

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 181[707 words]

“Ugh! Word on the street is that when that bold brute was getting all up in Ms. Thorne’s face, she just snapped–went totally bonkers. shouting it was all their doing that pushed her! Then nobody really saw her do anything, and the next thing you know, the bald guy just keeled over. Some of the guys reckon he’d never seen a gal that stunning before, got all hot and bothered, and down he went.”

That explanation didn’t hold water

Tarquin asked, “No toxins in his system?”

“None.”

op your friend on him, and let me know if there’s any new intel

“Keep

“Got it”

Hanging up the call. Tarquin lit up a cigarette.

When he’d arrived on the scene today, the guy was sprawled over Elysia, a perfectly healthy man, suddenly turned into a vegetable.

What the hell had Elysia done to him?

No, the real question was how could Elysia–under the watchful eyes of the public–render a fully-grown man comatose in mere minutes?

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She must be something special!

Tarquin was clearly skeptical.

In his eyes, Elysia wasn't completely useless, but she was definitely not the sharpest tool in the shed.

She was the kind of foolish woman with more tears than cunning

Meanwhile, the 'foolish woman' Elysia had just finished dinner and was cleaning up the kitchen.

Blossom had dashed to the loo and came running back, phone in hand, all flustered,

"Elysia, check this out—something happened to the Sutton family!"

The Suttons had hit rock bottom, debts up to their eyeballs, and were hawking their Jindale City villa and other properties like there was

no tomorrow.

n Mrs. Sutton

Their fleet of cars and even Mrs. Sutton's jewelry and designer bags were up for grabs

Oriana Sutton had skipped town, claiming she'd lost her marbles and jetted off abroad for treatment

Elysia was stunned. "This is so sudden!"

"It is, but when you think about it, not really. Oriana messed up big time today, royally pissed off Mr. Huber. When Mr. Huber gets mad, anything can happen."

Elysia didn't argue; she too suspected Keaton had a hand in the Sutton family's downfall.

She didn't have an ounce of sympathy for Oriana. She was a saint, after all. It wasn't like she'd wish well on those who wronged her.

She was just shocked at the power of the capitalists!

The Suttons were loaded, yet they crumbled so easily after crossing big money—imagine regular Joes like them, they'd probably lose more than just money!

Best to steer clear of those folks.

No contact, no conflict.

No matter what, she had to get that divorce tomorrow, and once it was final, she'd be out of this city and far away from certain people.

The next day.

Elysia hadn't planned on making breakfast, but the image of Elijah's tiny frame just wouldn't leave her mind.

So, she whipped up breakfast and took it to Sunshine Community.

She didn't reach out to Tarquin. Instead, she just carried the breakfast towards the apartment block.

She planned to leave the food at the door and shoot him a text so he could pick it up himself.

That way, she could avoid seeing him.

She didn't want to see him at all.

09:59

But fate had other plans. Just as she reached the apartment entrance, there he was!

Elysia froze at the sight of Tarquin.

It was barely six in the morning, the complex was quiet, and there he stood, alone.

Dressed in a black turtleneck and a long coat, he loomed beside the flowerbeds, a cigarette pinched between his fingers, taking the

occasional drag.

Against the backdrop of the snow-blanketed ground, he was like a black rose.

Though using 'use' didn't quite fit the man with his chiseled features and an air of icy detachment when his brow furrowed.

He was anything but delicate, all cold indifference.

But as frosty as he was, no one could deny his looks. He was a knockout.

At six-three, broad-shouldered, with a lean waist and long legs, he exuded a commanding presence whether standing or sitting, always ramrod straight.

His physique was impressive, and his features? No wonder he caused a stir like a celeb hitting the streets whenever he went out.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 182[817 words]

It was obvious that Tarquin had noticed Elysla too

He had another sleepless night, tossing and turning in his bed, haunted by the memory of their unexpected kiss in the grocery store. The thought of seeing her this morning to make breakfast for Elijah set his blood boiling with irritation. He didn't want to deal with her, and because of that, he'd tormented himself all night long, caught in a tug-of-war between reaching out and staying silent.

Finally, without contacting her, he succumbed to a restless night of Insomnia.

When dawn broke, he didn't quite know what drove him, but he found himself dressing and heading downstairs. Not really knowing what he was doing, he lit a cigarette to pass the time.

Before he could even finish smoking, Elysla appeared. It seemed, perhaps, he had come down just to wait for her.

They stood there, locking gazes, neither speaking nor stepping forward. A standoffish dance separated by a mere twenty feet

After what felt like an eternity, a cool breeze swept by, provoking a sneeze from Elysla

She had been too frugal to take a cab that day, riding over on Blossom's electric scooter, now parked just outside the complex. Only those who've braved the crisp, bitter mornings on a scooter could truly understand the mix of pain and pleasure it brought. Even bundled up in a mask and hat, the chill cut through her,

"Achoo!"

Another sneeze wracked her body, a telltale sign of a cold nipping at her heels.

Tarquin frowned at her condition, his resolve wavering. Eventually, he snuffed out his cigarette and took the first step towards her.

As he approached, Elysla's heartbeat quickened, a reflexive urge to retreat bubbling up inside her. His icy aura felt like a confrontation waiting to happen.

Clutching the thermos tighter, she stood her ground, straightening her spine, refusing to show weakness. She hadn't done anything wrong, so why should she cower?

"Stand strong, and let your enemies weaken," she reminded herself, clearing her throat and scowling as if to say, "I'm not afraid of you!"

Tarquin rolled his eyes and stopped in front of her. Noticing the thermos in her hand, his tone softened—relatively speaking, of course; he was still colder than most

"Bringing Elijah breakfast?" he asked, his voice carrying a hint of curiosity.

Yeah.

“Why didn’t you let me know ahead of time?”

“I have other things to do. I was just going to drop the breakfast off and leave”

“Don’t want to see me?”

Elysia blinked up at him, wordlessly questioning his blunt approach.

“I’m not a monster, Elysia. As long as you don’t overstep, we won’t have a problem, Tarquin stated matter-of-factly

“I haven’t overstepped!”

“The incident at the bar, and yesterday at the supermarket—expect them not to happen again. Your personal life is your own business, but don’t set your sights on me. I’m not interested.”

Elysia’s eyes widened at his words. Was he insinuating she was some kind of siren, luring men into her net?

“L...” Elysia was ready to fire back when he continued, “Look, you’ve been bringing Elijah food, and he enjoys it. That’s your doing. We’ll stick to our agreement: a day’s meal counts as a day off your debt. Once Elijah warhis up to you, we can discuss your remuneration separately”

At the mention of money, Elysia’s retort swallowed itself back down her throat.

“What do you

mean?”

“Exactly what I said. You’re contributing to his wellbeing. That’s worth something. We’ll deduct ten thousand a day from what you owe for now. Well settle the rest later.”

Elysia’s eyes sparkled.

Suddenly, the man before her seemed a bit more noble, even more handsome!

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inside, she slipped off her shoes and placed the thermos on the dining table, her coat still on a clear sign she wasn't planning to stay long

She had come to pick something up, but once inside, she couldn't resist peeking to Elijah room,

hadn't seen him in a while and found herself missing tem

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[598 words]

Chapter 183

Elysia wasn't bringing Elijah meals for the cash, but who in their right mind would pass up easy money? Ton grand a day, even just to break even, made the future seem a bit brighter.

"Did he eat all of last night's dinner?" Elysia asked, taking the initiative.

"Yep, licked the plate clean. He really dug the dishes."

"Alright, I whip up another batch for lunch."

Under the spell of potential prosperity, Elysia found herself growing softer

Another gust of cold wind swept by, and she couldn't help but snuffle, her nose turning a rosy red from the chill.

Tarquin watched her for a few seconds, his brow furrowed. "Come in with me"

He turned and headed towards the apartment building entrance.

Elysia humed to clarify, "I'd rather not go in, just in case Elijah wakes up and throws a fit seeing me

"He won't be up till six thirty

It was just past six

Still, Elysia hesitated to enter. With

Elijah asleep, it would be just the two of them alone in that room – it just didn't seem proper.

Tarquin, already at the entrance, glanced back to see her standing still, his expression growing more stern..

"Come in and grab some stuff."

"What stuff?" she asked, puzzled.

Without responding, Tarquin strode up the stairs with long steps.

Elysia hesitated for a moment before following with the thermos in her arms

As they ascended the stairs, the elderly couple from the neighboring apartment descended, greeting them warmly.

“My, my, is this your wife? What a beauty!”

Elysia felt awkward.

Tarquin replied politely to the seniors, “She’s not.”

“Oh? Not your wife, then who might she be?”

“The housekeeper.”

The old couple seemed a bit embarrassed and chuckled as they continued down the stairs.

Elysia could still hear their banter.

“Why aren’t they a couple? They look perfect together, a match made in heaven.”

“Matches made in heaven are a dime a dozen, doat
they’re all meant to be.”

“What do you know? They’re destined to be together, inse
by fate itself.”

“Come in.” Tarquin was already at the doorstep, unlocking the door

Elysia climbed the stairs, muttering under her breath, “I’m not your housekeeper:

“Don’t want to be the housekeeper? Want to be my wife instead?”

Elysia blushed. “What nonsense are you spouting?”

Tarquin’s face remained impassive. “Good, because you’re not my type.”

He stepped into the apartment after that declaration.

Elysia pursed her lips, tempted to dump the contents of the thermos over his head. But then she thought of the money and restrained

herself.

Inside, she slipped off her shoes and placed the thermos on the dining table, her coat still on a clear sign she wasn’t planning to stay long.

She had come to pick something up, but once inside, she couldn’t resist peeking into Elijah’s room

“Can L... take a look at Elijah?”

She hadn’t seen him in a while and found herself missing him.

09:58

“Sure”

With permission granted, Elysia rushed to Elijah’s room, her hand on the doorknob. She paused to ask over her shoulder, “Elijah’s still asleep, right?”

Her main concern was not to agitate him. If she did and he refused to eat her cooking, she’d lose any chance to get close to him again.

Tarquin glanced at the clock on the wall and said, “He has another fifteen minutes.”

Hearing that, Elysia quickly pushed open the door and stepped inside.

The room was dark, and she tiptoed towards the bed. Just one look at Elijah’s face made her heart skip a beat. He looked so much like

Elliot and Evan!:

Chapter 184

[531 words]

Chapter 184

fast as

The little guy was sprawled out, the blanket pulled up to his chest, fast asleep.

Elysia eased herself down beside him, unable to resist touching his soft cheek.

Elijah was such a beautiful and adorable child. How could his mother bear to abandon him? What was she thinking?

If it were Elysia, she’d never be able to leave him behind.

Even if she couldn’t stand the kid’s aloof father and had to leave, she’d find a way to take her baby with her!

She withdrew her hand from his cheek, intending to check his pulse.

Suddenly, her wrist was caught by a small hand.

“Mommy!”

Elysia froze.

Tarquin, who had been standing at the doorway, furrowed his brows.

Elijah's eyes snapped open, fixing on Elysia.

She held her breath, petrified, fearing that any second now, Elijah might erupt in distress.

But instead, Elijah sat up, his eyes brimming with joy as he asked, "Mommy? Is it really you, Mommy? When did you come back? Did you miss me and that's why you're here? You won't leave again, will

you? You're going to stay with me forever, right?"

Elysia was dumbstruck. She blinked in bewilderment, looking from Elijah to Tarquin for some kind of guidance, some clue as to what she should do.

Tarquin, clearly taken aback by this unexpected turn, approached the bedside.

"Elijah"

The boy was ecstatic. "Daddy, Mommy's back! Look, it's Mommy! The Mommy I've been dreaming off She's back! She's really back!"

Watching his son's excited little face, Tarquin was lost in thought

When was the last time Elijah had laughed like this?

When was the last time his boy had been this happy?

"Daddy, why aren't you excited? My mommy, your wife! She's back! She won't leave us again! We don't have to be lonely anymore. Mommy's back!"

Seeing his son in this state, Tarquin started to panic

The last time he had seen Elysia, he had been furious.

Why was it that this time, Elijah suddenly mistook her for his mother?

Had his fixation on his mother deepened?

Was his illness getting worse?

Tarquin's frown deepened with concern. "Are you dreaming

"Huh? I'm not dreaming, Daddy Can't you see Mommy? Look, Mommy's right here."

Tarquin turned to Elysia.

Elysia's expression was serious, she had regained her composure. She locked eyes with Elijah and said gently. "Elijah, look at me and let's count together, okay?"

“Okay, whatever you say, Mommy!”

“One, two, three, four, five Elysia snapped, her fingers, and Elijah collapsed back onto the bed.

“Elijah!” Tarquin moved to step forward but stopped when he saw Elysia’s demeanor. He held back

He knew Elysia had hypnotized Elijah. Like other pediatric psychologists, she had always wanted the chance to delve into Elijah’s psyche.

This was her opportunity

Tarquin didn’t want to interrupt and didn’t leave either, staying in place to keep them company.

Time passed, and Elysia’s breathing suddenly became rapid, her chest heaving

Tarquin watched her with a furrowed brow, anxiety etched on his face. “Elysia_”

09:58

Elysia turned to Tarquin, her eyes brimming with tears, “He’s in bad shape! Really bad! Something serious is happening! He he he.”

09:58

Tarquin’s brow furrowed in concern.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 185[624 words]

“Elysia!” Her eyes reddened with unshed tears as she said, “He’s in a bad place right now! A very bad place!”

Tarquin held his breath, trying to quell the storm rising within him. “What’s wrong with him?”

“He has no light inside him. No water, no life, and nothing positive or uplifting. Just an endless fog and swirling dust. He’s lying in a desolate wasteland, battered and barely hanging on... He’s not going to make it.”

Tarquin's head buzzed as though struck by a gong. "What do you mean, not going to make it? Be clear"

in his mind, he's not going to make it. When he can't hold on any longer, in reality... he will...

"He will what?"

"He will die!"

Tarquin gasped, the words hitting him like a ton of bricks.

Elysia continued, "When he loses the will to live and the belief in his spirit, he will lose the desire to continue in reality. He'll find any way to end it all, and that's often the outcome for children with severe psychological issues."

"It can't be! I told him I had found his birth mother. Shouldn't he be excited and looking forward to it? Why would he still be so injured?"

"You told him you found his mother?"

"Yes.

"He might not believe you, knowing you lied. Or maybe deep down, he feels that as long as his mother isn't back, she's not really found, and the search must go on to solve his current predicament. Only bringing his mother back might change that "

Tarquin was silent.

The room stayed quiet until an alarm broke the silence from outside.

It was 6:30 am, Elijah's time to wake up, but he remained asleep

Elysia explained, "I had to hypnotize him earlier, so he needs to sleep a bit longer."

Tarquin said nothing.

Elysia wasn't sure what else to say. Elijah had been keeping her at arm's length, preventing her from offering him any psychological counseling, Mental illness wasn't something that could be cured with medication alone.

After a whi

upsetting him when he wakes."

a while, sensing that Elijah would soon awaken, Elysia stood to leave. "I should go, to avoid upset

Tarquin glanced at Elijah and followed Elysia out of the room.

“You don’t need to escort me,” she said as he approached the door.

Tarquin didn’t reply, only grabbing a child’s scarf from a hook near the door and tossing it to her.

It was soft and adorned with cartoon monsters-

Elijah’s

Elysia was taken aback. “You called me here just to give me T

Tarquin didn’t speak, closing the door behind him, heading downstairs.

After a moment’s hesitation, Elysia followed.

Tarquin was still at the same spot, lighting a cigarette, taking puffs in silence

Elysia looked at him, feeling a twinge of pity. Perhaps as a parent herself, she understood what it was like when a child was in trouble.

But there was little she could do to help. She offered her final advice, “If Elijah shows any strange behavior when he wakes up, call me. If he becomes extremely agitated, give him the medication I provided earlier. Try to avoid sedatives. It’s harmful for kids”

Tarquin continued to smoke, his face a mask of stoicism

Elysia left with the scarf, but as she reached the corner, she couldn’t resist looking back.

In the cold, snowy landscape, the man stood alone against the whiteness, cigarette smoke curling around his furrowed brow, a picture of desolation.

If his demeanor had been less stern, the image would have been one of utter heartbreak.

Elysia pursed her lips, her feelings a tangled knot. She didn’t wish him well, so sympathy wasn’t quite right, but she couldn’t muster any joy at his plight either.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 186[709 words]

She had stumbled upon a heart wrenching story online once a case where a father, unwilling to spend time and energy on his son who suffered from bipolar disorder, had cold-heartedly chained the boy like a dog and locked him away in a cage.

When the story broke, the poor kid was found curled up in a corner of the cage, filthy and cold to the touch, breathless.

And just recently, a man from Fest City, eager to start over with his new flame, had mercilessly pushed his young son and daughter down the stairs, resulting in their tragic deaths.

Some people are supposed to be parents.

Others, it seems, are devils in comate.

She didn't really know Tarin. Given that he might be the man who bullied her years ago, she felt animosity towards him.

He might not be a good guy, but there was no doubt in her mind that he was a good father.

The way he looked out for Elijah made that clear,

Elysia approached her snow-covered scooter, hesitated for a second, then wrapped the scarf he'd given her around her neck and left the neighborhood.

The scarf was soft, a cozy barrier against the winter chill.

No sooner had Elysia disappeared than the photo of her sneaking a peek at Tarquin was sent to Nola's phone.

"That little tramp! She dares to make a play for Tarquin! Dad said I was just stirring up trouble, and accused me of being dramatic. Mom, can't you see? Am I wronging her?"

Alleen squinted at the photo, her gaze fierce.

Alleen, Nola's mother, was closing in on fifty but took such good care of herself she could pass for forty. She was the epitome of a trophy wife, born and bred in wealth.

She was Donovan's second wife, the other woman who had successfully climbed her way to the top.

In Alleen's second year as Donovan's mistress, his first wife passed away.

The year she mated Donovan and gave birth to Nola, Donovan's son met his untimely death.

The drama that unfolded wasn't something you could sum up in a few words

To describe Aileen in one sentence: she was ruthless and cunning.

She had been away in King City attending a high-society ladies' gathering when Nola got into trouble, and she rushed back only after a furious call from Donovan, demanding she take better care of their daughter.

"Speak up, Mom! Does she look innocent to you, the way she looks at Tarquin? No! I must find a way to get rid of her!"

Nola was about to make a call when Alleen snatched her phone away.

"How many times must I tell you, Nola? Stay cool-headed in the face of trouble. Don't act on impulse. Do you even know this woman? Have you looked into her relationship with Tarquin?"

Nola was livid.

"Do I need to investigate? It's obvious she's seducing Tarquin!"

Alleen pursed her lips.

"Know your enemy and know yourself, and you will never be defeated. You go picking a fight without understanding her, and you'll be the one to suffer! And you dare to go after her directly? Have you forgotten what happened to the Sutton family? Did Tarquin's warning fall on deaf ears? If you keep this up, the Slater family will become the next Suttons!"

Nola glared

"That's impossible! I saved Elijah's life. I'm his savior, Tarquin would never turn on me! Besides, it was Keaton who bankrupted the Suttons, not Tarquin!"

"Foolish girl! Without Tarquin's pressure from behind the scenes, Keaton wouldn't have had the heart to act so ruthlessly. And another thing, stop flaunting your deed of saving Elijah. Some debts of gratitude should remain unspoken. If you keep using it as leverage, it's no longer a favor, it becomes blackmail. Do you think Tarquin would tolerate that?"

"Then... what do you suggest? That woman Elysia is clearly here with a plan. She's barely been here a few days, and Tarquin is already shielding her. If we don't deal with her soon, who knows? They might end up together!"

"That won't happen. Tarquin is yours, and I won't let him end up with another woman."

As Aileen's words faded, her phone rang. She glanced at the screen, her eyes narrowing.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 187[637 words]

Alleen's eyes flickered with disdain as she listened to the voice on the other end of the line.

"I've got it" she said curtly as she hung up the phone and turned to Nola

"Got the scoop Tarquin isn't into her He's just mingling because of Elijah. She's got some tricks up her sleeve with child psychology and Tarquin's hoping she can work some magic on Elijah's condition."

"What are you saying? She can cure Elijah? Oh no, this is bad. If she really cures Elijah, Tarquin would give her the moon!"

Alleen remained unfazed. "She won't cure Elijah. She doesn't even have a license, she's nothing but a charlatan Got lucky a couple of times with Corbin Denton, and now Tarquin's clinging to hope."

"A charlatan? You mean she's using Elijah to get close to Tarquin?"

"Exactly"

"We need to expose her, now!"

"There's no rush. If she can use Elijah, so can we."

"Mom, what's your plan

Alleen's eyes gleamed with strategy as she said, "Don't forget, we're not the only ones who want that little brat out of the picture. Some folks in the Bradford family are itching for it too. If we let slip that Elysia can save Elijah, what do you think they'd do?"

Nola blinked rapidly and said, "They'd get rid of Elysia for sure! They'd never let Elijah survive! Mom, are you planning to use them as a pawn?"

"Smart girl. That's how you learn. A woman needs to be cunning if she wants to secure her place in high society."

Elysia was oblivious to the schemes brewing against her.

The moment she returned to the apartment, she dove into the study. She sat at her laptop, earnestly searching for anything related to Elijah's case

Perhaps it was Elijah's striking resemblance to Elliot and Evan

that stirred her resolve, or maybe it was the way he'd called her 'Mommy' in a moment of haze. She desperately wanted to help him.

She hoped for his recovery, for him to live like any other child, full of joy and laughter.

Elysia sat in front of the screen for hours until the lunch hour called her away. Her search had yielded little, leaving her disappointed. The best way to ease Elijah's condition was to integrate into his life, to observe, understand, and eventually guide him out of his psychological shadows.

But with Elijah's aversion to her, finding a way to break through was a puzzle she had yet to solve.

The ringtone of her phone broke her concentration. It was Kylton.

She had almost forgotten about the noon meeting with Tarquin

in her pr

preoccupation with Elijah's troubles.

She quickly picked up. "Hello?"

"Elysia, we're meeting at Azure Café at twelve, all good on your end?"

"I'll be there on time."

"Great, just confirming. Tarquin's all set. Have a good chat"

"Thanks!"

After hanging up, Elysia glanced at the clock, freshened up in the bathroom, and rushed to the kitchen.

She prepared lunch but didn't have a bite. Packing it up, she sped off on her electric scouter

Arriving at Sunshine Community, she messaged Tarquin.

I'm at the gate of your place. Come down, please.]

Tarquin didn't reply, and as she was about to call, she spotted him.

She parked her scooter and hurried over, clutching the lunchbox. But in her haste, she slipped, sprawling on the ground as the lunchbox skidded away.

The fall stung, and as Elysia tried to stand, she slipped again, landing back on the icy pavement.

Sitting on the ground, hurt and frustrated, her cheeks flushed with anger. She was bundled in a light-colored down coat with a teddy bear hat from Blossom and Elijah's little monster scarf around her neck.

09:59

Clumsy yet endearing, she looked to Tarquin like a light-furred bear cub In the snow

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 188[737 words]

Tarquin approached, bending down to pick up the lunchbox from the ground without a word, his gaze lingering on Elysia.

Elysia sat on the pavement, tilling her face up at him in surprise when he made no move to help her up.

“Aren’t you going to give me a hand here?” she exclaimed

After all, she had taken a tumble while trying to deliver lunch to his son!

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Tarquin frowned, hesitating for a moment before extending his hand

His palm faced downwards, clearly not inviting her to grasp it, but rather offering his arm as a support.

What’s with all the caution? She wondered indignantly. Did he think she was some sort of femme fatale?

Elysia’s pride was stung. She ignored the offered arm, instead reaching up to grab his trousers to pull herself up.

Tarquin’s eyes widened in alarm, but before he could scold her, Elysia’s footing slipped, sending her crashing towards him.

Her eyes wide with panic, and she instinctively reached for his tie. Just as she grasped it, her heels slid back, and she toppled over

Came by momentum, Tarquin also fell backwards.

As they both seemed destined to hit the ground, Tarquin’s quick reflexes kicked in. He caught her by the waist and pulled her into his embrace.

Elysia gasped, “That was close!

"I've told you before, I'm not interested in you. Stop playing these little games around me."

Elysia blinked, absorbing his words and her frustration peaked

"Playing games? I've seen narcissists, but never one as self-absorbed as you!"

"You..

"You are shameless! Unreasonable!" Elysia cut him off before he could continue, leaving him speechless.

As usual, Tarquin was at a loss for words, only managing to grumble after a long pause, "You're a woman; you should have some self-respect."

00:50

"What's that supposed to mean? Just because you're a man, you don't need self-respect? Jerk!"

Tarquin fell silent.

Not for the first time, Elysia was misunderstood by him. She decided not to argue and got straight to the point.

"How's Elijah? Did he react at all when he woke up this morning?"

Switching the subject to Elijah, Tarquin calmed down a bit and replied coldly. He didn't have much of a reaction when he woke up. Seemed in good spirits, said he had a dream about his mom. And he ate all the food you brought this morning."

"That's good news, I guess. At least he's not showing any signs of distress. Give him this, it's got his favorite dish.

With that, Elysia hopped on her scooter and sped off. She still had to hurry to the Azure Café to meet his husband Tarquin's appointment

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 189[693 words]

The ground was slick with ice, and Elysia creened awkwardly on her electric scooter, barely managing to keep it upright as she made

her way

Tarquin watched her clumsy attempts with a look of disdain curling his lips, and without another word, he turned on his heel and

headed home.

As fate would have it he bumped into the old man from across the street, who was out throwing the trash. The old man had lived in the neighborhood fo. years and was quite familiar with Tarquin's mother, which meant he wasn't a stranger to Tarquin either.

He was the chatty type, and upon seeing Tarquin, he struck up a conversation.

"Tar back on your lonesome, eh? Where's Elysia?"

"She had to take off; something came up."

"Gone? Aint you two shackled up yet?"

The corner of Tarquin's mouth twitched. "You got it all wrong. She and I aren't on item?"

"Come on, come on, you're both adults. No need to be shy about a little romance. I'll tell you what, I've got a knack for reading people, and Elysia, she's got a good head on her shoulders, a real lucky charm. Plus, I hear she's the kind to bring prosperity to a household. If you snag her, you've struck gold, my boy. Don't let someone else sweep her off her feet. You'd better catch that good fortune while you

can.

Tarquin just stared at him, speechless.

No sooner had he walked through his front door than Keaton's call came through.

Tarquin, it's nearly 12, you ready? Don't forget your date with Elysia!"

*...I'll be there shortly."

After hanging up, he spoke to Elijah, "Daddy's got to head out. I'll let Heath keep you company. I brought back some dinner, your favorite dish is in there. Dig in."

Elijah didn't say a word, just trotted off obediently to the dining room and climbed into his high chair to wait

Tarquin cast a thoughtful glance at Elijah, then reminded Heath, "Call me if you need anything."

With the roads clear, Tarquin's car easily outpaced Elysia's scooter, and he arrived at the cafe well before her.

He settled into a private booth on the second floor, Keaton at his side.

Through the floor-to-ceiling windows, they saw Elysia pushing her scooter, struggling against the cold.

Keaton remarked, "Is Elysia nuts or what? It's freezing out, and she's not taking a cab? Riding that scooter must be like an icebox."

*She's broke, but yeah, she's also nuts."

"You could at least spring for a car for her. Wouldn't you be quitted if she caught frostbite?"

Tarquin rolled his eyes at Keaton, took a drag of his cigarette, and kept his gaze locked on Elysia.

She was shaking off snow, then carefully removed Elij

folded it neatly, and stashed it in her pocket

Keaton added, "What's her rush to see you? She didn't even bother with makeup, clearly not trying to seduce you"

Tarquin was curious too, he barely knew her. What was her motive for asking Keaton to set up this meeting?

Unaware of their scrutiny, Elysia's nerves spiked at the thought of meeting Tarquin, She took several deep breaths at the entrance before mustering the courage to walk in

Inside, a man sat at the arranged booth. From her vantage point, she could only see the back of his head. Though she couldn't see his face, his demeanor screamed success.

That had to be Tarquin!

Elysia steeled herself against her jitters, clutching her hands as she approached, "Hello, I-

"Hmm? Elysia? Callum turned around, surprised to see her

Elysia was taken aback, not expecting to run into an old acquaintance here.

Without greeting him, she quickly checked her phone for Keaton's table number, then compared it to the one on the booth. It matched She was baffled, "Why... why are you here?"

Callumn smiled and said. Tve got a meeting. Are you waiting for someone too?"

Elysia nodded, still dazed.

no

“Hasn’t your date arrived?”

“No, not yet.”

“Well, since we’re both waiting, have a seat and let’s catch up. Waiter!”

Callum, ever the warm host, ordered a coffee for Elysia as she settled into the unexpected reunion.

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Elysia plopped down onto the chair with a sense of forced bravado, her mind a whirlwind of confusion

Callum asked, “It’s been years since we last met. How have you been doing?”

“Fine, just fine” Elysia replied, taking a sip of her coffee to calm her nerves.

Callum continued. “You know, after that incident years ago, Winona was half out of her mind with worry. I heard she’s been looking for you all this time. Now that you’re back, she must be thrilled, right?”

Callum was also Elysia’s senior of college. He was Zane’s classmate.

He had a crush on Winona and used to woo her by bringing treats to her dorm, like fresh baked cookies and apple pastries.

To get closer to Winona, he had often gone out of his way to be nice to her and Blossom, so they were all familiar with each other

Elysia steadied her thoughts and asked, “Have you been in touch with her recently?”

“No, we lost touch after she started dating Zane. You know I pursued her once. I’ve kept my distance to avoid any misunderstandings or unnecessary drama

“Right. I remember you studied film direction. Are you a director now?”

“Yeah, what about it?”

“You must know Winona’s agent, right?”

“I know of the person, but we’re not close, and I haven’t contacted Winona’s agent I’ve always been careful to maintain professional boundaries”

Elysia continued, “I heard from Zane and Blossom that Winona has gone off to shoot a movie and signed some sort of non-disclosure agreement. She’s not allowed to have contact with anyone outside the production crew and has been off the radar for over a year now. Do you have any news of her?”

Callum looked shocked. “No contact for over a year? That doesn’t sound right. In our industry, NDAs are

common, but I’ve never heard of an actor being cut off from their family. They just need to keep the script confidential.”

Elysia’s concern increased. “Could you find out what’s going on? I’m worried since there’s been no word from her.”

This only i

“Sure, I’ll ask around as soon as I get back and let you know if I hear anything Let’s exchange numbers.”

They swapped contact information, and then Elysia couldn’t help but ask, “Did you book this table in advance for your meeting?”

“Yeah, why?”

“That’s strange. I also

had a reservation for this table”

Callum paused, then it clicked. “You’re meeting Tarquin?”

“Yes!”

Callum’s face twitched as he glanced upstairs, cursing under his breath.

Busted.

He was Tarquin’s buddy who had just flown in from abroad and got tipped into this setup by Tarquin himself.

Tarquin had asked him to meet a woman on his behalf, just to listen to what she had to say.

Who would have thought it would be Elysia?

Realizing the situation, Elysia glared at Callum before gritting her teeth in anger and asked you to meet me?"

Callum awkwardly admitted, "Well, yeah..."

Elysia was livid. She grabbed her phone to call Keaton.

Keaton's phone exploded with rings, making him jump in alarm.

"Oh no, the gig is up! You've really screwed me over. If you were going to get someone to stand in, at least pick someone she doesn't know! What am I supposed to do now, huh?"

Tarquin was stone-faced, silent. He hadn't expected Elysia to know Callum.

Callum was a film director with a background in screenwriting, a true professional in the craft.

Tarquin had thought that hiring an actor would be the perfect cover, but he hadn't anticipated this twist.

Keaton's phone was relentless. He answered reluctantly

"Hello?"

09:59

"What the hell is Tarquin playing at?" asked Elysia

Keaton, sticking to the code of every man for himself, feigned ignorance.

"What do you mean? Didn't Tarquin show up for the meeting?"