

Hitched 361

Chapter 361

She was adamant about not living with that scoundrel of a man, especially not with Elliot, Evan, and Emmett in tow. Given Elijah's current condition, even if that scoundrel hadn't found her, she couldn't continue staying with Elijah. His overdependence on her wasn't good for his mental health.

"Sorry, Elijah," Elysia said as she left a deep kiss on his forehead. Her eyes brimmed with tears, and she made the tough decision to leave, gritting her teeth.

She returned to the study, sat at Tarquin's desk, and wrote a prescription along with an outline for a treatment plan, hoping it would help Benjamin Lawson and the others treat Elijah in the future.

After sorting out Elijah's affairs, Elysia thought about leaving directly, but she couldn't very well go out wrapped in just a towel. Thinking it over, she turned and headed to Tarquin's room. She had to figure out a way to cover up all these bruises!

There were no clothes of hers there, and Elijah's wouldn't fit; she had no choice but to make do with Tarquin's clothes. Inside the bedroom, Tarquin was still out cold. Elysia glared at him, teeth gritted in anger, and started rummaging through his wardrobe for something suitable to wear.

All she found in Tarquin's closet were suits and shirts, all in dark shades. After a bit of searching, she found a black wool sweater. It was oversized, but being a turtleneck, it would definitely cover the marks on her neck. Elysia didn't waste any more time, grabbing the sweater and heading out. Before leaving, she shot Tarquin one last look, thinking, 'This is the last time, buddy! Goodbye!'

But just as she was about to reach the door, a cold voice came from behind her, "Stop!"

Elysia jumped, quickly turning around to look. Somehow, he was awake! He was sitting up, looking at her with an icy glare, "Sneaking around, are you?"

Elysia's heart raced, pounding like a drum in her chest as she gasped for air, glaring back at him. Then, in the next instant, she turned to run! Tarquin's voice followed her, "There are bodyguards downstairs, you won't get far without my permission!"

Elysia immediately stopped, turning around, her eyes wide with terror, breathing heavily. Tarquin's expression was frosty, "Let's be honest, what are you doing in my room, sneaking around like that?"

Why would he ask that, especially when his attitude seemed so different from when he recognized her last night? It was as if he hadn't recognized her at all. Could it be, he forgot about last night?!

Elysia blinked rapidly, steadying her nerves, and cautiously asked, "Do you remember what happened last night?"

"What happened last night?" Tarquin responded.

Elysia was shocked. He really didn't remember?! She dodged the question, "You were drunk last night and somehow ended up at my doorstep. I brought you back here."

Tarquin frowned, remembering last night's drinks were with Keaton Huber. It must have been Keaton's doing, purposely sending him to Elysia's place! That Keaton, always dancing on thin ice!

Tarquin decided not to delve into that mess for now, his gaze still fixed on Elysia, "First, answer me, why were you in my room? And why take my clothes?"

Seeing he genuinely remembered nothing, Elysia felt a rush of relief! If he couldn't remember, then he wouldn't discover the truth, wouldn't recognize her, wouldn't suspect Elliot, Evan, and Emmett! Good, good, good, this was great! For the first time, Elysia found herself grateful for Tarquin's lack of memory, her anxious heart finally settling.

Trying to calm herself, she explained, "I got bitten by a... dog last night, got some marks on my neck, thought I'd borrow one of your sweaters to cover it up."

Tarquin asked, skeptically, "Bitten by a dog?"

Elysia gave him a meaningful look, "Yeah, a dog, a rabid one at that!"

Tarquin's face darkened, "Have you had your rabies shot?!"

Elysia froze, "Huh? Why would I need a rabies shot?"

Tarquin scowled, "You're telling me you got bitten by a rabid dog and didn't think to get a rabies shot?!"

"I... I said he was like a rabid dog, doesn't mean he's actually mad. He's just... overly aggressive!"

"And you're still alive after dealing with that kind of aggression?"

Elysia was speechless, "Are you wishing I got bitten to death? How would that benefit you?!"

Tarquin's expression grew even darker, "When did this bite happen?"

Elysia replied irritably, "On the way back after dropping you off!"

"Didn't see a doctor?"

"The dog wasn't actually rabid, why would I see a doctor?! Drop it, I'm taking the clothes!"

Elysia quickly tried to leave but was stopped by Tarquin, "Hold it!"

Elysia was exasperated, "Now what?!"

Tarquin's expression was stern, "Let me see that towel."

Elysia was shocked, "What... what for?"

"To check the bite on your neck!"

"Why would you want to see that?!"

"Can't I?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"It's not proper for men and women to... to be so informal!"

Tarquin rolled his eyes, "Pretentious much? Your neck's been out in the open for everyone to see, hasn't it?!"

Elysia, finding no way to argue, begrudgingly said, "It's not about can't, I just don't want you to see it!"

"Why not?"

"No reason!"

Tarquin, visibly upset, pressed on, "Elysia, don't make me do it myself. Hand over the towel."

He needed to see how vicious this 'dog' was, to see the extent of Elysia's injuries. Was there a need to rush her for a rabies shot?

Elysia, becoming emotional, retorted, "Are you insane? It's none of your business, why are you so keen on seeing it?!"

Tarquin, with a stern voice, countered, "How is it not my business? You're in my house, you got bitten by a 'dog' and didn't get a rabies shot. What if that dog had a contagious disease? I have to be responsible for myself and Elijah!"

Elysia was at a loss for words; he was comparing her to a dog, and not in a fond way. If only she hadn't referred to him as a dog!

But she didn't want him to see the bite marks, afraid it would bring back memories of the previous night.

Elysia quickly changed her story, "It wasn't a dog bite, it was a person."

"A person bit you?"

"Yeah."

"But you said it was a dog earlier?"

"It was a person!"

Tarquin stared at her for a few seconds, then realization dawned on him, gritting his teeth, "You... you had a date with someone else while dropping me off last night?!"

Elysia didn't bother to explain, letting him think what he wanted.

Seeing her silent acceptance, Tarquin grew furious, "You... how could you be so shameless?! You could have either dropped me off first or gone on your date first! To think you'd date him while on the way to drop me off, isn't that disgusting?!"

So, in his eyes, her dating someone else while dropping him off was like bringing him along on the date?

"I..."

"Stay away from me with your indecent affairs from now on, and tell your 'wild man' not to come near you when I'm around! Don't disgust me! And cover up your neck properly, don't let Elijah see and be bothered by it! Get lost."

Elysia was rendered speechless.

Alright, he admitted himself as the 'wild man'!

Ignoring his verbal jabs, nothing compared to the fear of him discovering the truth, Elysia grabbed the clothes and headed back to the study room to change. Though he didn't remember last night's events, she couldn't linger. It was best to leave quickly.

Chapter 363

Tarquin really couldn't remember a thing. He'd overindulged last night, tossing and turning without sleep until the early hours. Now, freshly awakened, his head throbbed, his mind buzzing annoyingly.

He slipped into a bathrobe and shuffled towards the bathroom for a shower, pausing as he passed Elijah's room.

With a gentle nudge, he cracked the door open and peeked inside.

Seeing the little guy sound asleep brought a warm glint to Tarquin's eye.

Quietly closing the door, his gaze inadvertently drifted towards the study, his expression instantly turning icy.

He knew Elysia was in there, his brow furrowed in disgust, face set in a cold demeanor as he continued to the bathroom.

Elysia's affairs were none of his business!

She could be with whoever she wanted; it didn't concern him. It was just that, being a bit old-fashioned, he had little tolerance for those who weren't faithful in relationships.

Shutting the bathroom door behind him, Tarquin was about to step into the shower when he noticed something on his skin.

Red, long scratch marks, as if he'd been clawed by a wild cat!

Taken aback, Tarquin studied his reflection closely in the mirror, finding not just a few on his front but even more on his back!

What the heck?

Who did this?!

Flashes of last night began to slowly resurface in his mind...

He'd been drunk, haunted by nightmares of his parents' tragic accident, and a memory from six years ago on the day he returned to the States, thinking he'd been drugged at the airport, then entangled with Elijah's mother in a darkened room...

No, that wasn't right!

The memory of his parents' accident was a dream, but Elijah's mother wasn't!

He clearly remembered when he turned on the lights, he wasn't at the airport but in his bedroom!

And there she was, lying on his bed!

He even recalled holding her tight, apologizing profusely!

Meaning, Elijah's mother was truly there, not a figment of his imagination. The scratches were proof!

It wasn't a dream; she had really come back!

But where was she now?

The bite mark on Elysia's neck...

Realization struck Tarquin like a bolt of lightning, his breath hitching as he quickly wrapped himself in his bathrobe and flung open the bathroom door!

There was Elysia, tiptoeing to the door, stealthily turning the knob, planning her escape!

Caught off guard by Tarquin's sudden appearance, Elysia was both surprised and awkward, stammering out an explanation,

"I... uh, Elijah's still sleeping. I thought I'd check in on my son at home. I'll come back later, bye."

She attempted to make a quick exit!

But Tarquin's hand shot out, slamming the door shut with a 'snap'.

She wasn't going anywhere!

Elysia, visibly shaken, turned to face him, her back pressed against the door,

"What are you doing?"

Tarquin, breathing heavily, demanded, "Was it you?!"

"Uh? What was me?"

"Last night, was it you?!"

Elysia's breath caught in her throat, her heart racing!

Did he remember?!

Before Elysia could respond, Tarquin pressed on, "And six years ago, it was you, wasn't it?"

Elysia panicked,

"No! I don't know what you're talking about. Six years ago, I was in a small village!"

"You're lying! Six years ago, you were in Jindale City! I've looked into it!"

"I... Yes, I was in Jindale City six years ago, but after my divorce, I moved to the village. I've never met you, I don't know you! I don't know what you're talking about!"

Tarquin's chest heaved with emotion, his voice laden with urgency,

"Then tell me, what were you doing on March 27th, six years ago?"

Chapter 364

Six years ago, on March 27th...

That was the day Elysia's world fell apart!

She had gone to the airport to pick up her husband when chaos erupted. Amidst the turmoil, he dragged her into a darkened lounge, where she spent three agonizing hours in despair.

Ignoring her protests and pleas, he left her with nothing but empty promises before tearing at her clothes...

That day, he was like a madman, a ravenous wolf, a domineering lion-wild and uncontrollable!

He pinned her down, dominating her from behind, on the floor, taking what he wanted over and over again until he had marked every inch of her.

It was her first time, and the pain of being forcefully entered was etched into her soul, unforgettable for a lifetime.

The memories were too painful to revisit. Elysia trembled all over, her fingernails nearly piercing the soft flesh of her palms in distress.

She wanted to tear him apart, oh, how she wanted to!

Tarquin saw the anger and resentment in her eyes and was more convinced it was her.

He, too, was shaking, his emotions running as high as Elysia's.

He placed his hands on her shoulders, bending down to meet her gaze, his eyes red with emotion,

"It's you, isn't it? You've been trying to strip me, not for some scandalous photoshoot, but because you wanted to see if the marks you left on my shoulder were there, right? From the first time we met, you insisted on me getting undressed, just to check for those bite marks to confirm it was me! At the hospital the other day, when you knocked me out, you must have seen the marks and confirmed my identity, but you refuse to admit it, don't you? You blame me, hate me, never want to see me again, right?"

Yes! Yes! Yes!

I do blame you! I do hate you! I never want to see you again in my life!

Elysia responded in her heart, her lips trembling too much to make a sound.

Tarquin seemed to find his answer in her emotions, his heart filled with sorrow, self-reproach, and overwhelming guilt.

"I'm sorry!"

Elysia's tears burst forth at his words...

Sorry...

Could a simple apology ever make up for what he had done?

Despite her fierce resistance that day, despite her telling him no, she didn't want this, he still took what he hadn't the right to!

She didn't care what excuses he had; from her point of view, he was a scoundrel, a monster, a rapist!

Because of him, she was branded with the stigma of 'infidelity within marriage', mocked and scorned!

Words like shameless, indecent were the nicer terms used!

Many called her a whore, a slut, trash!

She had always been known for her grace and conservatism. From middle school to university, she had received countless love letters, but she focused solely on her studies, aiming to change her fate through education, never engaging in inappropriate behavior with the opposite sex! But he changed the trajectory of her life completely!

He had nearly destroyed her entire existence!

So, compared to the damage he had caused, what was his apology worth?

His late affection was worth less than dirt!

With reddened eyes, Elysia sniffled, holding back her tears, and slapped his hand away, "Don't touch me!"

Tarquin froze, "..."

Elysia continued in denial,

"So much time has passed, how could I remember? I've forgotten what happened that day!"

For the sake of her three children, she would never admit it until the very end!

Tarquin's voice shook, "Forgotten, then why are you crying?"

"I'm not crying!"

Chapter 365

Elysia defiantly lifted her chin, her voice strong but betrayed by the unstoppable tears streaming down her face. Some wounds, she realized, weren't so easily numbed by time or distraction.

The presence of her kids had been a salve to her aching heart, but now, facing the very source of her anguish, her emotions spiraled out of control. She was determined not to cry over this anymore, yet she couldn't help herself. Her tears flowed like a breached dam, beyond her control.

Tarquin, his heart aching for her, tentatively reached out to wipe her tears, only to be met with rejection. "I told you, don't touch me!" Elysia snapped, batting his hand away.

Tarquin's hand froze mid-air, his expression one of a bewildered child, unsure of what to do next.

Elysia, in a futile attempt to regain some composure, roughly wiped away her tears and defensively claimed, "I'm crying because you mentioned something from six years ago, reminding me of issues between my husband and me. It has nothing to do with you!"

Tarquin was skeptical. "So, you're saying it wasn't you last night?"

"No, it wasn't!"

"Then who left these scratch marks on me?" Tarquin challenged, opening his robe to reveal the evidence.

Elysia, her breathing hurried and lips pressed tightly together, insisted, "It wasn't me!"

Tarquin countered, "We have security guards downstairs. They wouldn't let a stranger in. If it wasn't you, then it must have been me or Elijah. Do you really think Elijah or I did this?"

His implication was clear - it could only have been Elysia.

Cornered by logic, Elysia had no choice but to confess, "It was me! You tried to take advantage of me when you were drunk, and I had to defend myself!"

With that, she pulled down her collar to reveal bruises on her neck. "These are the proof of your assault!"

Seeing the marks, Tarquin's emotions surged. "Aren't these marks proof of who you are? In my life, it's only been you. I would never touch another woman, even in a drunken stupor. My heart responds only to you. I know it was you!"

He recalled how others, like Nola Slater, had tried to seduce him in his drunken state, only to be met with violence. Even inebriated, he would never mistake another for her.

"I know it was you, last night, in my arms, and six years ago at the airport. It was always you," Tarquin insisted, stepping closer.

Elysia, panicked, denied it vehemently. "It wasn't me!"

But Tarquin was relentless. "It was you!"

Backed into a corner, literally and figuratively, Elysia felt trapped. "I said it wasn't! Stop talking to me. I don't want to hear another word!"

She covered her ears, but Tarquin continued, "I know it was you. Why won't you admit it? What are you afraid of? That I'll hurt you? I won't, not ever again. I'll spend the rest of my life making it up to you. Please, don't leave. Stay with the kids and me..."

His pleas were cut short by a sharp slap across his face.

His mentions of 'the kids' and 'the rest of our lives' filled her with an unbearable fear.

What was she so afraid of, so worried about?

She feared he would discover the child! Feared he would fight her for custody! Feared he would use the child to bind her, turning her into a caged bird!

She despised him! She didn't like him one bit!

He was willing to spend the rest of his life making amends, but she wanted no part of it!

She didn't want to be with him! Wanted nothing more to do with him!

She wouldn't stay, and neither would her child!

Elysia snorted in defiance, sticking to her resolve of 'deny till you die',

"I never slept with you, and last night wasn't me in your bed! Yes, I did scratch you, but I didn't climb into your bed! I spent the entire night in the study, and Elijah can vouch for me!"

It just so happened that Elijah found her in the study that morning; surely he would assume she had been there all night.

Before Tarquin could even respond, Elysia added,

"Accidents happen, and feelings can be misleading, especially under the influence of alcohol. Your so-called feelings for me only prove that I resemble someone in your heart, but I am not her!

Let me emphasize again, I had no ties with you six years ago, and I won't have any in the future. Don't even think about me or my child!

Moreover, everything you're picturing about last night is a drunken illusion. Except for the scratches, nothing else happened. You were dreaming! You need to sober up!"

With that, Elysia pushed past Tarquin and fled the room while he was still in shock.

Tarquin stood there, mulling over her words.

Elijah could testify she was in the study all night? Then who was in his arms?

Could it be that he was so drunk that he imagined it all?

Frowning deeply, Tarquin decided to seek confirmation from Elijah about where Elysia really spent the night.

Yet, finding Elijah still asleep, he couldn't bear to wake him and instead turned to search for his phone in his bedroom.

The messy bed, with several strands of long, black hair, caught his attention.

Picking one up, he examined it closely. The color, the length, it all matched Elysia's hair perfectly!

Elysia hadn't dyed her hair; her waist-length, jet-black hair was distinctive in its natural state - shiny, full, and round. It was unmistakable!

If she wasn't admitting to being with him last night, then why was her hair on his bed?!

And not just one strand!

Several strands clearly indicated an intimate encounter!

She claimed she hadn't been in his bed. She was lying!

His instincts couldn't be wrong. It was her! Definitely her!

She just wasn't ready to confront him or admit it!

Tarquin, now agitated, turned to go after Elysia, but then he remembered the paternity test and hesitated.

Wait!

If Elysia truly was Elijah's mother, why did the test report say otherwise?!

Could it be that the woman from last night was her, but the one from the airport six years ago wasn't?

Yet, his instincts shouldn't be mistaken!

He had only been with her, albeit drugged, but he vividly remembered every moment they shared together! That feeling... it couldn't be wrong!

But the paternity test was personally conducted by Benjamin. How could it be inaccurate?

Was it his instincts that were off, or was there something wrong with that paternity test?!

With a furrowed brow and after a moment of hesitation, Tarquin grabbed his phone and called Lowell,

"Make sure Elysia doesn't leave Jindale City without my permission. Lockdown Future Community. I want to know Elysia's whereabouts at all times. And, get Benjamin to see me!"

After hanging up, Tarquin collected several of Elysia's hairs and went to Elijah's room.

He gently took a few strands of Elijah's hair and placed them alongside Elysia's.

Splitting them into several portions.

He was determined to redo the paternity test!

And this time, it would be conducted by different people, in different places.

Chapter 367

Elysia rushed home, her heart pounding in her chest. Blossom and the three little ones were packing up when they saw her, and they immediately gathered around.

"Elysia!"

"Mommy!"

Elysia didn't want the kids to sense anything was wrong, so she forced a smile. "Is everything packed?"

"Yeah, mommy, what's going on? Why are we leaving all of a sudden?"

Elysia fibbed, "I've got an urgent matter to attend to in another city. I just found out this morning. It's all very last minute."

Elliot was skeptical. "Will we come back here after?"

He was really concerned about this because his blood brother Elijah was still here! Elijah hadn't had the chance to meet their mom yet! If they were leaving, they definitely had to take Elijah with them. They couldn't leave him behind!

Elysia was evasive, "Not sure yet, we'll see how it goes. You guys hurry up and get ready. I'll check my room for anything else we need to pack. We need to leave soon."

After ushering the kids away, Elysia quickly retreated to her bedroom, with Blossom following closely. As soon as the bedroom door closed, Blossom urgently asked, "What's going on?"

Elysia's tears started flowing freely, and it was only then that she allowed herself to sob uncontrollably. The kids, eavesdropping at the door, were heartbroken.

Evan and Emmett impulsively wanted to burst in and comfort their mom, but the more sensible Elliot stopped them, communicating with his eyes, "Let's stay calm, first listen to what mom has to say, to understand what's really happening."

Inside, Blossom was frantic, sitting beside Elysia on the bed and trying to wipe her tears. "Okay, okay, whatever it is, you're safe now. If anyone dares to mess with you at my place, I'll fight them tooth and nail!"

Elysia choked out, "Blossom, he recognized me."

"What?!"

Blossom was stunned, and so were the eavesdropping kids. "!!!"

Elysia didn't go into details, just the outcome, "He was drunk last night, remembered things from the past, and I happened to be there... he connected the dots, recognized it was me!"

Blossom was panicking. "Did you confront each other?"

Elysia nodded, then shook her head. "He was sure, but I denied everything. But my denial was useless; it just bought me some time to escape. He'll figure it out soon and then come for me and the kids."

"No wonder you're in such a hurry to leave. But you're not divorced yet, and the kids' school registrations aren't sorted. Are you just going to leave?" Elysia sniffed, "Let's push the divorce back for now. We'll take it one step at a time. As for the kids' school... I'll get them settled first."

Blossom comforted her, "If you've made up your mind, then go for it. I'll worry about the kids' schooling. I'm a preschool teacher; I know a lot of colleagues in different cities. Once you're settled, I'll help find them schools."

Elysia was moved and hugged Blossom tightly. "Blossom, thank you!"

The kids' schooling was Elysia's top concern.

Blossom said, "What are sisters for! I'll miss you and the little ones terribly, but since you've made your decision, I won't hold you back. Better leave sooner than later. Once he's sure, you might not get a chance to escape. We'll keep in touch, and once you're settled, I'll come visit."

"Right!" Elysia nodded vigorously, wiping away her tears and getting up to finish packing.

They didn't know that Tarquin's men had already surrounded the entire neighborhood. Elysia and the kids couldn't leave now!

Elysia was packing in a frenzy when suddenly, her hands froze. She remembered something crucial! Something for her that was even bigger than the divorce!

Chapter 368

She just left, what about Winona?

She still hadn't heard from Winona!

First, there was the mystery of her vanishing act, then the uproar over Duchess Kate's scandal...

Lives were at stake, and she genuinely worried for Winona Newsom!

Without further thought, Elysia grabbed her phone to call Zane.

She hadn't told Zane she was leaving, just inquired if he had managed to reach Winona.

Zane said, "Got in touch, yeah. Was planning to catch up with you about it these past few days. Meet up for a chat?"

"...I'm a bit tied up at the moment, just want to know if Winona's okay? Where is she now?"

"She's fine, didn't leave the country though. She's been here secretly filming. The whole 'leaving the country' bit was a ruse by the production team." Didn't leave the country?

That matched up with what Callum had uncovered, mentioning there was no record of Winona leaving the country.

"Can I give her a call, maybe talk to her?"

"That's a no-go, confidentiality agreements and all."

"Oh..." Elysia sounded deflated.

Seeming to cheer her up, Zane quickly added, "But, her agent sent over a work clip of Winona the day before yesterday. I'll send it your way." "Sure!"

Receiving the video, Elysia and Blossom watched it together.

In the video, Winona, looking radiant in costume, leaned back in a chair, script in hand, deeply engrossed.

"Winona, look here."

Someone called out to her, and Winona turned towards the camera, "What's up?"

"Zane's missing you, thought we'd shoot a video for him. He might come down with a case of lovesickness if he doesn't see you soon."

A smile played on Winona's lips, "He's always fretting over nothing. Tell him I'll be home soon."

"Will do."

The video ended there, and Blossom remarked, "She only said she'd be back soon, no mention of when exactly."

Elysia frowned slightly, noticing the smile on Winona's face never reached her eyes, and even a hint of irritation when Zane was mentioned. "How have Winona and Zane been over the years?"

"Great, Zane dotes on Winona."

"And Winona towards Zane?"

"Of course, great. Have you forgotten? Winona was smitten with Zane at first sight."

Elysia "..."

She watched the video over and over, feeling something off about Winona, different from the Winona she remembered.

But she couldn't pinpoint what.

"Do you notice anything different about Winona?" Elysia asked Blossom.

"She looks younger! Winona's a big star, she takes good care of herself."

Even Blossom hadn't spotted anything amiss, so Elysia didn't dwell on it.

After all, it had been six years since they last met; some changes in Winona were to be expected.

Zane sent another message, "Winona is fine, don't worry about her, take care of yourself for now." Alright.

Replying to the message, Elysia called Callum.

She was grateful for his concern over Winona, knowing Callum had always held a torch for her. Sharing the video with him might ease his worries too.

But-

Callum was shocked after hearing about it!

He had just stumbled upon a rumor that Winona's agent, who had been missing for days, was suspected to have died abroad a month ago.

Was his information incorrect, or was there something off with the video Zane shared?

Uncertain of the agent's death, Callum didn't share this with Elysia but asked, "Send me that video, please. You know I'd keep Winona's star status confidential."

Trusting Callum, Elysia forwarded the video to him.

After hanging up, she sighed in relief, feeling somewhat at ease now that she had some news of Winona. She could leave with a lighter heart!

Time was of the essence. Elysia pocketed her phone and knocked on her kids' door, "Elliot, Evan, and Emmett, are you guys packed? We're heading out."

Chapter 369

Emmett stammered, his words tumbling out in a rush, "Not... not yet, Mom. Just give us a little more time, okay?"

"Alright, honey. Call me when you're all set," Elysia replied with a nod before leaving the room.

Once she was out of earshot, Emmett turned to Evan, his eyes wide with worry. "Evan, have you had any luck reaching Elijah?"

Evan and Emmett had packed their bags, ready to leave today. They had been trying to call Elijah all morning, hoping to tell him about their plan so he could join them.

But after numerous attempts, there was still no answer.

Evan paced the room, clearly agitated. "No luck! How about this - I'll go look for Elijah. You guys go ahead to the train station with Mom. I'll bring Elijah and meet you there later?"

Elliot, who had been listening quietly, shook his head, his brow furrowed in thought. "Right now, Tarquin has only found Mom, not us. If you're spotted trying to find Elijah, Mom will freak out."

"So what do we do? Leave Elijah behind? No way! He's our brother! We can't just leave him out there on his own!" Evan exclaimed.

Emmett nodded vigorously in agreement. "Yeah, brothers stick together!"

Elliot let out a sigh, "Even if we get in touch, Elijah won't come with us. He once said he wouldn't leave Tarquin behind."

"What?! He'd choose that jerk Tarquin over us and Mom?" Evan was incredulous.

"He wants both."

"But he's gotta choose!" Evan argued.

Elliot explained, "It's a tough choice for him. Tarquin's been taking care of Elijah; it's natural he feels loyal to him. But of course, Elijah loves us and Mom too."

"So, what now?" Evan asked, frustration evident in his voice.

Elliot paused before speaking, "Leaving now isn't right for Mom."

"Why not? If Mom wants to leave, we should just go. As long as she's happy, that's what matters!"

Elliot glanced out the window, "Tarquin has been searching for Mom for years. Now that he's found her, he won't let her go easily. We're already being watched."

Evan peeked outside and his anger flared, "No one can stop Mom if she wants to leave! Tarquin better not push me, or he'll regret it. If he makes Mom sad again, I won't hold back!"

Elliot closed the curtain, "Calm down. Tarquin is just one reason why it's not right for Mom to leave now."

The other reason is Elijah. He's been missing Mom for years. If they're separated again before even getting to know each other, it might break him. And there's Mom. She doesn't know Elijah is her son yet. She's ready to leave Elijah with Tarquin without a second thought because she's unaware. But eventually, Mom will find out the truth. And when she does, she'll regret today's decision for the rest of her life. She'll live with that guilt and pain." Evan's heart sank at the thought. "I can't stand the idea of Mom living with that kind of pain. Not now, not ever."

"But Mom's set on leaving. How do we stop her?" Emmett chimed in, worry creasing his brow.

Elliot pondered for a moment, then made up his mind. "If we have to, we'll tell Mom the truth. That Elijah is her son. Then, it's up to her to decide whether to stay or go. Whatever she chooses, we'll support her, every step of the way."

"You've got my support, bro. Whatever it takes to do right by Mom, I'm in," Evan declared, his resolve firm.

"And me, me too! I'll follow whatever plan Elliot comes up with!" Emmett added eagerly.

"Alright, don't worry. I'll handle this. Just try to get in touch with Elijah. If you reach him, tell him to stay calm for now."

"Got it!"

Chapter 370

Elliot Thorne had just left his room in search of Elysia when he was greeted by the sound of her angry voice echoing from the other side of the door. Quickly, he shut his bedroom door, hoping to prevent Evan from overhearing the commotion and causing a scene.

Alone, Elliot tiptoed to the door, pulling over a small stool to peek through the peephole.

Tarquin? What was he doing here so soon?

Elliot's heart skipped a beat. He took another glance and saw Lowell standing next to Tarquin, but he couldn't catch a glimpse of his mom's expression, only the back of her head.

Frowning, Elliot stood by the door, eavesdropping on the heated exchange outside.

Elysia was furious, her voice a low growl as she confronted Tarquin, "I told you, it's not me! Now go away! If you don't leave, I'm calling the cops! I don't want to see you, just go! Now!"

Tarquin stood there, a wounded look on his face. Even though the paternity test results weren't out yet, he was convinced Elysia was the one.

Having arranged for a new DNA test and left the sleeping Elijah under Benjamin's care, Tarquin had hurried over to see Elysia. He never truly understood the phrase "absence makes the heart grow fonder" until today. It felt like an eternity since he last saw her, though it had only been an hour.

He didn't come with a plan; he just wanted to be near her. It seemed like only her presence could settle his restless heart.

But as much as Tarquin longed to see Elysia, she wanted nothing to do with him.

His sudden appearance infuriated her. With the kids at home, she was also worried Tarquin might discover them, adding tension to her anger.

She kept yelling for Tarquin to leave, but he was as stubborn as a mule, refusing to budge.

The atmosphere was thick with tension, with Lowell awkwardly caught in the middle, too scared to even breathe.

He had never seen Tarquin so subdued, taking insults without a word, nor had he seen Elysia so fiercely protective, like a mama bear.

To Lowell, Tarquin was always the one calling the shots, and Elysia was the epitome of gentleness. Today, they were strangers to him. Attempting to mediate, Lowell chimed in, "Ms. Thorne, please, Tarquin just wanted to check on you, nothing more."

"Tarquin, since you've seen her, maybe we should go?"

Both turned their fierce glares towards him, snapping simultaneously, "I don't want him to see!"

"You shut up! Get lost!"

Lowell muttered to himself, realizing he should have kept quiet, and quickly ducked into the elevator to escape the drama.

Elysia's phone rang. It was Blossom, "Elysia, are you guys ready? I've cleared out the trunk. Just bring your stuff and come down. I'll drive you to the train station."

"I got it, we'll be right down. Wait for us," Elysia replied, about to pocket her phone when Tarquin's grip tightened around her wrist, his voice laced with desperation, "You're leaving again?!"

Struggling to free herself, Elysia retorted, "What does it matter to you? Let go of me!"

"It matters because what about Elijah? Hate me if you must, but what did Elijah do to deserve this? Have you thought about how he'll cope without you?"

Her abandoning Elijah repeatedly? Where did that come from?