

Hitched 621

Chapter 621

The moment Tarquin left, the kids immediately rushed to Elysia's room.

Elliot knocked on the door, "Mom, he didn't really mean to take Elijah away. Don't be upset, okay?"

Elijah's expression was serious, "Mom, he can't take me without my say-so. Don't worry."

Emmett started to sob, "Mom, he's gone now. Can you open the door, please?"

Elysia was in her room, tears streaming down her face, feeling utterly wronged. Hearing Emmett cry, she quickly dried her tears, opened the door, and scooped Emmett into her arms to comfort him, "It's okay, Emmett. Don't be scared. No more crying, okay?"

Emmett clung tightly to Elysia's neck, "I don't want Mom to be sad, waa."

"Yeah, Mom's not sad anymore. I was just worried he'd take Elijah away, but now that he said he won't, I'm fine, see?"

Elysia, holding Emmett, sat on the living room couch and gently wiped away his tears. Evan and Elijah quickly joined them. Elliot ran to the kitchen first to get Elysia a glass of warm water, then sat down and came clean, "Mom, it wasn't Dad's fault he and Keith had a fight. It's on us. We were just curious if Dad really liked you, so we..."

Elliot explained the whole ordeal of testing Tarquin's feelings, leaving Elysia astonished, "Why would you... How could you..."

All four kids were in on it, apologizing together, "Sorry, Mom."

They had merely wanted to test if Tarquin truly cared for their mom, never anticipating it would upset her. Had they known, they would have never agreed to it.

Elysia frowned, her head buzzing with confusion, "And here I was wondering what all this had to do with me! Turns out it's all about me!" Those kids really...

"How did you even come to think he liked me?"

Elliot, not wanting to reveal Tarquin's true feelings, explained, "We noticed he's been really nice to you lately, so we just wanted to be sure if he liked you or not."

Elysia pursed her lips, "Being nice doesn't mean he's fallen for me, got it?"

"Oh." The kids nodded in unison.

"But still, why did it have to lead to a fight?" Elysia continued.

Elliot replied, "Maybe Keith crossed a line, said something he shouldn't have, and provoked him."

By now, the kids figured the main issue must have happened in those few seconds when the listening device went silent. Something Keith said or did in that moment must have set Tarquin off. That's why Tarquin, unable to hold back any longer, lashed out!

But they were clueless about what exactly transpired in those seconds. However, they were certain the fight wasn't Tarquin's fault; he wasn't to blame. Elysia couldn't make sense of it, "What could Keith have possibly said to drive him to violence?"

The kids shook their heads; they were just as in the dark.

Elijah said with a tight voice, clearly angry, "It definitely wasn't anything nice, or Dad wouldn't have gotten so mad! Dad might have a short fuse, but he's not the type to lash out without reason."

Elijah was fuming, not at Keith directly, but at the situation. Elliot, Evan, and Emmett, despite their past good times with Keith, weren't holding any grudges against him for making their mom upset; they were blaming themselves.

But Elijah saw things differently; from his perspective, an outsider, everything was crystal clear. The whole mess was sparked by Keith's suggestion to test Tarquin. Perhaps Keith knew Tarquin would be at a disadvantage, unable to defend himself verbally, which is why he might have intentionally provoked the fight. He got hurt, knowing full well that their mom would intervene and inevitably question Tarquin about the fight.

Chapter 622

Dad's got his reasons, mixed with a pinch of jealousy, and that's how we ended up in this mess!

Right now, Elijah thinks of Keith as what?

Right, a wolf in sheep's clothing!

He's just like those people you hear about on the inte, all innocent on the surface but scheming behind the scenes, trying to mess up Dad and Mom's relationship! All this talk about "helping to test" - it's a trap!

But without any proof to back up his suspicions, Elijah keeps his mouth shut. No proof, no persuasion.

Luckily, Elliot is clear-headed enough. Even though he doesn't blame Keith, he knows it's not Dad's fault for the fight.

Elysia nods, having known someone for a while now, just like Elijah said, he might have a temper, but he's not the type to start a fight without reason.

"But if it's not his fault, why won't he tell me why they fought?" she muses.

Elijah frowns in response, "Dad must have his reasons, something he can't explain to Mom."

Elysia is puzzled, what could be so hard to say? But she trusts her kids! If they say it wasn't his fault, then it must not be. She decides she needs to talk to him more about it.

After a moment of silence, Elysia says, "Let's not worry about this anymore, it's grown-ups' business. But no more foolishness, and you must tell Mom everything first thing!"

"Is Mom still mad?"

"No, I'm not mad. I know you're all good kids."

Elijah quickly asks, "So, Mom, you're not mad at Dad anymore?"

Elysia thinks for a moment and says, "Fighting is definitely not okay. You can't follow his example. We live in a society of laws; we must be civilized, especially you, Evan, got it? No fighting!"

The kids nod eagerly.

Elysia continues, "But since you all said it wasn't his fault, I won't blame him. As long as he doesn't try to take you away from me, we can live in peace.

Alright, don't worry about this anymore. I'll call Blossom to check on Keith."

Elysia heads back to the bedroom to call Blossom. Blossom reports that Keith needed stitches and is now in a cast. Elysia frowns; it sounds pretty serious.

Blossom asks, "Did you find out why they fought?"

Elysia counters, "Did Keith say anything?"

"With doctors and nurses around on the way, and then all the check-ups at the hospital, I haven't had the chance to ask him."

Elysia sighs, "It's complicated, ask Keith when you get a chance. And tell him I'm sorry about today, I'll cover his medical expenses." Blossom is surprised, "Why would you pay? What about their cheapskate dad?"

Elysia purses her lips, knowing his temper, he wouldn't care about Keith. "He's given me plenty of money before; I'll cover it this time." "Alright, I'll tell Keith."

After a brief chat, they hang up. Elysia holds her phone, debating whether to call Tarquin. But then she thinks better of it, guessing he's still fuming. A conversation now would only lead to another argument. Better let him cool off first.

Meanwhile, Tarquin is already at Blissful Uncle's Bar. Keaton is shocked to see him, sensing the tension in the air as if a few rounds wouldn't be enough to calm him down.

He cautiously asks the brooding figure, "What happened this time?"

Tarquin, lounging on the sofa with his legs crossed, smoking a cigarette, his expression could freeze you solid.

Keaton ventures again, "Is it Elysia again?"

It seems no one else has the power to get under his skin like she does!

Chapter 623

Tarquin's brows furrowed upon hearing the words. He was on the verge of blowing his top but then thought better of it, swallowing his anger as he sullenly took a drag from his cigarette, staying silent.

Keaton already knew the answer and sighed inwardly. He always said, in the game of love, the first one to fall is the one who loses! The one who falls first is always the most vulnerable and gets hurt the easiest! And because Tarquin fell first, that's why he was sulking every other day.

Keaton didn't say anything, just smoked alongside him. When he felt Tarquin had cooled down a bit, he offered, "How about we crack open a beer?" Tarquin, with a cold expression, flicked his cigarette ash, "No!"

If he got drunk and went off to bed, what about Elysia? He wasn't sure the kids could actually cheer Elysia up! And what if that Keith guy took advantage of him being sound asleep to go after Elysia? So, no drinking!

Keaton didn't push it, "So, what's going on with Elysia? Let me help you figure it out."

Tarquin took a deep drag from his cigarette and spilled the beans about Keith. After listening, Keaton couldn't help but exclaim, "Wow, looks like you've got a wolf in sheep's clothing on your hands!"

Both Keaton and Elijah were outsiders in this, which meant they could see the situation clearly and immediately spotted what was really going on. Tarquin, still with a cold demeanor, said, "The guy's a real piece of work, and Elysia won't believe me!"

Keaton replied, "Let's put him aside for a moment and talk about you. Your biggest issue is that even though you know Elysia doesn't like you, you're measuring her actions by the standard of 'she loves you.' How are you not gonna get hurt? From Elysia's perspective, first off, she doesn't like you, why should she trust you? She has no reason to blindly take your side. Second, she's clueless about the whole testing thing, doesn't know why you guys were fighting. So, her asking about the fight is a natural response. Also, you need to see things from another angle. She's taking care of the wolf in sheep's clothing maybe because of you. You were the one who roughed him up; if he died, you'd be responsible! Elysia is thinking ahead for you."

Tarquin, still smoking, didn't reply.

Keaton knew he had cooled down by now and probably understood everything he said. The reason he acted that way was simply out of anger and jealousy, not being rational. All he could think about was who Elysia cared about more!

Keaton continued, "You can't let the wolf in sheep's clothing win! Getting mad at him is one thing, but you can't afford to mess things up with Elysia. If you two are in a tiff, the wolf in sheep's clothing would be thrilled. As long as you and Elysia are solid, the one getting angry will be him!"

Tarquin's brows furrowed again. After calming down, he wasn't mad at Elysia anymore and actually regretted blowing up at her earlier. It's like biting the hand that feeds you, and he was the biter!

Keaton asked, "I haven't heard you mention this guy before, where did he come from?"

After taking a few more puffs of his cigarette, Tarquin finally spoke up, "He's Elliot, Evan, and Emmett's teacher, but he never had any private dealings with Elysia before."

"Right! He's also the teacher of Elysia's sons, so there's no way Elysia could just ignore him. But they've had no private interactions, so how did he fall for Elysia?"

Tarquin grumbled, "Still unclear."

"Have you looked into him?"

"Checked him out, his background is clean."

Given Elliot's cautious nature towards Keith, Keith probably wasn't a threat. Elliot was cautious and would have noticed if Keith was up to no good. Regardless of whether Keith was truly after Elysia or had other motives, the goal was to get rid of him ASAP! But getting rid of him was tricky, given his special status as the teacher of Elliot, Evan, and Emmett!

Keaton guessed his thoughts and suggested, "If it's tricky to take direct action against him, then work it from Elysia's side. Arrange for Elysia to move out of the Blossom household, then switch her sons' preschool. Cut off any chance for the wolf in sheep's clothing to get close to Elysia."

Chapter 624

Tarquin's brow twitched slightly; indeed, that might just work!

Keith was stubbornly refusing to sell his house? Fine, let's have Elysia move out then!

Keith's role as a teacher to Elliot, Evan, and Emmett was a complicated issue? Easy fix: switch the kids' schools, so Keith would no longer be their teacher!

Without any reason to see Elysia, how could he possibly pursue her?

Mulling over his plan, Tarquin suddenly lashed out and kicked Keaton hard.

Keaton, caught off guard, exclaimed, "What the heck, man?!"

Tarquin sneered at him, "You're slightly better company than a stray dog. I'm outta here."

He snubbed out his cigarette and left, leaving Keaton in disbelief.

Keaton muttered under his breath, "Jerk!"

...

When Tarquin returned to the Future Community, he found Elysia cleaning up at Keith's place.

The sight soured his mood further, but this time, he managed to keep his cool, albeit barely. Standing at the doorway, he frowned deeply and said to Elysia, "Come outside."

Elysia glanced at him, a mix of confusion and irritation in her expression. "Give me a minute."

Tarquin's lips pressed into a thin line, fighting the urge to lash out again.

He watched her for a few seconds, bitterness evident in his tone. "I'll wait in the hallway."

"Okay."

Tarquin turned and left, his mood darkening by the second. Elysia continued her chores, feeling guilty for the chaos that had unfolded because of her, turning a once peaceful home into a disaster zone. Moreover, she was doing it for Blossom, who had a faint heart for blood.

Blossom had called earlier, saying she'd be back with Keith soon. Keith, stubborn as always, refused to stay in the hospital and wanted to recuperate at home.

Elysia hurried to clean up the most conspicuous blood stains, planning to deal with the rest later, mindful of Tarquin waiting outside.

Upon stepping out, she saw him at the end of the hallway, smoking, a clear sign of his bad mood.

She sighed inwardly, approaching him. Tarquin immediately put out his cigarette; he knew she hated the smell.

"Shall we take a walk downstairs?" Elysia offered, her voice calm and gentle, surprising Tarquin given their recent fallout.

He eyed her warily, "You're not mad anymore?"

"I'm over it. But violence is never the answer. It sets a bad example for the kids," Elysia replied, her tone firm yet fair.

Tarquin felt a twinge of defiance but managed to keep a conciliatory face. "I'll be more mindful, at least not in front of the kids."

To himself, he thought, if it comes to it, I'd still take a stand, kids or no kids around.

Elysia rolled her eyes, "You should avoid fighting altogether. We're adults, not schoolkids. Talk things out instead of throwing punches." Tarquin mumbled, "You hit me all the time, too."

"I... do I?!" Elysia was taken aback, then caught his teasing gaze.

She couldn't help but smile, albeit briefly, at his playful accusation.

"Fine, but I don't make a habit of it. And it's hardly the same as you fighting Keith. You were out for blood."

Recalling the intensity of their altercation made her shudder. If the kids hadn't intervened, Keith could have been seriously hurt.

Seeing her flustered made Tarquin's mood lift. His earlier gloom vanished as he flashed a charming smile, his tone affectionate, "I don't mind you hitting me, just keep it private. A man's got his pride."

Elysia paused, sensing something off in his words but was interrupted before she could ponder further.

"Let's go," Tarquin suggested eagerly.

"Where to?"

"On a date."

Her heart skipped a beat at his words, her eyes wide in surprise.

"A date?"

Chapter 625

Tarquin retorted, "Weren't you just asking me out?"

It took Elysia a moment to realize what he was implying, and when she did, she felt a mix of embarrassment and irritation. "Call that a date? I was merely suggesting we take a walk downstairs!"

She was worried that Keith might return unexpectedly, leading to a possible altercation between him and Tarquin in the hallway.

So, she thought it would be better to invite him for a walk outside to discuss things properly.

And here he was, making it about a date. Was his head filled with air or what?

Tarquin's handsome eyes narrowed slightly, "Feeling disappointed?"

"I...", she started.

"Next time, I'll be the one to ask you out."

Elysia's face turned a shade redder, "Who's disappointed? Stop talking nonsense! Even if you asked, I wouldn't be free! Let's go!"

With that, she spun on her heels towards the elevator, her steps slightly hurried.

A charming smile crept across Tarquin's lips; she seemed shy.

Why would she feel shy around him unless she harbored some feelings for him, perhaps unknowingly?

Tarquin felt a surge of pleasure at the thought. After all, he considered himself pretty experienced in these matters.

He cheerfully caught up with her, his long strides closing the distance. "Even a walk downstairs counts as a date."

"Get lost!"

Elysia snapped at him before stepping into the elevator.

Tarquin followed suit, his gaze fixed on her with an amused smile.

Elysia frowned, avoiding his look, her mind a whirlwind of thoughts.

Keith had provoked him, testing whether Tarquin had feelings for her, which led to a fight. Why did he hit Keith? Was it because he was irritated by the misunderstanding, or was it out of jealousy?

If it was the former, it meant Tarquin had no interest in her whatsoever. But if it was the latter, it hinted at something more, especially considering the baffling things he'd said in anger previously...

Elysia was leaning towards the latter option.

But why would he like her? What was there to like?

She wanted to confront him about his feelings directly but hesitated. What if she was wrong? How embarrassing that would be, making her seem conceited!

All she wanted was to understand why he fought with Keith, but Tarquin wouldn't say.

As Elysia was internally debating, Tarquin suddenly called out, "Elysia."

"What?!" Her tone was a bit sharp.

"Lost in thoughts?"

"None of your business!"

"...So, are we still going for that walk?"

"Of course! Aren't we already on our way down?"

Tarquin pressed his lips together, glancing at the elevator door.

Only then did Elysia realize they had reached the ground floor; the elevator doors had been open for a while. If it weren't for him holding the door open, they might have ended up heading back upstairs.

Embarrassed, Elysia mumbled something and exited the elevator.

"What's on your mind?" Tarquin asked her again.

"Nothing!"

As Elysia stepped out of the building, Tarquin followed closely behind, like a loyal guard dog ensuring her safety.

The temperature in Jindale City had noticeably risen this month, with the sun shining brightly, casting a warm, golden glow that felt soothing.

Most people were at work at this hour, leaving the neighborhood quiet.

They walked along the community's jogging track, and after a while, Elysia glanced at Tarquin, "You know about the kids teaming up with Keith to test you today, right?"

Tarquin, hands in his pockets, looked back at her, his usually charming gaze now laced with an extra hint of allure, making him even more tempting. He nodded, "Yeah."

Elysia's heart fluttered, and she quickly averted her gaze, feeling unusually flustered today. Even the simple act of making eye contact with him made her heart race.

Chapter 626

Elysia steadied herself and said, "I didn't expect the kids to be so immature. They saw us getting along lately and jumped to the conclusion that you like me. Kids don't understand the complexities of adult relationships. Don't overthink it, and definitely don't blame them. I've already cleared things up with them, and they..."

"How did you explain it?" Tarquin interrupted her.

"...I told them there's nothing going on between us."

"Nothing going on?"

Elysia instinctively swallowed. They had been intimate and even had a child together; it was hardly 'nothing going on'.

And just a few hours ago, they were kissing in the study...

Elysia felt her cheeks burning, "...I meant 'nothing going on' as in you don't like me. You don't like me, do you?"

She sneaked a glance at Tarquin, her eyes probing.

She wanted to hear his answer...

Tarquin's eyes narrowed, catching every bit of her nervousness and shyness. Was she testing him?

He watched her, hesitating for a moment before deciding not to take the risk of being too direct, changing the subject instead, "I didn't overthink it, and I'm not upset with the kids for banding together with Keith to test me."

The kids wanted to confirm his feelings for Elysia, which he could understand. After all, Elysia was their cherished treasure, and they obviously wanted to figure things out.

Elysia frowned. Why wouldn't he give a straight answer?

If he did, she could understand his thoughts and stop driving herself crazy.

"What exactly did the kids tell you?" he asked again.

Elysia pushed her thoughts aside and answered, "The kids were honest with me, saying it wasn't your fault."

Tarquin was touched and told her, "Those kids are sharper than you think, smarter too."

Elysia knew he was nudging her about her attitude toward Keith and immediately clarified, "He's their teacher, so of course, I'm going to be decent to him. And even though I haven't spent time with him outside school, Blossom and the kids always mention how handsome and nice he is, that he..."

"Is he more handsome than me?" Tarquin interrupted, clearly annoyed.

Elysia took a quick glance at him...

Truth be told, both he and Keith were handsome, but in different ways. Tarquin had a cold allure, while Keith's charm was more gentle. Their vibes were different.

But if push came to shove, he might just be the more handsome one!

Elysia decided not to entertain his trivial question and continued, "First off, my respect for Keith isn't the same as liking him. Asking you about the fight wasn't about taking sides or defending him. Secondly, I trust my kids. If they say it wasn't your fault, then I stand by you! But fighting, especially in front of the kids, is not okay!"

Tarquin felt a wave of relief wash over him. She might be naïve, but she was loyal!

She blindly trusted her kids, who were smart enough to discern right from wrong. Importantly, they were good-natured and morally sound, which meant they wouldn't lead her astray.

Tarquin apologized proactively, "I was out of line today. He got under my skin, and I lost it for a moment. I promise I won't snap at you again." "...What did he say that got to you?"

Tarquin frowned, knowing Keith's words would upset her if she heard them.

No doubt Keith had banked on him keeping quiet, which is why he had been so bold.

Elysia probed further, "Are you angry because he said he likes me?"

Chapter 627

"Sort of, but not exactly."

Elysia frowned, confusion lacing her voice. "What do you mean 'sort of, but not exactly'?"

Tarquin didn't elaborate, his tone serious. "Let's move."

"Excuse me?"

"I've got a friend who's got a vacation home sitting empty. You and the kids can move in there. No rent, and it's a comfortable place."

He quickly added, hoping to ease any worries Elysia might have, "You and the kids would move. I wouldn't be coming."

Elysia was speechless.

Tarquin continued, "There's a great preschool nearby, too. I can help with transferring the kids."

"Transfer schools?!"

"Yeah, it's a better school than the one around here. And don't worry about the paperwork or tuition fees."

Elysia frowned, "No way!"

Staying in his friend's house felt too close for comfort, almost as if they were living under his roof. It would make it too easy for their secret to be exposed.

They were getting along fine now, but who's to say he wouldn't change his tune and fight her for custody if he found out about the triplets?

She couldn't take that risk.

Not unless he and she...

Tarquin was puzzled. "Why not?"

Elysia struggled to find an excuse. "Personal reasons I'd rather not discuss. But I'm definitely not moving or transferring the kids."

Seeing her resolve, Tarquin's brows knitted tighter together.

Before he could say anything, Elysia quickly added, "This has nothing to do with Keith. Don't jump to conclusions."

Tarquin's expression darkened. "But I'm suggesting this move because of him! Keith is bad news. Buying the house across from Blossom was no accident. He's up to something!"

Elysia looked at him calmly. "Do you have any proof?"

Tarquin fell silent.

Elysia explained, "I'm not accusing you of slandering Keith. I just want to know why you'd say that. After all, Blossom and the kids think Keith is a decent guy."

Tarquin replied coldly, "He's just good at pretending! I can't prove it right now, but I'm sure there's something off about him! I wouldn't harm you!" Elysia held his gaze for a few seconds. "I believe you wouldn't hurt me. But if you think Keith is up to something, what do you think it is?" Tarquin was at a loss for words.

He had wondered about Keith's real motive for getting close to Elysia but hadn't figured it out yet.

"Do

you think Keith is not just testing the waters, but actually likes me?" Elysia asked.

Tarquin frowned, pondering before asking, "What do you think?"

Elysia was candid. "I don't think he likes me. Not only is it a lot of pressure dating someone with three sons, but Keith and I also have no private contact. We don't even have each other's numbers. If he liked me, he'd at least ask Blossom for my contact or try to bump into me occasionally, right? Emotions can't be controlled that easily. He wouldn't be able to stay so detached."

Tarquin found himself agreeing with Elysia's logic.

The fact that Keith could completely vanish from her sight at least proved he wasn't that into Elysia.

And then there were the things Keith said after turning off the listening device today!

He talked about dreaming of intimate moments with Elysia, in various places, in various positions...

He got into graphic detail, which is why Tarquin couldn't hold back and punched him!

That's also why he didn't tell Elysia or the kids when they asked about it later.

The kids were too young for such topics.

And as for Elysia, he didn't want to upset her. After all, no woman would be pleased to hear someone fantasizing about them in such a manner.

Chapter 628

Keith's words were downright disrespectful to Elysia!

How can you truly like someone and not show them respect?

So, Tarquin also doubted Keith's feelings for Elysia.

But...

If Keith didn't like her at all, why would he go out of his way to buy the house right across from Blossom's? And why create drama today of all days?

His interest in Elysia surely wasn't because he liked her or wanted to pursue her. There had to be another reason!

What could that reason be?

Was he here for Elysia or for some other ulterior motive?

Elysia was clueless about what Tarquin was pondering. She went on to say,

"Regardless, I don't think Keith likes me. I'm not planning on moving or changing the kids' school, but I'll keep your words in mind and remind the kids to keep their distance from Keith as much as possible."

Hearing this, Tarquin snapped out of his thoughts, his brows furrowing tightly.

He could have forced her to move or change schools, but the thought of how she'd react held him back.

He didn't want to upset her.

So, he compromised,

"If you really don't want to move, I won't force you. But you have to promise to stay away from him. Otherwise, I'll worry about your and Elijah's safety so much that I might just force you to move!"

"...I promise, I'll try my best."

For her, Keith was just a stranger she had met once. Keeping or not keeping in touch didn't matter much.

Their conversation went smoothly, the only thing bothering Elysia was that she still couldn't figure out what Tarquin felt for her.

They continued walking down the track, oblivious to the eyes watching them from above.

By now, Blossom and Keith had both returned.

Keith stood by the window, watching the two walk side by side. Although he couldn't make out their expressions, he knew it was Elysia and Tarquin. His eyes narrowed, his expression unreadable, leaving one to wonder what was on his mind.

Blossom, having made his bed, came to tell him to get some rest.

Keith finally turned around, saying kindly, "Thanks, Ms. Blythe."

Blossom replied heartily,

"Ah, don't be so formal. I heard about the mix-up from Elysia. Mr. Bradford must know it's all a misunderstanding by now. Get some rest, and we'll clear things up when we all have a chance to talk."

"Alright."

"I'll head home now. You're not in any condition to cook, so either we'll bring you some food later, or you can join us at my place." "Sounds good."

Just as Blossom left Keith's place, Elysia and Tarquin returned.

Seeing Blossom, Elysia quickly asked, "How's Keith?"

Not mingling was one thing, but today's fight had to be addressed, especially since Keith was seriously injured.

Blossom replied, "He's quite banged up, but it's nothing that won't heal with some rest, according to the doctor." "...I'll go check on him."

Tarquin, visibly displeased but knowing he couldn't stop Elysia, said, "I'll come with you."

Elysia immediately stopped him,

"You should check on the kids. I'll be fine on my own, I'll be back soon."

She practically pushed him back home.

She didn't dare let him see Keith, not with the mood he was in. They might end up fighting again, and keeping him away from Keith was the safest bet!

Her visit to Keith was merely out of politeness and a sense of responsibility.

Blossom accompanied her, whispering conspiratorially as if she had just uncovered a great secret,

"Elysia, I'm telling you, he's definitely into you!"

Elysia was taken aback, "Who?"

Was she talking about someone in particular, or Keith?

Chapter 629

Blossom exclaimed, "Of course, it's Elijah's dad!"

Elysia's heart raced. "How did you know? He... he never told me he liked me!"

"But he's already proven it with his actions! He got into a fight today because of you! Think about it, for a guy his age to get so heated over a woman that he ends up throwing punches, what else could it be if not love? Trust me, you don't need to doubt it; he's totally into you!"

Blossom's conviction made Elysia's heart beat even faster, to the point where her breathing became difficult and her cheeks flushed.

He likes her?

He really likes her?

Blossom nudged her with her shoulder, a gossip-hungry look on her face. "Come on, spill the beans, you've fallen for him too, haven't you?" "I... I have not!" Elysia stuttered, refusing to admit it.

It wasn't entirely about not wanting to admit it; she honestly didn't know how she felt about him. She was a mom, for crying out loud, and had never been in love, never had a crush. Her emotional world was a blank slate, clueless about what love even was. She knew she didn't dislike him, but was unsure if she liked him too.

"Your face is all red, you're blushing! Blushing means you like him, Elysia, you're in love!" Blossom declared, looking both surprised and all-knowing. Elysia's cheeks turned even redder with embarrassment. "What do you know, being single and all, stop talking nonsense."

"Don't underestimate the single folks; it's the spectators who see the game clearly, and I'm that spectator right now. You're definitely falling for him." Elysia felt her heart flutter, even her ears turning red. "Stop it, let's go check on Keith."

Worried Blossom might say more, she quickly knocked on the neighboring door. Despite not wanting to admit it, she indeed felt shy; this indescribable feeling was new to her.

Could this be what liking someone feels like?

But when did she start liking him?

How could she fall for him?

With a creak, the door opened. Elysia snapped back to reality.

Keith stood there, still in the white crew-neck sweater he wore that morning, his posture upright, exuding a gentle, gentlemanly vibe, like someone from a prestigious family. He had an artistic aura about him, not something forced but cultivated from years surrounded by the arts. You'd never guess he taught physical education, and in a preschool, no less. Now, with one arm in a cast and a bruised face, he seemed somewhat vulnerable. Elysia couldn't imagine what 'bad' meant in his case. If he was truly a bad guy, then he was terrifyingly good at pretending!

Elysia shivered unconsciously. Composing herself, she greeted him politely, "Hey Keith, Blossom mentioned you were back. Just wanted to check on you."

Keith smiled warmly. "Don't worry about me, I'm fine. Come in, let's chat."

Elysia nodded, stepping inside with Blossom. As soon as she sat down, she rushed to apologize, "I only found out after your hospital visit that today's incident was because of me. I'm so sorry, I..."

She still had Tarquin's words in mind, not planning to befriend Keith, but felt responsible since Keith was hurt because of her. In addition to apologizing for herself, she unintentionally included Tarquin, "...Actually, despite his temper, he's not a bad guy. Today's fight was an accident, he..." Keith listened quietly, nodding as she spoke well of Tarquin. He kept a serene smile, looking gracious and unfazed. After Elysia finished, he finally spoke, "You don't need to apologize, nor do you need to for him. Today wasn't your fault, nor his. I initiated the challenge, and though it ended in a misunderstanding with some injuries, these minor wounds are nothing. Don't feel guilty."

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"And it was me who got under his skin first, not his fault. I didn't watch my tone, kinda provoked him," Keith admitted with a rueful smile. "Provoked?" Elysia was taken aback.

"Yeah, I told him I liked you and he better stay away from you. Said I wouldn't be so nice if he didn't. Honestly, I just wanted to see if he'd back off. Never expected him to throw the first punch. And man, he's got some moves. I didn't stand a chance, got totally outplayed."

Elysia was silent, processing.

So, the fight wasn't necessarily about her.

Given his personality, he couldn't stand being taunted. Even without her in the picture, he might've still lashed out after Keith's provocation.

Was the fight about her or not?

Did he like her, or didn't he?

Lately, he had been quite nice to her, even... even kissed her, and it was very... very...

"Elysia!" Blossom nudged her abruptly.

Elysia flinched, "Huh?"

"Zoning out? Keith was talking to you."

"Oh, sorry, I was just thinking... yeah, he's got a short fuse, can't take a challenge. But he's not a bad guy, really, he..."

Blossom rolled her eyes, trying to bring her back to the point.

"Keith was asking who's covering the medical expenses, you or him?"

Elysia turned even more embarrassed, quickly replying, "Oh, I transferred it to Blossom, but it's his money. Please, just take it, it's the least we can do."

Her phone rang right at that moment; it was from Tarquin.

Elysia knew he was urging her to come back, so she didn't pick up, instead telling Keith, "You just rest up, Keith. Lunch is on us. We'll bring you something nice."

She meant to bring him something, not invite him over.

Keith nodded, his smile unfaltering, "Then I won't be shy about it. Thanks a lot."

"It's nothing, really." Elysia got up to leave.

Her interaction with Keith fluctuated between formalities and evident distraction...

Keith noticed, his eyes flickering with an unspoken thought but remained composed as he stood to see Elysia and Blossom off.

Opening the door, they were met with a surprise!

A group of people in uniform stood outside, at least seven or eight of them!

Tarquin, however, stole the show.

Dressed in a sleek suit, standing casually among them, he was a sight to behold with his charming looks and commanding presence.

Elysia was confused, unsure what was happening.

Before she could ask, Tarquin took her hand. Not the wrist, the hand.

In front of everyone, he pulled her to his side, his tone familiar as if they were an old married couple.

"Keith's a bachelor, and it's not appropriate for a lady to be coming and going from his place. Let the caregivers handle it, you don't need to worry."

His gaze then shifted to Keith, his expression turning ice-cold.

Thinking he could use his injury to get Elysia's attention? Fat chance.

Who did he think he was, to deserve Elysia's care?

He wouldn't even let her lift a finger!

"I've covered the caregiver expenses, consider it a charity. Just focus on getting better, and don't cause any trouble."

With a meaningful warning, Tarquin took Elysia's hand and led her back to their place.

Keith watched their retreating figures, his face emotionless, but a storm was brewing in his eyes.