

Hitched 561

Chapter 561

After a moment, Elysia steadied herself, rising from Tarquin's embrace. Drying her tears, she crouched down to wipe away the tears of the three little

ones.

"Don't cry now, okay? Elijah is going to be just fine. He'll be up and about in no time."

Emmett, sniffing and with a voice as tender as a glass of warm milk, asked, "If Elijah is okay, why didn't he come out with Mommy?"

Elysia soothed him gently, "Elijah is still resting inside. He hasn't woken up yet."

Evan immediately asked, "Can we go see him then?"

"Of course, we can."

Getting up, Elysia said to Tarquin, "I'm going to the restroom. You guys go in and see Elijah, okay? Dr. Benjamin is in there with him."

"Alright." Tarquin quickly led the three little ones into the ICU.

Elijah lay quietly on the hospital bed, surrounded by a maze of tubes, his complexion pale. Yet, the monitors on the bedside table showed his vitals were stable.

With eyes red from crying, Emmett asked Elliot, "Brother, does it hurt where Elijah is?"

Elliot's heart squeezed at the question. Elijah had indeed been pulled back from the brink, and he must be in pain. Mommy and the doctors had worked tirelessly to save him. He had been poisoned and surely felt as if he was burning from the inside. Trying to ease Emmett's worry, he comforted, "Don't worry, Elijah is sleeping now. He doesn't feel the pain."

"Yeah, I hope Elijah gets well soon."

Tarquin stood behind them, his brows furrowed as he looked at his son's frail form on the bed. In this moment, his worry was replaced by a deep sense of tenderness and rage. Whoever dared to harm his Elijah, good! The pain and suffering Elijah endured today, he would repay it tenfold! "Have you identified the poison yet?"

Dr. Benjamin shook his head, "Still checking. It might take a few more hours to get the results. Have you found the culprit? Who poisoned him?" "Not yet."

Dr. Benjamin frowned, "This happened at the Bradfords', it must be related to those people! They really are heartless. No matter what, Elijah is of Bradford blood, and he's only a child at five! To think they didn't like Elijah is one thing, but to go as far as poisoning him... We're lucky Ms. Thorne was here, or else we would've lost Elijah!"

Tarquin's face was a mask of cold anger, and his aura dark as the stormiest night, his eyes flashing with menace. The Bradfords weren't just heartless; they were utterly devoid of compassion! If they had even an ounce of it, his parents wouldn't have met their fate, and his return to the Bradfords wouldn't have been a nightmare!

"I'll head back to the estate for a bit. Keep an eye on Elijah for me here. And, Elysia and the kids are exhausted; find a clean room for them to rest." Dr. Benjamin nodded, "I'll handle it. You go do what you need to."

Tarquin then crouched to tell Elliot, "I need to step out for a while to take care of something. Make sure you help your mom and brothers get some rest."

Elliot, understanding the gravity, nodded, "You go ahead. Call me if you need anything."

"Alright." Tarquin affectionately ruffled Elliot's hair before standing to leave. As he made his way towards the restroom to inform Elysia of his departure, he hadn't gotten far when he saw her collapsed in the hallway!

Tarquin's heart tightened, and he rushed over, "Elysia!"

Hearing the commotion, the three little ones also hurried out, "Mommy!"

Dr. Benjamin quickly examined Elysia, "Don't worry too much, she just fainted."

Tarquin frowned, "She was fine just a moment ago, how could she suddenly faint?"

Dr. Benjamin explained, "The stress from Elijah's emergency took its toll, plus she was in the ICU fighting for Elijah for hours. It's more than most could bear, draining both emotionally and physically. But don't panic, a few IV nutrition bags and a good night's rest should do the trick. Let's get her to a room."

Chapter 562

Elysia looked noticeably unwell, her complexion pale and her body weak.

Tarquin's face was etched with concern and tenderness as he gently scooped Elysia up, lifting her in his arms to carry her to the infirmary. He carefully settled her on the hospital bed, then watched as Benjamin started an IV drip for her.

Once Benjamin was done, he said, "You go handle your stuff, I've got this covered."

Tarquin remained silent, his gaze fixed on Elysia for a long moment before he finally spoke, "I'm not going after all."

"Huh?" Benjamin was taken aback, "Why the sudden change of heart?"

Elliot was also surprised, looking at him.

After all, Tarquin was supposed to investigate the culprit, a matter of great importance!

Tarquin offered a half-hearted explanation, "Lowell and Axel are on it. They don't need me there."

Benjamin glanced at Elysia, realizing Tarquin's reluctance stemmed from his concern for her.

"Alright then, I'll leave this in your hands. I'm heading to the lab to check on the progress with the poison analysis. I'll come find you when I have something."

"Okay."

"

After Benjamin left, Tarquin turned to the kids with a serious tone, "I appreciate how worried you've been for Elijah. Thank you. Elijah is lucky to have friends like you. Once Elijah is feeling better, I'll treat you guys to dinner."

Evan mumbled under his breath, "We were worried about Elijah, not doing it for you."

"Either way, I know you're all good kids, full of loyalty and heart. Elysia raised you right."

Evan beamed with pride, "My mom is the best, the best in the whole world!"

Tarquin turned to look at Elysia, appearing to be asleep, and said from the bottom of his heart, "She really is."

She was kind, optimistic, strong, and independent, with a heart full of love and solid morals. Despite being non-confrontational, she wasn't afraid to stand up for her children, going head-to-head with the formidable Nola, and even taking on the Bradford family women for Elijah.

After facing so many setbacks and raising her children on her own, she never harbored any resentment. She still loved life, was hopeful for the future, and radiated positive energy.

Her children were well-raised, too-clear about right and wrong, full of optimism, and brimming with life.

She was a great mother! And a wonderful woman! Ordinary at a glance, but truly one of a kind!

Tarquin shifted his gaze back from the window to the kids, "It's almost dawn. You guys should get some rest in the next room. I'll take care of her." The kids glanced at him, then at Elysia, clearly worried.

Tarquin's tone was gentle, "The doctor said she's just exhausted. A good sleep will do her wonders. Don't worry about her. And don't worry about me taking advantage of her while she's out. She saved Elijah, which means she saved me. She's my savior, and I would never betray her trust."

Elliot looked at him with mixed emotions, "What about you? Don't you need to rest?"

He had been through a lot as well. Wasn't he tired?

"I'm not tired. You kids go get some sleep, alright?"

After a moment of hesitation, Elliot didn't say anything more and ushered his brothers to rest.

Suddenly, Tarquin asked, "Do you guys need help getting to sleep? If so, I can help."

The kids blinked at him, not quite understanding.

Tarquin explained, "Do you need a bedtime story or something? If you do, just let me know."

The kids: "..."

Tarquin added, "Elijah doesn't see your mom as a stranger, and you don't have to be formal with me either. If there's anything I can help with, just say the word."

Elysia truly loved Elijah, and he would genuinely reciprocate that love for her children. He might not have Elysia's attention to detail or her knack for caregiving, but he was willing to try.

Chapter 563

Elliot, Evan, and Emmett stared at him for a long while before Elliot said, "No worries, we can sleep on our own. Just make sure mom is taken care of, okay?"

Once inside their room, Elliot whispered to Evan, "Let's give him an extra point. He's sacrificing something so important to stay and look after mom. I'm really touched."

Evan nodded immediately, "Yeah!"

Before bed, Elliot asked Emmett to touch up his and Evan's makeup. Thankfully, Emmett was a whiz with the makeup kit. Otherwise, after all the tears shed today, their makeup would've been ruined, and Tarquin and the Bradford family might have noticed!

Outside, Tarquin leaned against the window, calling Lowell. His gaze lingered on Elysia. He told Lowell he'd stay put for now, inquired about the investigation's progress, and arranged some tasks.

After hanging up, he tiptoed into the boys' room to check on the trio. Seeing them all asleep, he carefully tucked them in, turned off the light, and left. The hospital room was quiet. He sat by Elysia's bed, silently keeping vigil. Today had been a brush with death for Elijah, and for him too. If Elijah had died, it would've been as if he died too. So, in saving Elijah today, Elysia had also saved him.

He was grateful, moved, and pained. She was exhausted because of him and his son. Tarquin looked at her tenderly, unconsciously lifting his hand to tuck a strand of hair behind her ear. His fingers gently traced her cheek, and his heart skipped a beat. It was like an electric shock. He swiftly withdrew his hand but soon found himself reaching out again.

Elysia's skin was soft and smooth, a sensation he found himself lingering over. He gently, like a thief in the night, caressed her cheek, her eyebrows, her nose, and couldn't help but touch her lips...

The moment his fingertip brushed her lips, a torrent of dreamy images flooded his mind-images of them entwined passionately. In the dream, they were undressed, he pinned her hands above her head and kissed her fervently. Her eyes were closed, her cheeks flushed. Beneath him, she trembled and panted, responding to him with a shy yet passionate eagerness. They kissed, tumbled across the bed, freely indulging in the most primal acts of passion...

A sob snapped Tarquin back to reality. To his horror, his lips were pressed against Elysia's! Panic-stricken, Tarquin pulled away. He breathed heavily, shocked and uneasy at having stolen a kiss.

The sobbing sounded again, coming from the boys' room. Tarquin steadied his heart and, putting the incident aside for a moment, went to check on the situation.

In the dimly lit room, Emmett sat up in bed, crying, while Elliot and Evan, awakened by the noise, tried to comfort him. Tarquin flipped on the bedside lamp, "What's the matter?"

Elliot explained, "Emmett had a nightmare."

Through tears, Emmett sobbed, "I dreamt of a monster so big, with three heads and eight arms! Its mouth was bigger than a car tire, and its teeth were longer than me! It was chasing mom and Elijah, trying to eat them, sob sob... I tried to save them, but I couldn't beat it. It slapped me away, sob sob... I saw it catching up to mom and Elijah, about to eat them, sob sob..."

Evan reassured him, "Don't worry, I'll protect mom and Elijah from any monster, no matter how scary. I'll knock them flat!"

Elliot, frowning, said to Tarquin, "Emmett is as timid as mom. It must've been the scare from Elijah's ordeal that triggered his nightmare."

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Tarquin gently pulled a tissue from the box, dabbing at Emmett's runny nose and tear-streaked cheeks before scooping him up into his arms. "You and Evan keep on sleeping, I'll take care of him."

With the bedside lamp switched off and the inner door carefully closed behind him, Tarquin cradled Emmett and moved towards the hospital bed in the dimly lit room, his voice soft and soothing.

"Look, your mommy wasn't gobbled up by monsters. She's just sleeping soundly, and so is Elijah. They're both okay, no need to be scared."

Rubbing his eyes, Emmett peered at Elysia lying in the bed. Reaching out, he gently touched Elysia, whispering, "Mommy's warm."

Tarquin couldn't help but chuckle. Of course, she was warm; she was very much alive.

"Alright, try to get some more sleep. By the time you wake up, she'll probably be awake too. Don't worry, I'll protect her, Elijah, and all of you. If any monsters come, I'll chase them away."

"Okay," Emmett murmured in a sleepy voice, nodding and snuggling against Tarquin's shoulder, drifting back to sleep.

Standing up with Emmett in his arms, Tarquin gently patted his back and rocked him, lulling him back to sleep.

Elliot and Evan peeked through the crack of the door, relieved to see Emmett had stopped crying. They watched Tarquin, seeing him in a new light, almost like a nurturing father, and something in their gaze shifted.

Back in bed, Evan pondered for a moment before speaking up, "Bro, I've decided to give him an extra point! For Emmett's sake!"

"Yeah! Agreed!" Elliot responded.

The brothers settled back down to sleep, blissfully unaware of Tarquin's secret kiss. Had they known, they might have reconsidered those extra points.

Outside, Tarquin, while soothing Emmett, couldn't help but glance at Elysia. His initial desire had cooled, but the memory of his stolen kiss lingered. He wasn't naive; despite never being in love before, he recognized his feelings for Elysia were real and beyond his control. The stolen kiss was proof of his unbidden affection.

He couldn't pinpoint when his feelings had started. It was after a close encounter, fueled by alcohol, that he realized his feelings for her were unlike those for any other woman. Dreams of intimacy only confirmed his attraction.

From that day, he deliberately distanced himself, conflicted over his emotions because of Elijah's mother.

Perhaps Elysia was right. His search for Elijah's mother was about atonement, not love. Yet, he had promised to take responsibility.

He doubted whether she would forgive him or consider a future with him. Nonetheless, he hoped to remain faithful until he found her.

If she chose to share her life with him, he vowed to dedicate his love to her. If not, he would find another way to make amends.

Despite his resistance, Tarquin's feelings for Elysia had deepened, proving emotions can't be controlled.

He struggled with his commitment to Elijah's mother and his growing love for Elysia. If only Elysia were Elijah's mother, how perfect that would be! But alas, she was not.

Tarquin frowned as he watched Elysia, with Emmett fast asleep on his shoulder, yet he didn't put the little guy down. He was gently patting Emmett's back, like a caring father soothing his son to sleep. However, his gaze remained fixed on Elysia, weighed down with worry.

It wasn't until a large bag of IV fluid was almost empty, signaling it was time to change Elysia's drip, that he thought about putting the child down. He carried Emmett to the next room.

Elliot and Evan were still asleep, the two brothers, born of the same mother, sleeping in stark contrast to each other. Elliot lay on his back, his hands neatly placed at his sides, embodying the posture of a disciplined sleeper, his breathing even. Evan had wriggled to the foot of the bed, lying on the edge like a little frog, his small face squished out of shape, arms and legs dangling off the bed's edge, at risk of falling off any second. Tarquin took an extra moment to look at Evan, the little rascal, even in his sleep, couldn't stay still. He had come to know the personalities of these three children quite well. Elliot was the epitome of a child wise beyond his years, smart, judicious, a steady player. Evan was the quintessential energetic kid, his eyes lighting up at the mention of a brawl, lively and impulsive. Emmett was soft and a bit of a crybaby, not the brightest bulb in the box, much like Elysia, more tears than cunning, a concern for his intellectual prowess.

He carefully placed Emmett beside Elliot, then picked Evan up. After tucking them in and making sure the blankets were snug, he turned to leave. Stepping out of the room, he saw Elysia sitting up in bed. Tarquin paused, then hurried over to support her, "Why are you sitting up? Don't move around, you still have a needle in your arm."

Seeing that she had already removed the IV needle, he was even more surprised, "Why did you take it out?"

Elysia, just waking up and still a bit weak, explained, "I wanted to go check on Elijah."

"Elijah's in the ICU, don't worry about him. You lie down, I'll call a nurse to reinsert the IV."

"What happened to me?"

Tarquin: "... You don't know what happened, and you took out the IV?"

"I just wanted to go see Elijah, I couldn't leave with the IV."

Tarquin was moved; her love for Elijah was as profound as that of his own father! "Elijah hasn't woken up yet, he's the same as last night. You fainted from exhaustion last night, Benjamin gave you an IV. How do you feel now? Any better?"

Elysia touched her head, still feeling a bit dizzy, but clearly much better. "I'm alright, has there been any progress with the poison in Elijah's body?" "Doesn't seem like it, Benjamin didn't update me."

Elysia frowned, then asked, "How are Elliot, Evan, and Emmett?"

"They're resting in the next room."

Elysia stood up, wanting to check on the children. Tarquin offered his help, but she refused, "I'm fine, really, I feel much better after some rest. I want to see the kids."

Tarquin could only sheepishly retract his hand. Elysia first checked on the three little ones in the next room, then left the ward to see Elijah. Tarquin, concerned she might faint again, accompanied her.

Just as they reached the ICU door, Tarquin's phone rang, a call from Lowell. There must be some situation at the old house! Tarquin furrowed his brow and told Elysia, "Go see Elijah, I'll take this call."

"Okay." Elysia entered the ICU alone. She put on a disposable isolation gown, donned a mask and cap, and went through sterilization before approaching Elijah. Little Elijah was still in a deep sleep, his body connected to various tubes. Benjamin had just finished his morning check-up; the little guy must be uncomfortable. He wasn't awake, but his tiny brows were tightly furrowed.

Chapter 566

On the little cart beside her, over a dozen vials of blood were neatly lined up, all freshly drawn from Elijah's body.

Elysia's heart felt like it was being squeezed, tears welling up in her eyes again. Her little Elijah, though no longer in life-threatening danger, had suffered damage to various organs. He had to take medication, endure injections, and go through painfully exhaustive examinations. Yesterday, during the stomach pump procedure, even though Elijah was unconscious, he trembled and shivered in discomfort... And they had just drawn several vials of blood yesterday, and now, even more! Her little boy was only five years old; how much blood could his tiny body even hold? But there was no choice. The poisoning was severe, and all these tests were necessary! Elysia felt a mix of distress and heartache, wishing she could take all this pain upon herself instead! She couldn't bear to see her son go through this suffering. He was so young, yet had to endure such pain...

Elysia gently touched Elijah's hand, wanting to tell him 'Mommy is here,' but she couldn't find her voice. Her body trembled, lips quivering, tears steadily cascading down. Her little Elijah, how her heart ached for him...

"Ms. Thome."

Benjamin, having heard of her visit, hurried over to update her on Elijah's condition. Elysia sniffled hard, lowering her head to wipe away her tears, "Yeah." Benjamin gave her a look, touched yet somewhat puzzled. Elysia's love for Elijah was no less than Tarquin's! Yet she wasn't Elijah's biological mother. Why then was her affection so intense? Her love for Elijah seemed a bit much. It was rare to see such strong emotions unless one was the biological parent or had raised the child themselves. But Benjamin had personally conducted the paternity test; Elysia and Elijah were indeed not related by blood! Benjamin was curious but didn't press further. He softly told Elysia, "We've identified all the toxic substances in Elijah's system, take a look. Also, the results from yesterday's battery of tests are all here."

Elysia quickly took them to examine. She read through each result with utmost attention! The more she read, the more agitated she became! "Just as I thought! Just as I thought!" Like she had discovered something incredible, she dashed out of the ICU! Pulling down her mask, she confronted Tarquin, teeth clenched, body trembling! Her eyes were a mix of pain, guilt, anger, and resentment! Tarquin, just off the phone, was confused, "What's wrong?" Before Elysia could speak, tears began to flow. She harshly wiped away her tears, only for new ones to quickly replace them. With a trembling voice, she asked, "Have you found out who poisoned Elijah?" Tarquin stared at her intensely, "What happened?"

Elysia's voice rose sharply as she demanded, "Did you find who poisoned Elijah?!" Tarquin frowned, puzzled by her demeanor. Without nodding or shaking his head, he shared the current findings, "The perpetrator tampered with Elijah's dinnerware. Last night, while you were on the phone, a new soup and bowl were served, and the poison was on the soup bowl. Elijah drank from that bowl and was poisoned on the spot. Lowell conducted a sweep of everyone who could have had access to that bowl

and found a suspect, a maid in charge of the children's dinnerware. But before we could interrogate her, she was found dead."

"Dead?"

Chapter 567

"Looks like a case of guilt-driven suicide," Tarquin mused, scanning the scene with a detective's eye.

Elysia, wiping away her tears, looked up in a mix of hope and confusion. "Does that mean... the killer's been caught?"

Tarquin sighed, the weight of truth heavy on his shoulders. "She was probably just a scapegoat."

He had no grudge against the maid; she had no motive to poison Elijah. It seemed more likely that the real culprit had set her up to take the fall, creating the illusion of a suicide to divert suspicion from themselves.

"So, what you're saying is... she's not the killer. The real murderer is still out there, walking free?" Elysia's voice trembled with rising panic.

"Yeah, but... try not to worry, I-"

Elysia's fear boiled over. "How can I not worry?! Someone's out to hurt my Elijah, and we don't even know who they are! They're still out there, possibly planning to strike again. I... I..."

Her emotions surged like a storm, words failing her as her frustration grew, pushing her to the brink of hysteria.

Tarquin, still puzzled by her intense reaction, ventured cautiously, "You're afraid they might try to harm Elijah again, aren't you?"

Elysia nodded vigorously, tears streaming down her face. "They definitely will!"

He rushed to reassure her, "Don't worry! I won't let them succeed again. We might not have caught them yet, but I promise, they won't get another chance to hurt Elijah."

But Elysia, inconsolable, shook her head, clearly unconvinced.

Her emotions escalated, almost to a roar, "How can you make such promises?! Elijah's been poisoned before! This isn't the first time, and every time you've failed to notice!"

Sobbing, she continued, "How could you not see it? You're always by his side, you love him so much, and yet you've missed it every single time someone has poisoned him!

He's just a child; can you imagine how much pain he must be in each time?

Every time he's poisoned, you don't know, I don't know, only Elijah bears the pain alone... My poor Elijah, how he's suffered all these years. I've failed him, I..."

Tarquin was stunned. "What did you say?"

Through her tears, Elysia whimpered, "Elijah... he's always been hurt by someone..."

Tarquin's expression darkened, his brows furrowing deeply.

"Elysia, calm down for Elijah's sake. What did you just say? Someone's been poisoning him repeatedly?"

Elysia, trying to compose herself, showed him the test results, her hands trembling.

"I knew something was off about Elijah's condition. I suspected it wasn't just grief over his mother. There had to be another cause!

I've had him examined, looked through countless case studies, but couldn't pinpoint the reason until today.

Look, along with the lethal poison, there are traces of chronic toxins in Elijah's system. These didn't just appear overnight; they're the result of repeated exposure.

This toxin affects cognition, this one induces irritability, and these...", Elysia pointed out, her voice breaking.

Tarquin, no expert in medicine, struggled to understand the details but grasped the gravity of what Elysia was saying.

Elysia was saying: Elijah's psychological issues weren't just due to his deep longing for his mother. There was a deliberate, human element involved.

Chapter 568

Someone had been poisoning Elijah for a long time, repeatedly!

Tarquin's breathing grew heavy, his lips pressed into a thin line as he asked, "Are you sure there's no mistake?"

Elysia stomped her foot in frustration, "No mistake at all!"

Tarquin was seething, a storm brewing in his eyes. Someone dared to poison Elijah right under his nose, and not just once but repeatedly and over a long period!

The audacity of that person!

And how foolish he had been!

He thought he had protected Elijah well, but what was the result?

Elijah had suffered greatly under his care!

He was failing as a father!

No wonder Elysia looked at him with a mix of pity, guilt, anger, and resentment when she brought the news.

Pity for Elijah, for the repeated harm done to him.

Anger at the perpetrator, furious at whoever was heartless enough to target a child in such a vile manner!

As for the guilt... he was momentarily at a loss for its reason.

But the resentment was definitely directed at him, blaming him for not keeping Elijah safe, for not detecting a single instance of the poisoning!

He deserved the blame!

He owed Elijah an apology!

Tarquin, consumed by anger and self-reproach, clenched his jaw, fighting to keep his raging emotions at bay, as he asked Elysia, "How did they manage it? Elijah undergoes regular check-ups, even Benjamin didn't notice anything out of the ordinary."

Benjamin, though young, was a prodigy in the medical field and trustworthy.

Had Benjamin noticed anything unusual, he would have informed him right away.

Besides Benjamin, Elijah had been seen by countless medical experts, none of whom had detected anything.

Elysia sniffled, explaining, "It's not surprising that Dr. Benjamin didn't catch it. This poison isn't common; it contains rare toxic elements that Dr. Benjamin wouldn't have encountered before. Even if he did find traces during a check-up, he wouldn't suspect poisoning.

Moreover, this poison has a characteristic where its potency is highest upon entering the body, making it the easiest to detect. Over time, its potency weakens, which is why the perpetrator needed to poison Elijah multiple times! They did it to keep Elijah in a constant state of illness!"

To keep Elijah constantly ill!

Tarquin's lips were pressed tightly together, his face ashen with rage, veins throbbing at his temple.

"Can the accumulated poison still be treated?"

"I need to study it more closely. I'm really worried that if the perpetrator didn't succeed in killing Elijah this time, they might try again. They're a repeat offender!"

Tarquin looked at her earnestly, saying, "I don't know much about medicine, so I can't help Elijah myself. I'm entrusting you to take care of him! I hope you can pull yourself together and clear all the poison from his system as soon as possible. As for the rest, leave it to me. I'll handle it!"

His tone was gentle at first but turned steely with determination by the end.

Unbeknownst to him about the ongoing poisoning, now that he was aware, it was time for retribution!

After saying his piece, Tarquin left the hospital.

No sooner had he left than Benjamin came looking for Elysia, "Ms. Thorne, you should look at Elijah's blood test report from this morning. It's different from the one you have. I'm not sure what's going on?!"

Elysia quickly wiped away her tears, forcing herself to calm down, and followed Benjamin into the ICU.

He was right; he didn't understand medicine, so it was up to her to cleanse Elijah's body of the poison!

As for catching the perpetrator, she would leave that to him!

In a corner, someone had heard every word of Elysia and Tarquin's conversation, clear as day...

Chapter 569

Elliott and Evan woke up to find Elysia missing from their hospital room. Piecing things together, they figured she must have gone to check on Elijah, so they headed over to find her.

As fate would have it, they stumbled upon her conversation with Tarquin.

Evan, red with rage, exclaimed, "Someone has been poisoning Elijah multiple times! Bro, we've got to root out this scumbag and avenge Elijah!" Elliott's expression darkened. "Yes, we'll find him!"

The audacity to poison his brother, keeping Elijah sick for so long, was unforgivable!

And their mom was right to worry. If the culprit was a repeat offender, there was a chance they'd try poisoning Elijah again.

Until they caught him, Elijah wasn't safe.

Evan grumbled, "That jerk Tarquin couldn't even figure out who the culprit is. I bet it was someone from the Bradford clan! Bro, let's take down their whole gang!"

Elliott pondered. The poison was definitely linked to the Bradfords.

But when he observed their reaction after Elijah was poisoned, except for Gideon looking oddly out of place, the rest seemed shocked and almost delighted, not the reactions of a guilty party.

As for Gideon...

His shock turned to disbelief, then to nervousness.

Why would he be shocked and then nervous?

Because he didn't expect Elijah to be poisoned to death!

Maybe Gideon was the one consistently poisoning Elijah, but the person trying to kill Elijah this time might not be him!

After some thought, Elliott said to Evan, "Tarquin must be onto the Bradfords looking for the culprit. Let's head over. If he can't find them, we'll figure something out."

"Alright!"

The brothers put on their masks and left the hospital, heading straight for the Bradford estate.

Tarquin drove like a man possessed, reaching the estate in record time.

The butler, shaking, greeted him at the door, but Tarquin didn't spare him a glance.

With a scowl, he slammed the car door and strode into the main building.

Inside, apart from the Bradfords, several police officers were present.

A maid had died in the house, and the Bradfords had called the police not to investigate the murder but for protection.

They were trapped in the estate by Tarquin and feared he might go on a rampage and kill them all!

The Bradford women were complaining to the officers, "Officer, it's not like his son was poisoned by us, and we didn't kill the maid. Why are we being held hostage?"

"Yeah, if he's got beef, go settle it with the killer, not us. Today's the first day of the year; we wanted to have a peaceful holiday!"

"Officer, isn't his behavior criminal? Can you arrest him?"

Tarquin, with a face like thunder, entered and announced, "The doors of the Bradford estate are wide open. Anyone who wants to leave can do so!" Lowell and Axel, who were at the door, greeted him, "Tarquin!"

Tarquin nodded and then turned his fierce gaze toward the Bradford women, his eyes sweeping over them with a chilling ferocity.

The women, terrified, collectively shivered and quickly shut their mouths.

The leading officer, Roland, was the local precinct captain and knew Tarquin well enough to know he was trouble.

After a brief stint in the station, a major shake-up in the police department followed, and the officer who handled his case, Josiah, was promoted three ranks—a testament to Tarquin's influence.

If Tarquin was indeed guilty of a crime, they'd need solid evidence to proceed, and as of now, there was none. Besides, his son was the victim of a poisoning attempt that night!

Roland stepped forward, "Mr. Bradford, I'm Detective Roland, the lead investigator on this case."

Chapter 570

Before Tarquin even arrived, he'd already gotten the gist from Lowell, nodding politely in acknowledgment.

"Any progress on finding out what happened?"

"So far, nothing definitive. We're pretty sure your son's poisoning has something to do with that maid, but she's dead now. That leads us to a dead end."

Tarquin frowned, "Any leads on the maid's death?"

Roland shook his head, "Looks like suicide at first glance, but it's too early to jump to conclusions. We need to dig a bit deeper."

Tarquin just hummed, not asking anything further.

Roland then said, "We've wrapped up the evidence collection here and have someone guarding the scene. Unless there's anything else, we'll be on our way. We'll keep you updated on any breakthroughs."

Tarquin nodded, "Yeah, please keep this under wraps."

"Understood, you've got it."

With that, Roland signaled his team to leave, leaving the Bradford family in a state of panic.

"Just like that? What about him holding us here against our will?"

Roland replied, "Didn't Mr. Bradford just say the front door is open, and you're free to leave if you wish?"

"He..."

Earlier, through Lowell, Tarquin had made it clear anyone attempting to leave would face severe consequences—a blatant threat!

But now, nobody wanted to be the first to voice this out.

They all hoped someone else would, to their benefit.

So, the group fell into collective silence.

Seeing no one speak up, Roland left with his team.

The moment the police were out of sight, Tarquin glanced at Lowell, "Lock the door."

Lowell immediately shut the mansion's main door.

The Bradford family was petrified. Allegra stepped forward to speak.

"Tarquin, we get you're upset about your son, but taking it out on us isn't fair. Direct your anger at the killer, not us!"

Tarquin, legs crossed and seated on a couch, ignored her and tossed a document onto the coffee table.

He then lit a cigarette, taking a drag in silence.

Curious, Allegra picked it up, her eyes widening in shock.

"Share transfer agreement, 20% of the shares?!"

The rest of the Bradfords, overhearing this, rushed to take a look, their eyes bulging with disbelief.

What was Tarquin planning?

20% of the company shares were worth a fortune!

Gideon, sitting across from Tarquin, first scrutinized the document, then looked up, puzzled.

"What are you trying to do?"

Tarquin flicked ash from his cigarette.

"Regarding Elijah's poisoning, whoever provides a significant lead will get these 20% shares."

The room went silent with shock.

They now realized he was using the shares as bait for information.

The police had failed to catch the culprit, so he was taking matters into his own hands.

Such a tempting offer!

Gideon didn't even have 20% of the shares himself. Whoever landed this deal would become the Bradford Group's second in command overnight!

Not just a fortune in gold, but a leap in power too!

Everyone was envious but frustrated at their lack of leads.

Gideon's heart raced, fearing betrayal from within, he quickly said,

"Throwing out such big bait, your motive is right, but in the end, the shares stay in the family!"

Tarquin lifted an eyebrow at him.

"I, Tarquin, always keep my word. To you, those shares are priceless; to me, they're trivial. If someone brings valuable information, the shares are theirs. I won't tarnish my reputation over this."

With everyone watching, he signed his name on the document.

The room held its breath, eyes glued to the paper.

It was like a pack of starving dogs eyeing a juicy bone, drooling in anticipation.

Gideon's closest aides broke out in a cold sweat.