

Hitched 581

Chapter 581

When she touched him, Tarquin's heart raced even faster.

Her fingertips were hot, like a spark that ignited him in an instant.

Even in his dreams, images of them entangled started playing in his mind...

Tarquin felt a feverish heat, his breath erratic, his Adam's apple bobbing.

Elysia, still clueless about his feelings, looked up at him with a puzzled expression, "What's going on with you?"

Tarquin's eyes were fixed on her lips, yearning for a kiss, yet he feared startling her!

Eventually, he suppressed his desires, withdrew his hand, and turned with a scowl to head to the bathroom.

Elysia was left wondering, "What's upset him now? Is it because of Elijah?"

She frowned, feeling a pang of sympathy for him.

She had heard from Elliot and Evan that it was Gideon who had been poisoning Elijah for a long time.

Gideon, his own grandfather, and Elijah's great-grandfather, had been poisoning Elijah to weaken him!

She had no ties to the Bradford family, yet the revelation had left her furious!

For him, aside from anger, there must be a sense of betrayal, too.

Later, Tarquin emerged from the bathroom, his composure regained.

"Where are Elliot, Evan, and Emmett?" he inquired.

Elysia, after a thoughtful look, responded, "Blossom picked them up a while ago. She came over after hearing about Elijah's situation. I figured since Elijah was out of danger, there was no point in them staying here, risking hospital germs and losing sleep, so I let Blossom take them." That was one reason. The other was she didn't want the kids to stick around him too much. It could get complicated if things got exposed. Tarquin didn't dwell on it, instead asking, "You didn't scold them, did you?"

At this, Elysia pursed her lips at him, her gaze reminiscent of a middle school principal looking at a mischievous student.

Unaware of the reason, Tarquin protested, "Did you scold them? I explained to you, it was my decision to take them, it's not the kids' fault..." Elysia cut him off, "Enough! They confessed as soon as they returned, didn't even wait for me to ask. They overheard our conversation, couldn't stand it, and followed you to the old house to find out who the culprit was. They forgot to inform me in their haste."

Tarquin was speechless, feeling betrayed.

"These little traitors! White-eyed wolves!"

Elysia glared at him but, knowing he meant to protect the children, her tone softened, "Teaching kids to lie is not okay!"

Tarquin nodded earnestly, "You're right, I'll be more careful."

Elysia frowned and pouted at him, then asked, "Did you visit Elijah before coming here?"

"Yes, he was still unconscious. Benjamin wouldn't let me in; I saw him through the glass."

"Elijah needs rest; disturbing him constantly won't help. Don't worry, I've studied the poison in his system. It can be cleansed, but it'll take some time.

Alright, I've made up the bed for you. Go rest a bit, and when you wake up, call me. I'll see what we have in the kitchen and cook something up for you."

Tarquin's heart melted once again,

"A bed made up for me? And you're going to cook for me?"

Chapter 582

"Seriously, you've been going like a machine, no food, no sleep. You're gonna crash at this rate."

There was a sparkle in Tarquin's eyes, a fiery intensity that couldn't be missed.

Caring about him, making a fuss over him, tucking him into bed, and whipping up something in the kitchen - if this wasn't a sign of affection, what was?

Tarquin looked every bit the clueless teenager in love, gazing at Elysia with a grin that could light up the darkest room.

That smile was genuine, reaching all the way to his eyes. He was truly happy.

Elysia, puzzled, asked, "What's with the smile? You look like you've won the lottery."

Tarquin just sat there, quietly watching her, his handsome face lit up with that smile.

Elysia was at a loss for words. His behavior was like a peacock flaunting its feathers - but why? He didn't have feelings for her, so what was with all the fanfare?

Was he sick or just messing with her?

Elysia frowned, deciding to ignore him and headed for the kitchen, leaving him to his devices.

Seeing her walk away, Tarquin quickly dropped his lovestruck expression and caught up to her.

Elysia, taken aback, asked, "What's up?"

Tarquin spoke softly, "I'm not tired."

"Not tired or not, you need to rest. You're only human, not made of steel. You can't keep running on empty."

Tarquin hesitated for a moment before changing the subject.

"Aren't you curious who tried to poison Elijah?"

He had thought she would bombard him with questions the moment he returned.

Elysia furrowed her brows, "Elliot and Evan gave me the gist of it. I was planning to discuss it with you after you've rested up. I didn't want to stress you out and mess with your recovery."

Tarquin felt a surge of warmth and happiness.

She really did care about him, thinking of him in every little thing. Was he falling hard or what?

His voice grew even softer, "I'm still wide awake. Let's talk about it. What did Elliot and Evan tell you?"

The mention of the topic made Elysia lose her cool. She clenched her fists, visibly agitated, "Elliot and Evan told me you found out it was Gideon! I can't believe it was him. Elijah is his great-grandson, for crying out loud! Most people dote on their great-grandkids, but not him. It's like he didn't care at all to go as far as to harm him! How could he?!"

Elysia was baffled by Gideon's thought process!

The man was over seventy, an age to enjoy peaceful family times, yet here he was, committing unspeakable acts.

He was sick in the head!

The whole lot of them must be sick!

Tarquin said coldly, "He spent his lifetime chasing fame and fortune, never changing his ways even in old age. For power, he'd stoop to anything." Elysia, fuming, wanted to curse Gideon and his ancestors but stopped herself, remembering Tarquin and the kids were also his family.

Instead of cursing his lineage, she cursed only him.

"What goes around comes around. Karma's always watching, and Gideon will get what he deserves. Just you wait and see!"

After venting, she turned to Tarquin with a comforting tone, "Don't let his actions dishearten you. If he could harm Elijah, it shows he never saw you or Elijah as family. Just treat him as an enemy, nothing more."

Tarquin's expression softened as he looked at her, "Can I have a hug?"

"Huh?" Elysia paused, their eyes locking.

The emotion in his eyes was overwhelming, yet to Elysia, it translated into a world of hurt.

Looking at him, she felt like she was comforting a big, wounded dog that had been let down by its own family.

Chapter 583

Hesitating for just a moment, Elysia gave him a big, warm hug.

"You know, they say blood is thicker than water. In the tapestry of human connections, the bond of kinship certainly plays a pivotal role, but the ties that bind us are often woven through the time we spend together. That's why there's a saying, 'The one who raises you is more of a parent than the one who gives birth to you.'"

Take someone like Gideon, over seventy and still stirring up trouble, poisoning his own great-grandchild. It just goes to show he's cold-hearted by nature, utterly devoid of familial warmth. Such a person doesn't deserve to know the meaning of family.

A cold-hearted man lacks empathy; nothing you do will ever move him, so whatever he does shouldn't bring you down. It's simply not worth your tears.

Don't let his negativity get to you. The world is still full of good people, and life is still beautiful..."

Although Elysia was aware that Tarquin had a strained relationship with the Bradfords, she didn't realize he had long regarded them as foes. So, she kept comforting him.

Tarquin, holding her close, rested his chin on top of her head, eyes closed, quietly listening to her ramble on.

He was a man who preferred silence over chaos, lacking patience for most people except for Elijah. He usually couldn't stand long-winded conversations.

But today, he found enjoyment in her chatter.

It was a rare moment of tranquility.

Her voice was so soothing, her body so soft, her hair so smooth.

Her scent, faintly herbal, was distinct and pleasant.

In this moment, Tarquin's mind was clear of all distractions. He felt peaceful, content, and grounded.

As if all his troubles had melted away, leaving only beauty.

His only wish was to hold her forever.

If he could also fall asleep like this, securely in her embrace, it would be even better.

Holding her felt more precious than the whole world.

She was a treasure beyond compare.

Tarquin cherished this happiness, unwilling to let go.

Elysia had poured out all the comforting words she could think of while being held in his arms.

She was starting to feel a bit awkward...

Did he even listen to what she was saying?

Did it improve his mood?

Although she had embraced him with no ulterior motive, simply wanting to soothe his wounded spirit, they couldn't just keep hugging!

After all, there are boundaries between men and women. How embarrassing it would be if someone saw them!

Besides, she had something important to discuss.

After a while, seeing he had no intention of letting go, Elysia took the initiative to speak up.

"Um, did you hear what I said?"

"Mhm."

"Are you feeling any better?"

"Mhm."

"Let's sit down and talk for a bit, I have something to tell you."

"What's it?"

He asked, still holding on.

Elysia said, "I'm thirsty, I'm going to grab a glass of water."

That finally got Tarquin to reluctantly release her.

After such a long embrace, Elysia's forehead was sweaty, her fine hair sticking together, her long locks slightly disheveled.

Tarquin instinctively reached out, gently fixing her hair.

Elysia felt a bit uneasy, quickly smoothing her hair before heading to the kitchen to fetch two glasses of water.

Handing him one, she took a few sips to steady herself, then looked at him.

"Elliot said that Gideon has been poisoning Elijah for a while, but this time, the one who tried to kill Elijah wasn't him. We haven't found the real culprit yet, have we?"

Tarquin slightly furrowed his brow, "Mhm."

Getting the confirmation, Elysia, with a worried look and after a moment of hesitation, earnestly said,

"Once Elijah is discharged, I want to take him under my care."

"To Future Community?" Tarquin asked, caught off guard.

"Yes, I've already talked to Blossom about it. She's more than happy to help. I plan to temporarily have him stay with Elliot, Evan, and Emmett." Eager to get his approval, Elysia quickly added,

"I know a thing or two about medicine. Elijah will be better off under my care."

Tarquin nodded in agreement,

"You taking care of Elijah is ideal. But there's no need to stay at Blossom's. Move to Sunshine Community instead. Once Elijah is discharged, you can bring Elliot, Evan, and Emmett along and stay with us."

Chapter 584

The vision of a bustling, happy family of six flashed through his mind, filling him with an immediate sense of contentment.

But in the next moment, Elysia flat-out rejected the idea, "No way!"

"Why not?"

Elysia's brows furrowed with concern. She was already uneasy with the kids spending too much time around him, let alone the idea of living together day in and day out. Even if Elliot and Evan wore disguises every single day, it was only a matter of time before their cover was blown. Besides, it wasn't exactly practical to live in disguise 24/7!

Grasping at straws, Elysia protested, "We're practically strangers, and moving in with you, kids in tow, would just invite gossip."

Tarquin immediately reassured her, "As long as I'm around, no one would dare gossip in your presence."

"That's not the point! It's... it's just weird for me," she insisted.

"How is it any weirder than you staying over at my place now? You're already spending nights here to take care of Elijah."

"It's different. I'm your nanny. Staying over occasionally is one thing, but moving in with my whole family? That's just not how things are done. When does a nanny ever move in with her employer?"

Tarquin's brow furrowed in frustration. "Who said you're just the nanny? You're not!"

"But that's what you said. And if I'm not the nanny, then what am I?"

Tarquin was momentarily speechless, his face darkening. Had he really said that? After a pause, he argued, "Since when does an employer's son call his nanny 'mom'? Neither Elijah nor I have ever treated you like you're just the nanny."

"Still, I can't just move in with my kids."

Tarquin thought she was just feeling awkward and tried to persuade her, "Don't overthink it. Just focus on Elijah. He'd be thrilled to have you and the kids move in."

Elysia frowned, "Elijah would be just as happy if we all went back to the Future Community."

Seeing her slightly upset, Tarquin asked, "So, you really want to take Elijah back to live in the Future Community?"

"Yes!"

Tarquin hesitated for a moment before relenting, "Alright, fine. After Elijah gets discharged, we'll go with you."

Elysia's eyes lit up, "You agree?"

Seeing her happiness made Tarquin smile foolishly, touched by how easily pleased she was. He nodded indulgently, confirming, "Yeah, I agree." Elysia was elated, but before she could celebrate, he added, "Take me with you."

Elysia was taken aback, "What?"

"If you're set on taking Elijah to the Future Community, then take me too. I'll move there with Elijah."

Elysia's eyes widened in disbelief.

Tarquin mistook her shock for delight, smirking with a playful glint in his eye, "Happy to the point of speechlessness?"

Elysia swallowed hard, "No, it's just... inappropriate for you to move there with us."

"Why's that?"

"We're staying at the Blossom residence. It'd be awkward for a grown man like you to move in, plus there's no extra room for you."

"So, you were planning to take Elijah and leave without considering me?"

Elysia nodded sheepishly, "Yeah."

Tarquin's face fell, a mix of disappointment and resignation. He stared at Elysia for a few seconds before asking, "What about me then?" "You... you can stay at your place."

"So, you and Elijah leave, and I'm just supposed to live by myself?"

"You're an adult. You've been living independently for a while now. You'll be fine on your own, won't you?"

Tarquin pressed his lips together, a contrast of images flashing through his mind: Elysia with Elliot, Evan, and the twins, Elijah, all of them together, their lives filled with laughter and joy. And then there was him, alone, the very picture of loneliness.

Tarquin's expression darkened, "I reject that proposal. If you're taking Elijah to the Future Community, you have to take me too. Otherwise, it's off the table!"

Chapter 585

Elysia was on edge, her voice laced with urgency. "I've already told you, it's not convenient for a grown man like you to stay at the Blossom residence. Besides, there's no extra room for you."

"Why don't you just move in with Elliot, Evan, and Emmett to my place then?"

"That's out of the question! I'm not going to drag the kids over to your house!"

"Then let's just keep things as they are!"

Tarquin's tone was sharp, his brows furrowed and his demeanor stern. The status quo meant Elliot, Evan, and Emmett staying at the Blossom residence, Elijah living at his own place, and Elysia running back and forth between the two.

Elysia's emotions were like a rollercoaster: first anger, visible in her furrowed brows and glaring eyes, followed by a sense of helplessness and extreme frustration when her plea was rejected, and finally, a look of hurt as she bit her lip and tried to hold back tears.

Tarquin's resolve softened in an instant, despite his previous determination not to give in. Seeing her on the verge of tears, how could he remain indifferent?

"I didn't mean to snap at you," Tarquin said, adjusting his tie in an attempt to calm himself. "It's not that I'm heartless or unwilling to consider your request. It's just that what you're asking would mean separating me from Elijah. Do you understand what that means?"

Elysia remained silent, biting her lip.

Tarquin continued, his frustration evident. "Elijah has been with me since he was a baby. We've never been apart. Have you thought about how this separation would affect us?"

Elysia mumbled, "Elijah would be okay with it. He likes me and the boys."

"And what about me? Am I okay with it?"

Elysia fell silent again.

Tarquin, trying to keep his cool, went on, "You know Elijah has been my world. And yet, you still insist on separating us. Have you even considered my feelings in this?"

"I... I have!" Elysia protested.

She had even encouraged him to start dating again, hoping it would lessen his focus on Elijah and prepare him for their eventual separation. She knew Tarquin wasn't a bad person and genuinely wished the best for him.

As for taking Elijah away, she felt guilty and selfish, but couldn't bear leaving her own son behind nor could she stay with Tarquin out of obligation. She believed that a child growing up in a happy single-parent household was better off than in an unhappy two-parent home.

Hence, she chose to take Elijah with her.

Tarquin, unable to grasp her perspective, pressed on, "If you care about how I feel, why insist on taking Elijah away?"

Elysia replied, "The culprit is still out there. I'm worried they might try to harm Elijah again."

Chapter 586

"Worried about Elijah's safety? Shouldn't you be pushing him to stay with me then? I can protect him."

"And how exactly have you been protecting him? You've been by his side all these years, and yet, he still got hurt, didn't he? And let's not forget, the one who hurt Elijah did it because of you."

Tarquin fell silent.

Elysia said, "I'm not blaming you. I know you love Elijah, and you'd never want him to get hurt. It's not surprising you wouldn't know about the poisoning, given your lack of medical knowledge. But think about it, if the attacker went after Elijah because of you, maybe they'd back off if you two were apart?"

Hearing this, Tarquin felt a slight ease in his heart. She wanted them apart for Elijah's safety, not because she didn't care about him. He felt a deep guilt over Elijah's situation.

"Elijah getting hurt is indeed on me. If he wasn't my son, the attacker wouldn't have targeted him. I've brought danger to Elijah, I know that. But your idea isn't right! The attacker knows Elijah is my weakness. Even if Elijah and I were apart, it wouldn't stop them. In fact, Elijah would be an easier target away from me. He's safest by my side!"

Elysia couldn't counter his argument, yet she wasn't ready to give up on this rare chance to have Elijah back by her side. After a moment, she proposed, "Then, how about assigning more bodyguards to watch over Elijah at Future Community?"

Tarquin was taken aback, "You still think of keeping Elijah away from me?"

"I... I just want Elijah to be with me."

Tarquin's emotions flared again, "You're concerned about Elijah's safety, sure, but you also see this as an opportunity to pull him away from me, don't you?"

Elysia remained silent.

Tarquin's face turned grim, "Why? How does separating Elijah from me benefit you? Or do you just want to cause me pain?"

"I don't!"

"Then explain yourself!"

Elysia was at a loss for words.

Tarquin, breathing heavily, his voice low and filled with suppressed anger, demanded, "And what about after? You've always said you never planned on settling down in Jindale City, that you'd leave someday. Do you still plan on leaving?"

Elysia nodded, barely audible, "...Yes."

That single word ignited a blazing fury within Tarquin! His lips pressed into a thin line, he stared at Elysia for a long moment, until he couldn't contain himself any longer and burst out, "You still plan on leaving! And you want to take Elijah with you! Do you want to snatch him away from me, to run off and leave me behind?"

Caught off-guard by his direct hit, Elysia was visibly shaken, her wide eyes fixed on him in alarm, "..."

Her silence was confirmation enough for Tarquin! His agitation grew, along with his anger. Veins throbbed in his neck as he roared, "Elysia, you've said you cared about me, yet now you're thinking of leaving! Taking my child with you! What am I to you? Have you ever considered how I feel? Do you even care about me?!"

Elysia looked bewildered, her mind racing to catch up. Before she could formulate a response, Tarquin suddenly asked, "Elysia, do you even like me?"

Chapter 587

Elysia's breath caught, and her eyes widened in sheer shock. She clearly hadn't expected that question.

Seeing her reaction, Tarquin's chest heaved with anger, and it took a moment for him to compose himself before speaking. "Back at the precinct, we made a bet. We agreed that if I got out, you'd

honestly answer one question for me. If you lie, you'll never strike it rich! Now, I'm asking you, do you actually like me or not?"

Elysia blinked, her face a picture of confusion as she shook her head and admitted, "No, I don't."

Tarquin felt as if an invisible hand had clenched his heart, the pain so intense he could barely breathe. "Not even a little bit?"

Elysia, cautious, replied, "No, not at all."

Tarquin was a portrait of devastation, all his earlier excitement and joy wiped clean. His heart sank, shattering into pieces on the floor. The room fell into a dreadful silence.

Their gazes met, worlds apart in expression. One looked as though he'd been dealt a grievous blow, a complete sense of defeat enveloping him. The other was cautious, clearly still trying to piece together the situation.

After what seemed like an eternity, Tarquin's phone broke the silence. He took a deep breath to steady himself before answering. The call was from Keaton. "Tarquin, I just heard about Elijah's situation, and I'm on my way to the hospital. Are you there now?" "Don't bother! I'll come to you!" Tarquin pocketed his phone and, with a last pained look at Elysia, turned and left.

Elysia watched his retreating figure, utterly baffled. Her brain was slow on the uptake, still trying to process what had just happened. He was mad because she planned to take Elijah away from Jindale City, which was understandable! But why did he ask what he meant to her?

What did he mean to her, if not the reluctant father of her child, a truth she was unwilling to admit? And why did he ask if she liked him? She'd honestly answered no, so why was he upset?

Moreover, what did her feelings for him have to do with taking Elijah away? No, it wasn't just about Elijah. He was also upset that she didn't like him! Good Lord, could he actually have feelings for her? This was... Elysia's heart raced, shocked and bewildered. But why would he like her? What about her could possibly appeal to him?

Ah, Elysia was on the verge of madness, frantically raking her fingers through her hair, reaching for her phone to call Blossom and spill her guts. But she wasn't entirely sure, how could she even begin to explain to Blossom? He'd only asked if she liked him, without confessing any feelings himself. What if she was reading too much into it?

Elysia was a whirlwind of panic and confusion...

On the other side, Mr. Bradford, with his heart in pieces, arrived at Blissful Uncle's Bar and immediately started smoking in silence. His aura was so icy, he almost scared off all the patrons, resembling a walking, human-sized freezer.

Initially, Keaton thought it was all about Elijah, bombarding him with a flurry of comments. But whether it was about Elijah or cursing Gideon, Tarquin just smoked in silence, a thunderous expression on his face. Until Elysia was mentioned...

"I heard it was Elysia who came through again, and she even passed out from exhaustion trying to save Elijah. Honestly, she truly loves Elijah." Tarquin's expression darkened ominously, his irritation palpable as he gritted his teeth. "She only loves Elijah!"

Keaton paused, then it clicked. "Are you upset because Elysia doesn't love you?"

That was it, she didn't love him! Tarquin's chest felt like it was burning, as he took a harsh drag on his cigarette. "I couldn't care less!"

"So, you don't care about Elysia's love? Then why the anger?"

"It's because she's trying to take Elijah away from me!"

Keaton was confused. "What do you mean?"

Tarquin, irritation clear on his face, flicked away his cigarette ash, the frustration evident.

Chapter 588

"She's planning to take Elijah away from me, move to another city, and start a new life!"

Keaton was stunned, "Take Elijah away from you?"

"Yeah!"

Keaton was puzzled, "First off, she's not Elijah's biological mom, and secondly, she hasn't been the one raising him. Why would she even think like that? My guess is she must be head over heels for him! But don't you think her love for Elijah is a bit... obsessive? You are Elijah's real dad, and she's practically a stranger to him. Yet, she thinks she can just take Elijah from you? That logic is bonkers!"

Tarquin furrowed his brows, caught up in his anger earlier, he hadn't considered this point. Elysia's affection for Elijah was indeed abnormal...

"But from this, it's clear Elysia really fancies Elijah, and quite frankly, isn't your biggest fan!" Keaton added, twisting the knife.

That stung!

Tarquin pursed his lips, giving him a cold, menacing look.

Keaton chuckled, "You know, women need to be charmed! If Elysia wants to take Elijah, why not just agree and avoid the argument?"

Tarquin's expression darkened, "Agree to let her take Elijah away from me? To let her and Elijah leave me? Why don't you just hand her a knife to stab me with?!"

Keaton explained, "Agreeing with her and actually letting her take Elijah are two different things. You agree to make her happy, and once she's happy, she'll warm up to you, right? And about her taking

Elijah away, think about it. Jindale City is your turf. If you don't want her to leave, she won't be able to take a step out of the city, let alone take Elijah."

Tarquin's expression softened a bit...

Keaton continued, "Remember, try to avoid arguments with Elysia. After a fight, you're the one who ends up angry, and then you have to swallow your pride and apologize. It's a lose-lose for you."

Tarquin turned and glared at him, "Why should I apologize? She's the one who's wrong!"

Keaton pursed his lips, "In the game of love, there's no right or wrong. Whoever falls first, loses. And when it comes to arguments, you'll definitely be the one apologizing."

Tarquin frowned, his face stern, "I admit I fell for her first! But right is right, and wrong is wrong. I will not be the one to seek her out and apologize!"

It's her who wants to take Elijah and leave, not caring about him! It's her who's indecisive, claiming to care and then saying she doesn't! She hurt him, and she should be the one to apologize!

Keaton smirked, "Says the rookie who's never been in love."

Tarquin: "..."

Keaton, legs crossed and eyes squinting, said, "I bet you, this time, you'll be the one going to Elysia to make peace. You'll apologize first! If I lose, I'll call you daddy!"

Tarquin looked at him with disdain, "I don't need a son your size! But I definitely won't be the one to apologize!"

"Then let's bet! If you lose, you invite Elysia out for a drink, and you kiss her in public for three minutes!"
Tarquin was taken aback, "!"

Keaton raised an eyebrow, "What do you say? Dare to bet?"

He knew it well; if he didn't step in to play matchmaker, this guy wouldn't get a date in a million years!

Tarquin swallowed, the thought of kissing her sending a rush of heat through him. But... Not just in front of everyone, even in private, he doubted he'd dare to kiss her without getting slapped! So, if he lost, it meant either getting slapped by Elysia or being the butt of the joke among his friends! This bet had its stakes! But the outcome was in his control, nothing to be scared of. He steadfastly believed he wouldn't be the one to apologize first. Tarquin flicked his cigarette ash, "You're on!"

Keaton grinned wickedly, "Done! I'm recording this, you know. A bet's a bet; backing out is for cowards!"
Tarquin: "..."

Chapter 589

Halfway through his cigarette, Tarquin was starting to feel on edge, his mind crowded with thoughts of Elysia.

What could she possibly be doing right now? Did his outburst scare her? Did he make her cry with his harsh words? And was she, at this very moment, thinking of him too?

The more he pondered, the heavier his chest felt. He didn't think he was in the wrong today, but he couldn't help but reflect. Was he too harsh? Elysia was always timid by nature, and his aggression must have frightened her! The image of her with teary eyes, looking so utterly distressed, made Tarquin feel even worse.

But it was her fault today! He wouldn't be the one to make the first move to apologize. It wasn't just about who was right or wrong; it was a matter of pride! Sure, he liked her, but he had his ego to consider, didn't he? Apologize when he wasn't at fault? That was something he couldn't bring himself to do. Unless she reached out first, even a simple text would do, he'd go back in a heartbeat!

Tarquin flicked the ash off his cigarette and reached for his phone on the coffee table to check for any messages. Nothing. Not a single message from Elysia. No texts, no calls.

Biting the inside of his cheek in frustration, he felt his anger rising again. She didn't even seem to want to reach out! Did she not realize how mad he was? Or did she simply not acknowledge her mistake?

With a scowl, Tarquin tossed his phone back on the table, feeling irritated. "Get Tristan and the guys over for some poker!" he barked.

Keaton, with a sly grin and a twinkle in his eye, understood all too well. This was Tarquin trying to distract himself, unable to find a way back to Elysia without swallowing his pride. A classic case of a man suffering for the sake of his ego.

With a chuckle, Keaton teased, "How about I give Elysia a call, see if she can make the first move, 'beg' you to come back?"

"Get lost!"

"Ungrateful, I'm just trying to help you out."

Tarquin, still scowling, flicked his cigarette ash again. "You looking to get buried today? Just say the word, and it's done!"

Keaton couldn't help but laugh, not expecting Tarquin's love life to become this entertaining so quickly. The prideful man in love was always the most amusing spectacle.

But Keaton's laughter soon faded as the night progressed. After Tristan and the others arrived, they switched to playing poker, initially filling the room with lively chatter and jokes to cheer Tarquin up. However, the room quieted down as hunger set in.

These sons of fortune, accustomed to lives of luxury, were held captive by Tarquin from noon till evening, missing lunch and heading straight into dinner without a bite. Their stomachs growled in unison, craving something as simple as a dozen bagels each.

They all started giving Keaton desperate looks, hoping he could come up with a solution. Starving himself, Keaton played another hand before suggesting, "Tarquin, how about we change the scene? There's this new place that opened up in the west suburbs, heard their signature dish is out of this world. Let's give it a try, my treat."

The others looked at Tarquin with hopeful eyes, silently praying he'd agree.

Tarquin glanced at his phone lying on the corner of the table, its screen dark, with no signs of Elysia reaching out. Feeling both frustrated and restless after all this time without a word from her, he thought, has she already forgotten about me?

"Tarquin?" Keaton called out cautiously.

With clenched teeth and a voice as cold as ice, Tarquin replied, "Not hungry!"

Chapter 590

Everyone felt like crying, but Keaton, trying to muster some courage, said:

"Look, we're starving here. Please, have a heart and let us go. It's the holiday season. If we all starve to death, next time you get hurt, there'll be no one around to keep you company."

Tarquin barely lifted an eyelid and dropped a bomb, "Want a meal or your legs?"

"Excuse me?"

"If you want to eat, you'll have to break a leg! Literally. Break your own leg, then you can go."

Everyone: "

"

Seizing the moment Tarquin headed for the bathroom, the group lamented in despair,

"Who on earth managed to anger the Grim Reaper himself during the holidays?"

"If we find out who it is, they're as good as dead! It's their fault we're all suffering!"

"Talk about being clueless. Out of everyone to provoke, they had to pick Tarquin. Don't they know he's the last person in Jindale City you'd want to mess with?"

"Keaton, do you know who it is?"

Keaton, nearly fainting from hunger, lazily replied, "Even if I told you, you wouldn't dare mess with them."

"Why? Besides Tarquin, is there someone else in Jindale City we should be afraid of?"

"Not exactly a big shot, but if you try anything on her, Tarquin will make sure you regret it!"

Everyone was shocked but curious, gossiping, "Who is it?"

Before Keaton could answer, someone's stomach growled loudly,

"For the love of God, please let Tarquin let us go grab a bite! I'll light a candle, I'll bow down!"

Keaton said, "Praying to God won't help, you need to pray to Elysia!"

"Who's Elysia?"

Keaton said, "She's the one person even Tarquin wouldn't dare cross! Remember that name. If you ever run into her, don't even think about causing trouble!"

Better yet, just kneel and cling to her coattails. Whoever manages to get on her good side is set for life!"

Everyone: "??? Really? That's hard to believe!"

Keaton remained enigmatic, offering only a smile.

But in his mind, it was clear as day. Clinging to her coattails was like winning Tarquin's favor.

And that was no exaggeration.

Keaton had already decided to visit Elysia with a gift tomorrow!

Little did Elysia know, her name was making rounds in the elite circles, despite her humble background.

A bunch of big shots were waiting to cling to her coattails!

Meanwhile, in the bathroom.

Tarquin leaned against the sink, phone in hand, hesitating. Eventually, he didn't contact Elysia directly.

He sent a message to Benjamin instead, "How's Elijah doing?"

Benjamin replied promptly, "All good here, don't worry."

After a few seconds, Tarquin typed, "Is Elysia taking care of Elijah?"

"No, Elijah just needs rest, no special care. She's been in the lab all day working on the antidote, just went home."

All day in the lab?

That probably meant she was too busy to reach out, not intentionally ignoring him.

This thought slightly eased Tarquin's mind, but he pressed on, "Where did she go?"

"She stayed in the same suite with her kid last night. She hurt her hand in the lab earlier, so I urged her to go home and rest. She's been pushing herself too hard."

Hurt her hand?

Tarquin's brows furrowed, his concern escalating.

While still walking out, he dialed Benjamin,

"How did she hurt her hand? Is it serious? Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

Benjamin sounded exasperated, "...It's not serious, just a prick from a plant's thorn."

"Did it bleed?"

"Yeah, but..."

"Bleeding and it's not serious?! You should've called me sooner! I'm heading back now!"

After hanging up, Tarquin grabbed his coat and car keys, and dashed out.

