

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 51[705 words]

Chapter 51

Blossom couldn't care less, "You know, I've been working as a teacher, and there's this kid in my class whose parents are in the middle of a nasty divorce. The mom's always the one dropping off and showing up for school events. She even made it crystal clear that no one but her is allowed to pick up her little one.

So, naturally, we follow the parents' wishes. When the kid's grandma came to pick him up, I had to turn her away and even gave the mom a call to let her know. Grandma did not take it well. She lost her temper and lashed out."

"I saw the video online. It was chaotic, and she hit you." Elysia said.

"Just a slap on the face. But my colleague pulled me away in a flash. No harm done, see?" Blossom continued, "If she hadn't been a senior citizen, I would've given her a piece of my

mind."

Elysia sighed, "Well, you haven't changed a bit. If that were Winona, she wouldn't care who it was. She'd probably break the woman's arm just to calm down."

Blossom laughed off the comment, "I didn't want to lose my job over some old lady. Let's not talk about this mess. It's great that you're back, though. Winona's going to be thrilled when she hears about it. Just wish I knew when she's coming back."

"Where did Winona go?" Elysia asked.

"Her husband Zane mentioned she's abroad, shooting a movie. It's been over a year, and we can't reach her all the time."

"Can't reach her?"

“Yeah, she’s on some top–secret project. Signed a non–disclosure agreement and can’t contact anyone outside the crew during the shoot.”

“Have you tried reaching out to her agent?”

“Same story. Agent’s under a non–disclosure agreement too. The whole crew is.”

Elysia was intrigued. What kind of play required such secrecy? She mused.

“Didn’t Zane go with her?” she quipped.

Blossom shook her head, “Zane’s been busy managing Winona’s family company. He can’t just up and leave.”

Winona Newsom was the only child of the Newsom family, and her father Ridley Newsom was a well– known entrepreneur in Jindale City. With a solid family fortune behind her, Winona, a classic heiress with looks and talent to spare, had made quite a name for herself in showbiz, thanks to her perseverance and the backing of the entire Newsom Group. She was a household name and a top–tier celebrity within three years.

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Cane, however, had a very different upbringing The quintessential self–made man grew up in a rural area, came from a poor family, and had many siblings to fend for. Meeting Winona in college was like a fairy tale they fell in love at first sight and got married right after graduation. Zane’s fortunes soared as he became the Newsom family’s son–in–law, a testament to the power of education to change one’s life,

“Has Zane been good to Winona over the years?” Elysia asked.

“Oh, the best. Zane’s known in Jindale City as the ideal husband and son–in–law. No one has a bad word to say about him. Unlike you, Winona really hit the jackpot. You skipped out on college to get married, and look how that turned out. Got yourself played by a scumbag.”

The details of Elysia’s forced marriage to Tarquin Bradford were unknown to Blossom and Winona. Due to the marriage being arranged under duress, Elysia was also coerced into – algnig a non–disclosure agreement...

At the time, even the Thorne family had no clue that it was the Bradford family who had come knocking with a lot wedding gifts for Daphne Thorne's hand in marriage. It was only after tying the knot that Elysia found out her husband was from the Bradford clan, named Tarquin.

She had heard that the Bradfords, trying to improve Tarquin's

ill fortune, had selected Daphne based on his apparatus. The Bradfords didn't reveal their identity when proposing; they just offered a hefty money and mentioned that the groom was disabled, hoping Daphne would marry him to fulfill his needs.

Daphne, upon hearing her suitor was disabled, refused outright, throwing a fit and threatening to take her own life rather than go through with the marriage.

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Chapter 52

The Thorne family was caught between a rock and a hard place. They couldn't bear the thought of discarding a hefty money, so they came up with the plan for Elysia to marry in her sister's stead.

Afraid that the switch would come to light, they even forced Elysia to sign a nondisclosure agreement.

Feeling cornered, Elysia saw it as repaying the Thorne family for twenty years of upbringing.

Blossom and Winona were clueless about all of this.

They only knew that Elysia, a brilliant student, suddenly dropped out to get married. Two years into the marriage, her husband dropped a bombshell to accuse her of infidelity and shamed her.

Elysia let out a sigh in the shadows, "I don't blame him for what happened."

Looking at it from Tarquin's perspective, she did cheat.

"You're still defending him? If it's not his fault, whose is it? He nearly killed you! If it weren't for your stubborn refusal to name him, Winona and I would've stormed his place and made him pay!" Even now, Blossom was fuming with indignation, "If you really were that loose, fine, but even we wouldn't have the right to judge. But you were innocent back then! You were bullied at the airport while waiting for him, and you were the victim. He, as your husband, should've cared, not sentenced you without a chance to explain. That's not what a real man does! Even if he felt you were tainted and wanted a divorce, he shouldn't have tarnished your reputation and gave you the stigma for all to mock.

Just wait, someone like him will get what's coming. After how he treated you, I don't believe for a second he's had a good life these past years!"

Elysia fell silent.

But he really hadn't had it good at all. Over the years, Tarquin had to play both father and mother, all while engaging in a constant battle of wits with the Bradford clan. He was well aware of how lonely and cold life was.

Meanwhile, the Bradford clan was heading to the hospital in droves.

Under the guise of visiting Elijah, they were looking for an opportunity to challenge Tarquin.

They also wanted to gauge how serious Elijah's condition was and how long he might

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have left.

Gideon Bradford, Tarquin's grandfather, had four children. Three daughters and one son.

The eldest was Allegra Bradford, then it was Verity followed by Saffron and the son, Killian.

Killian was Tarquin's father, who, years ago, met his demise alongside his wife in a foreign land, leaving Tarquin, then only a child.

If not for the Bradford tradition of a single heir, Tarquin might have met an early end too. Just like his marriage, which was claimed to bring him joy but in reality, they matched him. with a wife who would bring him bad luck according to the fortune teller.

Later, when the Bradford Group faced a crisis, Tarquin took the reins in a dire moment and yanked the company from the brink to the pinnacle of business circle.

In just three short years, the Bradford Group's market value soared by more than a hundredfold.

With industries across the globe, they had a finger in every pie. Thus, Tarquin secured the top seat at the Bradford Group.

But that seat was coveted by many.

The rest of the Bradford family, resenting that Tarquin was the sole survivor of his branch, wracked their brains to unseat him.

Naturally, Tarquin wouldn't back down, and his relationship with the Bradfords soured.

Furthermore, the Bradfords had always opposed his parents' union, to the point where his mother was never formally recognized by the Bradfords. Not to mention that his mother endured much humiliation at their hands.

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And there were also his parents' mysterious deaths....

All these factors combined painted a clear picture of the animosity between Tarquin and the Bradford family. If it weren't for his dying father's last wish and unresolved issues within the Bradford family that he needed to investigate, Tarquin would have cut ties with them long ago.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 53[644 words]

Chapter 53

Tarquin heard the clatter of voices approaching and planted himself firmly outside the hospital room, a living barrier to their advance. Not an inch closer to Elijah would they

come.

Allegra, Tarquin's aunt, was clearly displeased, "Tarquin, the moment we heard Elijah was under the weather and admitted, we braved the snow to see him. A 'thank you' is the least we'd expect. Now you are not thanking us but barring the door. What's the meaning of this?"

Tarquin didn't even grant her a glance, "Elijah isn't pining for your company."

"Nonsense! I'm your father's sister and your aunt, and I'm related to him too! How dare you speak to me this way? Have you no regard for me or your own father?" Allegra scowled.

Tarquin raised his head at the mention of his father, "If it weren't for my dad, do you you'd even be allowed to speak in my presence?"

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"You... Listen to this, Dad. This is your darling grandson. Does he give a hoot about the Bradford family? He..."

"Enough! Zip it! This is a hospital, not some fish market. We're supposed to keep the peace here. As the madam of Bradfords, you are yelling all the time and stooping low instead of acting high and mighty. That's so inappropriate." Gideon snapped back, silencing her.

"I..." Allegra was so taken aback by the retort that she started to cry.

Verity quickly handed over a tissue to Allegra, "Allegra, please, calm down. Tarquin's already on edge with Elijah being sick, and you're fanning the flames bringing up his late

dad."

"And what of it? My brother would never have dared to speak to me like that!"

"Let's just... drop it, okay?" Verity attempted to soothe the tension before turning to Tarquin. "Look, Tarquin, your aunt here is genuinely worried about Elijah."

Tarquin scoffed inwardly and lit a cigarette.

Verity continued, "Don't fret. Elijah's the last of the Bradfords. He's got his guardian angels and the old family luck. He'll pull through."

"How's he doing, really?" Gideon inquired.

Tarquin flicked ash from his cigarette, "Same as always."

"All these specialists and no improvement?"

Annoyed, Tarquin didn't respond. Then Verity remarked, "It's a malady of the heart, and

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that requires a therapy that regular doctors can't apply.

If regular doctors can't do the job, then what about the extraordinary ones? We can't just let this drag on indefinitely. Allegra grumbled. "We can't keep going like this. Elijah is the sole male heir of our generation. He's supposed to inherit the full weight of the Bradford legacy. But in this state, how can he

take over the Bradford Group? Can we really hand over the reins to someone so frail? And besides, if he can't even...

She was cut off by a sharp look from Gideon. Allegra's lips moved, but no more words dared escape.

Tarquin glared at her and extinguished his cigarette with force. Tired of the theatrics, he decided to get straight to the point, "What do you all want? Spit it out. Don't waste my time or yours.

He knew they weren't here out of concern for Elijah.

After a brief silence, Gideon said, "We've heard there's been a few business deals snatched right from under the Bradford name, which cost us a fortune. What's the deal?"

"Cuts and thrusts of business," Tarquin replied coolly.

Gideon narrowed his eyes, “You’ve been on top of the game for years. How did someone manage to outplay you all of a sudden?”

“I’m human, not infallible. Losses are part of the game.”

“Who’s behind it? Someone from Jindale City?” Gideon was suspicious.

Tarquin saw through his scheme, so he met his gaze with an inscrutable look, “Granddad, you are getting on in years. You needn’t worry about business affairs. I’ve got it under control.”

Gideon’s brow furrowed in concern, while Allegra’s temper flared anew.

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Chapter 54

arquin, you may run Bradford Group now, but don’t you forget that it was your andfather who built this company from the ground up. He has every right to meddle in the business affairs! Allegra snapped.

Seems like you’ve forgotten that Bradford Group was practically a goner before I stepped In and brought it back to life.” Tarquin bit back.

“Well... no matter what you say, your grandfather is the founder of Bradford Group.”

“And what’s your point?”

“My point? The founder always has more say, naturally. If your grandfather were no longer with us, sure, you’d inherit the reins of Bradford Group. But he’s still here, so...”

“So you want me to step down? Hand over Bradford Group on a silver platter? Kick me out and carve up the company among yourselves?”

Allegra choked on her words.

Tarquin furrowed his brow, his face a mask of cold fury, “You’re getting ahead of yourself.” “... I...” Allegra tried to retort, but meeting his icy gaze, she shrank back in silence.

Ferociousness passed through Gideon’s eyes before he spoke in a softened tone, “Don’t mind your aunt’s blabbering. I’m indeed getting on in years; I can’t be bothered with the stress and I don’t want to. You’re the sole grandson of the Bradford family, it’s only right that you manage the company. But with the company suddenly losing so much money, you owe us all an explanation. The explanation is not just for the Bradford family, but also for our shareholders. You need to make it clear.”

Tarquin replied indifferently, “I’ve already explained.”

“And what was your explanation?”

“Business competition.” He added.

Everyone fell silent.

After leaving the hospital, Allegra started to complain, “Dad, I told you not to hand over Bradford Group to him, but you wouldn’t listen. Look at the state of things now. He’s treating Bradford Group like his personal piggy bank, keeping us out of it entirely, even disregarding you!”

Yet Verity countered, “Allegra, don’t speak ill of dad. There was a reason why he gave Bradford Group to Tarquin and you know it. If it weren’t for him, we’d have handed it to the other family sure.”

“What difference does it make? It’s practically the same as if we had handed it out already!

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The biggest mistake was bringing him back from abroad! His mother was no good and her son was the same. He might be the only male descendant of the Bradford family, but my son Lionel is our family member too. Lionel has Bradford blood in him just the same! He has a right to inherit!”

“Enough!” Gideon roared, silencing the room.

Allegra shuddered and fell silent while Verity quickly interjected, “Dad, please, calm down. Allegra didn’t mean it. We know how much you value the family lineage. Our kids and our brother’s kid are not the same.”

Allegra couldn’t help but murmur again, “If we’re talking lineage, Elijah is the only heir in his generation. But with the way he is, can he really take over Bradford Group? Is he even going to live to eighteen if

the worst thing happens? If he passes away, what then?

The Bradford family has always had a single heir in each generation. Tarquin is unlikely to have any more sons. If you don’t change your mindset, Dad, the Bradford legacy will be ruined! Lineage is important, but we must also consider the reality...”

Gideon cut her off with a dark look, “Instead of whining here, why don’t you figure out how to raise your own son properly!? He hasn’t even graduated college and he’s already knocked up some girl. Think about how to handle that!”

“But... but that’s not Lionel’s fault. That temptress seduced him. She saw Lionel as a rich kid and wanted to climb the social ladder just like Tarquin’s shameless mother!”

“She managed to trap Lionel, didn’t she? If that’s not stupidity, what is? And you have the nerve to speak up!” Gideon bit back.

Allegra was rendered speechless by the rebuke.

Gideon, fuming with anger, stormed off to his car and drove away.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 55[637 words]

Chapter 55

Verity consoled her eldest sister, “Don’t beat yourself up over this. I’m on Lionel’s side here. We know how girls gang up on him. Lionel’s in the prime of his youth, and how could he resist temptation?”

Allegra nodded, “Exactly. But you heard how Dad made it sound like it was all Lionel’s fault.”

“That’s just dad blowing off steam. Don’t take it to heart. Right now, we need to figure out how to deal with that gold digger.”

“Yeah. That gold digger thinks she can waltz into the Bradford family’s grand estate? In her dreams! I’ll make sure she regrets it.” Allegra stormed off, her indignation fueling her stride as she hopped into her car and drove away.

Verity’s eyes narrowed with calculation as she watched her sister’s departure. Once inside her car, she asked her driver, “Did you get the scoop?”

The driver replied eagerly, “All clear, ma’am. Elijah’s sickness is indeed serious; he almost jumped out of a window.”

“Jumped out of a window?”

“Yes, the doctors say that if you leave children with psychological issues untreated, they

often end up taking their own lives.”

A flicker of excitement passed through Verity’s eyes.

The driver continued, “Ma’am, it seems Elijah might not have many days left. And with the Bradford family’s tradition of male heirs, even if Tarquin remarries, he may not have another son. Not to mention

that he won’t remarry. Once Elijah passes away, the Bradford Group’s heir will have to be chosen from among the left ones. But Lionel, from Allegra’s place, is nothing but a smug playboy. Saffron’s boy is under ten and has been living abroad. In that case, our little master becomes the most promising candidate. Perhaps we should bring him back home?”

Verity was cunning indeed and had been coveting the Bradford Group’s first chair for a long time. On the surface, Verity appeared to be uninterested in competing

for power with just a daughter living with her, always pleasant to everyone. But in reality, she was the most crafty of all. She had been nurturing her son so carefully away from the public eye, unbeknownst to even Gideon and Tarquin, preparing for a surprise power grab. She had long coveted the CEO position at the Bradford Group, never once abandoning her

ambition.

“Now is not yet the time,” Verity mused. “We wait. We make our move when Elijah’s condition is critical. Did they say how long he has?”

“It’s uncertain. He’s got psychological issues, so even the doctors can’t say for sure. But

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they believe it will only worsen. This suicide attempt is just the beginning: there could be more to come.”

Verity enered, “I refuse to believe Tarquin can always swoop in to save him in time! Once he’s gone, our chance will come!”

“Indeed, our time of fortune is near.”

“Keep an eye on my son and make sure he’s hitting the books hard, especially in economics and management. He’s destined for great things!” She added.

“Understood!”

Meanwhile, Gideon wasn’t just wandering around either.

As soon as he got into his car, he ordered his confidant, “Find the person who’s stealing Tarquin’s business. Anyone who can snatch billions from his grip and breach his security system is no ordinary foe. If we can get to him, we might just be able to tie Tarquin’s hands!”

Like a king of ancient times, Gideon wouldn’t abdicate until his dying breath. Had the Bradford Group not been on the brink of bankruptcy, he would have never handed it over to Tarquin. His pursuit of power was nearly obsessive.

But Tarquin had been too formidable and kept him undepressed for all these years.

It was only upon hearing that someone had cracked Tarquin's security system and stolen billions that Gideon saw a glimmer of hope for a comeback.

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Chapter 56

He knew it deep down that this person was his salvation. He had to find this enigmatic savior and bring them on board to take down Tarquin.

His confidant said, "Our guys have been on it, but so far, nothing's come up. It seems even Tarquin hasn't sniffed out any leads. Whoever it is, they're a pro."

Gideon's face was a mask of frustration as he exhaled sharply, "Of course they're a pro. You think someone would dare to square off with Tarquin if they weren't?"

Gideon narrowed his eyes in thought. "Get on the dark web and reach out to 'Baby ET'S Support One'. Whatever price they name, we meet it—as long as they can dig up who this person is.

His confidant looked worried, "But 'Baby ET's Support One' isn't easy to pin down. He's not always online and is so elusive. Plus, he doesn't take jobs based on money—he goes by what tickles his fancy."

"Baby ET's Support One' was the current superstar of the hacking world.

Two years ago, he burst onto the scene, breaching a foreign military's secure database in under a minute and made a name overnight.

Back then, a horde of hackers tried to uncover his identity, but not a single clue surfaced. Instead, they ended up having their own secrets exposed by the very person they were

after.

Since then, no one has dared to challenge ‘Baby ET’s Support One’, and he has been sitting pretty at the top of the hacker hierarchy. The very definition of an instant legend.

Many have tried to enlist his services, but with his elusive nature and fickle job selection, striking a deal with him meant you had hit the jackpot.

Gideon continued, “His user name is called ‘Baby ET’s Support One’, which means he cares about ‘Baby ET. Maybe we could use this ‘Baby ET’ to get to this man?”

The confidant replied, “The problem is, we also don’t have a clue who this ‘Baby ET’ is either. The whole hacker community is buzzing with theories. Some say ‘Baby ET’ is his girlfriend, but there’s no proof,”

Gideon furrowed his brow, “There’s got to be a time when he comes out for a job. If he is willing to take our offer, let him set the terms! If he gets involved, he’ll definitely be able to unearth the identity we need. So, think of something, and think fast!”

“Understood! And, we’ve come across a woman named Elysia who’s been mingling with the young master quite a bit. She’s also sort of a child psychologist. The young master might consider having her treat Elijah since she managed to stabilize the condition of the Denton family’s little boy.”

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At the mention of Elysia, Gideon’s gaze sharpened, “Did you dig up her details?”

We did. Here they are. She’s quite an ordinary woman. A mother of three boys, widowed. She’s been raising her sons by herself in a small mountain town and only recently arrived In Jindale City.”

Gideon scanned the information briefly, “Set up a meeting with her.”

Will do.

Meanwhile, in the hospital, Lowell spoke to Tarquin, “Gideon and the rest have left. They’ve been quietly busy searching for the person who cracked our security system. Looks like they’re looking for a

partner.”

Tarquin scoffed, his eyes brimming with disdain. He had the blood of the Bradford family coursing through his veins, but he and the Bradfords shared a deep-seated enmity. If not for a few things yet to be resolved, he would have completely turned his back on the Bradfords long ago!

“Tarquin.” Benjamin Lawson approached with a manila envelope in hand.

One glance and Tarquin knew what it was, “The results are in?”

Yeah.”

“And? How’d it turn out?”

“See for yourself.”

Benjamin handed over the envelope, letting Tarquin discover the contents.

With the envelope in hand, Tarquin’s expression was tinged with gravity.

After a moment’s hesitation, he opened it and pulled out the DNA test results... 56

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Chapter 57

There was no blood relation shown in this report.

Tarquin’s brow furrowed as he examined the DNA test results. He felt an odd mix of emotions though he had somewhat anticipated this outcome. If Elysia were truly Elijah’s biological mother, there was no reason for her to hide the truth. After all, acknowledging their relationship would be in her best financial interest, no matter how one looked at it.

Still, Tarquin asked further, “Did you do this yourself?”

“Yeah, I didn’t even let my assistant touch it.”

Tarquin's frown deepened but he said nothing more. He stuffed the report into a envelope, handed it to Lowell, and turned to head back to Elijah's hospital room.

Benjamin was a tad confused, "Whose DNA results are those?"

Lowell replied, "I'm guessing it's between Ms. Thorne and Elijah."

Benjamin's eyes widened in shock, "Tarquin suspects Ms. Thorne is Elijah's mom? Why on earth would he think that? Elijah doesn't even resemble her."

"It might be because of that night at the bar when Ms. Thorne kissed him. It probably triggered some memories."

Benjamin was even more stunned, "Ms. Thorne kissed him?!"

Lowell nodded significantly, "And he didn't push her away."

"Holy smokes! Is Tarquin gonna leave his life as a bachelor?"

"Hmm, I'd say there's a chance. Better start treating Ms. Thorne nicely; she might just be the one to save Tarquin and become the lady of the house." Lowell answered.

As soon as Lowell finished speaking, his phone rang. It was a call from one of the bodyguards, "Boss, we've spotted Ms. Thorne. She's with Gideon."

Lowell was taken aback, "With who?"

"Gideon."

Lowell was helpless. He had just finished suggesting that she could be part of the family, and now she was spotted cozying up with their enemy.

"Are you sure it's her? No mistake?" he asked.

"Positive. Sent you the photos. Check them out."

After hanging up, Lowell hurriedly opened the photos. Sure enough, it was Elysia with Gideon. It looked like they were deep in conversation over coffee.

Benjamin was astonished, “Ms. Thome knows Gideon?”

Lowell frowned, “I need to talk to Tarquin about this.”

He took his phone to the hospital room where Elijah was still resting. Lowell handed the phone to Tarquin and whispered, “Ms. Thorne is having coffee with Gideon.”

Tarquin’s gaze darkened as he looked at the photo, a menacing aura emanating from him.

Meanwhile, Elysia was blissfully unaware that she had been caught in a misunderstanding and was currently the subject of Tarquin’s suspicion.

She was looking at the silver-haired man before her, utterly baffled.

She had been chatting with Blossom when an unexpected call came through, claiming there was important business to discuss with her.

Upon arriving, she was greeted by Gideon. But she didn’t recognize him, “May I ask who you are?”

Gideon surveyed her and countered, “Are you a child psychologist?”

“No, I’ve read some books on the subject, but I’m not certified. I’m not a professional.”

“Tarquin wants you to treat Elijah?”

The sudden mention of Elijah brought a certain someone to Elysia’s mind. She eyed Gideon with suspicion, “No, today’s hospital visit was just a coincidence. I wasn’t much help, really.”

“Oh, so you’ve already treated Elijah?”

“Not exactly. Who are you, and why are you looking for me?”

Instead of answering, Gideon maintained a calm demeanor, “I’ve heard you’re quite short on cash. I’m willing to make a deal with you. Whatever Tarquin is paying you, I’ll double it.” Elysia was lost, “What kind of deal? What money? He hasn’t paid me anything.”

In fact, she was the one in debt to him—a whopping fifty million!

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Chapter 58

“He’s not giving you now but he’ll give it later. And you will know the deals when he gets you to talk about the terms and let you see Elijah.” Gideon said.

Elysia was left utterly baffled. And then her confusion only deepened. For Gideon had suddenly produced a wad of cash and placed it before her.

“Consider this a little token for our first meeting.” He said.

Elysia gaped, “What on earth are you getting at? I have no idea what you’re up to.”

Gideon continued as though he hadn’t heard her, “Let’s keep our little encounter between us for now. I’ll be in touch.”

With that, he stood up and left.

Elysia hurried after him, only to be stopped by his bodyguard. Frantic, she pleaded, “I don’t know him, and I don’t understand anything he said. I can’t take this money! Please, let me

return it to him.”

But the bodyguard remained unmoved, blocking the doorway.

Only when Gideon’s car had pulled away did the bodyguard step aside, then climbed into another car and followed suit.

Elysia was flummoxed. For now, all she could do was return to the café to count the cash. A whole hundred grand!

Her heart was about to thump out of her chest.

This wasn’t right; why was she given so much money for nothing?

“Elysia.” Blossom ram in. Concerned about the stranger who’d come to see Elysia, she’d followed along and had been waiting outside. Upon seeing that the visitor had left, she

came in.

“What did that old man want with you?” she asked.

Elysia shook her head, “I don’t know.”

“Huh? He didn’t say anything?”

Elysia pushed the money toward Blossom, “Look, this is what he gave me.”

Blossom’s eyes widened in shock, “All this cash... Why did he give it to you? You’re not some long-lost granddaughter of his, are you?”

Everyone knew Elysia was a foster daughter in the Thorne family.

Elysia immediately shook her head, “I told you, since I’ve been back, I met a man who

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looks so much like Eliot and Ivan. For a moment, I thought he might be Eliot’s real dad, but I wasn’t sure. A lot has happened since. The old man today, he came because of him.

Hom? Coult he be that guy’s grandfather who was thinking you’ve come back to hold the man accountable and trying to pay you off?”

Not really: he didn’t reveal his identity. He said that guy would pay me, so he’d give me double

What does that mean?”

“I have no clue. He talked about a deal but didn’t specify what kind. And think about it, Evan scratched that guy’s car. I owe him fifty million. He’s more likely to demand money from me, not give me any, right? Even if it’s to treat his son, it would be deducted from my debt, not paid out, right?”

Blossom was just as puzzled, “Yeah, what’s the deal?!”

Looking at the hundred grand, Elysia speculated, “There must be some secret between these two men.”

“So what will you do now? What about the money?”

“I can’t take ill-gotten gains, so I surely can’t keep it. I have to return it because I don’t want to be backfired later on. I get the feeling the whole family are all pretty crafty. If they all play their tricks in sleeves, they’ve probably turned the whole place upside-down. Best I stay well clear of them.”

She never intended to get close to that man, worried he might be Elliot and Evan’s real father and come to claim his children.

And with a family as cunning as that...

Elysia hasn’t met all of them. And if she has, she’d know that they’d even turn the whole world upside- down.

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Chapter 59

But he already left what now?”

End that man, he’s got to know the old man, Elysia said with determination.

But how are you going to explain? That old man clearly meant that man knew nothing about his appointment with you today.”

I can’t just take this money without a good reason. Whatever is going on between them, they can sort it out. I don’t want to be dragged into their mess.”

Blossom nodded earnestly, “Makes sense. Let’s go, I’ll come with you.”

“No, you stay. I need to stop by the hospital to return the money, and then I have to hit the county clerk’s office for a divorce. I’ll catch up with you once I’m done.”

“Alright, then. Just give me the kids address. I’ll go check on the little rascals.”

Mentioning the kids brought a smile to Elysia’s face.

She passed the address to Blossom. They left the coffee shop together, heading toward the hospital

On the way, Blossom, bubbling with excitement, asked her, “Quick, tell me what each of the little rascals likes. I’ve got to make a killer first impression, so they’ll be thrilled to have

me as their godmother.”

The children hadn’t even spoken yet, and here she was, appointing herself godmother.

Bysia chuckled and said, “They all love a pretty face, you won’t need to bring anything to

win them over.”

That won’t do! Godmothering is a serious business. I’ve got to show my sincerity, make a heartfelt gesture.”

Elysia laughed and filled her in, Elliot’s into books, Evan loves his toys, and Emmett likes all things trendy, like colognes or creative clothing.”

Blossom was surprised. ‘Emmett’s into cologne already?’

“Yeah, don’t underestimate Emmett. You’re in for a surprise when you meet him.”

Blossom’s eyes twinkled with anticipation.

They arrived at the hospital entrance, and Elysia got out of the car.

“If anything comes up, give me a ring. I’m on call for you,” Blossom said.

“Got it. Now off you go, and drive safe.”

“Will do, bye!”

2008 1

“But he already left; what now?”

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“But how are you going to explain? That old man clearly meant that man knew nothing about his appointment with you today.”

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20.08

Watching Blossom drive away, Elysia felt a warm glow inside,

Even after all these years, their friendship hadn’t changed a bit.

Blossom was still the same lovable goofball, both endearing and heartwarming.

Having someone to share your troubles with is so important. For years, Elysia had kept things bottled up inside. After all, the kids were too young to be burdened with her worries, and she didn’t want to share her unhappiness with them. Her heart-to-heart with Blossom had left her feeling utterly relaxed as if she had shaken off all the weight from her shoulders.

The only regret was that her marriage to Tarquin was a secret; Blossom didn’t know her husband was Tarquin. Otherwise, she could have been even more open.

Once Blossom’s car was out of sight, Elysia, with her backpack slung over her shoulder, walked into the hospital.

Elijah was still resting, and Tarquin gave her a cold glance.

Elysia’s heart skipped a beat; his look was colder than when they’d first met. She was puzzled, wondering what she’d done to upset him now.

And why was he so fickle?

At first, he disliked her, which she got – Evan had wrecked his luxury car.

Then, out of the blue, he turned all sweet on her yesterday.

But after just one day of tenderness, he was back to being cold as ice, even more so than before.

Why was that?

Elysia was clueless about the paternity test and the drama between Tarquin and the Bradfords. She just thought this man was incomprehensible, flipping moods faster than flipping pages in a book.

Not dwelling on his erratic emotions, she cleared her throat to speak.

Hitched & Hitched Again: A Comedy of Marital Mayhem (Elysia and Tarquin) - Chapter 60[893 words]

Chapter 60

Has Lijah not woken up yet?" Elysia asked, but Tarquin remained silent, his lack of response serving as affirmation.

Elyala pressed on, "Did Dr. Benjamin examine him?"

Tarquin, clearly irritated, snapped back, "What the heck do you want?!"

Elysin pursed her lips and got straight to the point, "You got a grandpa? Or some old family member? Someone who doesn't quite look like you but has a resemblance around the eyes. A tall, lean guy, looks to be in his late seventies or eighties?"

Tarquin knew she was talking about Gideon. His brow furrowed as he stared at her.

Elysia continued, "He came to see me today, but I didn't recognize him, so I thought I'd ask

you."

A flicker of something passed through Tarquin's eyes as he asked, "Why come to me about it?"

"Because he mentioned you and Elijah, and you guys kind of look like you could be related."

Tarquin didn't expect her to bring up her meeting with Gideon so directly. He gave her a long, meaningful look before asking, "You don't know him?"

"I've never met the guy."

Tarquin just stared at her, clearly skeptical

Elysia rolled her eyes. "Look, if I knew him, why would I hide it from you?"

"He's my grandpa."

"Oh? Got any proof?"

Tarquin looked at her, puzzled.

Elysia hurried to explain, "He gave me some cash, and I'd like you to return it to him on my behalf. So, I need some kind of proof that you're actually related."

Gideon had given her money?

Tarquin looked at Elysia for a few seconds, then averted his gaze. "No proof."

"Just show me a family photo of you two."

"Don't have one."

"What? No family photos? Not even one?"

"Nope."

20.08

Tarquin shot Elysia a cold glare as if to say, take it or leave it

Elysia pouted, dissatisfied. She was worried that if Gideon wasn't really his granddad Tarquin might take the money and never return it. But she couldn't keep the cash either

Just then, Benjamin walked in, and Elysia had an idea.

"Dr. Benjamin, perfect timing! Can you help me make a video? She set up her phone and handed it to Benjamin to record.

She pulled out the ten grand and handed it to Tarquin. This is what your granddad gave me today. I'm giving it back to you now, this video is my proof. I'm not taking a dime from your family, so don't come after me

After stuffing the cash into Tarquin's hand, she ran to check the video, saved it securely and pocketed her phone.

"Dr. Benjamin, I know you're a good guy. Please be my witness that I've returned this money."

Benjamin was still trying to wrap his head around Elysia's swift maneuver when Tarquin asked coldly, "Why did he give you money?"

Elysia couldn't quite explain. "It was weird. He said something about making a deal, that whatever you pay me, he'd double it... I don't really get it. You should go ask him yourself. Then she glanced at Elijah, lying on the hospital bed, and walked over.

"What do you think you're doing? Tarquin barked as he saw her reach out

Elysia, startled by his fierce tone, stammered, 'I... I was just going to check his pulse."

Tarquin glowered at her, his face twisted with suspicion.

Elysia cursed under her breath, Why so hostile? If I didn't care about the kid, I wouldn't bother trying to help!"

Thinking to herself, 'No good deed goes unpunished, she still went ahead and carefully took Elijah's pulse.

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