

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 21[682 words]

Chapter 21

Tarquin's threat worked.

Elysia's big, doe eyes were open wide, filled with indignant rage as she glared at Tarquin. But she didn't dare to make another move. And that just made her feel even more wronged.

The jerk was right there, and she couldn't lay a finger on him or even give him a piece of her

mind!

With no outlet for her fury, Elysia burst into tears, "How can you be so cruel? Haven't you done enough to ruin my life? What do you even want from me? What are you trying to do?"

Tarquin was taken aback watching her sob. His mind flashed back to that night when Elijah's mother cried beneath him. The room was dark, he hadn't seen her face clearly, and the drugs had made everything hazy, even her voice.

But when he kissed the tears from her eyes, he felt them. He didn't know why seeing this woman cry made him think of her, but in that instant, his heart softened with pity and a strange desire to reach out and wipe away her tears.

The next second, however, his brows furrowed again.

She couldn't be her. Elijah's birth mother was far gentler than this wild woman before him.

Even in his drugged state, he knew she was like a gentle cat without a temper.

Not Elysia, who was fierce as a tigress.

Sighing deeply, Tarquin's gaze turned impatient once more as he looked at Elysia, "Shut up! Stop crying!"

"Why can't I cry? Who do you think you are to tell me what to do? You've made my life a living hell and why don't you feel guilty? Are you heartless?"

Elysia's heart ached, and her sobs grew louder. She thought she could forget the pain and the humiliation, but his face made it impossible.

He'd screwed her over six years ago, and now he was back to haunt her. Was she indebted to him in a past life?!

Now she was trapped in a marriage she couldn't escape, her kids' future uncertain, anchored to Jindale City, and she was also suddenly buried under a mountain of debt of fifty million dollars.

Her life was so miserable.

Had God turned a blind eye by turning her into his sole victim?

It was too much to bear and she was so afflicted.

Since her children's birth, this was the first time Elysia had lost all control. The children had been her salvation from grief, but seeing Tarquin had driven her to the brink.

Tarquin was clueless that she was the one he'd been desperately searching for, nor could he understand her ramblings. He thought her life must've turned upside down because of the sudden debt, hence her resentment.

That only made him more irritated with her.

Ruining someone's car without remorse but harboring resentment instead? Her way of thinking was all wrong.

If he hadn't needed to question her, he would've thrown her out already.

"You'd better keep quiet!" Tarquin threatened, his face dark as thunder.

"Ah-" Elysia let out a feral growl, ready to bite.

Tarquin clenched his jaw, “Cry one more time, and you’ll never see your kids again in this lifetime.”

Elysia hit the brakes hard on her outburst, “What did you say?!”

“Try me.”

Elysia was thus silent. Living in this society, money was her Achilles’ heel, but her kids were her heart and soul.

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Instir vely, she clamped her mouth shut, refusing to let herself She glared at Tarqu with a mixture of suffocation and anger.

But she couldn’t hold his gaze for long and looked away. His face was a trigger for violence. Elysia forced herself to cool down, then her fear crept in.

Never mind if he was that brute from her past; if he was, and she spilled the beans, what if he fought her for custody?

Judging by his current state, he seemed well-off with a car worth million. If he decided to fight, she stood no chance. Her impulsiveness had nearly given her away.

And what if he just happened to look like that brute?

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Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 22[968 words]

Chapter 22

She was making a spectacle of herself in front of him, and it was downright rude.

Elysia took several deep breaths in the shadows, working to calm her frazzled nerves.

Seeing her regain her composure, Tarquin's voice was icy as he demanded, "Alright, spill it. What was yesterday's fiasco all about?"

Elysia tilted her chin defiantly and countered, "What fiasco are you talking about?"

"Who whisked you away? Where did you two fly off to after that? And, what's your angle with me? Are you after my money or are you gunning for my life?"

Elysia was flabbergasted, "When did I ever try to get close to you? Yesterday, you came knocking at my door and hauled me away, and then the building suddenly caught fire. I took the chance to run for it. I'm not after your cash, and I certainly didn't..."

She paused, biting her lip. If he was that brute, she might indeed want to throttle him.

"And didn't what?" Tarquin pressed.

Elysia pouted, muttering, "Didn't want to take

your

life!"

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"Do you really think I'm buying any of this?" he bit back. "Well... believe it or not, I'm only telling you like it is!"

Tarquin asked, "So, where did you crash last night?"

He had sent people to the motel to look for her, but she was nowhere to be found. The motel owner said they took off without even checking out.

With his current resources, if he couldn't find someone in Jindale City, the biggest possibility was that man was covering their tracks well. And only someone with real skills could hide like that.

Of course, Elysia was clueless that it was Elliot who had tampered with the surveillance. She frowned and retorted, “What does it matter to you where I stay? How’s that any of your business?”

Tarquin just gave her a frosty look, and Elysia’s heart skipped a beat in fear.

He was quite intimidating when angry.

Earlier, her temper had flared, and she’d been as fierce as a little tiger, but now, cooled down, she felt the bite of fear.

Elysia shrank in on herself and grumbled, “That’s my private affair, not something I’d share.”

“Is it really just a private matter, or are you purposefully hiding something?” he asked.

“Why would I hide anything? I don’t owe you...” The thought of the fifty million stopped her mid- sentence.

Suddenly remembering something, she huffed and pulled out her phone, showing him a photo,

“Look here, I questioned my son about it. Sure, he scratched up your car, but look at this you started it by bullying. Evan did it to stand up for his brother.”

As Tarquin glanced at the photo, his brow was furrowing.

In the picture, a child’s tender leg was covered with a large bruise. It was painful even to look

1. at.

Elysia continued, “This bruise? Your lady friend did that, probably your wife. That’s child abuse! I could take her to court for that!”

Tarquin was silent.

Elysia added, “The train station has cameras. If you don’t believe me, go check the footage.”

Tarquin didn’t doubt her word; he knew all too well what Nola was capable of. But what Nola did had nothing to do with him.

“The injury wasn’t caused by me, but your son did wreck my car.” He stated.

Elysia stared blankly and turned speechless.

Debts and grievances had their designated owners, and even in a marital relationship, she couldn’t pin the blame on him.

“And the bite on my wrist was all you,” Tarquin added.

Elysia glanced at the bite mark on his wrist and shrank back, her bravado deflating.

However, Tarquin had shifted the conversation when she was at loss of words, “If you don’t

to end up behind bars and leave your kids motherless, you better come clean.”

“Clean about what?”

“Your real reason for getting close to me. Who’s pulling your strings

Elysia glared, “I told you that I had no intention of getting close to you, and nobody sent me!”

Tarquin clearly didn’t believe her, “If you don’t tell the truth, the consequences will be severe.”

“I’m telling the truth!”

His expression darkened, “Lowell! Hand her over to the cops, and don’t let her out without my say-so!”

The car door was yanked open in an instant, and Lowell stood by the car, “Ms. Thorne, please step out.”

18-54

Tarquin remained silent.

Elysia, seizing the moment of his hesitation, added with feigned confidence, “And let me tell you, Tarquin is... head over heels for me! If you lay a finger on me, he won’t let you off the hook!”

Tarquin’s lip curled in obvious distaste.

Lowell struggled to keep a straight face. Their boss was right there, and she didn't recognize him, yet she dared to claim his undying love.

What a far-fetched tale.

But then, a thought struck Lowell—could she actually be the elusive Mrs. Bradford that even he had never met?

No, that couldn't be. Tarquin's wife was named Daphne, not Elysia.

Clearly, Tarquin also believed she was lying, but he was too disinterested to call her out. Without sparing her another glance, he ordered coldly, "Take her away!"

Elysia was terrified, "Hey! You can't—mmmph... mmmph..."

One of the bodyguards clamped a hand over Elysia's mouth and dragged her from the car, heading straight to the police station.

No sooner had they left than Benjamin approached Tarquin with a sense of urgency.

"Did you find her?" he asked immediately upon seeing Tarquin.

"No news yet," Tarquin replied curtly.

Benjamin was so regretted, "Well, it's my fault! If only I'd been quicker, she wouldn't have been snatched away. Listen, you need to be on your toes. Trust me, that girl is the perfect match. I saw it with my own eyes—she calmed Corbin down in no time."

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 23[700 words]

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Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 24[631 words]

Chapter 24

“Corbin?”

“Yeah, Corbin just had an episode and bolted from the hospital. He was making a scene out on the street, crying and causing a ruckus, totally out of control. It was that girl who calmed him down.

And when she left, she even wrote a prescription for the Dentons, with all sorts of calming and restorative remedies. She must know a thing or two about medicine.

Think about it: a kind-hearted, loving, drop-dead gorgeous woman with medical knowledge to boot. Sounds perfect for our Elijah, don't you think?”

Tarquin knew Corbin as his good friend, Keaton Huber's nephew,

After a kidnapping two years ago, Corbin had been left with psychological scars and bipolar disorder, with episodes not unlike those of Elijah.

The idea of someone with medical knowledge piqued Tarquin's interest. Elijah often hurt himself during his fits of rage. If Elijah's caregiver understood medicine, that could only be a good thing.

“Tarquin, we got the surveillance footage, and it's-it's...”

Tarquin snatched the tablet from Lowell's hands and glanced at it, his face darkening,

“Her? No way!”

Benjamin leaned in closer,

“Yep, it's her! Look at how she managed to soothe Corbin without any sedatives. Don't think she's just pacifying a crying kid. Corbin was in the middle of an episode. If I'm not mistaken, she must be versed

in child psychology; otherwise, she couldn't have calmed him down so effortlessly. What an outstanding woman!

It's just a damn shame not knowing which lowlife snatched her away. It's just inhuman! If we catch the guy, he's gonna learn his lesson.”

Tarquin pursed his lips and turned to Benjamin, speechless.

Lowell, standing to the side, interjected quietly, “Dr. Benjamin, the one who snatched her away is Tarquin himself.”

“Huh?” Benjamin’s eyes widened in shock.

Lowell shifted awkwardly.

Realization dawned on Benjamin, “Oh, it was you! You’re the scoundrel? Why on earth would you snatch her off the street? You two don’t have some feud, do you?”

Lowell murmured, “Tarquin just threw her in the slammer, even planned to starve her for three

days.”

18:54

Benjamin was livid, “That’s crazy! Why would you mess with the poor girl? Release her Immediately, and apologize. Who knows, she might be Elijah’s savior.”

Tarquin brooded with a stormy expression.

The incident with Corbin had him overthinking again.

Was it all a setup by her to get close to him and Elijah, a play put on for his benefit?

After all, since this woman showed up, there had been a string of unusual events. She was definitely not as simple as she seemed.

After a moment of silence, Tarquin said to Lowell, “Let her go.”

“And then what?”

“Nothing else.”

Lowell was surprised. “Not even take her back to see Elijah?”

“Not for now.” Tarquin’s face was inscrutable.

He needed to observe her further. If she was indeed scheming to get close to him, letting her go would surely make her try another approach.

She had a record, and he couldn't risk bringing her to Elijah unverified.

A slight against him was one thing, but what if she harmed Elijah?

Before he could bring her to Elijah's side, he had to be certain of her intentions.

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Meanwhile, as Elysia was dropped off at the curb near the police station and watched the car drive away, she was baffled.

What was going on?

Had Tarquin realized she was his wife and got scared?

It seemed that despite being the black sheep of the prestigious Bradford family, Tarquin's name still carried weight. The Bradfords were the top dogs in Jindale City; their influence was undeniable.

Elysia didn't dwell on it. She quickly hailed a cab and sped away from the police station. The last thing she wanted was to be locked up and kept away from her kids.

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Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 25[655 words]

Chapter 25

Elysia stepped back, immediately greeted by the mouthwatering aroma of home-cooking.

Emmett was standing on a stool by the kitchen counter, carefully stirring a pan of scrambled eggs.

She watched her son's small figure bustling about the kitchen and felt a mix of heartache and pride. The kid always had a way of warming her heart.

After blowing off some steam earlier, she felt much more at ease. The divorce hadn't gone through, but the anger had subsided.

"Hey, Emmett," Elysia greeted him with a cheery smile.

Emmett turned around, his face lighting up at the sight of her. "Hey, Mommy!"

Elysia washed her hands. "Go play. Let Mommy take over."

"No need, it's all ready," Emmett insisted. "Go sit at the table; let's have lunch!"

He spoke as he swiftly turned off the stove and scooped the fluffy eggs onto a plate. It looked absolutely delicious.

Hearing the commotion, Elliot and Evan also emerged, rushing over and chorusing a greeting to their mother.

Elysia looked at them with tender affection, the earlier frustrations vanishing like morning mist. All that remained was the warm glow of love.

"Is everything sorted with your stuff, Mommy?" Elliot asked.

Elysia shook her head with a wry smile. "Not yet, sweetie. Looks like we'll be staying in Jindale City a li

"Why not?"

while longer."

"The person I needed to see is out of town on business. Can't do anything until he gets back." She hadn't told the kids that she was in town to finalize divorce papers with Tarquin. Shel didn't want them to be aware of his existence or the past events.

Kids should just enjoy a carefree, healthy growth; they didn't need the burden of adult troubles.

"Alright, no need for you guys to worry about my stuff. Let's eat!"

"Okay!"

After lunch, the three kids took their afternoon nap, and Elysia sat on the bed counting her money. All in all, she had less than ten grand to her name. They needed to pay for the hotel, and food, and her boys were growing – they couldn't live on bread and water. Fruits,

vegetables, milk, and meat were essentials. Tallying up the expenses for a family of four was no small feat, and her funds wouldn't stretch far.

Being broke made her anxious. She felt it was best to find a part-time job, preferably with daily pay. After all, she couldn't just wait until she was down to her last penny, could she?

But in an age where qualifications and certifications were king, her lack of both made finding a job she liked impossible.

Elysia sighed. Whenever she hit this wall, she'd remember the good university she'd been accepted into and how life had taken such a drastic turn. It was a past she preferred not to dwell on.

After scouring LinkedIn without finding anything appealing, she decided to settle for a job that paid well. Bartending came out on top – with a daily rate of \$380 plus a 2% commission, it was lucrative work.

Though she wasn't fond of the bar scene, the thought of the money made her relent.

Promptly at 7 PM, Elysia showed up at Blissful Uncle's Bar, the city's most opulent watering hole and a veritable gold mine.

The crowd here was either loaded or influential. Despite having to wear a slightly revealing black dress and high heels she detested, she found the job tolerable.

In just over an hour, she had sold three bottles of pricey liquor, each fetching upwards of two grand, which meant her commission was already over a hundred dollars.

In this society, looks could be as important as qualifications. Elysia was a natural – beautiful, with a great figure and a pleasant voice; even her hands were exceptionally attractive.

Listening to her talk and watching her pour drinks was a treat, making her quite popular at Blissful Uncle's.

However, beauty could be a double-edged sword

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 26[646 words]

Chapter 26

“Down this bottle, and It's on me,” drawled Gage Slater, Nola's second uncle, the infamous sexual predator of Jindale City, the epitome of a sleazebag.

Hideous, disliked, yet a notorious player.

Elysia didn't know him from Adam, and she blinked in confusion at his proposition. “Me? Drink It?”

“Yep, you. Not a drop left, you hear?”

“But... isn't that a bit appropriate? It's your tab, and this bottle isn't cheap.*

“When I say it's fine, it's fine. This bottle's a grand, you drink it, it's on my dime.”

As Gage spoke, his lecherous gaze roamed over Elysia, unashamedly ogling her.

Elysia realized she'd run into a real lowlife. She fought the urge to punch him and forced out an apologetic grin,

instead

“Sorry, but I had some cold medicine before coming here. Can't mix it with alcohol.” The man's mood soured at her excuse. “Then take the bottle with you. We don't want it.” Elysia was stunned. “The bar has rules. Once a bottle's opened, it can't be returned.”

“Heh, did I ask you to open it? You decided to open it on your own. If it can’t be returned, you’re footing the bill.”

Elysia held back her anger and said, “You asked me to open it; that’s why I dared to. There should be security cameras in this room to check.”

At that, the room erupted into laughter,

“You can tell she doesn’t get out much. Security cameras at a bar? What if someone wants a little privacy for some fun? Ha!”

Elysia’s lips quivered, speechless, her fists clenched tightly as she silently seethed. She had never been to a place like this before!

Someone chimed in, “Honey, Mr. Slater taking a shine to you is your lucky day. Drink up, and don’t be ungrateful. Do you even know who Mr. Slater is? He could scare you stiff! But hey, if you keep him happy, you could be set for life.”

Elysia realized this greasy old man was someone of status.

They were about to cheat her, and if she fought back, she knew she’d be at a disadvantage.

The average Joe always loses against big money.

The bottle cost a hundred grand, which was a year’s salary for many, yet only a mere evening’s pleasure for the wealthy. What could she possibly do against them?

had to cover that cost, she might as well be dead. She didn’t have that kind of money.

After a few seconds of silence, Elysia managed another apologetic smile,

“My mistake, Mr. Slater. It’s really loud here, so how about we go somewhere quieter to chat?” Gage’s interest was piqued at her suggestion, a lecherous chuckle escaping him as he rose to his feet. “Sure, let’s find a nice quiet spot for a... deep conversation.”

The room hooted, “Yeah, go deep, real deep! Ha!”

Elysia felt sick to her stomach but kept her composure as she walked out.

Tarquin stepped out of the elevator just in time to see Elysia slip through the service door. He stood there, his expression inscrutable.

Moments later, Gage exited the room, hurriedly following behind her, muttering, “Baby, I’m coming, hehe.”

Behind the safety door of the bar was a place where stories unfolded. Dimly lit and sparsely populated, it was the go-to spot for the desperately thirsty to quench their desires.

I like your style, babe. You had me at hello. I’ll treat you right, don’t worry. Make me happy, and you’ll be rewarded. Just look at those lips... get on your knees and put them to use...” The words were loaded with innuendo.

Lowell, uncomfortable, said, “It’s Ms. Thorne and Gage...”

A scream suddenly pierced the air.

Lowell’s face turned pale. “Tarquin, Ms. Thorne might be in trouble.”

Tarquin frowned, reluctant to get involved, but thinking of Elijah, he quickened his pace towards the commotion.

And then he witnessed a scene beyond belief...

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 27[649 words]

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Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 28[673 words]

Chapter 28

She hastily released Tarquin's arm with a sheepish grin, her cheeks flushed with embarrassment. "Thanks," she muttered, digging into her pocket to shove a wad of bills into his hand before bolting away.

The click-clack of her high heels echoed, fading into the distance until swallowed by the pulsing beats of the bar's jukebox.

Tarquin watched her disappear, his brow furrowed in confusion and a hint of something else. It had been six years since he'd been this close to a woman.

The rush of familiar warmth came flooding back, unbidden, reminding him of that night so long ago. Her lips had been just as soft...

That was why he hadn't pushed her away immediately.

Noticing Tarquin's distress, Gage broke free from Lowell's grip and circled back.

"Tarquin, that was... You know her?" he inquired, a note of surprise in his voice.

Tarquin glanced down at the cash in his hand—two crisp hundred-dollar bills and a fifty—and scowled.

Without a word, he shoved the money at Lowell and stalked off to the private booth, ignoring Gage's query.

Lowell examined the \$250 in his hands. Was this Elysia's way of sealing his boss' lips? Or was it for the kiss she planted on his boss?

A kiss and silence for \$250—wasn't that too cheap for Tarquin's worth?

Seeing Tarquin's foul mood, Gage didn't dare follow. Instead, he grabbed Lowell's arm and asked, "Tarquin knows that bartender?"

With a police nod, Lowell pocketed the cash. "Met her a couple of times."

"What's their deal? How could she dare to kiss Tarquin? And how could he let her? Tarquin's supposed to be Nola's man!"

Lowell, not one to gossip about Tarquin and Elysia's business but unable to help himself with Nola's, retorted, "Gage, you should know the real score between Tarquin and Ms. Slater. Some things are better left unsaid. Wouldn't want to upset Tarquin. Bad for you, Ms. Slater, and the whole Slater family."

With a cordial tip of his hat, Lowell excused himself from Gage's grasp and strode off.

Gage's face darkened. Ignoring his own discomfort, he whipped out his phone and dialed Nola.

"Nola, we've got a situation! A big one! Tarquin kissed another woman!"

ber 28

In the VIP lounge, the atmosphere buzzed with chatter and laughter.

As Tarquin entered, the crowd rose to greet him. "Hey, Tarquin!"

He nodded, signaling them to carry on. He made a beeline for the central seat, sat down, crossed his legs, and lit a cigarette.

Keaton Huber, noticing his friend's grim expression, asked, "What's got you down? You finally decide to come out and you're still sulking?"

Tarquin's mind was elsewhere, troubled by the memory of Elysia's kiss. He dodged the question, instead asking, "How's Corbin doing?"

Corbin, Keaton's nephew, was still in the hospital.

Keaton replied, "He was asleep when I visited this afternoon. My sister said he had an episode today and ran into traffic in a fit. Lucky for us, a knowledgeable young lady was there. Otherwise... Well, how's Elijah been?"

Tarquin flicked ash from his cigarette. “Same old.”

“Don’t beat yourself up,” Keaton advised. “Benjamin says miracles happen, especially with psychological issues. They’re young. Who knows? They might outgrow it.”

But Tarquin knew better. Corbin’s trauma was from a kidnapping, while Elijah... his was a deep yearning for his mother.

Healing the mind required the right medicine, and if Corbin could face his fears, he might

well recover.

Elijah, however, was a different story. Without finding his birth mother, his condition would likely only worsen.

Keaton lined in, whispering teasingly, “You smell like a woman’s perfume. Got a lady friend?”

Keaton’s reputation as a ladies’ man made him particularly attuned to such details.

Tarquin snapped back to the present and frowned. “No.”

“So why do you smell like perfume? It’s a pleasant, fruity scent. High-end ladies’ perfume, very unique, like a limited edition... Whoever wears it is no ordinary woman. Spill it—who’s the heiress? After all these years, no one’s managed to get close, and now someone’s succeeded? What makes her different?”

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 29[637 words]

Chapter 29

Wrapped in a black trash bag like some bizarre Halloween costume, Gage lay on the ground, howling in misery, while Elysia kicked and punched him with all the

ferocity of a schoolyard. scuffle. Her blows might not have been heavyweight, but given she was sporting stilettos, they certainly left their mark.

Looking every inch the drunken mess, Gage didn't seem to have the strength to fight back. After a short-lived thrashing, Elysia, gasping for breath and making a grotesque face at her victim, dramatically collapsed on the floor beside him.

Gage groaned his way upright and yanked the trash bag off his head, cursing like a sailor, "Fucking hell, who the hell thinks they can mess with me and live to tell the tale? I'll make them pay!"

Elysia, feigning a groggy awakening, clutched her head. "Mr. Slater, what happened? My head's throbbing like someone clocked me."

"I fucking got jumped. Did you see who it was?"

"No, I was out cold too."

"The nerve, messing with my plans and hitting me. Don't worry, babe, I'm calling the troops to

sniff out this rat."

Swearing under his breath, Gage reached for his phone to call for backup.

Elysia excused herself to the restroom, her face a picture of innocent alarm. But once out of sight, her expression morphed into a colorful tirade of silent curses.

Tarquin and Lowell could only stare in disbelief.

With a little thought, anyone could piece together what had happened. Gage had tried to force himself on her, and she struck back from the shadows. It was hard to decide whether

to admire

cunning or her courage.

Emerging from the emergency exit with a mix of timidity and inner triumph, Elysia's heart. stopped when she saw the two men, her eyes wide with shock.

Tarquin regarded her with a disapproving frown, his gaze inscrutable. Lowell, however, greeted her with a smile, “Ms. Thorne, fancy seeing you here again.

Elysia, realizing they must have witnessed her act, swallowed nervously. Before she could speak, Gage’s voice boomed from behind, “Lowell? Hey, man, you’re here too, perfect! Help me find out who sucker-punched me!”

Thanks to Nola’s heroics in saving Elijah, the Slater family was riding high, and Gage was familiar with Tarquin and Lowell. He could only see Lowell from his position, so he sought help without hesitation.

Elysia’s expression twitched manically as she faced an unexpected complication – they

18-57

knew each other!

Could her luck be any worse?

As Lowell waited for Tarquin’s cue, Elysia desperately whispered into Tarquin’s ear, “He tried to assault me. Don’t rat me out.”

Tarquin, who disliked personal space invasions, pushed her away with visible disgust.

Thinking he wasn’t going to cooperate, Elysia clung to him like an octopus, pleading, “I was just working part-time, and he targeted me. I had no choice but to... It was self-defense.”

“Get off.

“But think of your fifty million. If something happens to me, you can kiss that money goodbye!”

“Are you threatening me?” Tarquin’s voice was icy.

As Elysia recoiled, preparing to explain, Gage approached, “What’s up, Tarquin, you’re...”

Fearing exposure, Elysia pressed her lips to Tarquin’s, silencing him.

All the three men were petrified.

Time seemed to freeze, and no one spoke.

Elysia's lashes shivered, and her heart pounded, not from the kiss but from sheer panic. She knew Gage was a big shot; if he found out she was the assailant, her night—and possibly much more—was over.

Lowell, snaking out of his shock, seemed surprised that Tarquin hadn't pushed Elysia away. Could it be that their iron-hearted bachelor was finally showing a soft spot?

Excited by the prospect, Lowell quickly ushered Gage away, "Mr. Slater, let's talk over here..."

"But Tarquin, he..."

Once Tarquin and Elysia were alone, she breathed a sigh of relief, her tense shoulders finally relaxing.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 30[710 words]

Chapter 30

Elysia's cheeks were still blazing hot at the thought of the bold move she had just made. Kissing someone first? That was something she never imagined she'd do in her entire life.

Back in college, her friends Blossom Blythe and Winona Newsom had pegged her as the poster girl for the conservative crowd.

She snorted, recalling the predatory look on that guy's face. It was as if she was trying to get a free ride or something. If it hadn't been to shut him up, why on earth would she have kissed him? And she had lost \$250 in the process—enough to buy three sets of cozy fall clothes for

the kids!

Just as she was stewing in her misfortune, a sleek luxury car suddenly cut in front of them, performing an elegant yet aggressive maneuver that blocked their way.

The cab driver slammed on the brakes, his heart racing with fright and anger. He rolled down the window, ready to unleash a tirade.

“What kind of driving is that? Do you even know how to drive? You...”

But his anger deflated like a punctured balloon when he saw two men in black suits step out of the car. He clamped his mouth shut, not daring to make another peep.

Elysia peered out the window, curious. The window was knocked on, and a stern voice commanded, “Get out.”

Sensing trouble, Elysia scooted to the opposite door, asking, “Are you looking for me? Who are you?”

The man didn’t bother with pleasantries, yanking the door open and pulling her out of the car. As soon as her feet hit the pavement, the cab sped off, anxious to avoid any involvement.

Elysia struggled to free herself from the man’s grip. “Who are you? Let me go! Let me go!”

She was dragged onto a bridge, where a chic convertible was parked.

The car door swung open, and a woman emerged. She strode toward Elysia, her footsteps echoing with the click-clack of her stiletto heels. She carried an expensive designer handbag and had her arms folded across her chest.

Elysia couldn’t shake off the feeling that she recognized this woman, but the mask and sunglasses obscured her identity.

“Slap!”

The woman struck Elysia across the face without warning.

Elysia was stunned. Held back by two bodyguards, she couldn’t fight back and shouted, “Who are you? Why did you hit me?”

“You slut, thinking you can seduce my man? I ought to teach you a lesson!”

19-155

Elysia was confused. “Are you crazy? Who did I seduce?”

Nola, as if deaf to Elysia’s words, slapped her again, twice more. “Don’t think because you’re pretty, you can climb the social ladder. Let me tell you, Tarquin is out of your league. He’s mine! If you so much as look at him again, I’ll make you wish you hadn’t!”

Turning to her bodyguards, Nola ordered, “Ruin that pretty face of hers. The sight of it disgusts me!”

Nola was determined not to allow any woman prettier than her to be near Tarquin. One of the bodyguards produced a gleaming dagger, its blade catching the light menacingly.

Elysia, panic-stricken, forgot to demand who Tarquin was and instead pleaded, “There must be some mistake! I don’t know you, and I certainly don’t know any Tarquin. Let me go!”

As Nola took the dagger, intending to do the deed herself, Elysia lashed out with a kick, sending Nola sprawling backward. The high heels did her no favors; she fell, twisting her ankle, and the blade sliced her hand.

Nola’s scream pierced the air, “Ah! It hurts...”

Two bodyguards rushed to her side, calling out, “Miss!”

Noticing that Elysia attempted to bolt, Nola cried with fury, “Kill that bitch! Ouch, ouch...”

Seeing the bodyguards in pursuit, Elysia took out the pepper spray her son had given to her, and she didn’t hesitate to use it on the bodyguards. Of course, Evan’s work had always been potent, and it left them writhing on the ground.

She took off running, making a dash across the road to the opposite side in no time at all.

Left behind, Nola shouted in frustration, “Incompetents! Catch her, or it’ll be your heads!”

Three more bodyguards appeared, giving chase to Elysia as she ran for her life.

