

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 191[688 words]

“He stood me up! Can you believe it? He sent someone else in his place! Elyalo ranted, her voice laced with disbelief and anger

“Whoa, talk about being a jerk? Keaton raised his eyebrows, clearly taken aback by the audacity

“Could you just confront him? Ask him if he even has the guts to call himself a man? It’s downright despicable! We had plans to meet and he sends a stand in What’s he playing at? A man’s word is his bond, and this... this is just shameless! He doesn’t even have the courage to face a woman? That’s cowardly, not what you’d expect from a real man. I’ve lost all respect for him.”

Elysia’s trade was relentless, leaving Kenton completely dumbfounded.

She was spitting fire with words that even Keaton wouldn’t dare say.

Not only did Keaton let the speakerphone capture every word, but he also thrust the phone in Tarquin’s face, making sure none of Elysia’s verbal lashing was wasted.

Tarquin’s lips were pressed into a thin line, his complexion darkening.

Snatching Keaton’s phone, he ended the call, tossed it onto the table, and got up to leave

“Hey, hey, hey, that’s the latest model! Don’t you dare break in Keaton’s concern for his phone was palpable.

Without looking back, Tarquin left the private room and headed straight for Elysia.

Elysia, having been hung up on, didn’t bother to call back. She was fuming.

She had high hopes for today – hopes of finalizing her divorce from Tarquin. And now this....

It felt like a cruel joke!

She had felt guilt over him, never once bad-mouthing or resenting him, and he couldn’t even bother to show up!

If he didn't want to see her, he could have simply said so. But agreeing to meet and then pulling a no-show?

Her frustration was akin to that of soccer fans who'd bought tickets to see a soccer star play, only to find out he wasn't taking the field. Feeling played and utterly annoyed.

While fans could at least chant for a refund, what could she do?

Apart from yelling at Keaton, she couldn't even get a glimpse of Tarquin.

At this point, Callum was thoroughly shocked. He even wondered if Elysia truly knew who Tarquin was. How could she dare to curse him

out like this?

"Elysia, just calm down, will you? What's going on between you and Tarquin? If there's something you want to say, I can pass it on. I mean, you guys..

Before Callum could finish, Tarquin appeared, his anger evident.

Callum opened his mouth to speak, but Tarquin cut him off with a terse, "Move"

Keaton quickly pulled Callum away, not allowing him a single word.

Surprised to see him, Elysia asked with discontent.

you want, Tarin? Got something to say to me?"

"Isn't this what you wanted?" Tarquin would rather reveal than let Elysia continue to brand him as dishonest and cowardly.

But Elysia, seemingly without a clue, frowned and asked, "Who asked for you? Wait...is something wrong with Elijah?"

It was Heath.

Just as Tarquin was about to respond, his phone rang.

"Mr. Bradford, you need to come back. Allegra Bradford has shown up!"

Allegra was Tarquin's aunt who always seemed to be waiting for Elijah's downfall

Tarquin's expression darkened, and without a word, he dashed out of the café.

Elysia was left bewildered. "Hey, you..."

By the time she ran outside, Tarquin was nowhere to be seen.

over

being

stood up and hopped on her

Uncertain whether something had happened to Elijah, she momentarily pushed aside her anger on scooter, racing towards Sunshine Community.

The winter was harsh, with snow falling thick and fast

Elysia stumbled several times on the way, finally arriving at Sunshine Community out of breath.

As she approached the entrance, a woman's scream pierced the air – “Ah! Ah! Ah...”

Before Elysia could react, a woman dressed to the nines came tumbling down the stairs, crashing at her feet.

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Elysia was stunned.

“Madam!” A man nished over, showing Elysia aside to help the fallen woman.

The man's push was forceful, sending Elysia sprawling several feet away

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Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 192[688 words]

As Elysia teetered on the brink of falling, a strong hand abruptly clasped her arm and yanked her upright with a forceful tug

She glanced up at the man who had saved her from a nasty spill, her heart pounding with the close call. Today had been a frightening dance with gravity!

On the ground, a woman was clutching her twisted ankle, barely managing to stand with the help of a passerby, her voice drenched in tears as she hurled accusations of Torquin.

s? You're trying to kill me! I'm your father's own sister, and you treat me like this? Have

“This is a curse! You dare push me down the stairs? you no humanity? You disgraceful wretch...”

Tarquin's grip on Elysia's arm didn't loosen. In fact, when he heard the woman's rant, his grip tightened, as though he intended to crush

her bones.

Wincing in pain, Elysia bit her lip and dared not make a sound.

Tarquin glared at Allegra with a chilling aura and warned her, "Don't test my patience. If you dare mess with Elijah again, I won't be so nice!"

His words seemed to be squeezed out through clenched teeth.

They sounded as if they were uttered from the depths of Hades itself.

Elysia risked a cautious look at him. He was staring at the woman with a gaze so murderous that Elysia's heart skipped a beat.

She had thought his looks were cold enough when directed at her, but now she realized that in her presence, he was practically tender

The old woman was livid.

"You... you want to murder me, your aunt! You'll get yours in the end! No, you're already getting it! Why do you think Elijah is in such a state? He's your retribution! The severity of Elijah's illness is proof of God's punishment upon you! Just you wait, God will take Elijah away from you as the ultimate punishment, and let him descend to hell..."

"Shut up!" Elysia couldn't help but blurt out in protest.

For some reason, hearing this woman curse Elijah like that imitated her to no end.

Allegra turned her attention to Elysia, "And who are you to talk to me like that?"

"It doesn't matter who I am. What matters is children shouldn't be dragged into the feuds of adults. They're innocent! Cursing a hell is simply vile!"

"How dare you! Who is this nobody speaking to me this way?"

"It's not important who I am, but you can't curse Elijah!"

"You wretch!"

child to

Allegra raised her hand to strike Elysia, but Tarquin pulled her behind him, shielding her and facing Allegra with a menacing glare.

“Touch her and see what happens!”

Allegra’s raised hand hesitated, then retracted as she skeptically at Elysia.

“Is she the one who can save Elijah?”

She had come in haste after receiving a tip-off from Nola, intending on seeing Elijah’s condition for herself. She had no wish for Elijah

to survive!

“With no education and no certificate, you expect her to help? She

Elijah! How foolish you must be to trust her,”

Allegra’s eyes were full of scorn as she looked at Elysia.

She’s clearly just a shy woman using her looks to snare you by preying on

Before Elysia could retaliate, Tarquin already spat out a warning, “If you insult her again, I’ll cut out your tongue right now!”

Murderous intent was evident in his eyes.

“You”

“I’ve made myself clear. This is your last warning. Get out!”

Allegra, both frightened and furious, spat out, “Fine, fine, I’m leaving! You’re here threatening me when you should be checking on Elijah. Just a moment ago I saw him quite agitated; he might not have long left!”

With those words, she stormed off, limping from her fall.

Once she was

gone, Tarquin and Elysia rushed upstairs.

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They had barely reached the fifth floor when they heard Heath’s cries, Elijah, don’t scare me! Please wake up. Don’t frighten me, you can’t

leave us like this. If you go, how can your father bear it? Elijah, open your eyes.

Tarquin’s expression shifted rapidly, meing three steps of a time into the room.

“Elijah!”

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 193[638 words]

Elysia's heart was pounding like a drumline on parade day, her entire body shaking like a leaf in a storm. If it weren't for the wall she was clutching for dear life, she would have collapsed right there on the spot. Her legs were like they'd been swapped with someone else's; they wouldn't obey her, and wouldn't even lift off the ground.

It wasn't until Tarquin's hysterical screams cut through the air again that she snapped back to reality and bolted up the stairs toward the sixth floor.

When she burst into the room, Tarquin was desperately performing CPR on Elijah.

Elijah lay there

as still as a statue, his eyes shut tight, his face as pale as a ghost, and his lips colorless and lifeless

Elysia felt a knot in her throat and tears cascaded down her cheeks.

She collapsed beside the bed, kneeling on the floor, her hands trembling as she reached for Elijah's wrist, searching for a pulse,

But there was nothing. Elijah's heartbeat had vanished.

Elysia's mind went blank, her heart felt as if it had been carved out, leaving a searing pain that made it hard to breathe.

"Needle, I need a needle..." she mumbled, desperate to give Elijah a needle treatment.

But her hands were shaking so violently from panic and distress that she couldn't even hold the needle steady

Elysia was frantic, her frustration boiling over into tears. "Come on!"

She wanted to calm down, to steady her hands and give Elijah the treatment, but the more she tried, the more she berated herself.

"Snap out of it!" she yelled, slapping herself across the face with a force that left a bright red mark on her pale skin.

The slap wasn't just a wake-up call for her; it also snapped Tarquin and Heath out of their daze.

After a few stunned seconds, Tarquin leaped off the bed, bent down to scoop Elijah into his arms, ready to dash to the hospital.

Elysia blocked him. "There's no time! Put him down and let me try!"

Tarquin hesitated.

"If we wait for you to drive him to the hospital, he'll be gone before we get there!"

Elysia roared, shoving him aside.

"Strip him down. Get his clothes off, all of them!"

While she directed Heath, she started to prepare the treatment

"There's medicine in my pocket. Crush a pill, mix it with water, and make him drink it!"

Heath was peeling off Elijah's shirt when Tarquin, frowning in confusion, reached into her pocket and pulled out a small bottle.

"What is this?" he asked.

"It's a lifesaver!" she snapped without looking up from her

"But..."

"If you don't want to give up on Elijah, then do as I say!"

Tarquin didn't waste another second. He rushed to the kitchen and came back with a small bowl prepared with the crushed pill.

h with a Elysia snatched the bowl and gently forced the medicine down Elijahs throat, then tenderly wiped his mouth As Benjamin arrived with the doctors and nurses, Elysia commanded, "Perfect timing. Get him to the hospital, now!" In a whirlwind of urgency, they loaded Elijah onto the ambulance and sped toward the Hospital.

a tissue.

Before they even reached the emergency room, Elijah suddenly coughed violently.

Everyone on board was stunned.

His coughing brought color back to his cheeks.

Elysia's eyes lit up with hope. She checked his breath, felt for his pulse, and then blurted out incoherently with joy, "He's... he's awake. He's come back to us!"

Overwhelmed with relief, Elysia dived into Tarquin's arms, tears streaming down her face.

"He's okay! He's awake! He's the strongest little fighter in the world," she sobbed.

Tarquin, his own eyes red-rimmed, didn't push her away for the first time. Instead, he held her close, letting her cry her heart out in his embrace

09

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 194[688 words]

Elysia was shaken, but Tarquin was even more so!

If today were to claim Elijah's life, it would be as though Tarquin himself had perished. Without Elijah in this world, there would be no Tarquin left to speak of!

Heath and Benjamin were right there with him, tears streaming down their faces.

Today had indeed scared them half to death!

After the bustle at the hospital, and once it was clear that Elijah was out of danger, Elysia slipped away without a word, leaving the hospital behind.

The snow was heavy today, and the air was bitterly cold, but the intense anxiety she had felt made her break into a heavy sweat.

All she wanted was to head home, and take a long, hot shower to unwind.

She didn't bother asking about Allegra's situation. She didn't want to pry into Tarin's family matters; her concern was for Elijah.

Now that he was safe, she felt at peace.

No sooner had Elysia left than Gideon Bradford arrived at the hospital with an imposing entourage in tow.

Members from the main branch, along with some from the extended Bradford family had all converged.

Dozens of them, crowding the corridors to the point of impassability.

“Tarquin, how is Elijah now?” Gideon asked, his face riddled with worry.

Tarquin stood leaning against the rail, a cigarette in hand, staring blankly ahead, not sparing a glance nor a word for them. His face was ashen, the atmosphere around him heavy with tension.

Gideon, frowning deeply, shot an ominous glare at Allegra!

His men dumped Allegra in front of Tarquin.

A slap mark was visible on her cheek, and her clothes were stained with blood. It was clear, without needing to ask, that Gideon had enforced family discipline.

Gideon then spoke to Tarquin, “I know you’re angry, and I’m furious too! If I had known she was this malicious, I never would have let her be born! To think she’d even attempt to harm the sole heir of the Bradford family, she deserves to die! Today, I bring her before you, with the authority to decide her fate in front of the entire Bradford family. Whatever punishment you deem fit, even death, is at your disposal!”

Allegra was terrified as she pleaded, “Dad, please! No! I know I’ve made a mistake, and I never meant to harm Elijah. Who knew the kid would be so sensitive. Just seeing me set him off. I, I, I didn’t want him dead, please...”

Her sobs were loud and fearful, clearly shaken by Gideon’s demeanor.

Upon receiving the news, Gideon had stormed Allegra’s home and beat her senseless.

Seeing Gideon’s indifference, she turned to the other family members, “Please help me, beg for mercy on my behalf, please...”

The rest of the Bradford family, knowing Gideon and Tarquin were truly enraged, each felt their own skin at

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risk. They hunched their shoulders, too afraid to utter a sound.

No one dared come forward to plead for Allegra.

Gideon had summoned them as a warning, a demonstration that anyone who dared cross the sole heir of the Bradford family would meet this fate!

Now, everyone wished they could vanish, so who would dare step forward and take the bullet?

Gideon bellowed, “Silence! What face do you have left to cry? As a Bradford, you dared to harm the family’s only heir. It seems you’re asking for death! Today you can poison Elijah, and tomorrow it could be me, and the day after, the entire Bradford family! You, you...”

He swung his cane, striking Allegra repeatedly, blood streaming from her head on impact.

Allegra, petrified, ignored the pain and turned to Tarquin for salvation, “Tarquin, I’m sorry. Please forgive my foolishness. I won’t ever dare to cross Elijah again. Spare me this once, will you? Your grandfather wants to kill me, please...”

Tarquin remained expressionless. Ever since the Bradford family had appeared, not a single flicker of

emotion had crossed his face.

The heavier his silence, the more oppressive the atmosphere became.

Just as everyone felt as if they were about to suffocate from the tension, Tarquin suddenly spoke up.

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Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 195[741 words]

“Beat it. Scram!” Tarquin barked without specifying at whom, snuffing out the cigarette in his hand and striding toward Elijah’s hospital room with his long legs.

aly

“Tarquin...” Gideon tried to call out, but Lowell cut him off with a timely gesture, his tone neither warm nor cold, “Mr. Bradford, please head on home and get some rest. Tarquin’s got a lot on his mind right now and isn’t in the mood for chitchat.”

Gideon frowned. “How’s Elijah doing, anyway?”

“He’s out of the woods now.”

Hearing this, Gideon let out a relieved sigh.

So did Allegra.

The rest of the Bradfords, however, had mixed expressions.

In the Bradford family, only Gideon didn't want Elijah to kick the bucket—he still had plans to use the boy to keep the others in line.

The rest of them, though, wouldn't mind if the sole heir bit the dust sooner rather than later.

There could only be one heir in the Bradford legacy, and Tarquin had only this one son—the sole heir to it

all.

If Elijah were to die, the spot for the heir would be up for grabs, and all their offspring would have a fair

shot at the throne.

The Bradfords were a cunning lot, each with more tricks up their sleeve than you could count.

A bunch of schemers!

Gideon shot Allegra a venomous look.

“Get back to your house and stay in there till I say otherwise. You're not to step out without my say—so! Your branch of the family won't be meddling in company affairs for a while. All the projects under your name will be transferred to me. I'll handle them personally!”

Allegra's eyes nearly popped out of her skull! Being grounded was one thing, but being taken their branch's projects was tantamount to taking their lives!

“Dad, no way! I'll stay at home for as long as you want, but you can't take our projects away. We've still got Lionel and his father—they can handle the business. Those projects are our livelihood; if you take them away, how are we supposed to live?”

“You should've thought about that before you acted! You reap what you sow!”

With that, Gideon huffed angrily and left, leaning on his cane.

No one else dared to utter a word; they hung their heads and quickly left the hospital.

Allegra was left sobbing her heart out.

Once everyone had cleared out, Lowell's eyebrows knotted in anger as he cast a cold glare in their direction.

He was shocked to hear today's news. Allegra had really crossed the line...

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As Heath reported, Allegra had burst in unannounced, barging into the room while Elijah was eating.

The shock had triggered Elijah's condition, causing him to reflexively hurl things around.

Allegra didn't soothe him or leave promptly, but instead berated Elijah for his lack of respect and manners. She even told Elijah his mother was long dead, and had died a horrible death!

Believing her, Elijah collapsed on the spot.

Thankfully, Elysia was there; otherwise, who knows what might have happened to Elijah...

Now Elijah was out of danger, but if anything had happened to him, it wouldn't just be Tarquin after Allegra—none of them would let her off the hook!

They had watched Elijah grow up. Although there was no blood relation, he might as well have been their own flesh and blood!

Lowell entered the hospital room, his eyes full of pity for the still unconscious young Elijah, and whispered to Tarquin, "The Bradford lot has cleared out. I've made arrangements; those snakes won't be slithering into Sunshine Community anymore."

Tarquin, gripping Elijah's hand, asked indifferently, "What's Lionel Bradford up to these days?"

Lionel was Allegra's son, taking after Allegra's last name. So he was technically a Bradford, too.

"Word is he's been running with some rich kids, and hasn't been home in ages. Rumor has it he's gotten into drugs."

"Find out for sure. If he's using, notify Axel."

Axel never did anything by halves.

Lowell got the message and nodded furiously. "Got it!"

As evening fell, Elijah woke up, and Benjamin immediately called Elysia.

Elysia was thrilled. She had just finished cooking dinner for Elijah, packed it up, and was out the door at

once.

She didn't ride her bike this time; she took a taxi instead.

After her fall earlier that day, she was too spooked to ride, and with the thick snow on the roads, it wasn't feasible anyway.

[647 words]

Chapter 196

At the hospital, Elysia didn't dare to barge into Elijah's room. Instead, she stood outside the door, peering

in secretively.

Watching the little guy in his hospital gown, sitting quietly by the window, gazing outside, she felt a mixture of relief and heartache.

She remembered Benjamin telling her once how Elijah loved to sit by the window, waiting for his mom.

He wanted to be the first to see her when she returned so he could dash out and leap into her arms.

Elysia could almost picture the scene in her mind...

A beautiful, gentle woman suddenly appears outside the window, looks up at Elijah, and smiles, waving at him. "Elijah, Mommy's back!"

Overwhelmed with excitement, Elijah would rush out of the room, tumbling into his mommy's embrace...

What a wonderful picture that would be. At that moment, Elijah would surely feel like the happiest child in the world!

Alas, why would a mother leave behind such an adorable son?

Did she even know her child was sick from missing her so much?

If she didn't know, that was one thing, but if she did, that was quite heartless!

Noticing some movement, Tarquin turned his head and saw a little head quickly retract.

Then it peeked out again, sneaky as ever.

Realizing it was her, a flicker of emotion crossed Tarquin's eyes. He rose and walked towards the door of

the room.

Seeing him, Elysia said, "I heard from Dr. Benjamin that Elijah woke up calm, as if he'd forgotten everything that happened."

"...Yeah."

"That's probably for the best. If he remembered, he might get agitated. I made him some chicken soup at home. Take it to him. He can't eat much else right now."

Hesitantly, Tarquin took the thermos, and after a moment, he managed to utter a 'thank you'.

Elysia was startled. He could say thank you?

Before she could react, Tarquin added, "Wait for me afterward. I need to talk to you."

"Uh? Oh, sure."

With the thermos in hand, Tarquin entered the room as Elysia continued her covert surveillance.

Opening the thermos, the aroma wafted out, and Tarquin's stomach embarrassingly growled.

He hadn't eaten all day, and the worry for Elijah had drained him. He was famished.

But clearly, Elysia hadn't prepared anything for him. The small portion was just enough for Elijah alone.

He served a bowl of soup, stirring it until it cooled enough to eat, and set it before Elijah on the small

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round table.

"Elijah, time for soup."

Elijah glanced at it, sensing something, and turned his head towards where Elysia was hiding.

Elysia quickly ducked away, but in her haste, she bumped her head, wincing in pain and silently rubbing the

sore spot.

Tarquin caught a glimpse of her little accident, his expression subtly changing, but he remained silent.

Elijah looked back at the soup and said, "This isn't Daddy's cooking."

Tarquin was like, "This time, he couldn't lie."

Elijah had been awake, and he'd been by his side the whole time, with no chance to cook.

“Yeah, Daddy didn’t make it, but it tastes good. Try it.”

Elijah eyed the bowl of soup, hesitating.

Both Tarquin and Elysia held their breath.

Fortunately, Elijah’s hesitation was brief. He didn’t reject it outright and eventually picked up the spoon to

take a taste.

After a moment, he said nothing, simply nodding and continuing to sip the soup.

Tarquin’s heart settled back into place.

Outside, Elysia also took several deep breaths. If Elijah had refused to eat her cooking, she would have lost another chance to get close to him.

After a while, Tarquin came out of the room, leaving Benjamin inside with Elijah.

“Let’s talk on the terrace,” he suggested.

“Huh? Can’t we talk here?”

Without responding, Tarquin turned and strode towards the terrace with long, purposeful steps.

Elysia eyed his tall, retreating figure with suspicion and followed him out.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 197[671 words]

Tarquin had sparked up a cigarette, his only solace against the chilly breeze that swept through the yard. But no sooner had he taken a drag than the wind changed course, sending the smoke billowing straight into Elysia’s face.

She coughed violently, her delicate features reddening with each sharp intake.

Tarquin’s brow furrowed in concern, but Elysia just waved him off. “Don’t mind me. If it helps you relax, go ahead.”

Still, Tarquin hesitated for a brief moment before crushing the cigarette under his heel.

Elysia couldn't help but sneak another glance at him, noticing a softness in his demeanor that was uncharacteristic of the man she knew. Her pulse quickened as she recalled the words Keaton had said over the phone just before her arrival at the hospital, making her all the more anxious.

Breaking the silence, Tarquin spoke, "I owe you one for today, for helping Elijah."

"It was nothing!"

"What do you want in return?"

"I don't want anything."

"Come on, you've earned a favor. I'll see it done whatever you ask."

Elysia blurted out, "That won't be necessary!"

"Oh?"

She looked straight into his eyes, her expression serious. "You may not think much of me, and the feeling is mutual. So let's forget about any grand gestures of indebtedness. I can't accept that!"

Before coming to the hospital, Keaton had called her out of the blue. He had thanked her for saving Elijah and then hinted that someone was interested in a more... personal form of gratitude. But Elysia wouldn't entertain the thought of being with that someone, not even for a second. She wanted to clear the air before things got awkward.

But Tarquin hadn't considered that angle at all. His eyes narrowed slightly as he asked, "Are you suggesting that I should offer myself to you?"

Elysia's face flushed, her eyes widening in disbelief as she denied, "No, not at all! Don't twist my words. Or was it you who was dropping hints?"

"Me? Never."

"But you just said I could ask for anything. Doesn't that mean you were expecting me to bring it up?"

Tarquin was at a loss for words.

Was she being naive or was there a hidden meaning behind her words?

Regardless, he wouldn't offer himself to anyone. "My heart belongs to Elijah's mother. There's no chance of me being with another woman, so let's put that idea to rest. I was referring to other kinds of favors."

"That's a relief!"

Tarquin gave her a probing look before adding, “But since you saved Elijah, I am willing to grant you any

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favor but that‘

1ddit save him for a reward.”

All she wanted now was to get a divorce from Tarquin, but Tarin didn’t know Tarquin. And though she was in dire need of money, Tarin was broke and burdened with Elijah’s medical bills. She couldn’t bring herself

to ask

After all, saving Elijah had been her own choice, without any expectation of compensation

Tarquin watched her for a moment, then said, “Fine, consider it a debt I owe you. If you ever need anything come to me

1 don’t need your favors either.”

It was surprising to him. Many would bend over backward for the chance of such a debt, yet she was indifferent

What he didn’t realize was that in Elysia’s eyes, he was nothing more than a pauper now.

“However Tarquin continued, “if there’s ever a conflict between us, I hope you’ll compromise once! Elysia’s brow furrowed as she spoke with a seriousness that belied her usual demeanor

She was thinking of the kids. If it ever came down to a custody battle, she hoped he’d be on her side and grant her the right to keep them.

“What kind of conflict?” Tarquin asked, puzzled.

Elysia pursed her lips and lied, “I don’t know yet. Just if.”

“Fine” he agreed. “If that day comes, I’ll let you have your way.”

“A gentleman’s promise is his bond,” she reminded him.

He nodded in acknowledgment, “You have my word.”

[602 words]

Chapter 198

Elysia's heart settled a notch, feeling like she was securing a safety net for the future,

Of course, she hoped that day would never come, that the triplets' secret would stay just that—a secret,

Her phone chimed—a new message.

Elysia checked the screen and gasped, “No way!”

There was a deposit of ten thousand dollars!

She looked up at Tarquin, who was also on his phone, having just made the transfer,

“You...”

“You saved Elijah. I couldn't just do nothing—that would weigh on my conscience.”

Tarquin had wanted to send more, but thinking back to how Elysia reacted to getting money from the Denton family, he coolly removed a couple of zeros.

She loved money but was timid; too much would surely scare her off. And sure enough, the ten thousand had already blown her away!

After all, she was just an ordinary gal, and ten thousand was more than she might make in a year.

“I...”

“Take it,” Tarquin said, as if afraid she'd refuse. “Elijah loves your cooking. Consider it a fee for your culinary services.”

Elysia hesitated, then nodded.

“Okay, I'll hold onto it! If Elijah craves anything, just let me know. As long as I'm in Jindale City, I've got his

meals covered!”

She'd been skimping before, serving Elijah simple fare, heavy on the veggies.

For a growing boy, that wasn't cutting it nutritionally.

With the ten thousand, she could whip up something way more appetizing.

“And mine,” Tarquin added suddenly.

“Huh?”

Tarquin didn't miss a beat, seizing the opportunity.

"Make extra. Elijah likes it when I join him for meals."

The logic was sound—I'm not after your cooking; I just want to dine with my son.

Elysia hadn't expected this request and paused before agreeing cheerily, "Deal!"

"And about that fifty million you owe me—it's now just five million."

Elysia's eyes widened in shock as she asked, "Excuse me?"

"You heard me," Tarquin repeated. "From today, you owe me five million dollars."

Elysia couldn't believe it; he was slashing the debt by forty-five million?

09:52

"So... so you're saying I only have to pay you back five million now?"

"Yes."

"Like, I'm only in debt for five million?"

"Yes."

"You're not kidding me, right? This isn't some kind of joke, is it? Because I'm taking this seriously

Tarquin looked at her with a mix of disdain and amusement. "If you don't accept, forget I mentioned it."

"I accept it! I never said I didn't!"

Would she be crazy to refuse?

Though five million dollars was still a daunting figure, it paled in comparison to fifty million.

Before, with a fifty million debt, she didn't see an end to it. An insurmountable debt, impossible to repay, it was a lifelong burden!

But now it was down to five million—a light at the end of the tunnel.

Now, taking care of Elijah for ten thousand a day, she could be debt-free in less than two years!

Elysia rubbed her hands together excitedly, her cheeks flushed, her eyes rolling around with anticipation as her thick lashes fluttered wildly.

Then, she let out a goofy laugh.

Tarquin just stared at her...

Elysia was buzzing with excitement, feeling both thrilled and relieved.

“You know,” she said, “you’re not that bad. You might not seem like the good guy, but you’re not the worst, either. You have a conscience, though not a huge one, it’s there...”

He doesn’t seem like a good guy?

A conscience, though not a huge one?

Tarquin’s expression darkened. If this was her way of giving a compliment, he wasn’t sure whether to say thanks or something else entirely.

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Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 199[609 words]

“Don’t you plan on settling down here in Jindale City?”

After today’s events, Tarquin had gained a profound respect for Elysia. He wanted her to stay in Jindale City long-term, to look after Elijah. Instead of wiping out the entire fifty million debt, he had left a five million balance, a little insurance on his part. He was concerned that someday she might decide to stop caring for Elijah, and he’d have no leverage over her.

The sudden shift in conversation made Elysia eye him suspiciously.

“No,” she stated flatly.

“Why not?”

“Don’t like this city.”

Is it because of that scandal six years ago?” Tarquin ventured, which immediately caused Elysia’s brows to furrow, her mood turning sour as she glared at him.

Thinking he'd hit a nerve by bringing up the past, Tarquin hurried to smooth things over. "Let bygones be bygones. If you want to make a life here in Jindale City, I can help you. You won't have to worry about being exposed online again, or about..."

"I don't want to stay in Jindale City! Mind your own business!" Elysia snapped, turning on her heel and storming off.

Tarquin stood there, perplexed. "What did I say to tick her off this time? She flips faster than a pancake!*

Had he made a mistake by offering his help?

Was she being ungrateful?

Tarquin was seriously bummed out.

That evening, Elysia was lost in thought.

Blossom, ever the nosy friend, prodded until Elysia revealed, "After I saved his son, he just handed me a hundred grand and knocked off forty-five million from my debt!"

Blossom's eyes widened. "Really? Well, that shows he's got some decency in him."

"Yeah, I used to think he was good for nothing, but today's actions proved otherwise. But him suddenly being so concerned about whether I'll settle down here in Jindale City has me worried."

Blossom analyzed the situation. "You saved his son today. He obviously doesn't want you to leave Jindale City—he wants you by Elijah's side."

"I know, and that's what's freaking me out. I'm afraid he'll try to stop me from leaving Jindale City. I don't want him paying too much attention to me. The more he does, the higher the chance he'll find out about the triplets."

"Hmm... true that. So, what's your plan? Gonna ditch Elijah and steer clear of this wild card?"

Elysia frowned. "I want to avoid him, but Elijah... I feel a bond with that kid. I can't just abandon him."

"So what now?"

Elysia sighed. "I don't know."

Maybe just take it one step at a time. Don't overthink it. If he's shown he has a conscience, that's a good thing. If he ever does find out about the triplets, we'll reason with him. The kids have a say too. If it ever came down to a custody battle, the court would listen to them, and they'd surely want to stay with you."

“That makes sense.”

*So don't worry. Finding out he's not a complete villain is good news.”

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Elysia nodded, somewhat reassured. It was better than dealing with a total monster.

But any relief she felt, along with the smidgen of improved regard she held for him, vanished the next day.

Because Lionel Bradford had died.

Lionel, the only son of Allegra, was found dead early that morning in Military Courtyard, an overdose the cause.

The incident, taking place in the high-security Military Courtyard, was immediately hushed up. Such a scandal, hinting at lawlessness within the military's own ranks, would cause an uproar if it got out- questioning the very integrity of the military establishment.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 200[569 words]

So, the higher-ups went straight to Gideon, insisting that the Bradford family handle the situation privately and swiftly.

Gideon, of course, didn't want the family's reputation tarnished. He promptly announced that Lionel's death was due to a sudden, fatal reaction to alcohol. Not a whisper about drugs, and he wouldn't dare mention the notorious Military Courtyard One.

Allegra was beside herself with grief, confronting Gideon, demanding justice, and accusing Tarquin of murdering her boy in an act of revenge against her!

But Gideon's face turned stormy. Not only did he wash his hands of the matter, but he also pressured the Bradfords to bury Lionel post-haste, forbidding any inquiry into the affair!

Enraged, Allegra stormed the hospital to settle scores with Tarquin.

Elysia was clueless about Lionel's fate, but as she brought Elijah his breakfast, she stumbled upon the scene.

Allegra was shrieking like a banshee.

“You killed my son, you bastard Tarquin! I only had one boy, how could you be so cruel...”

I admit I wronged Elijah, but he’s still alive, isn’t he? I’ve apologized, so why harbor murderous thoughts against my Lionel? If you’re angry, take it out on me, kill me! What kind of man goes after a child?”

Child?

Lionel was 33 for heaven’s sake.

Tarquin, with a cigarette dangling from his fingers, looked on with icy detachment.

“Bring evidence and let the cops come for me; otherwise, get lost.”

Allegra roared, lacking evidence to accuse him, but daring him to swear on Elijah’s life that he wasn’t involved. “I swear, if I’ve wronged you, may I be struck down by a car the moment I step outside! Do you dare say if you did it, let Elijah drop dead right now?”

Tarquin’s expression darkened ominously. “If you’re itching for a car accident, I can oblige.”

His calm voice belied the storm raging within. He wasn’t just arguing; he was issuing a serious warning, a threat.

Elysia’s heart pounded. She couldn’t believe what she had overheard.

Seeing his chilling demeanor, she felt an icy dread, even from a distance.

“Go on, kill me too!” Allegra yelled at Tarquin.

Suddenly spotting Elysia, Allegra charged at her like she was a punching bag, yelling, “You meddler! I’ll kill you myself!”

Yesterday, Elysia had saved Elijah from death’s door, and the Bradfords all knew it.

Elysia stepped back, startled by Allegra’s frenzy. Just as Allegra lunged, a towering figure stepped in front of her, shielding her completely.

Before Allegra could get close, Tarquin sent her flying with a kick. He didn’t glance at Allegra but turned to her husband, his voice heavy with an impending tempest, “If you want to keep your place in Jindale City, take her and get out. Now!”

Allegra’s husband, pale as a ghost, hauled her away without a word.

Down the corridor, Allegra’s voice echoed threats of doo

“You bitch, you wait! You’re gonna die! If you can cure Elijah, you’re lucky, and if you can’t, you’re gonna die! You’re dealing with a demon now. I think you’ve got a few days to live! You will die worse than my Lionel...” Elysia’s face was ghostly pale, drained of color.

Tarquin turned to her, frowning. “Scared?”

She was terrified, not by Allegra, but by the implications of her words.

Had Elijah’s near-death yesterday driven Tarquin to... to kill Allegra’s son?

Was he a murderer?

Elysia gazed up at Tarquin, her eyes wide with terror.