

Hitched 411

Chapter 411

Her eyes were wide as saucers, brimming with earnestness. "I'm telling you! Elijah's dad is a total jerk! Why can't you understand that?" she exclaimed.

Tarquin, trying to maintain his composure, struggled to keep his breathing steady. "And who am I, may I ask?"

"You? Well, you're not exactly a barrel of laughs, but kinda cute, actually!" Elysia pondered, tilting her head as she leaned closer. "Huh? Aren't you Elijah? My son! When did you get so big? Weren't you just five?"

Curiosity got the better of her, and she reached out to pinch his cheek.

Tarquin, visibly annoyed, stood up abruptly from the couch, causing Elysia to lose her balance and bump into the coffee table with a 'thud.'

She bounced back up, "Who hit me?!"

Tarquin could only facepalm. How could anyone be this clueless? It was utterly baffling! Clearly, getting any sense out of her was out of the question for now. The so-called confession she'd made was impossible to take at face value.

Suppressing his frustration, Tarquin helped her up. "Nobody hit you. Go to bed, it's late."

Since he couldn't get anything out of her while she was awake, and there was no chance to pull her hair for a DNA sample, he decided to let her sleep first.

"Why does my head hurt if nobody hit me?" she protested.

"It's all in your head. You're not really in pain."

"That's not true! It hurts!"

"... You won't feel it if you sleep."

With a scowl, Tarquin escorted her to bed, forcefully tucking her in. He then retreated to his study, lighting a cigarette and taking deep, silent drags. After a while, feeling enough time had passed and Elysia was likely asleep, he went to check on her. Entering the bedroom, he turned on the bedside lamp. The soft light cast a gentle glow on Elysia's face, highlighting her beauty and grace.

Tarquin lingered for a moment before softly calling out, "Elysia, Elysia..."

But Elysia didn't stir, deeply asleep. As Tarquin reached out to pluck a strand of her hair for a DNA test, a sudden "crash!" startled him—a vase had fallen from the windowsill.

He quickly turned on the room's main light, only to find the shattered vase but no culprit in sight. Hearing the commotion, Elijah rushed in, "What happened?"

"Nothing, a vase just broke," Tarquin explained after a quick survey of the room.

Elijah, puzzled, went to check on Elysia, who remained undisturbed by the noise, thanks to her drunken slumber. "Why is Mommy sleeping in Daddy's room?" Elijah inquired.

"I let her have the room. I'm sleeping in the study," Tarquin confessed.

"And why are you here and not in the study at this hour?"

Tarquin paused before explaining, "She drank tonight. I came to check on her."

Elijah eyed him suspiciously for a moment then decided, "Daddy, go back to sleep. I'll stay with Mommy. I'll take care of her."

After tucking his son in, Tarquin cleaned up the broken vase, wished his son 'goodnight,' turned off the light, and left.

Then, a thought struck him. He headed to the bathroom and spotted Elysia's used toothbrush. A smirk played on his lips as he realized he'd been so fixated on getting a hair sample for a paternity test that he'd overlooked the toothbrush, which could also serve the purpose. He collected both Elysia's and Elijah's toothbrushes, replacing them with new ones, and left with the samples.

Back on the bedroom windowsill, a cat named White watched Tarquin leave the house, flicking its tail indifferently...

Chapter 412

Meanwhile, Nola was losing her mind at home. She had thrown everything she could get her hands on and was now sitting on the floor, sobbing uncontrollably.

Aileen, woken by the noise, hurried over in her robe, her face turning pale at the mess in the room. "Nola, what's going on?!"

"Mom! *sob*....." Nola threw herself into Aileen's arms, crying her eyes out. "Tarquin's shacked up with that witch! He doesn't want me anymore! *sob*" Aileen was shocked. "You went to see Tarquin today?!"

"Yes! I saw that witch Elysia getting out of Tarquin's car, holding Elijah, and going back to Tarquin's place. To any outsider, they'd look like the perfect family! Just thinking about it makes me wish I could gouge out my eyes! Mom, it hurts so much!"

Aileen frowned. "Didn't I tell you not to go after him?!"

"But I miss him! It's been so long, he doesn't answer my calls or texts. If I didn't go to him, he'd probably forget who I am!"

Aileen sighed in frustration. "You're so impatient! You know, you're Elijah's lifesaver. With Tarquin's character, he wouldn't forget you!"

Nola roared, "He has forgotten me! He has someone new and has forgotten his old love, *sob*..."

Aileen was speechless. "Why are you so foolish?! When were you and Tarquin ever an item? He's always seen you as a savior, never had feelings for you! What 'old love' are you to him?"

"Mom, you..."

"Snap out of it, Nola. You're just Tarquin's savior, not his lover. He doesn't have feelings for you!"

Those words from her own mother hit Nola hard. "Mom "

Aileen continued sternly, "If you don't get your act together, you're going to ruin everything! Saving Elijah was a huge honor. You got close to Tarquin because of it and were in a favorable position! But look at where you are now!"

"I... I didn't mean for this to happen, *sob*..."

Aileen sighed, then comforted her. "Nola, being a savior weighs more than being a lover. Just keep your role in mind, and Tarquin won't easily belong to someone else!"

"But Elysia, that witch..."

"Elysia is nothing! She only got close to Tarquin because of Elijah! I've heard she's quite good with child psychology, which helps with Elijah's conditions. Tarquin protects her in front of the Bradfords because of Elijah, not because he likes her."

Hearing this, Nola calmed down a bit. "Are you sure?"

Aileen rolled her eyes. "At least I know Tarquin doesn't like her now."

"What about later?"

"Who can predict the future?!"

Nola panicked again. "But she's so pretty, a real siren. If she stays by Tarquin's side, she'll definitely steal his heart!"

"Then figure out a way to remove her from his side!"

Nola gritted her teeth. "Just removing her would be letting her off too easy. I must get rid of her!"

Aileen smacked Nola on the forehead. "Why are you so senseless! Nola, whatever you do, you need to prioritize! Tarquin is your focus, not Elysia! You need to figure out how to make Tarquin fall for you, not how to get rid of Elysia! Even if Elysia's gone, does that mean Tarquin will like you? Focusing on Elysia is a waste of energy. You should be concentrating on Tarquin! If Tarquin falls for you, Elysia won't matter anymore! If you hadn't taken the wrong path and encouraged Oriana to kidnap Elysia, your relationship with Tarquin wouldn't be so strained! Have you learned nothing?"

Chapter 413

Nola pouted and went silent.

"...So, tell me again about what happened with Tarquin tonight. I want all the details," Aileen insisted.

After a mumbled recount from Nola, Aileen frowned and said, "I told you it was a bad idea to go after him. And look what happened! Not only did he not forgive you, but he's also more annoyed with you now!"

"What... What do I do now?!"

"Don't panic. Remember, you're Elijah's lifesaver. He can't ignore you forever. Besides, he's still worked things out between the Bradford Group and the Slater family. Now, listen to me. Your next move is to get on Elysia's good side."

Nola was shocked, "Get on Elysia's good side? The same woman you just told me to ignore in favor of Tarquin?"

Aileen explained, "Getting close to Elysia is a move for Tarquin! Since she's taking care of Elijah, winning her over means you'll be closer to both of them. Plus, you'll be able to keep an eye on her every move."

"But Tarquin warned me to stay away from Elysia!"

"He said not to hurt her. He didn't say you couldn't be friends."

"And you think Elysia would want to be friends with me?"

"If you're nice to her and she's still hostile, that's on her. Tarquin will see that. Nola, you're an actress, playing roles is what you do best."

Nola blinked a few times, "Okay! I'll approach Elysia tomorrow."

"Don't just barge in; that's too obvious. Start with her kids. I did some digging and found out all three of her sons attend Sunshine Daycare. Make a donation to their school, win over those little rascals, and you'll naturally get closer to Elysia."

This time, Nola got it, her eyes twinkling with determination, "Mom, I know exactly what to do!"

Aileen sighed deeply, her voice laden with advice, "In situations like these, never panic. Always remember your ultimate goal and don't stray from the path. Think about it; once you've got Tarquin, dealing with Elysia will be a piece of cake."

"Right! I'll visit the daycare tomorrow!"

Aileen nodded, then suddenly asked, "Nola, the person who tipped you off about Elijah years ago, have they contacted you again?"

"No, why do you ask, Mom?"

Aileen let out a worried sigh, "I'm concerned."

"Concerned about what?"

"The only reason you're seen as Elijah's savior is because of that tip-off. If Tarquin finds out..."

"So what if he does? It was me who found Elijah first. If it weren't for me, he would've been a goner, frozen outside."

Aileen stared at her naive daughter, pressing her lips tightly together.

If Tarquin found out, Nola's standing with him would plummet. Clearly, someone was orchestrating things from behind the scenes. Even without Nola, Elijah would've been saved by someone else!

And when Nola first heard about Tarquin's illegitimate child, her instinct was to get rid of the problem, not to save him!

If it weren't for that mysterious backer's warning to deliver Elijah to Tarquin, Nola might have made a drastic move!

If Tarquin ever learned the truth, it could spell disaster for Nola and the Slater family!

She needed to find this informant - offer them hush money if they're cooperative, or else silence them permanently.

Chapter 414

"What on earth are you worried about, Mom? Can you just talk to me?" Nola pressed.

Aileen snapped out of her reverie. Her daughter was too naive; explaining too much would only confuse her more and possibly mess things up. "There's nothing to worry about. But if that person contacts you again, you must tell me immediately, got it?"

"...Oh."

"Anyway, you can't just do things on your own anymore. You need to tell me everything from now on. Tomorrow at preschool, you better make sure Elysia's sons like you. That's the only way you'll get close to Elysia."

"I got it, Mom. Just a few brats, I can handle them! Don't worry."

"..."

Meanwhile, Elysia was blissfully unaware of the scheme Nola and her mother were plotting against her.

The next morning, she woke up to the sight of her son Elijah sleeping beside her, her heart instantly filled with joy.

Turning over, she quietly watched the little guy, her heart brimming with affection.

This was her son, Elysia's son!

How lucky she must be to have found her missing son so smoothly!

And he didn't even blame her!

Smiling, Elysia gently touched his cheek, feeling utterly blissful.

She used to complain about her unfair fate, but now, she was just grateful to the heavens for her wonderful sons.

If this was the universe making up for her past hardships, she truly hit the jackpot!

While the little one was still sleeping, Elysia sneaked a kiss on his forehead, then cheerfully went to make breakfast.

She started by putting oatmeal on the stove, then headed to the bathroom to freshen up.

The toothbrush on the sink looked just the same as yesterday, and she didn't notice anything amiss, beginning her morning routine.

After freshening up, she dove back into making breakfast.

It was only after breakfast was ready that she realized Tarquin wasn't home.

She didn't think much of it, enjoying a pleasant morning with Elijah.

Just before noon, Tarquin came rushing back.

He didn't even glance at Elysia, scooping up Elijah and retreating to the bedroom, locking the door behind them.

"What's wrong, Daddy?" Elijah asked, puzzled.

Tarquin, with furrowed brows, asked, \"Elijah, tell Daddy the truth. Where did you sleep the night Daddy was drunk, and where did Elysia sleep?\" \"What happened?\" Elijah frowned.

\"Just answer Daddy!\"

The curtains fluttered suddenly, and Elijah saw White hiding behind them.

The pet snake, flicking its tongue, seemed to be signaling something. When Tarquin looked, White quickly hid again.

Elijah seemed to understand...

He was curious about White. Yesterday, during the family reunion, Evan had told him a lot about White's intelligence and how Evan had sent White to protect Mommy.

The vase breaking last night must have been White's doing, just to get his attention.

Now, with Daddy suddenly asking about that night, it surely had something to do with Mommy's identity. Remembering Mommy's advice, Elijah said, \"Mommy and I were together that night. We slept together.\" Tarquin's expression was indescribable, as if his heart had sunk...

Elijah felt sorry for him, \"Daddy...\"

Tarquin steadied himself, \"Daddy has some errands to run. I won't be back for lunch today, okay?\"

With that, he turned and left.

Elysia, puzzled in the living room, watched the scene unfold. Tarquin and she locked eyes for a few seconds before he frowned and left. Confused, Elysia hurried to ask Elijah, \"What's going on?\"

Elijah unfurrowed his brows, \"It's nothing. Daddy said he won't be back for lunch; he must be busy with work. Mommy, don't worry about him.\"

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" '...Oh."

"Mom, what are we having for lunch?" Elijah shifted Elysia's attention.

Elysia immediately asked, "What do you feel like eating?"

"I want beef stir-fry with rice."

"No problem, I'll get right on it."

"Mhm."

After Elysia left, Elijah quickly got in touch with Elliot.

By this time, Nola had arrived at the preschool, and the teachers were organizing the kids to go out to the playground to receive the gifts Nola had brought.

Evan recognized her immediately and exclaimed, "It's that ugly lady! What Angel Lady? She's more like an old witch, for heaven's sake! Ugh, teachers are such liars!"

Today, Nola came to the preschool to donate money and gifts, but the teachers, unaware of her true character, told the children that an Angel Lady was visiting.

Elliot also recognized Nola, watching her from a distance with a frown.

Emmett, of course, recognized her too. The sight of her reminded him of being kicked viciously with her high heel at the train station, making him hide behind Evan, "That mean lady! What is she doing here?"

Elliot, seeing Nola standing on the stage and searching the crowd, said unhappily, "She's probably here for us, no surprise there."

Evan was furious, "Is she asking for it again?!"

Elliot's smartwatch suddenly beeped. It was Elijah calling.

"Let's head to the restroom to take Elijah's call, then we can deal with her."

"Okay."

The three little guys excused themselves to the restroom under the pretense of needing to use it, stepping away from the playground.

As soon as the call connected, Elijah said, "Dad must have done another paternity test!"

Elliot's brows knitted, "When did he do it?"

"It must have been last night. Dad showed up in Mom's room late at night. It was White breaking a vase that drew me over there, then Dad left the house and didn't come back all night. He just rushed back home a while ago and immediately started asking me about the night he got drunk. That's when he started doubting Mom! Mom had told me before, if Dad asks, to say that she and I slept together that night."

"And then?"

"I did what Mom told me, I told Dad that Mom and I were together that night."

"How did he react?"

"...He seemed disappointed, upset. If I'm not wrong, he must have gone for a paternity test last night, and the results showed that Mom and I aren't related by blood. He rushed back to see me this morning, probably to confirm it one last time. This time, Dad must have given up hope for good."

Elliot asked, "Where is he now?"

"He left again, he looked upset."

Elijah also sounded a bit down. If Tarquin wasn't happy, neither was he. Although he too wished Tarquin would give up on the paternity issue. Elliot comforted him, "It's probably for the best that he's lost all hope. That way, his feelings for Mom can be pure! No guilt, no obligation to make amends. If he falls for Mom under these circumstances, it's genuine love! It's better for both him and Mom."

Elijah understood, "Yeah!"

"By the way, Nola showed up at the preschool today, seems like she's here for us three. Do you know why?" Elijah frowned, "She went to the preschool?"

"Yeah."

"I don't know why she's there, but she showed up looking for Dad last night. Be careful, she's not a good person." "....Yeah."

After chatting for a bit, the brothers hung up.

Elliot decided to put Tarquin's issue aside for now, focusing instead on Nola. Evan was right, this bad lady might be looking for trouble again!

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But...

Nola, he hadn't taken her seriously before, but today, he realized, this wicked woman could be quite useful!

Elliot was still pondering when suddenly, their teacher came looking for them.

"Elliot, Evan, and Emmett, aren't you guys done yet?"

"... Yeah, almost."

The teacher stood at the bathroom door, speaking gently, "Ms. Slater was specifically asking for you guys. I'll wait outside for you, okay?"

"Sure."

Elliot responded to the teacher but frowned, "Nola is definitely here for us three!"

Emmett was nervous, "What if she knows you guys look just like Elijah and came just to check on you?"

Evan clenched his fists, "If she dares, let her come! Bro, leave her to me. I'll handle her!"

Elliot shook his head, "If she knew our secret with Elijah and came just to confirm it, she wouldn't need to make a big show of donating money and stuff. Just sneaking a peek at us would do. Her high-profile appearance seems more like she's trying to make nice."

"Make nice? With us?"

"Yeah."

"But she hates Mom, so she must hate us too. Why would she want to make nice?"

Elliot analyzed, "It must be because of Mom. If I'm not wrong, Nola has changed her tactic. She thought Mom liked Tarquin, so she wanted to eliminate Mom. But her past deeds not only failed to hurt Mom but also backfired on herself. Now, she probably wants to get close to Mom through us, pretending to be friends while actually planning to stab her in the back."

Evan's eyes widened, "That's so malicious! Bro, let me deal with her. She needs to learn what happens if she tries to hurt our Mom!"

Yet, Elliot, with a thoughtful frown, shook his head again, "Resorting to violence isn't the right move now. Actually, her showing up just gave me a great idea to bait that mysterious person!"

Mentioning the mysterious person changed Evan and Emmett's expressions, "What's the plan?"

Elliot narrowed his eyes, "We'll talk about it at home tonight. For now, since Nola came to us, let's meet her and give her a taste of her own medicine!" "What do you mean?"

Elliot explained, "The rumors about Mom six years ago were closely linked to Nola. Since she loves spreading rumors, let's see how she likes being the subject of one!"

Elliot whispered a few words into Evan and Emmett's ears, and their eyes lit up immediately, nodding in agreement, "Alright! We'll follow your lead, bro!"

Evan suddenly thought of something, "But bro, when we meet her and she sees what we look like, won't she run off to that jerk Tarquin and snitch?" Elliot, with a nonchalant expression, squinted his eyes, "She won't see us the same way Tarquin would. Don't worry about it."

Even though Evan didn't quite understand the difference, he still nodded. Elliot was the brain of the family, the smartest among them. If Elliot said there was nothing to worry about, then there was nothing to worry about!

After their conversation, the three boys came out of the bathroom.

The teacher immediately showed concern, "Have you been in the bathroom for so long because of a stomachache?"

Elliot made an excuse about having a 'number two' and then asked, "What does Ms. Slater want with us?"

The teacher explained excitedly and happily, "Ms. Slater heard you three are triplets and was fascinated. She wanted to meet you. She also mentioned how hard it is to raise children these days, with ordinary families struggling to support one child, let alone your family having to support three of you all at once. The economic pressure must be huge."

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"Ms. Slater thinks your family is struggling financially," a classmate whispered to Elliot. "She says your parents must be worrying about money all the time and is considering sponsoring you guys."

Elliot remained silent, a smirk playing on his lips. Sponsor them? Unnecessary!

The only one in their family who could be considered poor was their clueless mom, always fretting over the bills. As for Tarquin, being the town's wealthiest man, financial worries were foreign to him.

The teacher continued, oblivious to the true financial standing of Elliot's family, "You know, Ms. Slater is a big-time celebrity with loads of cash. If she really sponsors you, it'd take a huge load off your parents' shoulders. So, make sure you leave a good impression on her when you meet, okay? It could really help lighten your folks' burden."

The teachers, like everyone else, were under the impression that raising kids was a financial strain for the family. In these times, where the cost of living had skyrocketed, having one kid was tough, let alone

three. It's no wonder many young couples hesitate to start a family, primarily due to economic pressures. If someone found out a family was raising three boys, they'd be lauded for their bravery.

Meanwhile, at the schoolyard, Nola was growing impatient. "When are those kids going to show up? How long do they expect me to wait?!" she snapped at her agent.

The agent, trying to maintain professionalism, whispered, "I heard they're on their way from the restroom. Their teacher went to fetch them. Just a bit longer, please smile for the cameras. We've got a lot of press today."

The agent had invited the media to showcase Nola's charitable side.

Nola gritted her teeth in annoyance, "Those little pests. They might as well drown in a cesspool for all I care!"

Minutes later, Elliot, Evan, and Emmett arrived, masks on, accompanied by their teacher who introduced them to Nola.

Elliot, holding Evan's and Emmett's hands, greeted Nola with a polite, "Hello," his grip a silent reassurance to his brothers.

Nola was taken aback. Despite the masks, she recognized them, especially Evan. She remembered the insolent boy who had insulted her at the train station and the one who had accidentally broken her wrist in a scuffle.

"It's you?!" she exclaimed, glaring.

Evan raised an eyebrow, a challenge in his gaze.

Her agent nudged her, a silent reminder to watch her image. He then turned the awkward moment around, "Hey kids, don't you think Nola looks pretty?"

Evan was quick to respond, "She doesn't look pretty. Kinda funny, actually."

In this small town where community and appearances mattered, the clash between a celebrity's facade and the candid honesty of children was about to unfold in the most unexpected ways.

Chapter 418

"Madam?!"

"Not a pretty sight, is it? Funny?"

The agent's smile froze on her face, and before she could utter a word, Evan launched into another tirade.

"Madam's got skin so thick, it's like she's layered on makeup with a trowel. Could probably stop a bullet with that. And her features, my goodness, they're all over the place, like they're each doing their own thing. Honestly, it's not a good look; she's both old and ugly."

The room went silent. Not only was the agent cringing, but the teacher was too.

Evan was usually such a sweet talker, what got into him today?

The teacher hurried to smooth things over. "Evan's just joking around; this little guy is always up for a laugh."

Evan immediately countered, "I'm not joking, though. Madam really does look... uniquely unattractive. Her features are so adventurous, it's like science fiction, very abstract, almost alien-like. Honestly, it's old, ugly, and downright hilarious. Not an angle on her face that works."

The awkwardness in the air thickened.

Nola was boiling with rage, barely able to control her breathing!

Had it not been for the reporters and the teacher present, she'd have slapped him already!

Evan, eyeing her, added, "Don't be mad. Being ugly isn't your fault. You can go home and blame your parents. It's all gics."

Nola bit her lip hard, holding back her fury as she retorted, "Seems like someone from a less fortunate background lacks a bit of class. But no matter,

I forgive you. Why don't you take off that mask, let's see your face!"

She planned to remember their faces for a future reckoning, considering today wasn't the day for confrontations.

Upon hearing this, Evan looked towards Elliot.

Seeing no objection from him, he sneered and removed his mask, defiantly staring at Nola.

"Ah!" Nola screamed in shock!

Her eyes nearly popped out at the sight of Evan's face, as if she'd seen a ghost!

Evan gave her a cold smile, and Nola stumbled back in fright, twisting her ankle and falling over!

She stared at Evan in horror.

Everyone was puzzled by the outburst when Elliot suddenly remarked, "Are you okay? Be careful, think of the baby."

The crowd went, "What?! A baby?"

"Nola's pregnant? But she's not even married!"

Elliot covered his mouth, acting as if he'd accidentally spilled a secret.

Immediately, a reporter said, "My God, no wonder she suddenly took an interest in kids, coming to the kindergarten and all. She must be expecting and wants to be a mom!"

"Wow, what a scoop, get those cameras rolling!"

Regardless of the truth, this story was bound to hit the headlines.

So, the reporters swarmed in, their cameras flashing non-stop.

Everyone was buzzing with questions about the baby's father.

Nola, still reeling from Evan's appearance, was caught off-guard by the barrage of inquiries.

Her shock, misconstrued by onlookers as guilt over a discovered secret, seemingly confirmed the pregnancy rumors.

For a top female celebrity, known for her single status, to be outed as pregnant out of wedlock was monumental news!

Her agent, panicked, tried to clarify to the reporters that Nola wasn't pregnant, urging them to stop spreading rumors.

She even tried to coax Elliot, "Sweetie, do you think Nola's just really nice and reminds you of your mommy, and that's why you thought she was pregnant?"

The agent was guiding Elliot, who looked terrified and refused to speak.

Ah, the drama of it all! Who doesn't love a bit of theater?

Pressed by the agent, Elliot burst into tears, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have said anything."

Now the misunderstanding grew even larger.

Realizing they couldn't clear up the confusion right away, the agent quickly escorted Nola away from the scene.

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At the preschool, the teachers were all atwitter, their curiosity piqued as they surrounded Elliot.

"Hey Elliot, how did you come to know Ms. Slater is expecting?" they asked, eyes wide with wonder.

Elliot, shrouded in an air of mystery, simply replied, "Can't say."

"Is she... is she really pregnant?"

"Secret."

The teachers were left speechless, their minds buzzing with questions.

Word quickly got around, and soon enough, Elysia heard about it through Blossom.

Elysia was taken aback. She was clueless about the ongoing saga between herself and Nola, let alone the fact that Nola had sought out Tarquin the night before. So, it baffled her why her son would suddenly make such a claim about someone's pregnancy.

For a celebrity of her stature, such news was monumental, with potential to significantly impact her reputation.

Anxious, Elysia decided to head to the preschool to have a word with Elliot. She called Tarquin to see if he could look after Elijah. If he was unavailable, she planned to take Elijah with her.

At that moment, Tarquin was at a bar. He wasn't drinking but was incessantly smoking, the ashtray before him overflowing with cigarette butts. His phone lay on the low table, buzzing with Elysia's call. He frowned, hesitating to pick up right away.

Keaton squinted his eyes, trying to make light of the situation, "Even though it turned out she isn't the one you were looking for, Elijah likes her. You can't just ignore them."

Tarquin tapped the ash from his cigarette, his expression dark as thunder.

Keaton internally sighed. They all had been so sure Elysia was the woman Tarquin sought, but it turned out she wasn't! The twist was unexpected and caught them off guard! Tarquin had personally overseen the verification process in the lab until noon today, ensuring there was no mistake in last night's results. Indeed, Elysia was not the one he was looking for.

Keaton tried to offer some advice, "Regardless of whether she's the one or not, since Elijah is playing matchmaker, it shows he likes her. If you have feelings for her..."

"I don't," Tarquin cut in coldly.

"But you don't hate her, right? If there's no hatred, there's a chance to grow fond of her. I suggest you give it a try with Elysia, for Elijah's sake. Forget the past, life moves forward. It's been years; whether she's alive or has her own family now, who knows? Waiting blindly is foolish! Life is too short. Live in the moment and appreciate what's in front of you!"

Tarquin, his brow furrowed in thought, finished his last cigarette, stubbed it out in the ashtray, and picked up his phone to leave. Keaton sighed heavily, wondering how much of his advice had actually been heard.

Meanwhile, as soon as Nola got back into her car, her manager was on the phone trying to squash the rumor before it spread online. It was crucial to prevent it from reaching the public eye!

After the call, her manager asked, "Nola, do you know those kids?"

It was clear to her that those kids harbored no goodwill towards Nola.

Nola, however, countered, "You saw him too, right? Doesn't he look just like Elijah?"

Her manager was taken aback, "I haven't seen Elijah."

Nola was frantic, "He looks exactly like Elijah. He must be Tarquin's illegitimate child!"

"That can't be. The Bradfords have always had just one male heir per generation. Mr. Bradford already has Elijah. It's impossible for there to be another son."

"Exactly, I knew those kids couldn't possibly be that lucky to be Tarquin's. But why does he look so much like Elijah?"

After a moment of contemplation, Nola gasped in realization, "I've got it! Elysia must have had her son undergo plastic surgery to make him look like Elijah! That woman is up to something sinister! I need to tell Tarquin about this!"

With gritted teeth, Nola dialed Tarquin's number...

Chapter 420

Tarquin was just about to step through his front door when his phone buzzed, a wave of irritation flashing across his face at the caller ID. Still, he picked up.

As soon as the call connected, Nola blurted out, "Tarquin, where are you? I need to talk to you, it's a big deal, huge!"

Tarquin replied with a chilly tone, "Say it over the phone."

Clearly, he had no desire to see her.

But Nola, as if she hadn't caught the hint, persisted, "This is too important for a phone call! I need to tell you in person! Just send me your location, I'm coming right now! I..." Beep. Beep. Beep.

Tarquin had hung up on her.

Nola was both angry and hurt, "What's his problem?"

Her agent tried to console her, "Mr. Bradford might be tied up with something, maybe he can't meet you right now. Why don't you just tell him over the phone?"

"How can I explain something this important over the phone?"

"...Nola, are you sure about this? If you rush into telling Mr. Bradford and it turns out to be a misunderstanding, he might hold it against you."

"I'm absolutely sure! I'm not blind! I saw it with my own eyes, that kid looks exactly like Elijah! It must be Elysia's doing, that witch!"

"I know it, she's trying to harm Elijah! No, I have to let Tarquin know about her evil scheme!"

After saying this, she tried calling Tarquin again. When he didn't pick up, she left him a voice message, "Tarquin, you need to kick Elysia out, that witch is up to no good! I have evidence she's only getting close to you for her own benefit! If you don't get rid of her, Elijah is in danger!"

Tarquin didn't respond, so Nola, gritting her teeth, left another message, "If you don't believe me, go check out Sunshine Daycare. Elysia's brats are enrolled there. Just take a look at them and you'll see why I'm saying this!"

Still no response from Tarquin left Nola stunned, "What is Tarquin thinking? Doesn't he care about Elijah's safety at all?"

Her agent was confused, "How did we jump to Elijah's safety?"

"Idiot! Think about it, why would Elysia want her son to look like Elijah? She's obviously planning to replace him!"

"You mean... she's plotting to pull a switcheroo?"

"Exactly! She's grooming her own son to take Elijah's place so that she and her son can take control of Tarquin. That heartless fiend! Tarquin would kill her if he found out!"

Nola, stubborn as ever, called Tarquin once more. This time, he picked up.

Nola was momentarily taken aback, not expecting him to answer, and quickly blurted out, "Tarquin, did you listen to my voice messages? I'm telling you, Elysia is planning to kill Elijah and put her own son in his place! You need to act fast and eliminate her first, or Elijah will be in danger!" Tarquin frowned, "Have you lost your mind?!"

"I... I haven't! If you don't believe me, just go to Sunshine Daycare and see for yourself! If I'm lying, may I... may I... never win your love in this lifetime!"

For Nola, that was the ultimate curse.

Tarquin's brow furrowed deeper as he coldly said, "I got it."

The call ended, leaving him staring skeptically at his phone screen.

He didn't believe Elysia would harm Elijah.

But Nola making such a damning vow meant something was up.

"Did Nola visit the daycare today?"

Lowell, who had been driving, had overheard Nola's voice message and hummed in response, "Apparently, she went there under the guise of charity work. Interestingly, Ms. Thorne's three sons attend that daycare. It's curious that she suddenly decided to donate there, especially with Ms. Thorne's sons being involved."