

Hitched 671

Chapter 671

Elysia's heart was racing, pounding against her chest as Keaton spoke again,

"I've been his wingman since we were kids, nobody knows him better than I do. You might question his temper, but never doubt his love for you. He's head over heels for you, Elysia. If I'm lying, you can have my sister come and slap me!"

Keaton, fearless as he was, had only one fear - his sister!

Anyone who knew him knew that.

After hanging up, Elysia stared blankly at her phone.

Truth be told, these past few days had been anything but joyful for her. Ever since she realized her feelings for him, especially after Keith entered the picture...

It was either arguments or cold wars between them.

Three days of silent treatment, and she hadn't slept a wink, walking around like a zombie, heart aching and on the verge of tears at the drop of a hat. She was utterly drained.

Today, he had finally shown up, only to find Keith unexpectedly helping with a plumbing issue, sparking jealousy and anger once again.

They hadn't even had a proper conversation before things escalated to this point.

She was unhappy, and he was undoubtedly even more so.

Keaton was right; they couldn't keep getting upset over others!

After much hesitation, Elysia typed out a message to Tarquin, "I want to have a serious talk with you, about us."

Before sending, she deleted it and rephrased it,

"I want to have a serious talk, about us."

She changed 'you and me' to 'us'.

At that moment, Tarquin was braving the icy waters of the Atlantic, going for a winter swim.

He had drunk more than his fair share tonight, feeling particularly down. Leaving the bar, he found solace at the beachside.

Alone, with the sea breeze as his only companion, he thought of Elysia.

And with thoughts of her, came the inevitable thoughts of Keith.

Keith's taunting pictures, his derisive laughter, his provocative words...

The more he thought about it, the more irritated he became. So, he crushed his cigarette and leaped into the sea.

In January, Jindale City was bitterly cold, and the sea was freezing, paralyzing him as he plunged in, immobilizing his limbs.

He didn't struggle, didn't react, just let the sea engulf him.

He never understood why people called love a poison, addictive and inescapable, until now!

Since realizing his feelings for Elysia were different from any he'd had for other women, he had lost all control.

He was at the mercy of these emotions, step by step, from the initial spark to complete surrender.

His feelings for Elysia were intense, his heart ablaze, yet he treaded lightly, fearing he might scare her away.

Unable to fully express his love, he felt suppressed. Keith's arrival only amplified this feeling to its peak!

So he was sad, heartbroken, furious, and anxious!

Now, all these emotions had morphed into fear!

He believed Elysia didn't like Keith; if she did, there'd be no reason for her to lie to him.

But Keith's words tonight filled him with dread...

Elysia opening up to Keith meant she didn't see him as a stranger!

It at least suggested the possibility she might grow to like him!

What if today's indifference turned into tomorrow's affection?

Overwhelmed by a sense of crisis, he struggled for breath!

Just when the sea was about to claim him, he started moving his limbs, breaking the surface for air before diving back into the depths.

In the pitch-black night, he swam alone in the sea, venting all the pent-up negative emotions within him!

He was genuinely, deeply in love with her, longing to lay his feelings bare, to let her know how much she meant to him, yet always fearing he might push her away!

He was giving her time, hoping with each day she'd grow fonder of him, waiting for the right moment to confess his feelings!

But Keith's sudden appearance had thrown a wrench in his plans!

Keith came prepared, and Tarquin feared that before he had a chance to confess, Elysia might already be swept off her feet by Keith!

Chapter 672

The more Tarquin thought about it, the more his heart raced. Without another moment's hesitation, he turned and swam back to shore with all his might.

He couldn't let things progress to a point of no return!

He couldn't wait any longer!

He couldn't afford to live with regret, couldn't stand the thought of Elysia being swept off her feet by Keith and then having to nurse his wounds in solitude!

He had to find Elysia, to open up his heart to her, to confess his feelings!

He had to make his feelings known to Elysia before Keith had a chance to whisk her away!

He wanted to tell her, he loved her, was madly in love with her!

He was nearly going insane because of her!

Tarquin swam from the ocean's embrace back to shore, the chilly wind cutting through his drenched clothes, stimulating his skin. He didn't feel cold, though; instead, he felt a burning heat inside!

At that moment, a fierce fire was blazing within his heart!

Getting back to his car, he grabbed his phone only to see missed calls and messages from Elysia!

Surprised and thrilled, seeing her concerned and worried words made him come alive, grinning like an idiot.

She cared so much; she must really like him!

Yes, she cared, she liked him!

Tarquin roughly wiped away the seawater obscuring his vision, pulling out a tissue to dry his phone screen.

His eyes locked on her last message, and his heart began to race...

What did she want to talk about regarding them?

No matter what it was, he had to lay his cards on the table tonight!

Determined, Tarquin was about to message Elysia back when a new message popped up!

He opened it, and his heart skipped a beat!

His body froze, his expression cycling through disbelief!

Elijah's mother... was coming back?

How could this be...

Ding-

Another message came in, "Get ready for a welcome back party. The three of you will finally be reunited. Congratulations."

Tarquin's breathing became erratic, barely processing the truth behind the message.

He had forgotten, utterly forgotten!

His mind had been filled with nothing but Elysia these past days. Opening his eyes, he saw her; closing them, it was still her. His love for her was so intense it had completely overshadowed Elijah's mother!

This message was a stark reminder.

Between him and Elysia, there was Elijah's mother!

Before, such news might have filled him with joy, but now, it brought nothing but anxiety, nervousness, and uncertainty.

Elijah's mother was coming back, what about him and Elysia?

Breathing heavily, Tarquin was overwhelmed by an indescribable emotion, suffocating him!

Ding ding ding, ding ding ding...

His phone wouldn't stop ringing. Elysia was calling again.

Tarquin stared at the screen, his hand trembling slightly, too afraid to answer.

Boom-

Suddenly, a roll of thunder exploded, followed by a downpour!

Sitting in his car, Tarquin was instantly enveloped by the rain.

The relentless rain pelted the car windows, making a 'pitter-patter' sound that struck directly at his already tumultuous heart.

Elysia, hearing the thunder, quickly got out of bed, grabbed her phone, and ran to the window.

The relentless rain made her even more anxious!

No word from him, where could he be?

In such heavy rain, did he have an umbrella? Was he soaked?

The phone kept ringing, but no one answered, driving Elysia to the brink of worry!

Looking out at the pouring rain, she lost control and sent him a voice message,

"Please don't scare me, okay? I don't like Keith, not one bit! It's you I like! I like you so much! Please, reply to my message, can we talk?"

Just as she successfully sent the voice message, Keaton suddenly sent her a location,

"I found him! He's here!"

Without a second thought, Elysia checked the location, threw on a coat, and rushed out the door!

Chapter 673

Winter in the North is known for its blizzards, so rain during this season is a sure sign something's off. This unusual weather only heightened Elysia's concerns for Tarquin, who'd been acting distant and preoccupied.

With worry nagging at her, Elysia bolted out of her apartment building, umbrella in hand. The moment the fierce wind flipped her umbrella inside out, her heart nearly leaped out of her chest!

Lightning tore across the sky, followed by the deep rumble of thunder, causing Elysia to slip and fall to the ground.

A security guard patrolling the neighborhood spotted her and rushed over with his umbrella.

"Ms. Thorne? Are you alright?"

Helped to her feet by two guards, they commented, "Out in such heavy rain at night, and in slippers no less?"

Only then did Elysia realize her choice of footwear. In her haste, she'd forgotten to change her shoes. Now, her feet were soaked and cold.

"You're soaked through, let's get you back inside. Change into something dry and warm up, you don't want to catch a cold," one guard suggested. Shaking her head, Elysia declined, "Thanks, but I need to head out, it's urgent."

Ignoring the guards' concerned looks, Elysia, umbrella in hand and slippers squelching, made her way to the exit.

As thunder continued to roll and the wind howled like an angry deity, Elysia's heart ached. It felt as though a giant hand was squeezing her heart, making it hard to breathe.

Arriving at the beach around 2 a.m., Tarquin still hadn't replied to her messages.

She tried calling him, but his phone was off.

Why would he turn off his phone? Was it out of battery, or did he do it intentionally after seeing her message?

She had confessed her feelings to him, but did he even hear her? If so, why was there no response?

Was he alright?

With her mind buzzing, Elysia pushed the car door open and dashed into the pouring rain.

The taxi driver, noticing she left her umbrella behind, called out, but Elysia's figure had already disappeared into the night...

The rain intensified, and the desolate beach was empty. Normally, Elysia wouldn't dare venture here at this hour, not even for all the money in the world. Yet, tonight, consumed with thoughts of Tarquin, she forgot her fear.

Meanwhile, Tarquin stood on the beach in the rain, the stormy weather mirroring his turbulent emotions.

He looked up, allowing the rain to wash over his face, hoping it could cleanse his inner turmoil.

Two unexpected messages tonight reminded him of Elijah's mother's existence.

Regardless of whether she returned, just the thought of her filled him with guilt.

He had promised to make her the happiest and most honored woman in the world.

Though he harbored resentment for her abandoning Elijah, it didn't deter his resolve to take responsibility.

Initially, his aim was to reunite their family. However, he realized that responsibility didn't equate to love, and compensation wasn't the same as affection.

Still, he wanted to offer her the choice, a form of compensation and a way to honor his word.

He hoped to steer clear of any romantic entanglements until her return, offering compensation if she chose not to stay with him. Then, he could move on with his life.

Unfortunately, emotions aren't easily controlled. His feelings for Elysia surpassed his grasp, uncontrollably veering into love.

He loved her to the brink of madness.

Chapter 674

Elijah's mom - a memory Tarquin had almost forgotten existed in his life!

Now, out of the blue, he's hit with the news that she's making a comeback. This wasn't just idle gossip; it had the ring of truth to it.

And just like that, his world was thrown into chaos!

Choosing Elijah's mom meant he had to put his relationship with Elysia on hold. Forget Keith's lurking presence; Tarquin couldn't even bring himself to ask Elysia to wait for him.

He was in the dark about what Elijah's mom would decide, leaving him unable to promise Elysia a future.

Asking her to wait would unfairly make her his plan B.

He loved her too much to ever treat her like that!

But how could he face Elijah's mom if he chose Elysia?

Even if Elijah's mom understood and stepped back, Tarquin's guilt wouldn't let him be at peace.

Six years ago, he had been the one to insist, changing her from a girl to a woman on her very first night. How could he not feel responsible?!

Tarquin was a mess of guilt, agitation, frustration... a storm of negative emotions that left him struggling to breathe!

"Tarquin Bradford?!"

A familiar voice suddenly broke through his turmoil, making him spin around in surprise.

It was Elysia, running towards him, her presence giving his heart a jolt of shock and excitement.

The sand underfoot made her struggle in her flip-flops, so she kicked them off and ran barefoot towards him.

A sudden sharp pain made her cry out and fall, "Ouch!"

Realizing this wasn't a dream but reality - she'd really come for him - Tarquin rushed to her side, "Are you okay?!"

Seeing her drenched and bedraggled tugged at his heartstrings.

He scooped her up and headed for his car without a second thought.

As Elysia clung to him, looking relieved yet utterly vulnerable, her eyes filled with unspoken hurt.

"Did you get my messages?" she asked.

Tarquin, lost for words, countered, "Why did you come out in this pouring rain all by yourself?"

"You weren't answering your phone, and you didn't reply to my texts!"

Tarquin looked away, guilt-ridden, "I'm sorry."

Elysia's voice wavered, "I don't want your apologies! Did you even see my last message?"

She had confessed her feelings, despite it not being an official declaration. She'd laid her heart bare, and he hadn't responded... Tarquin remained silent, gently placing Elysia in the car before checking her foot, finding a small cut likely caused by a seashell.

"I've got a first aid kit in the trunk. I'll grab it."

After adjusting the car's heater to its highest setting, Tarquin dashed out into the rain to fetch the medical supplies.

No sooner had he stepped out than Elysia followed, standing in the pouring rain and asking once more, "Did you even see my last message?"

Tarquin, his brow furrowed in concern, tried to usher her back into the car, but Elysia stood firm, facing him in the downpour.

This was her safeguarding her heart. If he had seen the message but still avoided the topic, it meant he couldn't reciprocate her feelings, regardless of the reason.

She knew herself well. She'd be heartbroken, likely to cry.

But in the rain, her tears would be hidden, allowing her some semblance of dignity.

Tarquin swallowed hard, "I saw it."

Chapter 675

Elysia pinched the soft flesh of her palm hard, her eyes brimming with tears, "Why didn't you respond when you saw my message?" "I... I'm sorry."

Sorry?

He was apologizing to her!

So, he was rejecting her feelings!

Elysia felt a pang of heartache, just like any girl whose confession had been turned down, her tears uncontrollably mixed with the rain, thankfully concealing her sorrow from him.

"I get it." Elysia forced herself to sound calm, pretending to be unharmed, "I just said it in case you were down because of Keith, to cheer you up. Don't take it seriously."

What she implied was clear: It's fine you don't like me, because I don't like you either!

Tarquin was confused,

"But didn't your last message ask me to reply asap, wanting to talk about us?"

Elysia paused, "That was the one before! The last one was a voicemail!"

"Voicemail? You sent me a voicemail?"

Elysia: "..."

Tarquin explained, "I was swimming when you tried to reach me, and by the time I wanted to reply, I got caught up in something, and then I left the phone in the car."

Elysia was surprised, "Then your phone was off, did you know?"

"It was? No, I didn't know."

Elysia: "...". He clearly hadn't seen her message.

Meaning, his apology wasn't a rejection of her feelings!

The sadness was replaced with nervousness.

Before she could say anything, Tarquin again carefully lifted her into the car.

After closing the door, he began to clean the wounds on her feet.

"I'll drive you home," he said, after finishing.

As he moved to the driver's seat, Elysia grabbed his hand, "Don't you have anything to say to me?"

Tarquin frowned in silence for a moment,

"I was in a bad mood today and did something terrible at the bar... I kissed you in front of everyone... I'm sorry. And I'm sorry for worrying you by not replying to your messages."

Elysia shook her head, "I didn't come here to hear your apology! I want to know what's really bothering you today. Is it because of Keith?"

Tarquin frowned, about to admit that Keith was indeed a part of his troubles and he was planning to confess everything to her. But now, he was at a loss for words!

Elysia said firmly, "I don't like him! I can tell you seriously, again, I don't like him! Not one bit! Don't get the wrong idea!"

Tarquin looked at her with a complex expression, clearly not buoyed by her assurance.

Elysia frowned, "Don't you believe me?"

"I do believe you," he admitted, though he was worried she might fall for Keith someday, he believed her current feelings. Elysia was puzzled,

"Then why are you still unhappy? Is there another reason for your mood today?"

Tarquin's frown deepened. Keith was only a small part of the problem; the real issue was Elijah's mother!

But he didn't know how to explain this to Elysia...

Suddenly, Elysia asked, "Are you facing a financial crisis?"

If it wasn't Keith, then money issues were the next logical conclusion.

"Did you lose money in some business deal again? I have money! I haven't touched what you gave me; it's all yours!"

Tarquin looked at her, touched and also pained.

She was so careful with her money, and yet she was willing to give it all to him. If that wasn't love, he didn't know what was! Yet, he didn't know how to respond to her affection.

Tarquin shook his head, "I'm not in a financial crisis. Don't worry. Let me take you home to change."

He attempted to leave, avoiding the topic of Elijah's mother, wanting to escape the conversation.

But Elysia wouldn't let him, grabbing him tightly,

"We need to clear things up tonight!"

"Elysia..."

"Please, don't scare me, okay? I don't like Keith, not one bit! I like you! A lot! Please, let's talk, okay?"

Tarquin was stunned.

Elysia, cheeks flushed red, looked at him determinedly, her resolve firm as she played the voicemail on her phone for him!

She was shy and easily embarrassed, but she couldn't continue in this vague state with him any longer.

She was unhappy recently, and so was he. It was better to clear the air once and for all!

Perhaps the rain outside the car window gave her courage.

Or perhaps his unusual behavior ignited a sense of urgency in her. She needed to express her feelings, to understand his thoughts! She played the voicemail again, her heart racing with anticipation.

Chapter 676

"I don't like Keith, not one bit! It's you I like! So much, so very much!"

He remained silent, and she played the message for the third time, "...I like you, so much, so very much..."

The car was filled with her eager voice, Tarquin looked at her with eyes wide, disbelief written all over his face!

He never imagined she'd make the first move!

She...

Elysia's gaze was resolute as she looked at him,

"This is the only chance I'm giving us. If you're not willing to open up to me now, don't expect me to listen if you change your mind later!"

Tarquin's expression turned even grimmer. He stared straight at Elysia, wanting to say something but found himself at a loss for words.

Outside the car window, the rain poured down relentlessly, as the two of them sat inside, looking at each other, listening to the sound of the rain and the voice of their own hearts.

Time ticked away, her voice confessing her feelings for him echoed inside the car.

Tarquin's breathing became rapid, his face a mix of surprise, delight, and panic.

If not for the memory of Elijah's mother, he would be over the moon right now!

But Elijah's mother was his Achilles' heel, he couldn't just ignore her!

Yet, Elysia had no idea what was on his mind!

As her voice message played over and over, declaring her affection, he remained unresponsive, hurting Elysia deeply.

If he truly liked her, he couldn't possibly remain indifferent!

At the very least, he wouldn't be without a single word of happiness!

Elysia felt miserable, so miserable that her nostrils burned and a lump formed in her throat. Watching him swallow hard, she pushed the car door open and dashed back into the rain, running blindly forward!

Tarquin was horrified, a fear of being completely abandoned by her welled up inside him, and he hurried after her, "Elysia!"

He grabbed her, but she resisted!

He called her name, and she yelled back, "Don't you dare call me!"

They struggled in the pouring rain, Elysia emotionally charged, screaming and hitting!

When she couldn't shake his grip, she bit him!

After biting, she started to cry...

Her emotions escalated, and Tarquin, heart aching, forcefully pulled her into his embrace and kissed her! "Uh, uh..."

Elysia first resisted, but soon gave in, and after conceding, she began to boldly reciprocate.

She tiptoed, wrapped her arms around his neck, and lost herself in the kiss.

Her passionate response was like an aphrodisiac, sending tremors through Tarquin's heart.

He pulled her closer, pressing her body against his, and kissed her fervently!

The rain continued to fall, the two of them standing in it, pouring all their tumultuous feelings into the kiss.

Only when they were on the verge of losing control, when only a sliver of reason remained, did they part, ending the kiss.

Elysia finally calmed down, but the sadness did not fade. She hung her head, not looking at Tarquin, nursing her inner wounds as tears streamed down her face.

Tarquin still held her waist, his voice low and husky,

"Elysia, I like you!"

Elysia was stunned, her heart skipping a beat!

With reddened eyes, she looked up at him, surprised!

Tarquin lowered his gaze to meet hers, his expression serious,

"I really like you, terribly! Madly! To the point of losing control! To the point of helplessness! I like you so much... I can't even find the right words to describe it. But I know, if you want, I'd give my life for you!"

"You're like my sunshine, and I can't help but orbit around you, afraid of making you sad, wanting to make you happy every day. Afraid you won't like me, trying everything to catch your eye. Just one glance from you, and I could be happy all day."

"Missing you when I can't see you, day and night. Wanting even more when I do see you, to hug you, to kiss you, to be with you every second of every minute! I don't want to be apart from you!"

"I want to build a life with you, not to ponder the philosophies of life, but to tackle the daily grind together. I want us to last forever, greedily, not just in this lifetime but in the next, and the next after that, to meet you, to be with you!"

"..." Tarquin said so much, jumping from one topic to another, making no logical sense.

Though his words seemed far from romantic, to Elysia, every word was filled with romance.

She blushed, batting her beautiful eyes at him,

"Then why... back in the car did you...?"

Tarquin furrowed his brows, silent for a moment, then confessed, "Because of Elijah's mother."

Chapter 677

Elysia was at a loss for words, wondering what was going on.

Before she could even ask, Tarquin blurted out, "Elijah's mom is coming back."

After saying that, he pulled her into a tight hug, resting his chin on top of her head as if he was afraid that mentioning another woman would upset her and drive her away.

Elysia was dumbfounded. She's coming back? She's been back for ages!

Who was spreading these rumors?

Who was feeding him this false information?

Trying to get a better look at him, Elysia struggled in his arms, but he held her so tightly she couldn't move.

Pressed against his chest, she could hear the steady beat of his heart as she asked, "Who told you she was coming back?"

"That's not the point," Tarquin's voice was filled with a sense of defeat, "I wronged her years ago, I promised her I'd take responsibility, I..."

He trailed off, unsure of how to continue, but Elysia got the picture.

He didn't realize she was Elijah's mother. He thought of her and Elijah's mom as two separate people!

That's why he was so torn...

Although he wasn't particularly fond of Elijah's mother, a sense of duty compelled him to take responsibility.

If Elijah's mom came back and wanted to be with him, he'd oblige!

That meant he and Elysia couldn't be together.

But if he chose Elysia, then there'd be no place for Elijah's mom by his side, and he'd feel he was betraying her.

Caught between duty and love, he was at a crossroads, unsure of which path to choose.

Elysia let out a sigh. If she wasn't Elijah's mother, she might have been angry or jealous!

In her view, love was between two people, with no room for a third.

If he was indecisive, unable to commit to being with her, then it was time to go their separate ways.

But, as luck would have it, she was Elijah's mother, so there was no room for anger or jealousy, only a deeper understanding of his feelings for her.

If it wasn't for his deep love for her, given his obsession with Elijah's mother over the years, he would have let her go, content to wait for Elijah's mother's return.

His suffering stemmed from not wanting to let her go!

Elysia raised her hand to wrap it firmly around Tarquin's waist, her face pressed against his chest, feeling his love for her.

She understood his dilemma, but she wasn't ready to reveal everything.

After all, bringing up the child would complicate things further.

They had just confessed their feelings for each other and hadn't even officially started dating yet. She wanted to wait a bit longer before bringing up the child...

After all, mutual affection didn't guarantee a happily ever after.

She wouldn't bring up the child until the very last moment.

But she couldn't stand to see him so troubled anymore. After some thought, Elysia said, "You don't have to worry about Elijah's mom. She won't be showing up for a while, and even if she does, she won't have any negative impact on us."

For now, she had decided not to reveal her identity, so 'Elijah's mom' wouldn't be making an appearance.

When she did, it would be the day she revealed everything, and he would be overjoyed to learn she was Elijah's mother. Hence, 'Elijah's mom' wouldn't negatively affect their relationship.

Tarquin was surprised, "How do you know that?"

"I..."

"Do you know her?"

Elysia wasn't sure how to respond, only managing to say, "Let's not talk about this now. Just believe me, she won't be showing up any time soon, and even if she does, it won't cause us any trouble. Don't let her be a burden on your mind."

"You..."

"Do you trust me?" Elysia pressed.

Tarquin's brows furrowed in concern, "Tell me the truth, do you know her? Are you in contact with her?"

Chapter 678

Elysia's eyes darted away, avoiding contact. "I told you not to ask. If you keep at it, I'm really going to get mad. Seriously mad!" Tarquin was silent, baffled.

The message she was sending couldn't be clearer; she knew Elijah's mother, knew her well at that!

But why the secrecy?

Could she possibly be...

A thought struck Tarquin, tightening his brows and halting his breath momentarily.

Seconds later, his heart raced uncontrollably, his blood boiling with anticipation.

Gasping, his face taut with shock, he stuttered, "Elysia..."

"Hmm?"

"You..."

Seeing his emotional turmoil, Elysia inquired, "What's wrong?"

A bolt of lightning cleaved through the night, followed by the distant rumble of thunder. The rain showed no signs of stopping, only growing fiercer. Swallowing hard, Tarquin pushed down what he was about to say, lifting Elysia in his arms again.

"Let's get you home first."

If she wasn't volunteering the information, it meant she chose to hide it. Badgering her wouldn't change that; he had to uncover the truth himself. Unaware of his thoughts but sensing his heightened agitation, Elysia, clasping his neck, cautiously asked, "Do you believe what I just said? Has it eased your mind?"

Tarquin gave her a meaningful look, nodded, and swiftly changed the subject.

"Let's get you home into some dry clothes first. Don't want you catching a cold."

Back in the car, he wrapped her in a spare blanket stored in the trunk and planted a kiss on her forehead before taking the driver's seat and starting the engine.

The heavy rain made driving difficult, and it was past 3 a.m. by the time they reached home.

Instead of heading to Future Community, Tarquin drove to Sunshine Community, closer to the seaside.

Upon arrival, he adjusted the water temperature for Elysia to take a hot shower.

"What about you?" she asked, noting his drenched state.

"I'll shower after you," Tarquin replied.

"My hair's long; it'll take me a while. You go first; you're quicker."

He watched her intently. "Either you go first, or we go together."

Elysia blushed deeply at his suggestion, turning away to enter the master bedroom, now claimed as her own.

She remembered having a change of clothes here but found only undergarments, no outerwear.

After a futile search and several sneezes, Tarquin, concerned for her health, urged, "Go shower. I'll find something and leave it at the door."

Left with no choice, Elysia nodded and retreated to the bathroom.

Tarquin, eyeing the bathroom door, furrowed his brows in deep thought. Elysia, is it really you?

Minutes later, Tarquin knocked on the bathroom door.

Still under the shower, Elysia quickly wrapped herself in a towel at the sound.

"What's up?"

"I couldn't find your clothes. Do you want to wear mine, or should I go back for yours?"

Given the late hour and the relentless downpour, going back was out of the question. She conceded, "I'll wear yours. Just leave them at the door."

"Alright. And don't worry about the kids; I've called Lowell. He'll check on them."

After placing the clothes at the door, Tarquin retreated to his study, too soaked to sit, opting to stand instead.

He lit a cigarette, staring out at the rain, lost in thought. Elysia's words, her recent behavior, all seemed to hint at something troubling...

Tarquin's brows knit together once more as he extinguished his cigarette, picking up his phone to call Benjamin Lawson.

"I'll come to the hospital later to see you."

Chapter 679

After what felt like an eternity, noise from outside broke the silence. Tarquin hurried out, just in time to catch Elysia making her way to the bedroom door.

Her hair was damp, draping loosely around her shoulders, and she was wearing one of his shirts, which barely covered her, leaving her legs entirely exposed.

She wasn't particularly tall, but her figure was striking, with long, straight legs that were quite the sight.

And at this moment, incredibly enticing.

This was the ultimate seduction in a shirt.

Tarquin felt his throat go dry, swallowing subconsciously without saying a word, as Elysia dashed into the bedroom.

Knowing she was shy, Tarquin fetched a hairdryer from the bathroom and knocked on the door, announcing, "I'm coming in to dry your hair."

Upon entering, as expected, Elysia had covered her legs with the blanket, sitting on the bed drying her hair, "Just leave it here, I'll do it myself later." Tarquin didn't bite, instead, his gaze lingered on her a bit longer, admiring her in his shirt, his thoughts wandering...

He made another swallowing motion, walking over to the bed to start drying her hair.

Elysia wanted to protest, her lips moved but then she gave up, knowing she couldn't stop him.

The room was silent as he dried her hair, the silence and the tension thick in the air.

Fortunately, Tarquin didn't make a move, simply advising her to rest and not to worry about the kids before taking the hairdryer and leaving. Elysia lay in bed, lost in thought.

Though their feelings were clear, he was still too composed, not even suggesting a serious talk or mentioning dating.

It was probably because of Elijah's mother.

Sigh...

But she couldn't risk anything concerning the kids, not even a little!

She had told him Elijah's mother wouldn't come back or interfere with their relationship, giving him time to think it over.

Yawning several times, Elysia eventually fell asleep.

Not long after she drifted off, Tarquin entered the room again.

He had taken a shower and changed into clean clothes, standing by the bed to watch Elysia for a while before gently touching her cheek and turning to leave.

Once outside, his expression changed immediately!

He coldly made a call instructing his bodyguards to ensure Elysia's safety, then hurried to his car, driving to the hospital.

What was usually a forty-minute drive, he made in just over twenty minutes in this extreme weather!

Having called ahead, Benjamin was waiting in his office.

Upon seeing him, Benjamin quickly stood up and asked, "What's wrong? What happened?"

Tarquin, with a serious expression, handed over a dossier, "I need a paternity test!"

Benjamin was puzzled, "Whose?"

Tarquin didn't explain, simply stating, "Get someone to do one, and you do one yourself. I've brought enough samples."

Benjamin guessed it might be about Elijah, the only reason Tarquin would come personally!

But not knowing the specifics, and seeing Tarquin's urgency, he didn't ask further and immediately arranged for the test.

Keeping a sample for himself, Benjamin said, "I'll start the test now, but the earliest I can have results is by tomorrow morning. Are you going to wait here or go home?"

"I'll stay with you."

"Huh?"

Tarquin didn't elaborate, only stating, "I'll watch you do it."

Benjamin was left speechless...

The lab lights stayed on all night, with Tarquin maintaining a stoic presence, not leaving even for a moment.

He appeared calm, but inside, he was anything but, eagerly awaiting a result he desperately hoped for.

That night was more torturous for him than any other.

Chapter 680

Ben used to spend nights cursing his luck, loud enough for the stars to hear. It wasn't just him; everyone who knew him thought he drew the short straw in life.

He'd thrown every insult in the book at the heavens, each more colorful than the last.

But that night, he did a complete 180. He apologized to the man upstairs, even begged for a slice of happiness, just this once.

The next morning, around 10:30, the wait was over.

Benjamin stared at his computer screen for a moment before turning to Tarquin, "You want to take a guess? Is this the paternity test for Elijah and his mom?"

Tarquin frowned, "We got results?"

Benjamin was worried. The results were in, but he hadn't printed them yet. Even without paper in hand, he knew.

He also knew Tarquin had fallen hard for Elysia. Now, with Elijah's mom potentially back in the picture, what was Tarquin to do?

"Out with it!" Tarquin's voice was sharp.

Benjamin jumped, "Yes, we got them. It's a match. Mother and son!"

Tarquin froze, his expression flipping like a switch!

Benjamin could only tell he was shocked, but couldn't decipher if it was good shock or bad. But judging by his friend's recent infatuation with Elysia, this revelation was bound to sting.

"Ha!" Tarquin's laugh broke the tension.

Benjamin shivered. Had the news knocked him loopy?

But Tarquin's laughter grew louder, carefree and triumphant, as if he'd won the lottery.

Benjamin was puzzled. Was Tarquin genuinely ecstatic, or had sorrow driven him to madness?

Before Benjamin could ponder further, another report landed on his desk.

"Dr. Benjamin, the DNA results confirm a maternal match."

"Got it, thanks. You can leave now."

Benjamin glanced at the report, about to share the news with Tarquin when-wham! A punch landed on his chest, knocking the wind out of him. Clutching his chest, Benjamin gasped, "What the heck, man?!"

Tarquin was beaming, unable to contain his joy, looking like the luckiest man alive.

"The big guy upstairs has finally cut me some slack, haha! No more bad-mouthing him. From now on, he's my guardian angel. Anyone dares to speak ill of him will have me to answer to!"

Benjamin was lost. What was going on?

Tarquin's excitement bubbled over. "I'm going to pour money into the Lawson family's hospital. Need a billion? Just say the word. I'm feeling generous today!"

Benjamin's eyes widened. Was this for real?

Dealing in billions?

Seeing Tarquin genuinely happy, Benjamin finally relaxed, but before he could speak, Tarquin kicked him, hard.

Benjamin doubled over, "Dude, are you trying to kill me?!"

Tarquin shot back, "If it weren't my lucky day, I might have! Last time, you screwed up the paternity test, telling me they weren't related!

Made me jump through hoops, nearly lost my girl over it! Consider that kick a lesson. Next time, get it right!"

With that, Tarquin grabbed the report and strutted out, looking like a kid on Christmas morning.

Even greeted Benjamin's assistant with a merry, "Guess who Elijah's mom is? An angel!"