay."

She had originally said it to make Janelle and Richard happy, but in that moment, she felt a sense of happiness herself. She didn't have feelings for Keaton, but she genuinely adored vanelle and Richard. With parents like them, anyone who married into the Huber family would surely be very happy.

A little later, there was a knock on the door. Tarquin arrived with a

breakfast tray. Seeing Janet

Richard beaming, Tarquin was

surprised. He couldn't help but give Winona a second took. He had to hand it to her; to be able to cheer them up like this after such a huge blow... she was something else.

Tarquin's expression was gentle. "Janelle, Richard, time for breakfast."

Winona asked, "Has Keaton eaten?"

"Not yet. We'll eat over there."

Winona turned to Janelle and Richard. "Why don't we have him come eat with us? You were so angry, he's probably been on edge all night and too scared to eat."

Janelle threw back the covers and got out of bed. "Let's go. We'll go eat with him."

Winona smiled and nodded. "That

works too." She moved to help Janelle, but Janelle waved her off. don't need help. My sickness was just fre from stress. Now that the stress is gone, I feel perfectly fine. Keel great everywhere."

Chapter 1623

Richard agreed, "Me too! I feel fantastic!"

In the next room, the moment Keaton saw his parents, he sat up straight, bracing himself for the inevitable fallout. He greeted them cautiously, "Dad, Mom."

Richard had returned to his benevolent father persona. "Relax, we're not here to yell at you. Son, you're a lucky man to have Winona. You better treat her right from now on. If you dare upset her, your mother and I will have your hide!"

Janelle was also all smiles. "My dear son, how are you feeling today? Is your appetite back?"

Keaton was stunned. He'd gone from the family troublemaker to 'my dear son' again?! Did Winona really manage to talk them around?! Good Lord, how did she do that?

Keaton shot a subtle glance at Winona. Their eyes met for a second before she quickly looked away, ignoring him.

Keaton awkwardly pulled his gaze back and asked Janelle, "Mom, you're not angry with me anymore?"

Janelle said with a smile, "Not at all. Seeing as you found your mother such a wonderful daughter-in-law-to-be, I forgive you!"

Richard chimed in, "And your dad forgives you too!"

Keaton blinked. "?!"

Daughter-in-law-to-be?!!

Winona cleared her throat and shot him a pointed look. Only then did Keaton remember her plan to 'continue pretending to date.' He looked at Winona with sheer gratitude. The Beatrix situation was a mess, but his parents were the main event. He was endlessly thankful that she had managed to calm them down.

After breakfast, Tarquin left to pick up Elysia, and Winona convinced Richard and Janelle to go home and rest. They didn't really want to leave but, fearing they'd be third wheels, they eventually did.

The room was left with just Winona and Keaton...

Winona still felt a little awkward. She sat on the sofa, looking down at her phone, with no intention of talking to Keaton. She was only staying to wait for Beatrix, not to take care of him.

Keaton lay weakly in bed, staring at her. He'd had a mysterious appetite this morning and eaten a lot, only to throw it all up shortly after. Now he looked completely drained, pale and weak.

Feeling uncomfortable under his gaze, Winona finally spoke up. "If you have something to say, just say it."

Keaton's expression was sincere. "I'm in your debt forever, Winona. Seriously, name your price."

Winona pursed her lips. "That's not necessary."

Keaton immediately replied, "Don't be so quick to refuse. There's a lot I can do, you know."

Winona went back to her phone, ignoring him. "....."

Keaton tried to make conversation.

"Hey, Winona, I'm really curious.

How did you get my parents back on board? Just telling them we're

dating couldn't have made them that happy, right? Not when they're so obsessed with having a grandchild."

Winona didn't even look up. "I told them that if Beatrix is really carrying your child,

I'd talk to her and make sure she has it."

Keaton was surprised. "You're that confident? How are you going to talk to her?" Winona went silent again. "..."

Keaton pestered her. "So what if the baby in her belly isn't mine?"

Winona started to say, "If it's not yours, then I'll..." She choked on her words.

Keaton stared at her with wide, curious eyes. "?"

Winona frowned. What had she said back then? If the baby wasn't Keaton's, she would have one for him! Oh God, was she insane?! What had she been spouting?!

Seeing her expression shift, Keaton pressed, "If it's not mine, you'll what? Finish your sentence. Don't leave me hanging."

Winona scowled, snapping at him irritably, "Why do you have so many questions? You're a grown man, stop being so nosy! It's annoying! I've never met a guy who talks so much! Nobody's going to forget you have a voice if you stop talking for a minute!"

Keaton was baffled. Why was she suddenly so angry? She went from calm to furious in a split second. He didn't dare get angry back, so he just "Your Majesty

asked cautiously,

what did say to set you off?

Chapter 1624

Winona didn't explain, just said fiercely, "Have you contacted Beatrix or not? Is she coming today?! If she's not, I'm leaving!"

Keaton quickly replied, "She is, she is! She messaged me back and said she'll be here, but it'll be later. Probably this afternoon."

Winona frowned. "Why the afternoon?"

Keaton answered honestly, "I'm not sure. My guess is she's not in Jindale City right now and has to travel back."

Winona was not pleased. "Then why didn't you say so before?" If she had known Beatrix wasn't coming until the afternoon, she wouldn't have wasted her morning at the hospital! It was already awkward enough being alone with him.

Keaton looked aggrieved. "You didn't ask..."

Winona glared at him. "..."

Before she could think of a comeback, he started retching again, leaning over the side of the bed and dry-heaving.

Winona initially didn't want to get involved, but seeing how violently he was gagging, she softened a little. She got up, walked over, and started patting his back. "You should prepare yourself. Beatrix might really be pregnant with your child. This definitely looks like morning sickness."

Keaton caught his breath. "You've never been pregnant, what would you know about morning sickness?!"

Winona shot back immediately, "I have too!"

Keaton froze. "!" He had been about to gag again, but her words shocked him out of

it. He looked at her in disbelief. "When were you pregnant?"

"For a movie," Winona said. "I played a pregnant woman."

Keaton rolled his eyes. "..."

Winona frowned and slapped his back with surprising force. "Ow... Ugh..." He started gagging again, even more intensely this time.

Seeing this, Winona felt a little bad and offered an explanation. "Sorry about that. I forgot you were pregnant."

He retorted between heaves, "I'm not pregnant! I'm a man!"

"Right, right, I know. You're a man. A man with morning sickness!" "I..."

"Just focus on throwing up!" Winona ordered fiercely.

Keaton fell silent. "..."

Once his nausea passed, Winona got him some water to rinse his mouth, then sat on the sofa to order some food. Patting his back had made her hungry again. An ad for diamonds popped up on her screen and it suddenly reminded her of Keaton's jade stone.

Winona looked up at Keaton...

He was already staring at her. Their eyes met. Keaton looked flustered, like he'd

been caught staring, his eyes darting away awkwardly.

Winona held his gaze for a few seconds, her tone calm. "You don't have to keep watching me or trying to flatter me. I said what happened that night is in the past, and I meant it. We're both adults; it's not like we can't handle it. It's more awkward when you keep dwelling on it."

Keaton was silent. "..."

Winona's lips moved. "Let's talk about your jade stone. I broke it. Why didn't you tell me?"

Keaton looked surprised. "Who told you?"

Winona didn't hide it. "I heard it from Elysia."

"It wasn't a big deal," Keaton said. "There was no need to tell you."

"...What if another friend had broken it?"

Keaton said, "That depends on the friend. If it was just some casual acquaintance, then yeah, we'd have to talk about it. But for a real friend like you, there's nothing to talk about."

A real friend... Winona looked at him, genuinely moved by his words. She regretted her impulsive actions that night all over again. If it hadn't happened, they really could have become good friends.

After a few moments of silence, Winona said, "That jade was too precious. I can't afford to replace it, so let me at least pay you back for the custom dress."

Keaton frowned. "So you don't want to be my friend anymore?"

"That's not it."

"Then why insist on paying me for the dress?"

"...It was too expensive."

"Friends I truly care about are worth

more than any object. What's wrong good friend a gift?

with giving a a good

Besides, you got dragged through

the mud online because of me first. I

was just trying to make things right."

Winona was at a loss for words. "..."

Keaton asked her directly, "Is it that you never saw me as a friend, or is this because

of what happened that night?"

Chapter 1625

Winona hesitated. "...I do see you as a friend."

Keaton's brow furrowed. "Then it is because of that night. But you keep saying it's in the past, don't you?"

Winona fell silent. "..."

The atmosphere in the room suddenly became thick with awkwardness. Yes, she kept saying it was in the past, but she was the one who couldn't let it go. How do you just move on after sleeping with someone?

Winona's mind was a mess, and she had no idea how to respond. Luckily, her phone rang, shattering the tension.

It was Elysia. "Winona, Tarquin and I are on our way to the hospital. Do you want me to bring you anything to eat?"

Winona smiled. "I was just about to order something. Could you stop by The Golden Spoon and grab me a few pastries and a latte? Oh, and..." Winona seized the opportunity to break the awkwardness, turning to Keaton. "Do you want anything? Elysia can bring it."

Keaton started to shake his head, then said, "Ask her to grab a few lemons for me."

Winona asked, "Like, lemonade? Or a lemon tart?"

"Just fresh lemons," Keaton said.

Winona was surprised. "You're going to eat them raw?"

"Yeah. My mouth tastes bland. I'm craving something sour."

Winona was speechless. "..."

She stared at Keaton in shock for a long moment before speaking into the phone again. "Could you also bring a few fresh lemons for Keaton? He's craving something sour."

"Get a bunch of them," Keaton added.

"...A bunch of them," Winona repeated.

As soon as she hung up, she sent Elysia a text.

[Elysia, you're good with all that holistic medicine stuff, right? When you get here, can you check Keaton's pulse? I'm seriously starting to think he's pregnant!]

Elysia replied: [That's impossible. He's a guy. Guys can't get pregnant!]

Winona: [But his symptoms are exactly like pregnancy! Who eats raw lemons? They're insanely sour!]

[And you didn't see how badly he was throwing up. When I played a pregnant character, I threw up just like that!]

Elysia: [If he's pregnant, that means he's not a guy. He's been a woman in disguise all these years!]

Winona: [He is a guy. One hundred percent a guy!]

Elysia: [But what if?]

Winona: [No what-ifs. I'm sure!]

Elysia: [How are you so sure?]

Winona: [I slept with him, of course I'm sure!]

The next second, Elysia was calling her.

Winona realized what she had just typed and smacked her forehead. She didn't dare answer, rejecting the call and texting back instead. [We can talk in person when you get here.]

Elysia: [Fine. You better have your story straight. Get ready to confess everything!]

Winona sent back a pleading emoji. [Okay, okay.]

After ending the chat, Winona looked

like she had lost the will to live. She tossed her phone aside, covered her face, and flopped onto the sofa. Forgetting Keaton was even in the room, she squirmed and rolled around on the sofa in

embarrassment.

Keaton watched her with his alluring eyes... The earlier tension had vanished. On a whim, he took out his foldable phone and secretly started recording her.

After a moment, Winona seemed to remember he was there and shot up with a jolt. Keaton's heart skipped a beat, and he quickly hid his phone. Winona glared at him, her face flushing. "What are you doing, acting all shady?!"

He lied without missing a beat. "I wasn't doing anything."

Winona didn't believe him. She had just started to frown when Keaton changed the subject to distract her. "You were kind of cute just now, wriggling around like that."

turned even redder.

Winona's face tur

The word 'cute' made her feel

awkward and uncomfortable. With

her straightforward and free-spirited

personality, her image in the

entertainment industry was that of a

cool,

sophisticated queen. No one

had ever called her cute.

Winona scrunched her brow, her face still red, and grabbed a pillow, chucking it at

him. "Cute, my ass! I'm a queen!"

Keaton caught the pillow with a

smile. "You're not my sister, you're a

goddess. A cute goddess! And I'm

not just sucking up. You're cuter

than all the stern-faced ancestors in the Huber family portraits combined."

Winona was speechless. "..."

The door to the hospital room was suddenly pushed open. A beautiful woman, not quite familiar but not a complete stranger either, appeared in the doorway.

Winona's attention instantly shifted. Her eyes narrowed, and a smirk played on her lips. Ah, showtime...

Chapter 1626

Shifra froze. The last person she ever expected to see in this hospital room was Winona.

She stared at Winona for a long moment before snapping out of it and offering a weak greeting.

"Winona... hey."

Winona didn't respond. She just continued to study her, a sly smile on her red lips, her beautiful eyes narrowed.

Shifra was dressed for innocence today: light makeup, a high ponytail, a collegiate- style sweatsuit, and a pair of canvas sneakers.

The whole preppy look made her look like a high schooler at first glance.

Winona immediately thought of Keaton's first love, that girl named Clementine.

She let out a disdainful scoff and thought to herself:

Shifra's a smart one, alright. She knows how to play to her strengths and give him what he wants.

Keaton was only with her because she looked like Clementine.

She might not know Clementine by name, but she must have guessed that the one person Keaton could never forget would be his first love.

After all, first loves happen when you're young and impressionable. You remember them for a lifetime.

Her dressing up all innocent like this is a ploy to look more like Clementine, to win Keaton back.

The idea is sound, and her method of seducing a man is on the right track. Like I said, she's smart.

Feeling unnerved by Winona's stare, Shifra forced a smile that didn't reach her eyes and tried again. "Winona, I thought you were out of town for an event? When did you get back?"

Winona had secretly flown back to Jindale City overnight, without even her agent. Almost no one knew.

Ignoring the question, Winona turned to Keaton. "Am I your ancestor?"

Keaton blinked, then nodded. "Yep! You are!"

"Good. Then I'm going to have a little chat with her. Settle some personal business. You stay out of it."

She didn't know if Keaton was planning to get back together with Shifra, so she had to strike first. After all, Shifra looked just like his first love.

If they reconciled, it would be much

harder for her to get her revenge. She'd come back to deal with Beatrix, but since Shifra had served

herself up on a platter, she might's

well take care of her too. Save herself the trouble later.

Of course, Keaton had no objections. "You two talk. I won't interfere."

Winona stood up and walked toward Shifra.

Seeing the dangerous glint in

Winona's eyes, Shifra's guilt kicked in, and she quickly apologized.

"Winona, I'm so sorry about wham et

happened at the beginning of the month. It was all my fault I was just too jealous. I truly realize I was wrong now. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me."

Winona shut the door to the hospital room, turned around, and slapped Shifra hard across the face.
Smack!

Shifra: "!"

Keaton: "!"

Winona looked down at her imperiously. "You've already done the unforgivable, so don't bother saying you're sorry. I won't accept it."

"And I don't have a big heart. Quite the opposite, in fact. I'm petty, I hold a grudge, and I hate being taken for a fool."

"But if a dog bites me, I don't bite it back. I just put the dog down."

Shifra clutched her cheek, staring at Winona with a mixture of terror and fury.

She turned to Keaton, her voice a pathetic whimper. "Keaton!"

Keaton was just as stunned as she was. He hadn't expected Winona to get physical.

"!"

Winona didn't even spare Keaton a glance. "Calling him won't help. He can't control me. Didn't you hear him admit it? I'm his ancestor."

Shifra's eyes widened. "?!"

"Of course," Winona continued, "I'll still give him some face. I'm not going to actually kill you. But I can't just let you walk away, either. I need to blow off some steam!"

As soon as the words were out, Winona delivered a rapid series of slaps. *Smack, smack, smack!* Shifra stumbled and fell to the floor, but Winona wasn't done. She unleashed a flurry of blows.

Shifra cried out in pain, instinctively

trying to fight back, but Winona grabbed both of her hands, pinning her down. "My fighting skills are just average but it's more than enough to handle you. I've been doing Taekwondo for over a decade, you know. I'm a black belt."

Chapter 1627

Desperate, Shifra cried out to Keaton for help. "Keaton, save me! Waaaah....."

Before Keaton could say a word, Winona plucked a red rose from the bouquet Shifra had brought. She tore off a few petals and forcefully shoved them into Shifra's mouth. "Delicious?"

Shifra's tears streamed down her face in humiliation. "..."

Winona's smile vanished, her expression turning ice-cold. "If you ever dare to mess with me again, it won't be petals you'll be eating. I'll make you eat the thorns from the stem. Try me if you don't believe it."

Shifra's eyes were red with fear. "!"

Winona let her go, tossing the thorny stem onto her face. The thorns pricked Shifra's cheek, but she didn't dare make a sound.

Getting to her feet, Winona walked to the hospital bed, grabbed a wet wipe to clean her hands, and smoothed her hair. She looked at Keaton. "I'm done talking to her. I'll give you two some privacy."

As Winona turned to leave, Keaton quickly stopped her. "You don't have to go. I have nothing private to say to her."

Shifra's brow furrowed. "Keaton..."

Keaton ignored her and said to Winona, "You got my parents to leave, so you have to stay and take care of me. Besides, it's never a good look for a guy and a girl to be alone in a room together. I'll feel more comfortable if you stay."

It was obvious he didn't want her to leave.

Winona had no idea what he was playing at. He couldn't be alone with Shifra, but he could be alone with her? Was she not a girl?

She didn't dwell on it and simply walked over to the sofa and sat down. She pulled out her phone and started scrolling through videos.

Shifra shot her a venomous glare before getting up and walking to the bedside, crying softly. Keaton handed her a tissue. "Whatever is between you and Winona is your business. I'm not getting involved."

Shifra wasn't surprised. If he had wanted to get involved, he would have said something after the first slap. She was furious, but she didn't dare show it.

Through her tears, she said, "I was the one who wronged Winona first. It's only right that she'd hit me to let off some steam."

She wiped her eyes and looked at Keaton with a pained expression. "How did you get so thin?"

"It's nothing serious," Keaton said dismissively. "What did you come here for today?"

Shifra's eyes welled up again. "... The reason blicly announced our

breakup was because felt I wasn't good enough for you."

"I never thought you'd get so sick because of me. I feel terrible, so guilty... I rushed over as soon as I heard the news..."

"Keaton, let's stop fighting. Let's get back together."

Winona almost burst out laughing. *Sick because of her? This girl really knows how to flatter herself.*

"Winona, come over here for a sec," Keaton suddenly called out.

Winona looked up. "What's up?"

"I want to sit up. Give me a hand."

Shifra immediately stood. "I'll help you."

Keaton shut her down. "No. We're done. Let's keep some distance."

Winona rolled her eyes. *The way he said that, you'd think we weren't done.*

"Ancestor," Keaton called again when he saw she wasn't moving.

Winona's scalp tingled. *Why is he dragging me into their drama?*

She reluctantly got up, helped him sit, and tucked two pillows behind his back, Keaton squinted his charming eyes, a grin on his face. "My dear ancestor, would you be so kind as to get me a glass of water?"

Winona: "..."

She handed him the water. "Anything else?"

"Nope, that's all. Thank you, ancestor."

He kept calling her 'ancestor,' making Winona deeply

uncomfortable She shot him a few discreet glares before retreating to the sofa to scroll on her phone.

Shifra frowned. "Keaton, you and Winona..." Keaton's reply was swift. "None of your business."

Chapter 1628

He leaned back against the pillows, took a few sips of water to wet his throat, and then spoke. "Me being sick has nothing to do with you, either. Don't overthink it, and definitely don't feel guilty."

"You should know my style by now. When I break up with someone, it's clean. No loose ends. We're done, which means I'm not torn up about it."

"And there's absolutely no chance of getting back together. I don't go back for seconds. It's over between us."

Shifra cried, "Breaking up with you was an impulsive decision, I..."

She truly never imagined that Keaton wouldn't come crawling back to her. He hadn't sent her a single text in all this time.

Keaton chuckled. "Shifra, I might have a soft spot for a pretty face, but I only care about my girlfriend's tears. We've broken up. Crying in front of me now is useless. I don't feel sorry for you, and I certainly won't go soft on you."

"And another thing. It's not a crime for a girl to be a little clever, but you've played games and used me time and time again. Do you think I'm an idiot, or did you think I'd be sentimental about our past?"

Shifra froze, immediately denying it. "I... I didn't use you."

Keaton's eyes narrowed, his tone deceptively mild. "You didn't use me? Then how did you get close to Winona? And where did you get the resources to make her go viral with all that hate?"

"And for that matter, you caused a public uproar, so why has your life been proceeding as normal?"

"How did you find out what was going on with me? How did you know I was sick, hospitalized, where I was, and what room number?"

"If you weren't using me, you'd never have had the chance to get near Winona, you wouldn't have been able to dig up info on me, and you certainly wouldn't be standing in front of me right now."

"And your life? It would be a complete mess."

Shifra's brows knitted together as she looked at him, guilt written all over her face. "Keaton, I..."

Keaton laid it all out. "You're actually quite smart. In the face of a crisis, you still had the presence of mind to secure your own future by initiating the breakup."

"By breaking up with me, you could keep me on the hook and maintain your own buzz. After all, everyone was curious if we'd get back together, right?"

"Plus, the public doesn't know the details of our situation, so no one would dare mess with you behind the scenes."

"You could even continue to use my name to connect with more resources and pave your own way."

"You came to see me today to use me again, didn't you? Whether I take you back or not, you can continue to use me for hype, to generate buzz for yourself."

"If I'm not mistaken, there are probably paparazzi following you, right? From the moment you entered the hospital to the second you appeared at my door."

"Once you leave this room, the news about us will be all over the internet again, won't it?"

Shifra's breath caught in her throat, her face turning pale. "!"

Winona had already looked up, her eyes narrowed as she watched Keaton He's as sharp as he is charming. He can read women like a book He's seen right through

Shifra.*

Keaton continued, "After what happened with Winona, I told you. I liked you because you reminded me of my first love. If you had just been honest, confessed everything you did, and cleared the air publicly, I wouldn't have broken up with you, and I wouldn't have abandoned you. I would have helped you build your future. But you just couldn't be honest. After your 'clarification,' you staged playing

games again, hiring

bots to claim you were forced into it. Then you kept using my name to

make moves behind my back for

your own gain. Even then, I didn't

hold it against you. After all, you look

like my first love. But I didn't expect

you to get addicted to using me and show up here today."

"Shifra, you not only overestimated the place my first love holds in my heart, you

also overestimated your own intelligence."

Winona looked at Keaton in surprise. She never thought he would so openly admit to his feelings about his first love.

Chapter 1629

Such a deep wound was something most people would never reveal.

Keaton didn't give Shifra a chance to speak. "To be honest, out of all my exes, you're the one I find the most repulsive right now."

"So let's skip the excuses. The more you talk, the more annoyed I get."

"Stay away from me from now on. And stay away from my ancestor. If you ever mess with her again, just you try it."

A strange glint flashed in Winona's eyes. "..."

Shifra, however, looked at Keaton in terror, now too scared to even breathe. To have her intentions laid bare so bluntly didn't just make her nervous; it terrified her.

Who was Keaton? He could crush her with a flick of his finger.

Shifra didn't dare say another word. She shakily pushed herself to her feet and fled in disgrace.

The hospital room fell silent again.

Winona was still watching Keaton. He turned to meet her gaze and gave her a slight, wry smile.
"Ancestor, did you let off enough steam today?"

Winona: "..."

Keaton's smile widened. "Ancestor, hand me your phone."

"Stop with the weird nicknames," Winona grumbled.

"Hmm? Didn't you already admit you were my ancestor?"

Winona flushed. "...I only said that because I was afraid you'd stick up for Shifra."

Keaton's eyes crinkled. "Doesn't matter why. An admission is an admission. You can't just burn the bridge after you've crossed it."

Winona was speechless. "Are you that desperate for an ancestor? You short on them or something?"

Keaton grinned. "I'm not short on ancestors, but I am short on *living* ancestors. The ones in my family shrine are all six feet under, and each one is more boring than the last. You're much more fun."

Winona's mouth twitched. "Fun my ass!" *Comparing me to a bunch of dead people? What's wrong with him? And talking about his own ancestors like that... what a disgrace to the family name. It's a good thing Richard isn't here, or he'd get a beating for sure.*

Keaton chuckled and beckoned to her. "Come on, come on. Let me see if I look handsome in your little video. If I don't, you can't post it. You have to use a beauty filter on me."

Winona was taken aback. "How did you know I recorded a video?"

Keaton's charming eyes narrowed, his gaze tantalizing. "You wanna know? My lips are sealed. Unless you can persuade me."

His tone shifted so quickly, from calling her ancestor' to this playful flirting, that it took Winona a moment to register. Her heart began to pound. She frowned and shot back, "I'm your ancestor!"

Keaton laughed. "See? See? You admitted it yourself! Now come on, ancestor, let me see the video you recorded."

Winona: "..."

She stared at Keaton for a moment, then couldn't help but ask, "Why are you in such a good mood?"

She could tell. He was in an even better mood than before Shifra had arrived.

Keaton was surprisingly honest. "I am pretty happy right now." "Why?"

"I just mentioned Clementine. Didn't you hear?"

"I heard. So what?"

"Don't you see? I'm really over her."

"Huh?"

Keaton sighed wistfully. "I used to avoid talking about her at all costs. It's been so many years, and I've only ever told you and Tarquin about her. Every time I mentioned he

name, it hurt. But not today! just talked about her openly, and I didn't, feel a single trace of sadness or

pain. It's like she's really just become a regular ex in my mind, someone I can talk about freely."

Winona: "..."

The ex you can't even bring yourself to name is the one who still owns a piece of your heart. The one you can talk about openly is the one who's truly in your past. Just like how she never brought up Zane, and whenever she did she still felt angry, hurt, and sad. Because she wasn't completely over him yet.

Keaton was truly over it. That's why he was so happy. After all, moving on was a

form of liberation.

"Congratulations," Winona said sincerely.

Chapter 1630

Winona was still curious. "Why the sudden breakthrough? How did you get over her?"

Keaton was silent for a few seconds before answering. "I don't know. All of a sudden, I could just talk about her."

Winona: "..."

They looked at each other for a moment, then Keaton cleared his throat. "Hey, uh... don't go sleeping around, okay? I don't think that method I taught you is very reliable."

Winona: "..."

"Look at me," Keaton explained. "I slept with so many people and it never helped me get over her. It feels like I was only liberated today. So the whole 'sow your wild oats' method? It's a bust."

Winona felt a wave of awkwardness talking about this. She forced herself to ask again, "But how did you really get over her today?"

Keaton replied, "I really don't know. Maybe I already got over her a few days ago. It's strange. But I'm sure it wasn't because I was sleeping around. Anyway, just listen to me. Don't go sleeping around!"

Winona: "..."

For crying out loud, I already slept with you, and NOW you're telling me the method doesn't work? It sure as hell doesn't! After sleeping with him, I don't feel liberated at all. I feel even more anxious!

"Ancestor!" Keaton suddenly called her name again.

"What?!" Winona snapped, irritated.

Keaton grinned. "Let me see the phone first."

Winona composed herself, took out her phone, found the video she had just recorded, and showed it to him. "I recorded your conversation so that everyone knows you're really done with Shifra. It'll stop her from using you for clout outside."

Keaton seemed to not hear her. He sighed. "I've lost a lot of weight. I'm not as handsome as I used to be, am I?"

Winona: "...Can I post this video? Just the first part, not the part where you talk about your first love."

Once the video was out, everyone would know that Keaton and Shifra were well and truly over. Shifra's days of using him for personal gain were finished. They would finally have a clean break. And only with a clean break would Shifra stop bothering her and Janelle.

But Keaton said, "Why not post that part? Post the whole thing."

Winona looked at him suspiciously. "If you post it, people will get curious about who your first love is. They'll talk."

"It's fine," Keaton said. "I'll answer them openly."

Winona: "... You're really over her?"

"Yeah. It's not a lie!"

Winona pursed her lips and took back the phone. "I'll have someone post it now."

"Can you edit it to make me look more handsome?" Keaton asked.

Winona nodded. "Sure!"

"Do you know how? If not, I'll do it myself," he offered.

Winona ignored him. "Ancestor," Keaton called.

"I know how!" she snapped.

She went back to the sofa and fiddled with her phone for a while before finding someone to leak the video.

Soon, the video exploded online.

When Keaton saw it, his world came crashing down. He furiously confronted Winona. "Why did you replace my face?!"

"You said to make you look more handsome," Winona said nonchalantly.

Keaton's eyes bugged out. "And you think **that's** more handsome than me?!" Winona nodded. "I do think it's more handsome than you. And cuter."

The video showed the Sky City's cartoon snake mascot edited over Keaton's head.

Keaton looked at her in disbelief.

bet

"Are those big eyes of yours just for

nation? Or is there something

wrong with them?!"

Winona pressed her lips together and didn't reply.

bet

After glaring at her for a moment, Keaton found a selfie on his phone,

and quote-tweeted the video with a

clarification

[The content of this video is true, but the face is wrong. This is what I look like,

folks!]

Instantly, the comments under his post flooded in:

Some were fawning over how drop-dead gorgeous he was.

Some were asking about his health.

Some were curious about his first love.

Others were publicly flaming Shifra in his comments.

And a special group showed up just

to mock the Sky City's snake mascot One user's scathing comment read: "Looks

that

snake ate the wrong kind of mushrooms and is seeing things.'

And then there was a whole contingent of Sky City fans who came just to cry.