

Hitched 501

Chapter 501

After Gideon left, Tarquin summoned Josiah to his room to inquire about the progress of the investigation.

Josiah, visibly trembling, managed to stutter out, "It's... still under investigation."

Tarquin looked at him calmly, "I know whether I've committed murder or not. Like I said last night, as long as you stick to the facts, we're good. If you run into any trouble, you can come to me."

Josiah's heart skipped a beat, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead, "Sure, sure."

Back in his own office, Josiah realized his shirt was soaked through with sweat.

He understood the subtext of Tarquin's words. Tarquin was aware someone was framing him and was warning him.

The situation was dire. Someone was out to pin a murder charge on Tarquin, and Tarquin wasn't going to be an easy target.

And now, Josiah was caught in the middle!

He felt like the cream in an Oreo, with Tarquin, the fierce lion, on one side, and the crowd eager to see Tarquin fall on the other.

He couldn't afford to offend either side!

What a predicament!

An excited junior officer burst in, "We've got something!"

"What is it?"

"An anonymous tip-off sent a video that supposedly shows Mr. Bradford pushing Gregory off the building, look!"

Josiah quickly viewed the blurry footage, which seemed to show Tarquin pushing Gregory, but it was hardly conclusive.

"Should we confront Mr. Bradford with this video to see how he reacts?"

"No! Get our tech team to verify its authenticity first. And keep this video under wraps; oversee this personally." "Got it!"

No sooner had the junior officer left than Josiah's phone rang.

He sighed upon seeing the caller ID, answering reluctantly, "Hello?"

"I heard you've got evidence of Tarquin committing murder. Can we close the case now?"

Josiah frowned, "..."

The caller pressed on, "Look, this case is getting a lot of attention upstairs. If you don't wrap it up soon, none of us are going to have a peaceful holiday season. But solve it before then, and you're looking at a promotion, a big one."

Josiah's expression darkened, "..."

The video had barely arrived, and they already knew about it. It was likely fabricated evidence, aiming to quickly pin the crime on Tarquin. After hanging up, Josiah exhaled deeply...

The higher you stand, the more dangerous it becomes. Sometimes, it's better to live a simple life.

Tarquin, the magnate behind the Bradford Group and Jindale City's wealthiest, might appear glorious to outsiders, but his life was fraught with danger. And while many would happily see him dead, few seemed to genuinely care for him.

In any ordinary case, family and friends would have rallied in support.

But not for Tarquin. Not a soul had shown up to inquire about him or offer support.

Such a life, in its own way, was pitiful.

Over in Future Community, Blossom had a restless night but eventually found some peace in sleep.

Elysia, while preparing breakfast for the kids, couldn't stop worrying about Tarquin.

It had been nearly ten hours; why hadn't he been released yet?

Could someone be using this as an opportunity to harm him?

Elysia paused mid-chop, a realization hitting her!

Elijah had mentioned that Tarquin had made many enemies over the years, with few friends to speak of.

Those enemies might seize this chance to strike at him!

But Tarquin was no pushover; surely, he wouldn't be easily taken down.

Chapter 502

No, no, no!

This was a matter of life and death. If Tarquin was wrongfully accused of murder, he could face the death penalty!

The image of Tarquin facing a firing squad flashed through Elysia's mind, her heart leaping into her throat in panic.

She had to find out more.

Setting down her kitchen knife and wiping her hands on her apron, Elysia dialed Lowell's number.

"Lowell, do you have any idea what's happening at the police station? It wasn't him, so why is he still locked up after all this time? Haven't they cleared his name yet?"

"...Not yet."

Elysia frowned, "Is someone trying to frame him?"

For a moment, Lowell was at a loss for words, worried about scaring her or revealing too much about Tarquin's true identity.

After all, in Elysia's eyes, Tarquin wasn't the CEO of the Bradford Group; he was just someone from the Bradford family who once had money and then went bankrupt.

After pondering for a moment, Lowell replied,

"Ms. Thorne, you don't need to worry about this. We'll handle it. Just take care of Elijah for Tarquin."

""

After hanging up, Elysia zoned out for a while.

Then, with a determined twist of her brows, she hurriedly started making breakfast.

Once done, she checked on the kids.

The little ones had only fallen asleep at dawn, and only Elliot was awake, murmuring, "Mommy."

Elysia whispered back:

"Elliot, mommy has to step out for a bit. Breakfast is in the pot. Remind Blossom and your brothers to eat when they wake up."

"Where are you going, mommy?"

"I'm heading to the police station."

A flicker of concern crossed Elliot's eyes, "To see our step-dad?"

"Yeah, with everything that's happening, I'm worried about him. His family is no good; not a single one of them would bother with him. Since Elijah is his only kin, I should go check on him on Elijah's behalf."

A softness touched Elliot's gaze.

His mom might not be the sharpest tool in the shed, but she truly had a heart of gold.

"Go ahead, mom. Don't worry about Blossom and the boys; I'll look after them."

"Alright, if you're not hungry, you can sleep a bit more. If you're hungry, go ahead and eat. Oh, and if someone knocks on the door before I get back, don't open it, okay?"

"Got it, mom."

After instructing Elliot, Elysia checked on Blossom, then grabbed a thermos filled with breakfast, worried that Tarquin might be hungry, and headed out.

Since she couldn't drive and her electric scooter was out of charge, she took a cab to the police station. To ensure they'd let her see him, she claimed to be Tarin's family member.

Everyone assumed she meant Tarquin when she mentioned Tarin.

Josiah was also at the station, surprised to hear someone from the Bradford family wanted to visit Tarquin.

Weren't all the Bradfords hoping for Tarquin's downfall?

Who would want to visit him?

Was the information he received incorrect, or did the visitor have an ulterior motive?

Josiah approached Elysia personally, not wanting to take any chances at such a critical moment.

He looked Elysia over, puzzled.

A member of the Bradford family would usually be all glitz and glamour, but her outfit was exceedingly plain.

Josiah asked, "You're here to see Mr. Bradford?"

Mr. Bradford?

The police sure seemed to respect him!

Elysia quickly nodded, "Yes, I'm here on behalf of his family."

"And you are his...?"

"I'm his girlfriend!"

To avoid any complications, Elysia claimed a title for herself on the spot.

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Josiah was utterly gobsmacked. This was Tarquin's girlfriend?

But... although she was drop-dead gorgeous, flawless really, she didn't sport a single piece of bling or designer gear. Normally, with a guy like Tarquin, you'd expect his girlfriend to be dripping in brand names and jewels, right? Even if she was going for the understated look, this was taking it to an extreme.

Josiah began to doubt Elysia's story. He hesitated before saying, "Just give me a moment." He turned to find Tarquin. He didn't dare let her meet Tarquin without checking first. What if she was just some overzealous fan who'd somehow got wind he was here and decided to pretend to be his girlfriend to meet her idol? That would surely annoy Tarquin, wouldn't it? And worse, what if she was an assassin sent by one of Tarquin's enemies? Maybe she looked harmless on the outside but was hiding something sinister.

Feeling particularly cautious today, Josiah decided it was best to check with Tarquin first.

The whole girlfriend concept seemed totally alien to Tarquin! When told his girlfriend was here to see him, he was as surprised as anyone, "Her name?"

Josiah blinked in confusion. "?"

Did Tarquin have so many girlfriends he couldn't keep track, or was it that he had none, which is why he didn't know his own girlfriend's name? "She says her name is Elysia."

Tarquin: "?!"

In the next second, his eyes narrowed slightly. This silly woman, she was probably worried the cops wouldn't let her see him, so she cooked up this girlfriend story. Tarquin's mood suddenly lifted, "Let her in then."

Though Josiah was still puzzled, he let her through.

Inside the visitation room, it was just Elysia and Tarquin. Once out of the cops' sight, Elysia exhaled dramatically, "Scared me half to death." Tarquin, with a smirk, "You've done nothing wrong, what's there to be scared of?"

"I lied to the cops. I was afraid they wouldn't let me in, so I said I was your girlfriend. Imagine how awkward it would be if they found out. Awkwardness aside, what if they decided to detain me for a couple of days?"

"...So you risked all that to see me!"

"Yeah!"

"And you came all this way, wanting to see me?"

Elysia steadied herself, muttering, "Don't flatter yourself. It's not because I care about you. I'm here on behalf of Elijah and Evan. Elijah is really worried about you. I came to check on you for him. As for Evan... if he hadn't insisted on going home last night, you wouldn't have had to drive him, and none of this would have happened. As Evan's guardian, I feel somewhat responsible, so I came to check on you."

Tarquin: "..."

He drove Evan home, and that's when this mess started? Thinking it over, he realized the kids must have spun Elysia a tale. This naive woman, she believed it.

He didn't expose the kids' fibs, instead asking about Elijah, "Is he doing okay?"

"He's pretty worried about you. But don't you worry about him. With me, Elliot, Evan, and Emmett around, we won't let anything happen to him." After saying this, she finally took a good look at Tarquin, surprised, "Why aren't you in a jumpsuit?"

Tarquin replied, "I'm a suspect, not a convict. Why should I be in a jumpsuit?"

"But how come you're still so well-groomed? You shouldn't be!"

Tarquin raised an eyebrow, "And how should I be?"

"You should be a mess! Where are your dark circles and stubble?"

Elysia figured, with all this trouble, he must be stressed and sleepless. There had to be dark circles! There had to be stubble! There had to be a lack of vitality!

But looking at him now, still in his sharp suit, clean and cheerful, in excellent spirits, he didn't seem like someone entangled in a crisis at all! This was totally different from what she had imagined.

Chapter 504

The next second, someone knocked and came in with breakfast.

Seeing the scrambled eggs, bacon, pancakes, and a variety of pastries, Elysia was even more shocked, "Is the food in jail always this good?"

"This isn't a prison, dummy!" Tarquin sneered, glancing at the thermos she brought, "Did you bring me breakfast?"

"Yeah, I thought you'd have nothing to eat, or just stale bread and pickles. Had I known you eat like a king, I wouldn't have bothered."

"Open it. Let's see what you've got."

Elysia mumbled, "It's nothing fancy like yours, don't bother."

Nevertheless, Tarquin had the luxurious breakfast cleared away and took the thermos Elysia brought over to him, opening it himself. He took out the food one by one and laid it in front of him: a homemade savory pancake, a side of chilled veggies, two boiled eggs, and a bowl of oatmeal. Seeing him not move, Elysia thought he was disgusted and mumbled again, "I told you it's nothing fancy. If you don't want it, fine by me."

She made a move to pack it up, but Tarquin slapped her hand away.

"Why'd you hit me?!"

Tarquin said nothing, just lowered his head and started to eat.

Elysia was surprised and was about to say something when he said, "Don't talk while eating."

Elysia was speechless, "What era are you living in? 'Don't talk while eating,' my foot! I'm asking you, have the police given you any explanation for keeping you so long?"

Tarquin ignored her, quietly eating his breakfast. He usually didn't care much about the 'don't talk while eating' rule, but today was different. He wanted to seriously enjoy this meal, cherishing not so much the food but the feeling it brought him... warmth, beauty. Even though there might be thousands who wished him dead, there were still those who cared about him, right?

Elysia didn't realize he could feel neglected. Unable to empathize with him at the moment, she just watched him ignore her, not saying anything else. Only when he had finished everything did she ask with wide eyes, "Did I not bring enough? Are you still hungry?"

"It was just right."

Tarquin tidied up the utensils, looking at Elysia, "Thanks for the breakfast."

His sudden politeness made Elysia feel uneasy. Her lips moved, but no sound came out. She packed the utensils back into the thermos to take home and wash.

After finishing, she finally asked, "Do you know what the actual problem is?"

"What problem?"

"Why haven't you been cleared of suspicion yet?!"

Tarquin squinted, pondering how to reassure her without revealing too much about himself. Before he could figure it out, Elysia suddenly said, "Maybe you could find a way to let me see the body, and I could help you find evidence to clear your name!"

Tarquin was stunned, "?"

Elysia was serious, "The appearance of a suicide and a murder are different. I'll go see the body, then take the evidence to the police and demand they release you."

She didn't know Tarquin had a confrontation with the deceased. She thought Tarquin had no connection with the deceased, just happened to witness the suicide, and the police suspected him of involvement. She hadn't considered that the police might suspect the deceased was forced to jump by Tarquin.

Tarquin, hearing this, stared at her for a while before asking, "Why do you care so much about me?"

Elysia, as if her pride was wounded, flared up, "Who cares about you! Didn't I explain already? I came because of Elijah and Evan! Don't flatter yourself."

Tarquin just smiled, disarmingly handsome.

Elysia glared at him, "Stop laughing, or I'll really leave you to your fate!"

"Heh." This time, Tarquin laughed outright.

Elysia turned away, fuming.

What an infuriating man!

Chapter 505

Before she could get upset, Tarquin asked, "You know how to do autopsies too?"

Elysia retorted, somewhat irritated, "I know medicine, of course, I can do autopsies."

Though she hadn't practiced on actual humans, her expertise in traditional Chinese medicine and anatomy made her quite familiar with the human body. Dissecting was not an issue for her.

Tarquin looked somewhat surprised, "I thought you were only an expert in child psychology, with a bit of medical knowledge on the side."

Elysia puffed up with pride, "Hmph! I know plenty!"

Watching her smug little face, Tarquin couldn't help but chuckle, "Pretty impressive. I underestimated you before."

"Just remember how impressive I am and be nice to me! Don't make me angry! I can be quite scary when I'm mad!"

Tarquin's eyebrows quirked up, seeing the shadows of Evan and Emmett in her. No wonder Evan got so cocky when praised! And no wonder Emmett got all bluff and bluster, threatening how scary he could be when angered! They clearly got it from their mom!

Traits passed down, both Evan and Emmett had inherited Elysia's characteristics, though Elliot seemed to be an exception. Probably took after his tragically departed dad. But Elliot's kindness, that was definitely from Elysia.

"You need to listen to me seriously!" Elysia pulled Tarquin back from his thoughts.

Tarquin was in a good mood, very cooperative, "Go ahead, I'm listening."

Elysia glanced towards the door to make sure no one was coming in before she motioned him closer, "Come closer."

Tarquin, who had been leaning back, narrowed his eyes with intrigue. After watching her for a few seconds, he leaned forward, mirroring her posture, their faces inches apart.

The subtle scent of herbs emanated from her, pleasant and unique, distinctly hers.

Yet, Tarquin's brow furrowed slightly, his thoughts drifting back six years... Elijah's mother had not smelled of herbs.

Feeling a sinking sensation, Tarquin instinctively leaned back, but before he could recline fully, Elysia pulled him forward, "Don't stay too far, what I'm about to say can't be overheard."

Unaware of his discomfort, Elysia continued in a lowered voice, "Here's what I think. If the coroner examines the body, it'll clearly show the person wasn't killed by you. But why haven't you been cleared of suspicion? Someone is framing you! Find a way for me to see the body, and I'll find the evidence to force the police to let you go."

Tarquin, steadying his emotions, looked at her with a complex expression, "Knowing someone's out to get me, you still want to get involved? Aren't you afraid of retaliation?"

Elysia paused, her focus had been solely on how to exonerate him, and she hadn't considered the possibility of becoming a target herself. Seeing through her thoughts, Tarquin asked, "Scared?"

"Yes," Elysia admitted, frowning, "That's why I need to be careful not to expose myself! I'll find the evidence and secretly get it to the station. That way, both the police and your enemies won't know I helped you, and they won't come after me."

Even though her plan lacked practicality, Tarquin was visibly moved, "Didn't it cross your mind to just not help me? If you don't, you wouldn't be at risk of retaliation."

"What would happen to you if I didn't help? Rely on your wonderful relatives? Don't even think about it, they'd be more likely to harm you than help!" "They wouldn't help me, but why do you insist on helping me? And don't say it's because of Elijah and Evan."

Chapter 506

Elysia pouted, her voice tinged with sympathy, "You know, I kinda feel sorry for you."

In her eyes, it was simple. Most folks would want someone by their side when they're under the weather, let alone going through what he was. Yet, here he was, without a single soul to fret over him.

Pretty sad, if you ask me.

Sure, she wasn't related to him by blood, like Lowell, but she was the mother of his son.

A secret he was oblivious to, but one she was painfully aware of.

Their son tied them together with bonds that couldn't be severed. Directly linked, she felt a tad closer to him than others might.

She wouldn't bother with the small stuff, but when push came to shove, she believed she ought to step up.

Especially considering her guilt over wanting to whisk Elijah away from him, despite Blossom's advice against it. Helping him now might ease her conscience when the time came to leave with Elijah.

Her admission of pity rendered Tarquin silent, his gaze dark and unreadable. The room fell into an uneasy quiet.

Feeling awkward under his stare, Elysia broke the silence, "But I definitely can't handle a corpse, so we'll need Lowell's help. Should I talk to him, or will you?"

Tarquin pocketed his cigarettes, initially lighting one before remembering Elysia's dislike for the smell and putting it away. Leaning back, he assured her, "You don't need to worry about me. Just take good care of Elijah."

"I'll definitely take care of Elijah! But how will you get out?"

"There's always a way."

Elysia frowned, "Aren't you worried someone might frame you? If you're pegged as a murderer, you could face the death penalty."

Tarquin shrugged it off, "No worries. If I did it, I'd be brainstorming my defense. If not, it's not my problem. Let's see if they've got the chops to pin it on me."

"But if you can't clear your name, you'll be stuck in jail, and the police can hold you for a month. New Year is almost here..."

"Looking to spend New Year together?" Tarquin teased.

Elysia, caught off guard, raised her voice, "Who wants to spend New Year with you! Can't you take this seriously?!"

"I'm not serious?"

"How can you be serious if you think I want to spend New Year with you?"

"Why bring up New Year then?"

"I'm worried about you and Elijah! If you can't get out before New Year, think about how sad Elijah will be. It'll ruin his New Year!" After a brief stare, Tarquin assured her, "Don't worry, I'll be out before New Year."

He had plans to take Elijah back to the family estate for New Year's Eve dinner. He wouldn't leave his son to face the wolves alone.

Seeing his confidence, Elysia asked, "Don't tell me you have evidence to clear your name and you're just not using it?"

Tarquin didn't elaborate, simply stating, "Tell Elijah not to worry. I'll be out by New Year's Eve at the latest!"

Considering today was December 28th, New Year's Eve was just around the corner.

Chapter 507

Elysia eyed him skeptically, doubting his ability to get out.

Suddenly, Tarquin had an idea, "How about we make a bet if you don't believe me?"

"A bet? On what?"

"If I can't get out before New Year's, I'll give you all my properties."

At the mention of money, Elysia's eyes sparkled, "Really? How much are we talking?"

"A lot. But if I do make it out, you have to answer one question honestly, no lying."

"What question?"

"You'll find out. So, do we have a bet?"

Seeing Elysia hesitate, Tarquin teased, "Think about the money."

Elysia quickly agreed, "You're on!"

"Deal. No backing out."

"Whoever backs out is a chicken."

Tarquin couldn't help but laugh, leaving Elysia frowning, sensing some mischief in his laughter.

But it was a bet she felt she wouldn't lose.

Even though he had faced financial ruin before, he had recently come into money again. If she won, she'd definitely get a hefty sum!

As a true money lover, her heart always swayed at the thought of cash.

Elysia was about to say more when her phone rang. It was Zane.

She frowned and declined the call, telling Tarquin, "Since you're so confident about getting out, and you seem fine here, I'll leave you to it. I'll update Elijah on your situation too, so he won't worry."

As she mentioned leaving, a fleeting look of sadness crossed Tarquin's face, almost too quick to catch even by himself.

"Who was that, Blossom?"

"No, Blossom fainted last night after seeing a dead body. She's squeamish about blood."

Tarquin's attention immediately shifted, "Blossom is squeamish?"

"Yeah, but only with large amounts of blood."

Frowning slightly, Tarquin thought, "That means Blossom couldn't be the one hurting those stray cats."

But whether she was connected to the mysterious person remained unclear.

Elysia stood up, "If you need anything, just call. For Elijah's sake, I won't ignore you. Goodbye."

Tarquin watched her leave, feeling a strange emotion stir within him, his eyes lingering on her retreating figure.

After leaving the station, Elysia hesitated before calling Zane back.

Zane picked up immediately, his voice full of urgency, "Elysia, are you okay?"

"I'm fine, just was busy. What's up?"

"I heard about the death in Future Community, was worried about you... and Blossom. Heard the victim was from across your place." "I'm okay, Blossom just got scared and fainted last night. She's resting at home now."

"I'm on my way to Future Community. Are you home?"

"You're heading there?"

"Yeah, just want to check on you guys."

After a brief pause, Elysia fibbed, "Go ahead, Blossom's at home."

"You're not there?"

"I had to step out. And really, I'm fine; no need to worry about me. Check on Blossom."

Zane then asked, "How long till you're home?"

"Not sure."

"Alright, I'll touch base with you later, when you're home."

Elysia hung up, her thoughts a whirlwind as she pondered her next move.

Chapter 508

After ending the call, Elysia furrowed her brows, lost in thought.

In truth, Blossom was still unconscious, and under normal circumstances, she'd have told Zane straight up not to disturb her while she rested. But just now, she had purposefully suggested Zane visit Blossom, wanting to gauge his reaction. The fact that Zane refused to go in her absence struck her as odd. And then there was the last time they met; Zane's gaze had been uncomfortably intense...

Elysia's frown deepened.

Though Zane and Winona's love story was the stuff of high school sweethearts turned lifelong partners, and Zane's affection for Winona was well-known, it seemed impossible for him to harbor any inappropriate thoughts towards her. Yet, she wasn't paranoid; these thoughts didn't just appear out of nowhere! She felt something was off with Zane! However, Blossom seemed to think Zane was perfectly normal.

Wasn't there a saying about the observer being clear-headed while the player gets lost in the game? Why did she feel Zane's gaze on her was unsettling, yet Blossom noticed nothing?

Ding-

Her phone suddenly chimed, snapping her out of her thoughts. Elysia received a message, "Little Elysia, your chance for revenge has arrived!" Her expression changed instantly! Her focus shifted from Zane to the message, suspecting it was from that mysterious lunatic!

Before she could react, another message came through, "This time, you don't have to get your hands dirty. I can have the law punish him and avenge you. Excited, huh?"

Elysia's heart pounded as she quickly replied, "It wasn't him who did it! He shouldn't face legal punishment!"

"Whether he did it or not isn't the point. You just need to go back to Evan and convince him to change his story. Tell the cops it was a homicide, and leave the rest to me."

Elysia's brows knitted tighter, "My child will not bear false witness! And I don't need your revenge! I've moved on from whatever was between him and me. Don't think about using me to harm him!"

"Moved on? After he left you battered and broke your spirit, ruining your prime years, you've stopped hating him?"

Elysia replied unhappily, "Whether I hate him is none of your business! It's between him and me!"

After a while, the person replied, "What if I use your secret to force you to obey me?"

Elysia's breathing grew rapid as she clenched her teeth and answered, "Do whatever you want! I will never do as you say!"

"Really? You're not afraid I'll reveal your secret to him? Not scared he'll find out you're Elijah's mother? That your son is also his son? Afraid he'll fight you for custody?"

Of course, she was scared! But more than fear, she refused to corrupt her child! She couldn't bear the thought of teaching Evan to lie. What would Evan think of her? How would he deal with it? Her son, bearing false witness to convict his own father, would be enough to torment Evan for life!

So, if she complied, she'd not only destroy herself but Evan as well! As a mother, she was a model for her children's learning; if she couldn't lead a good life, how could she teach them to do the same? She might not have much, but she could instill in her children the right values, teaching them right from wrong, to be good people!

"Go ahead and tell if you want! No matter what, I won't be used by you! Don't contact me again!"

Elysia, with a frown, sent the message. Just as she was about to block the number, she was suddenly bumped hard! Her phone fell to the ground.

Chapter 509

"Watch it, buddy! You're in my way!"

Instead of an apology, the other guy just started mouthing off.

Elysia glared at him, noticing he was just a kid, probably no older than sixteen or seventeen, clearly going through that rebellious phase. His style screamed "trying too hard," with bleached hair and ears and nose decked out in flashy jewelry. To any adult, he was the definition of trouble.

Elysia frowned, "You bump into someone and act like you're the one wronged? Is this what your parents taught you?!"

The troublemaker just smirked, "Oh, my bad, didn't see you there, gorgeous. Hurt anywhere? Need me to take you to the hospital?" "No, thanks!"

"Let me at least see where you're hurt?"

As he made a move towards her, Elysia quickly stepped back, "Back off, keep it respectful!"

The boy jingled his sports car keys, smirking, "No worries, I'm one of the good guys. If you're not hurt, how about a ride instead? My dad just got me this for my birthday, cost him a pretty penny."

Clearly, this was a spoiled rich kid. Elysia wanted nothing to do with him and turned to leave.

But the boy grabbed her arm, "Come on, don't be like that. We met for a reason, let's go somewhere and talk."

Elysia was not having it, "Let go!"

But he held on, "I've taken a liking to you."

Elysia was shocked, "Are you out of your mind?!"

"Judging by the looks of it, you're not rolling in cash. Consider yourself lucky I'm even offering. How about it? Ten grand a month, yes or no?"

Infuriated, Elysia yanked her hand back and slapped him across the face!

The boy was stunned, "You hit me?! Even my parents haven't dared to lay a hand on me, you've got some nerve!"

Elysia glared, "It's exactly because they haven't disciplined you that you act this way! Keep talking nonsense, and I'll call the cops. The station is right there!"

The boy, clutching his cheek, glanced towards the police station, gritted his teeth, "Fine, you've got guts. Just hope we don't cross paths again!"

He stormed off to his flashy sports car parked nearby. Then, deliberately driving close to Elysia, he flipped her off, his immaturity and rudeness on full display, "Pretending to be all innocent with that face? Too good to accept my offer? Just wait till you get what's coming for you!"

With that, he sped off, leaving Elysia fuming. Clearly, he was from a wealthy family with questionable parenting. At such a young age and already so spoiled and arrogant. A disaster waiting to happen.

She was confident her brothers, Elliot, Evan, and Emmett Elijah, would never turn out like this. Such arrogance and ignorance were bound to lead to trouble. His parents couldn't protect him forever. If they were too soft now, life would surely teach him a harsher lesson later.

Elysia let out a huff, picked up her phone, and hailed a cab home.

In the distance, a cold gaze followed her departure, then shifted towards the direction of the speeding sports car...

A while later, on a nearly deserted road.

The rich kid was still blasting his music and speeding when a pickup truck slammed into him! With a loud crash and the kid's screams, the sports car flipped several times before coming to a smoking halt.

A tall, handsome man stepped out of the pickup truck, his gaze fixed on the wreckage.

Chapter 510

He was decked out in a black face mask, sporting dark casual pants and a mid-length hooded down jacket, hands buried in his pockets, sauntering towards the troublemaker with an air of nonchalance. Despite his obscured face, his clean attire and neatly trimmed hair spoke volumes of his meticulous nature.

Approaching the sports car, he towered over the young troublemaker inside. The young man was battered and bloody, whimpering for help. Silently, the man shattered the car window, yanked the troublemaker out, and dragged him by one leg into the woods.

It was a while before the man emerged from the forest. Casually tossing a black trash bag into the car, he straightened his clothes, glanced at his expensive wristwatch, and drove away. No sooner had he left than screams of terror erupted from the woods, startling the birds into a frenzy. Passersby stumbled upon the scene in the woods. The once brazen and lively troublemaker was reduced to a torso, his limbs severed and neatly placed beside him. The cuts were clean, as though made by a sharp blade, yet he was miraculously still alive. The attacker had bandaged his wounds to prevent him from bleeding out, clearly intending not to kill him but to condemn him to a life worse than death...

...

Meanwhile, Elysia made a trip to the grocery store before heading home. She picked up some fresh ingredients, planning to make a hearty stew for Blossom and the kids. By the time she reached her apartment complex, it was nearly 11 PM.

As the elevator doors slid open at the top floor, she was greeted by the sight of Blossom and three strangers of similar age, two women and a man, seemingly waiting for the elevator. Elysia, surprised, exclaimed, "Blossom?"

Blossom quickly introduced them with a cheerful smile, "This is Elliot, Evan, and Emmett's mom, my best friend Elysia. Elysia, these are my colleagues Florence, Mona, and Keith. They came over specially to check on us after hearing about the incident next door."

Snapping back to reality, Elysia stepped out of the elevator and greeted them warmly, "Hi there, why don't you come in for a bit?"

The women teachers responded with a smile, "We've been here for a while now, just about to leave."

"One look at Elliot, Evan, and Emmett, and it's clear why they're so handsome. Their mom is gorgeous. It's all in the genes."

Keith, the sports coach, also greeted her with a smile, "Nice to meet you, I'm Keith, the boys' PE teacher."

Elysia's gaze lingered on Keith. She'd often heard about him from Blossom and the kids. Tall and handsome, he was dressed in black casual pants, a white hoodie, and a relaxed down jacket, with pristine white sneakers. His whole demeanor was as clean and pure as his gaze, devoid of any blemish. He radiated warmth and charm, making one feel instantly at ease.

Elysia politely replied, "The boys always mention how great you are at basketball, soccer, even swimming. They really look up to you and adore you."

Keith's smile was gentle and warm, "It's an honor to be liked by them. I really enjoy their company; they're such well-behaved kids at school. You've done a wonderful job raising them."