

Hitched 601

Chapter 601

Tarquin caught Elysia's innocent, curious gaze and his lips twitched, but he offered no explanation.

"You should rest. I'm heading out."

With that, he turned and left.

Elysia was a bit taken aback. That's it? He's just leaving? She thought he would have more to say.

Just as she was about to get out of bed to check, Tarquin suddenly reappeared at the doorway. The cool, handsome features of his face were touched with a hint of melancholy.

"I've made sure your windows are locked. Feel free to take a shower if you want, or just go straight to bed if you're not up for it. Don't worry about anyone else coming in. I'll be at the hospital tonight, just give me a call if you need anything."

After saying this, he furrowed his brows deeply, giving her another meaningful look before he left.

When Elysia came out to check, he was already gone.

Standing in the living room, she wondered to herself, was he upset about something? Why did it feel like he was so down just now? He didn't have to be friends with her if he didn't want to. It's not like she was forcing him. What was there to be upset about? She wasn't even upset about it herself! Elysia couldn't fathom the real reason behind his dejection. Pouting slightly, she ran to the window to check. Sure enough, it was tightly shut. Standing by the window, a sudden realization struck her! She lived on the eleventh floor! How high that was! How did he manage to climb up here? Did the guy have some sort of superhero ability?! Thank heavens they weren't enemies, or she'd be in serious trouble!

Elysia shivered involuntarily, quickly took a shower, and then headed to bed.

Downstairs, Tarquin leaned against a tree, staring up at her window while smoking a cigarette, feeling utterly dejected. He didn't want to be just friends with her because he wanted to be her boyfriend... Such an obvious reason, yet she couldn't see it! Her naivety was endearing, but it also made him anxious with how clueless she was. Was his affection not obvious enough? She seemed completely oblivious to it.

But then again... Her obliviousness was probably for the best. If she knew and didn't feel the same way, she'd likely avoid him. The thought of her not liking him made it hard for Tarquin to breathe, his heart felt like it was being squeezed. Why wouldn't she like him? If she didn't like him, then what type of person did she like? Someone like the father of Elliot, Evan, and Emmett? She must have really liked him to have three sons, right? What kind of man was he that Elysia would fall for him? What charm did he possess?!

Thinking about this man made Tarquin's mood plummet even further. He was desperate to know who this man was. On one hand, he wanted to learn from him, to see what Elysia liked so he could try to become more like that. On the other hand, he was genuinely jealous, envious that Elysia had feelings for someone else.

Tarquin smoked his cigarette in frustration, finally pulling out his phone to send a message to Elliot:

"I need your father's details!"

He knew that Elliot had manipulated the information about their father, making it impossible for him to find out anything on his own. He had no choice but to ask Elliot directly.

Meanwhile, Elliot was at the Future Community. Evan and Emmett were already asleep, and he was pondering how to swindle Elizabeth's ashes from Gideon's grasp. Gideon was cunning, and fooling him to get such an important item would require a flawless plan.

Upon seeing Tarquin's message, Elliot's eyes narrowed slightly. What was this stepfather of his up to now, in the dead of night?

After making sure his brothers were tucked in, Elliot grabbed his smartwatch and headed to the bathroom to call Tarquin back. This was definitely going to involve their mother, and he needed to get the details straight.

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As soon as the call connected, Tarquin launched into his threat, "If you don't spill the beans, tomorrow I'll let Elysia in on your little secret." Elliot was speechless. A threat right off the bat-it was clear Tarquin was on edge.

Sensing something was off in his tone, Elliot asked, "First off, why are you so eager to dig up dirt? What does this have to do with Mom?" Tarquin frowned, hesitated for a moment, then got straight to the point, "What does Elysia see in him, anyway?"

Elliot was taken aback, "Who told you Mom has a thing for him?"

Tarquin shot back, "Why else would she have his kid if she didn't like him?"

Elliot pursed his lips, "So having a kid with someone automatically means she likes him? Ever heard of just plain parental love?"

Tarquin looked puzzled, "So, you mean, Elysia doesn't like him?"

Elliot paused for a couple of seconds, "I don't want to talk about him. If you're so curious, go ask Mom."

"I have, but she doesn't want to talk about it."

"Neither do I."

Tarquin, growing curious, pressed, "Did your dad do something unforgivable to Elysia? Why is it that neither of you wants to talk about him? Was he a deadbeat? A total loser?"

Elliot sidestepped the question, "What does Mom liking him have to do with you? Why are you so nosy?"

After a few seconds of silence, Tarquin admitted, "Elysia doesn't like me!"

There was a mixture of anger, sadness, and a touch of feeling wronged in his voice.

Elliot was momentarily stunned, "Didn't I tell you ages ago Mom isn't into you? Are you just now coming to terms with reality?"

Indeed, the harsh truth had only hit him tonight.

Tarquin grunted in frustration, and Elliot bit his lip.

No wonder his mood was so off tonight; finding out Mom didn't fancy him had wounded his pride.

Then, Tarquin added, "I just want to know what Elysia's type is. And how do I not measure up to him?!"

Elliot was speechless.

He wondered how Tarquin would react when he eventually finds out that the man he's so jealously curious about is actually himself.

After a moment of silence, Elliot offered, "I can't give you the details now, and threats won't work on me. But pitying your sorry state, I'll tell you this- you still have a chance, a pretty good one at that."

"What do you mean?"

Elliot tried to console him, "Mom's attitude towards you has changed a lot. She might not like you now, but at least she doesn't hate you. And with just you by her side, your chances are plenty."

Tarquin's eyes gleamed, as if a lightbulb went off.

Elliot was right. As long as Elysia didn't hate him, there was hope!

And with no other men around Elysia, all opportunities were his. If he played his cards right, the possibility of Elysia falling for him was huge!

Who cares whether she liked Elliot's dad or not? He's out of the picture, and he, Tarquin, is the one right in front of her now!

With this thought, Tarquin's spirits lifted immensely.

He felt like he'd been given a shot of adrenaline, his mood instantly brightening, "Elliot, you're a good kid! I'll buy you something nice someday. Get some sleep."

Hanging up, Tarquin gazed towards Elysia's room, a twinkle in his eye, love in his heart.

At the very least, Elysia didn't hate him!

At the very least, he had a fighting chance!

It didn't matter that she didn't like him now; there was always the future!

Tarquin's bruised ego was mended by a few comforting words from his own son.

Chapter 603

The next morning, Elysia was up at the crack of dawn, freshened up in a hurry, and headed out to see Elijah. But as soon as she opened the door, she was met with an unexpected sight!

There was Tarquin, still in yesterday's clothes, leaning against the wall with a cigarette. The hallway reeked of cigarette smoke, and it was anyone's guess how long he had been standing there. He looked worse for wear, with dark circles under his eyes and a general look of exhaustion.

Blinking in surprise, Elysia asked, "What are you doing here? How long have you been standing out here? Did you not sleep at all last night?" At the sight of her, Tarquin had already stubbed out his cigarette. After feeling a bit better last night, he had first visited Elijah in the ICU before coming back here. This spot, closest to her, gave him a sense of comfort and peace. And before he knew it, he had spent the entire night there.

"I came back for my jacket," Tarquin said, brushing off her questions with a casual excuse. If she couldn't accept his feelings now, he decided to keep them hidden; her peace of mind was what mattered most.

Elysia, puzzled, asked, "You knew I was inside, why didn't you knock? Or you could've just called me."

"No rush."

Elysia bit her lip, then said, "Come inside, then."

Stepping into the apartment, Tarquin followed her lead as Elysia shut the door behind them. She took off her jacket and hung it by the door, deciding not to go out anymore.

"Did you stay up all night again?" she inquired.

"...Couldn't sleep."

"How can you not be tired after being up for so long?"

Tarquin lied, "I caught some sleep during the day yesterday."

Elysia frowned; she knew he hadn't. If he had, he wouldn't look like this now. He must have been awake since the incident with Elijah! She wanted to ask if his insomnia was because of her, especially since he had left in a bad mood the night before. But she hesitated, fearing it might upset him again.

After a moment of silence, she didn't press further on his lack of sleep and instead asked, "Have you had breakfast yet?"

"Not yet."

"Go brush your teeth, there's a new toothbrush in the bathroom. I'll make you something to eat."

Tarquin felt a warmth in his heart, "Have you eaten?"

"Not yet, we can eat together."

"I could order something; you should rest."

"I've slept all night, I'm not tired. Takeout isn't as clean or quick as homemade. I saw we have noodles in the fridge, how about noodles in clear broth?"

"Sounds great!"

"Alright, you go freshen up; I'll get started in the kitchen." Elysia stood up and headed for the kitchen.

Watching her go, Tarquin felt an overwhelming sense of contentment. Indeed, one shouldn't yearn for too much; contentment brings happiness. Though she might not return his feelings, her genuine concern for him was enough to make him happy.

By the time Tarquin was done freshening up, Elysia had already served the steaming noodles on the table. Looking at the hot meal and then at the woman joining him for breakfast, Tarquin's heart filled with warmth.

After they had eaten and cleaned up, Elysia was ready to visit Elijah, insisting Tarquin stay behind to rest. He knew better than to argue; she'd get mad!

So, Elysia left, and he laid down in the bed she had slept in last night, her scent still lingering on the sheets. Even though she wasn't there with him, he felt enveloped by happiness.

When he woke up, he received the best news: Elijah had woken up and had been moved to a regular room. Rushing over to Elijah's side, Tarquin found Elysia already there, chatting away with him.

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Both of their eyes were rimmed red, a clear sign that tears had been shed not too long ago.

Seeing him, Elijah's face lit up, "Daddy!"

Tarquin felt a lump form in his throat, almost breaking down into tears. Without Elysia, he might never have heard Elijah call him 'Daddy' again. Calming his heart, Tarquin quickly walked over to Elijah, his brows furrowed as he gently caressed Elijah's cheek, his myriad thoughts condensing into a few words, "I'm just glad you woke up."

He paused, guilt written all over his face, "I'm sorry, buddy. It's all my fault. I should've been there to protect you from the bad guys."

Shaking his head, Elijah replied, "Mom already explained it to me. The poison was rare, even Uncle Benjamin couldn't detect it, let alone you, Daddy. You did nothing wrong."

Tarquin glanced at Elysia, touched by her support. Just then, Elysia's phone rang, "Talk amongst yourselves, I need to take this call." She gently patted Elijah's cheek and stepped out.

With Elysia gone, Elijah didn't start with the attacker's subject but instead said, "Mom has been defending you ever since I woke up. She says it's not your fault I got poisoned, and she keeps saying how much you love me, and that you're a great dad... She's really worried I'd blame you. Daddy, Mom is truly wonderful."

He knew his mom always wanted to take him away, but even in this situation, instead of speaking ill of his dad, she defended him, proving she was a kind person. Not one to tarnish someone else's name for her own sake. His mom was genuinely a good person, and he was both proud and grateful. And it made him even more hopeful for his dad to be with his mom! He worried his dad might miss his chance with her!

Understanding his son's thoughts, Tarquin, who would usually brush off such topics, earnestly said, "You're right, she is wonderful, and I really like

her."

Elijah, excited, asked, "Daddy, do you like Mom because of me?"

"You played a part, but my feelings for her are about who she is as a person. But she doesn't feel the same way about me right now, so I have to keep these feelings to myself until the right moment comes to tell her. Can you keep a secret for me?"

Elijah nodded vigorously, "Go for it, Daddy!"

Tarquin affectionately ruffled his son's hair, "I'll do my best!" For himself, and for his son!

After a while, Elysia returned, accompanied by Elliot, Evan, and Emmett. The room instantly filled with lively chatter. Despite just waking up, Elijah's spirits were high, especially seeing his three little friends.

Seizing a quieter moment, Tarquin stepped out to call Lowell. "Is everything set for the Future Community?"

He had promised Elijah that he could stay in the Future Community with Elysia and had arranged for Lowell to buy the house across from Blossom's. He planned to move there too. Just as Blossom's neighbor had a mishap and the house went up for sale.

Lowell sounded frustrated, "Don't get me started. The house has already been sold. I tried contacting the new owner, but no matter how much I offer, he just won't sell! Given that the house was the site of a suicide, it's considered unlucky, and you'd think people would be deterred by that, but even when I offered five times the asking price, he refused!"

Tarquin frowned, "Who's the new owner? What does he do?"

"Keith, apparently he's a preschool teacher."

"Keith?"

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The name was unfamiliar to him.

Tarquin's voice was icy, "Why doesn't he want to sell at a high price? Did he give a reason?"

"He says the Future Community is close to his work, which is convenient for him."

"Are there no other listings available in the community?"

"As luck would have it, there's nothing available lately. The listings that were up before the holidays got snapped up fast after that stunt double's suicide. It really brought down the property values in Future Community, and the listings sold like hotcakes."

Lowell added, "But if you're willing to consider other buildings, we might have something to talk about."

After all, those who bought at a low price generally wouldn't refuse to sell at a high price.

Keith was an exception.

Tarquin frowned. Living in another building was out of the question; he was moving there for Elijah and Elysia. Why would he live anywhere else? The other buildings were too far from them. Living right across from them was ideal!

"Did you meet with this Keith face-to-face?"

"No, he's not in Jindale City right now. Probably won't be back until after the 15th, when the preschool starts."

Tarquin pondered for a moment, "Look into his background."

After all, with Elysia and the three kids living there, and Elijah planning to move in, it was essential to check out anyone who seemed out of the ordinary living across the door.

He had just ended the call and returned to the hospital room when Keaton suddenly appeared.

The ladies' man arrived with an armful of roses and the latest limited edition LEGO sets in hand.

There were four LEGO sets-one for Elijah and the others for Elliot, Evan, and Emmett.

The kids were thrilled, thanking him repeatedly.

Elysia was happy with the roses, and although she was polite and somewhat distant with Keaton, she greeted him with a smile and gentle warmth. She even sneaked a sniff of the roses when she placed them by the window, clearly loving them.

Keaton's grin was wide, "Elijah owes a lot to Ms. Thorne's care. As his godfather, I couldn't be more grateful. If there's ever anything I can do to help, just say the word. Once Elijah's out of the hospital, dinner's on me."

Before Elysia could respond, Keaton found himself on the receiving end of a kick.

He turned to see who it was. Tarquin, acting as if nothing had happened, didn't even glance his way but spoke softly to Elysia, "Stay with the kids, I need to have a word with him outside."

Keaton, puzzled, asked, "Why do we need to talk outside?"

"You're too loud!"

Keaton found himself being dragged outside by Tarquin, straight to the smoking area. There, Keaton protested, "What do you mean, too loud? Seems to me like you're just jealous because I'm popular, and Elysia and the kids like me."

Tarquin's face darkened as he warned coldly, "Stay away from Elysia!"

Keaton narrowed his eyes, "Jealous? Upset that Elysia liked the flowers I brought?"

Tarquin rolled his eyes and lit a cigarette.

Yes, he was jealous and upset!

He hadn't even gotten around to giving Elysia flowers, and here was Keaton, beating him to the punch!

And seeing how much Elysia liked them made his heart sour!

Keaton chuckled, "Who's to blame if you don't bring her flowers? She's not going to fall for you just like that!"

"She likes money!"

"But you can't just give money! You have to put thought into your gifts to move her. Get it?"

Tarquin took a drag on his cigarette, silent. He had no experience in wooing women. She liked money, so he found ways to give it to her.

He hadn't considered other gifts.

And since Elysia didn't seem to like him, would she even accept a gift from him?

The thought of her possibly rejecting it outright made Tarquin irritable as he took another drag, "Who loses and who gains when a man strips down for a woman?"

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Keaton couldn't help but bring it up, "You know, it really depends on who you're with and the situation. Between lovers, it's kinda spicy - adds a bit of flavor. But if there's no love, and the lady's not into it, then it's just being a creep!"

Tarquin just stared blankly for a moment.

Keaton, with a mischievous glint in his eye, teased, "You didn't try to pull a fast one on Elysia, did you?"

Tarquin's face turned sour immediately, "Of course not!"

With a chuckle, Keaton continued, "If you really want to charm Elysia, just flex those biceps, show off the six-pack, maybe a little bit of those killer quads - that should do it. Go full monty, and you're asking for a smackdown."

Tarquin pressed his lips together, choosing to ignore the comment.

As they continued their walk down the hallway, Keaton couldn't resist jabbing one more time before leaving, "Don't forget about our bet, man. You owe me a public display of affection with Elysia - a three-minute kiss, no less! Once Elijah's out of the hospital, you better pay up."

Tarquin just shook his head. The mere thought of kissing Elysia was enough to know he'd be welcoming a slap. It wasn't the slap he feared, but the thought of her being angry at him that did.

He didn't want to lose face in front of his friend, nor did he want to upset Elysia. He needed to think this through carefully.

Taking a drag from his cigarette, he pondered - Elysia loved money, but what else? Keaton's bunch of roses came to mind, and it irked him. Pulling out his phone, he dialed Lowell, "Buy out a flower shop!"

Just as he finished his instructions, Elliot appeared.

Tarquin quickly snuffed out his cigarette, his tone softening, "What are you doing here?"

"Just wanted to talk."

Elliot, looking all too serious for his age, stared up at him, "Mom's the most important person to us. I don't mind you chasing after her, but let me lay it out straight - you can't force her to like you, can't make her anxious, and definitely can't annoy her. If it doesn't work out, don't you dare take it out on her."

Tarquin got the message. The call last night had made Elliot see right through his feelings for Elysia.

He was here to issue a warning.

Tarquin, earnest and gentle, replied, "I care about her just as much as you do. I'd never do anything to make her sad or hurt. Even if she never returns my feelings, I'd only be upset with myself, never her."

Elliot nodded, then added, "Mom's too good and has been through a lot. Now that she has us, we won't let anyone hurt her. Treat her well, and we'll do the same. But if anyone dares to hurt her, they'll have to answer to us."

His tone was calm, but the underlying threat was clear.

Tarquin, affectionately ruffling Elliot's hair, said, "Count me in your squad. Let's protect her together. Us five guys, looking out for one lady." Elliot gave him a long, meaningful look before nodding.

Changing the subject, Elliot mentioned, "I did some digging on Gideon. He wasn't lying. He really doesn't know who the mystery person is. You're wasting your time on him."

Hearing about the mysterious person made Tarquin frown. His mind had been so preoccupied with Elysia that he had even delegated the task of checking on the Bradford family's move to Lowell.

He had also set people on finding out about the mystery person, but to no avail.

"Got any leads on him?" Tarquin asked.

Elliot shook his head, "Nothing."

This person was proving to be alarmingly elusive. So far, they couldn't even be sure if they had ever met his real identity.

Considering he had arranged for a decoy, there could very well be more than one.

Who knew if the ones they had met or who had contacted Gideon were just stand-ins?

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Now, the only thing they knew for sure was that he had a heart-shaped birthmark over his chest. But given its location, it was almost impossible to spot. So, finding him was like looking for a needle in a haystack. They had to figure out some way to lure him out!

The best way seemed to involve Elysia, but that meant putting her in danger. Elliot wasn't willing to take that risk, and neither was Tarquin. There was a moment of silence in the hallway before Tarquin spoke up, "Don't worry too much. Even if we do nothing, he'll show up eventually. His plan isn't finished yet. If we can't find any leads, we just wait!"

Elliot agreed, nodding. The mystery man had been pulling the strings for years, playing a long game with a very specific goal in mind. He would continue to haunt them until the very end, sure to make a move himself! Until then, all they had to do was stay vigilant and patient.

Time passed, and there was still no word from the mystery man. It was as if he had vanished into thin air. Elliot and Tarquin found no traces of him. He made no moves. Life for the family of six was peaceful and comfortable. Tarquin got along well with Elysia, as well as with Elliot, Evan, and Emmett.

That peace was disrupted when Elijah was discharged from the hospital half a month later! Following their previous arrangement, Elijah went straight to the Future Community with Elysia. Blossom had already tidied up the house, even going as far as decorating it with balloons and streamers for a small welcome party for Elijah. The house was filled with joy, and the kids were amazed as they walked in, "Wow!"

Blossom lifted Elijah into her arms, cheerfully saying, "Welcome to the Blossom household, Elijah. This is your home now. Here's to your health and happiness every day."

Elijah's face turned red with emotion, "Thank you, Blossom."

"Don't mention it, don't mention it. Now, you guys go check out the kids' room. There's a surprise waiting for you."

The four little ones were thrilled, and Emmett even gave Blossom a peck on the cheek before they all ran off to the kids' room. Elysia was deeply moved, embracing Blossom, "Thank you so much, Blossom."

"Oh, stop it. No need for formalities with me." Blossom quickly turned to greet Tarquin and Lowell, "Mr. Bradford, Lowell, come on in. Have some tea."

Tarquin, following behind Elysia, carried a suitcase filled with Elijah's belongings. Lowell also arrived, arms laden with gifts prepared in advance. Though Tarquin still felt uneasy about Blossom's potential connection to the mystery man, he was touched by her efforts for Elijah. He politely expressed his gratitude, "Thank you for your hospitality."

Blossom hurriedly responded, "It's nothing, really. Oh, why did you bring so many gifts? You shouldn't have."

"It's the least we could do." Lowell, all smiles, carried the gifts inside, asking Blossom where to put them. Blossom led Lowell to the storage room. Laughter and chatter from the kids' room filled the air as Elysia watched from the doorway, her face a picture of contentment and joy. Tarquin glanced inside too, seeing the kids playing on the bed. Blossom had replaced the old bed with a custom-made bunk bed, the bottom bunk two meters wide and the top a bit over one meter wide. The four kids had plenty of room to sleep without feeling crowded. The bed sheets and covers were in a dark blue cartoon theme, matching the room's dark blue wallpaper perfectly. There were four identical pillows and teddy bears on the bed, and cartoon decorations that any boy would love hung around the bed. It was clear that Blossom had put a lot of thought into making Elijah feel welcome.

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Elysia bit her lip, trying not to show it, but she was deeply touched. Having Blossom as her BFF was like winning the lottery three times over!

Tarquin surveyed the cozy atmosphere of the room, his heart swelling with emotion, feeling a sense of peace settling in. Lowell had dropped off a gift and left, and Blossom went down to the basement to fetch something, leaving as well.

Tarquin said his goodbyes to Elijah, "Whenever you miss daddy, just give me a call, okay?"

"Okay! Take care of yourself, daddy." Elijah looked up at him with big, watery eyes.

Tarquin felt a lump in his throat; goodbyes were always bittersweet, especially since this was the first time he'd be away from Elijah. He tousled Elijah's hair, feeling reluctant to leave.

Elysia felt a pang of softness, "Whenever you miss Elijah, you're welcome here anytime. Just give me a heads-up."

"Thanks, it means a lot."

Tarquin gave her a meaningful look before turning to leave. Elysia and the kids walked him to the door. That's when the unexpected happened, catching everyone off guard-

Keith suddenly showed up!

As the door swung open, there stood Keith, wearing blue jeans, a black hoodie, and a creamy-white down jacket, with a large suitcase by his side, as if he had just traveled from afar. His hand was still mid-air, frozen, apparently about to ring the doorbell when the door suddenly opened, leaving him startled.

The household stood inside, Keith on the outside, separated only by the doorstep. Elliot, Evan, and Emmett's faces changed instantly upon seeing Keith, their hearts jumping to their throats, "!!!"

Elysia was shocked, "Keith?!"

Tarquin squinted at Keith, a flicker of recognition, yet unable to place where he'd seen him before. Keith, equally stunned, quickly greeted Elysia politely. Then, his gaze shifted from Tarquin to Elijah, and finally landed on Elliot and Evan,

"Are you two Elliot and Evan? How come you..." (What happened to you? Disguised?)

"Happy New Year, Keith!" Elliot quickly interrupted, dashing outside and slamming the door shut behind him, leaving himself and Keith outside, and everyone else inside.

Standing outside, Elliot said, "Mom, give us a moment, I need to have a quick word with Keith at the door."

Elysia was gobsmacked, her eyes wide as saucers, breathing heavily, heart pounding! Keith was Elliot and Evan's teacher, familiar with their true identities, thus his curiosity upon seeing their current appearances.

Had Keith finished his question, the secret of Elliot and Evan's disguises would've been out in front of Tarquin. Wouldn't that mean Elliot and Evan's cover was blown? Wouldn't Tarquin discover the truth?!

And now, Keith knew about the disguises! He must have figured out the father-son relationship between Tarquin and the boys! This big secret exposed to an outsider! It was all going downhill from here, a total mess!

Elysia's panic and distress were evident to Tarquin, who, with furrowed brows, asked, "Who is he? What's your connection with him?"

Elysia was too nervous to speak, her lips moving but no sound coming out. Clearly, something was up. Tarquin, suspicious, tried to step outside to investigate, but Elysia quickly stopped him!

If he started chatting with Keith, Elliot and Evan's secret would be out!

Elysia grabbed Tarquin's hand, pulling him towards the study. She locked the door behind them, leaning against it to block his exit.

Chapter 609

Tarquin's suspicion deepened as he witnessed the reactions of Elliot, Evan, Emmett, and Elysia upon seeing the man - shock and panic, but no hostility. This indicated the man wasn't an enemy.

If not an enemy, then what stirred such a reaction within them?

There had to be something between Elysia and that man!

Tarquin furrowed his brows, pressing for answers, "What exactly are you so nervous about?"

Elysia, catching her breath with her long lashes fluttering, attempted a lie with wide eyes, "Me, nervous? Not at all!"

With a skeptical frown, Tarquin pushed, "It's written all over your face. What is your relationship with him?"

"He... He's Elliot, Evan, and Emmett's gym teacher, Keith."

Keith? The kindergarten...

Tarquin's concern deepened, "He's Keith?"

"Yes, do you know him?"

Tarquin's frown deepened. Keith was the new homeowner across the street, the one Lowell had unsuccessfully tried to persuade into selling his house despite offering a price many times its worth.

So, that's why Lowell couldn't seal the deal with Keith - it was all connected to Elysia!

But what sort of relationship could cause such a stir at the mere sight of him?

And Keith, upon seeing him and Elijah, seemed just as taken aback.

"You know him well?"

Elysia shook her head instantly, "Not really, I've only seen him once before. Today was the second time."

Tarquin half-doubted her words, "Just the second time and yet, you, Elliot, Evan, and Emmett react like this?"

"We... What reaction? We're just nervous seeing the teacher!"

"Don't insult my intelligence. If you don't give me a straight answer, I'll go ask him myself."

Elysia's eyes widened in panic, "You... you can't go talk to him!"

Tarquin scowled, "Then tell me the truth! What's going on between you two?"

"I told you, he's the kids' teacher. Our relationship is purely that of a teacher and a parent. He came last time to visit Blossom, probably here for the same reason today."

"Then why the panic at the sight of him?"

"We didn't..."

Snap! Snap!

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Not a slap, but Tarquin placing his hands on the door frame, cutting off Elysia's words.

He cornered Elysia between himself and the door frame in a classic move.

Elysia shivered in fear, finding herself trapped with no escape!

Tarquin, with a stern look, pressed her, "I'll say it one last time, either you explain, or I go find him now."

Breathless, Elysia knew she couldn't reveal the truth nor let him confront Keith!

But what to do?

As her mind raced for a solution, Tarquin inched closer!

His imposing presence was nearly overwhelming!

Startled, Elysia let out a scream, "Ah!"

Tarquin, looming over her, his voice icy, "Decided yet? Will I hear it from you, or him?"

Elysia, feeling utterly trapped, could only look up at him with a pitiful expression, lips trembling.

Tarquin's brows knitted together in irritation, "Stop biting your lip!"

Chapter 610

Elysia had finally caught Tarquin's attention, urging him to let go. Her demeanor was reminiscent of a high school student sheepishly accepting a scolding from the principal, regardless of whether they agreed or not.

Tarquin was visibly upset. "Once is an accident, twice is a coincidence, there won't be a third or fourth time! This is the second warning I've given you about biting your lip. Do it again, and you'll face the consequences!"

Elysia's eyelashes fluttered in defiance, but upon meeting his stern gaze, her courage faltered.

Pouting, she could only grumble to herself, "What's it to you if I bite my own lip? Got a bee in your bo or just salty because you live by the sea?" Tarquin, as if reading her mind, pressed his lips together in

disdain and chose not to engage further, simply stating, "You've got three seconds to rethink your stance, or I'm going straight to Keith for answers. Three, two, one..."

With that, he lifted her away from the doorway.

Elysia was taken aback, her heart racing, "Hey!"

But Tarquin was resolute, unmoved by any further delay. He was determined to seek answers from Keith directly.

Elysia rushed over, grabbing his arm, "Please, don't go!"

Tarquin glanced at her dismissively, "You've lost your say in this. I'm not interested in hearing more excuses. I'll ask Keith directly." Despite her pleas, Tarquin coldly shrugged off her hand, his decision unchangeable.

However, in the next moment-

Elysia unexpectedly hugged him from behind!

She wrapped her arms tightly around his waist, a gesture so sudden it took him by surprise, making his heart race unexpectedly. Elysia wasn't thinking too deeply about the embrace; it was purely an attempt to stop him from leaving.

As she clung tightly to prevent him from breaking free, she glanced up at his stern profile, pleading, "Can't you just not go to Keith?" Tarquin, feeling a whirlwind of emotion, found it hard to stay mad. The fact that she was hugging him made it even harder to resist. Without saying a word, he turned within her grasp to face her directly, their embrace becoming even more intimate. Elysia thought about letting go, fearing that if she did, he would indeed seek out Keith.

And if Keith found out about Elliot and Evan disguising themselves, it would only be a matter of time before Tarquin discovered their true identity as his sons!

This thought made Elysia hold on even tighter. As she pulled him closer, Tarquin, caught off guard by the affection, stumbled, and they both nearly fell.

Just in time, Tarquin wrapped his arm around her waist, lifting her up and pressing her against the door, their bodies closely entangled.

Breathless from the scare, Elysia was too preoccupied to notice the change in Tarquin's demeanor until she felt something pressing against her. Realizing what it was, her heart skipped a beat, and she looked up at him with wide eyes...