

Hitched 701

Chapter 701

On a crisp Friday afternoon, Tarquin Bradford Elysia Thorne, had just finished a casual shopping spree at the local supermarket, stocking up on essentials and a few comfort foods for the weekend. Little did they know, their peaceful day was about to take a turn straight out of an action movie.

No sooner had they left the parking lot than they noticed a car tailing them. Tarquin, with a quick flick of the wheel, managed to lose them, but that relief was short-lived. Another car tried to rear-end them, and when that failed, two more cars joined the fray, attempting to sandwich them in a coordinated attack.

Tarquin wasn't one to panic. Pushing the pedal to the metal, he channeled his inner action hero, weaving through traffic with a blend of speed and precision that would make any stunt driver proud. Just when it seemed they had shaken their pursuers, three more cars appeared on the overpass- a coordinated trap aiming to push them off the edge.

Thanks to Tarquin's driving skills and a bit of luck, they narrowly escaped disaster. In a bold move, he accelerated and rammed into one of the attacking cars, forcing it forward and causing another to miss its mark and plummet from the overpass.

Elysia, wide-eyed and gripping the dashboard, watched in horror as the car fell, knowing the grim fate of those inside. The shock was too much, and she fainted, her last conscious thought filled with Tarquin's anguished cries.

When Elysia came to, she found herself in a hospital room, Tarquin by her side, his hand gripping hers with a mix of relief and worry. Despite his own injuries and disheveled appearance, his concern was all for her.

She reassured him, touching his bruised face gently, "You're hurt."

Tarquin, trying to lighten the mood despite the gravity of their situation, responded, "Just a scratch. But enough about me, how are you feeling?"

Elysia insisted she was fine, more concerned about the attackers and whether they had been caught. Tarquin was hesitant, revealing only that one of the attackers had survived the crash. The conversation turned tense as Elysia realized Tarquin had not involved the police, a pattern she had noticed in their relationship.

"Why wouldn't you call the police?" Elysia pressed, her anxiety mounting with each unanswered question.

Tarquin's silence spoke volumes, leaving Elysia to confront the reality that her boyfriend, the man she loved, had secrets that ran deeper than she could have imagined. Their relationship, once filled with simple joys like grocery runs and lazy weekends, had suddenly thrust them into a world of danger and mystery.

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Elysia felt an uneasy knot forming in her stomach. Why was Tarquin so hesitant to involve the police? Was it fear or distrust that held him back? She couldn't wrap her head around it and pressed on, "Someone's dead, Tarquin. This is definitely something for the police to handle. Why wouldn't you report this?"

Tarquin tried to soothe her worries. "Just rest up and don't stress about this. I'll take care of it."

Elysia remained silent, a storm of thoughts brewing in her mind.

Tarquin shifted the conversation to a lighter note, "The kids still have no idea about your accident. You've been out cold, and I didn't have the heart to tell them. Maybe we should do a video call now?"

Elysia sniffled, "Let's not. They'd be worried sick seeing me like this."

"Did you tell Blossom about it?"

"Yeah, Blossom Blythe knows. She came to see you when you were unconscious. She's back home taking care of the kids now."

"Make sure Blossom keeps this under wraps for me, will you? Just tell the kids I'm out with you on a short trip."

"Sure thing."

Tarquin looked at her, guilt etched across his face, "I'm sorry, Elysia. I should've protected you better."

Elysia shook her head, "It's not on you. The blame lies with those who attacked us! But Tarquin, I still think we should go to the police. This is a big deal, and we need their help."

Not wanting to upset her further, Tarquin nodded in agreement, "Alright, your wish is my command."

Elysia sighed in relief, finally feeling a bit at ease. She then inquired, "What about the survivor? Did he spill why we were targeted, or is he still out cold?"

Before she could finish, Tarquin's phone buzzed. It was a message from Axel: [He's awake.]

A chill ran down Tarquin's spine, but he quickly composed himself, tucking his phone away. "He's been unconscious. The cars involved were stolen, and we haven't caught anyone yet. But there's news. I'll do as you say and get the police on it today."

Elysia could sense his inner turmoil and tried to comfort him, reaching out to touch his face, "You've let yourself go." "Huh?"

"You don't have to stick by me. Go freshen up, change, and get some rest."

Tarquin captured her hand and kissed it, avoiding any talk of leaving. "I've let myself go, you say. Do you still fancy me?"

Without hesitation, Elysia replied, "Of course, I do. You'll probably look even worse when we're old. If I start fussing over your looks now, what will happen when we're really old?"

A spark of excitement lit up Tarquin's eyes. Was she thinking about their future together?

"Once we're old and the kids are grown, we'll ditch them and live our own lives."

Elysia chuckled, "By then, our kids will have their own little ones. I'll be too busy spoiling my grandkids to run away with you."

Tarquin laughed heartily, "Alright then, we'll spoil them together. Wherever you are, that's where I'll be."

Elysia laughed again, "Now go and clean yourself up. You look and smell terrible."

"I want to stay with you."

"I don't need you to."

"But I need to be with you."

Elysia felt a mix of emotions-touched yet heartbroken.

She insisted on him freshening up, not just for his sake but to give him a moment to rest. He looked so worn out and needed a break.

Their exchange was her way of lifting his spirits. She knew he was burdened with worries, and it pained her to see him like that.

Chapter 703

Elysia playfully said, "But what if I still want to sleep?"

"Then keep sleeping, sleep peacefully, don't worry about anyone hurting you. You're safe," was the reassuring reply.

"Okay, I'll sleep a bit more then."

"Alright."

No sooner had Elysia closed her eyes than Tarquin's phone buzzed urgently. He quickly silenced it.

After a glance at the screen, he frowned slightly and pocketed the device.

He remained seated by the bed, gently holding Elysia's hand, softly humming a love song to lull her to sleep.

Elysia had planned to pretend to sleep so he would go rest, but his singing actually lulled her into slumber.

Once sure Elysia was asleep, Tarquin carefully released her hand, tucking it under the covers and making sure she was snug before leaning down to plant a gentle kiss on her forehead and then her lips. Only then did he call in a nurse to keep watch.

The moment he stepped out of Elysia's room, Tarquin's demeanor shifted dramatically.

He transformed into the alpha of the night!

His lips were a tight line, his facial muscles taut, his eyes rimmed red and emitting a chilly light.

Lowell was waiting just outside, quickly reporting, "Tarquin, Axel said the guy's awake."

Without a word, Tarquin strode into the elevator.

Only when the doors had closed did he speak, "Add more guards for Elysia. No one gets near her room without my say-so!"

"Understood. Don't worry, we won't let anything happen to Ms. Thorne."

It was common knowledge among Tarquin's crew that Elysia was his Achilles' heel.

No one dared take matters concerning her lightly.

Had the incident not occurred with Elysia in the car, fainting from shock, Tarquin wouldn't have unleashed such fury.

Lowell still vividly remembered the look on Tarquin's face as he rushed Elysia into the hospital – not anger, but helplessness, anxiety, fear.

His eyes even held a plea when he handed Elysia over to Benjamin, begging him to save her, to keep her from harm.

Elysia hadn't been injured, merely fainted from fright, yet Tarquin was visibly shaken.

Having lived on the edge of life and death since childhood, Tarquin feared very few. Previously, only Elijah had that power. Now, Elysia joined that sacred list.

She was someone he held dear, a touch to her was a death wish.

As long as Elysia remained unconscious, Tarquin was a constant presence in her room, refusing to leave or even eat.

His rage was always there, simmering beneath his concern, waiting for the moment...

Now that Elysia was awake and confirmed to be okay, he could finally ease his guard.

Next came vengeance.

Minutes later, Tarquin arrived at a makeshift shack by the seaside.

A solitary chair stood at the entrance, where Axel was seated, expressionlessly enjoying the sea breeze.

Upon seeing Tarquin, he stood, "Tarquin."

Tarquin nodded briefly, aggressively stripping off his tie and tossing it aside before shedding his suit jacket. Rolling up his shirt sleeves, he made his way into the shack.

Lowell and Axel stayed outside, knowing better than to follow.

The tin shack was small, barely spacious enough for a metal bed and walls adorned with various implements of torture.

This was Axel's secret hideout, a place no outsider left intact.

Currently, a man was tied to the bed, limbs spread in a stark "X," his mouth sealed with duct tape, eyes wide with terror at Tarquin's approach.

Tarquin's face was a mask of cold fury as he rolled up his sleeves further, then took off his watch.

Elysia had once complimented that watch; it wouldn't do to stain it with blood.

Only after securing the watch did Tarquin approach the bed, his gaze fixed on the man tied there.

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The man was gasping for breath, terror etched across his face. Despite the chill of the season, he wore nothing but a pair of boxers, his body slick with sweat.

Sweat dripped into his eyes, stinging them, causing his eyelashes to tremble - a mix of discomfort and fear.

Tarquin lifted his hand and tore the duct tape from the man's mouth.

Immediately, the man begged for mercy. "Please, don't kill me! I'll tell you everything I know. No, wait - just kill me quickly, don't torture me, I... Ahhh!" His screams nearly blew the roof off the tin shack!

Outside, Axel and Lowell stood by the door, chatting casually as if oblivious to the horror unfolding inside.

Lowell asked, "How long has it been since Tarquin last visited?"

Axel paused, "Two years."

Lowell sighed, "Ms. Thorne was traumatized into unconsciousness. Tarquin's been beside himself with worry."

Axel, hands in his pockets, leaned against the door frame, gazing at the pitch-black ocean. He quietly listened to the howling wind and the screams from within, choosing not to respond.

Everyone has their limits, and ordinary folks' limits should never be tested, let alone Tarquin's.

It wasn't that he was heartless; some folks just had the misfortune of living in a cruel world. If you weren't ruthless, you'd end up prey.

After what felt like an eternity, the room fell silent, save for the man's whimpers and sobs. Then, even those faded away.

The metal door swung open, and Tarquin emerged, his hands covered in blood.

He walked to the shoreline, squatting to wash his hands in the sea.

Lowell quickly handed him a clean towel to dry off.

Axel glanced inside the room. The man was still tied to the bed, conscious but in too much pain to make a sound. The extent of his injuries was unclear.

Axel didn't care. He turned his attention back to Tarquin.

Tarquin, having cleaned his hands, took the towel from Lowell, wiped off, and lit a cigarette. He took a few puffs before saying coldly, "We have a mole."

This revelation shook Lowell and Axel!

Lowell eagerly asked, "Who?!"

Tarquin flicked the ash from his cigarette, "He didn't know."

Axel looked grave. He was responsible for Tarquin's inner circle. A mole among them meant he had failed in his duty.

"Any leads?"

Tarquin shook his head, "He only knew there was a mole. Someone got wind of the fact that I took Elysia to the grocery store today without any bodyguards and acted on it!"

Tarquin usually had plainclothes bodyguards with him, but today, feeling good, he'd given them the day off.

Lowell immediately asked, "Could it have been someone close to Ms. Thorne?"

Axel frowned, "Only our people would know Tarquin's bodyguard details!"

The mastermind might not be one of their own, but the leak certainly was.

In other words, there was a traitor among them!

After a brief silence, Axel said, "I'll handle the mole."

Tarquin didn't object, silently agreeing to the proposal.

Lowell asked, "Any idea who's behind this? Is it the same group responsible for the car fire last week? What's their motive? To kill you?" Tarquin's frown deepened.

Two major incidents in one week, each more dangerous than the last.

Yet, these events led him to a peculiar feeling: the mastermind didn't seem particularly keen on taking his life!

What then, was their goal?

To intimidate him? Or to frighten Elysia?

After all, she was present during both incidents...

Chapter 705

Tarquin's face darkened with a thought, and he took a harsh drag of his cigarette, his voice ice-cold, "Call the cops, cooperate with the investigation of the crash, and hand over the one inside to them as well."

Lowell and Axel looked at him, bewildered. This wasn't Tarquin's style at all.

Tarquin wasn't one to mingle with the police-not out of fear, distrust, or anything. He just lacked the patience. He found dealing with the bureaucratic red tape of law enforcement too tedious!

"I promised Elysia," Tarquin flicked the cigarette ash and explained briefly.

He didn't want Elysia to be scared anymore. If she wanted him to report it to the police, then that's what he would do. Anything for her, even changing his ways was nothing in comparison.

Lowell and Axel got it immediately once he mentioned Elysia.

Elysia was a gentle soul with a timid heart, so it made sense she'd want to involve the police.

Tarquin added, "Focus on those who showed up today. Whether we can root out the mastermind or the mole is another matter, but those people... we must find every single one of them!"

Lowell and Axel nodded in agreement, "Got it!"

Only by tracking down those involved could Elysia feel truly at ease.

Tarquin's mind was entirely on Elysia...

When Tarquin returned to the hospital, Elysia was still asleep. He approached her bed, caressed her hand, touched her face, clearly smitten.

Lowell had prepared a change of clothes for him, wary of waking Elysia. He even went to the bathroom inside to freshen up.

But when he came out, Elysia had awakened.

Ignoring his damp hair, he rushed to her side, whispering gently, "Did I wake you?"

Elysia shook her head, "Woke up on my own. You haven't gone to rest?"

"I took a short break. Just had a shower. I'll call Dr. Benjamin to check on you."

"No need. It's late; don't trouble Dr. Benjamin. I'm a doctor myself, I'm fine."

She seemed much better than when she last woke up.

Tarquin sat down, "Hungry?"

Elysia nodded slightly, "A bit."

"What would you like?" Tarquin's face was a picture of tenderness.

Elysia thought for a moment, "Some porridge?"

"How about chicken and spinach porridge?" Tarquin offered with a smile.

Elysia loved that, "Do we have any right now?"

"Just lay back, I'll fetch you some."

Elysia was surprised, "You made some?"

"Yeah, knew my little glutton would be hungry when she woke up. Had it ready early."

Tarquin kissed her forehead affectionately and headed to the kitchen.

Elysia's heart warmed at the sight of his retreating back.

Returning with the porridge, Elysia said it was too hot and decided to wait a bit to eat. She sat up and took the towel from around his neck, "Lean down."

"Hmm?"

"I'll dry your hair."

He hadn't properly dried it after his shower, and Elysia worried he might catch a cold.

Tarquin, pleasantly surprised, simply smiled at her, his clean, white teeth bared like a big, happy wolf pup.

He pulled a chair closer to the bed, plunging his head into Elysia's embrace. The big wolf pup was seeking affection.

Elysia, pushing his head gently, "Stop it, you're getting the blanket wet."

Tarquin complied, lifting his head just so, making it easier for Elysia without tiring her arms.

With both hands, Elysia tenderly dried his damp hair. Tarquin's hair was a natural, non-treated black, cut neatly in a style that was both clean and straightforward, much like the man himself.

His hair was thick and of good quality—a pity he wasn't a woman; such hair would've been the envy of many!

His short hair dried quickly, not taking much effort.

"All done."

"Already?"

"Yeah, your hair's short, easy to dry."

Tarquin slumped onto her lap, clearly not ready to move, "A bit longer."

Chapter 706

Elysia knew he was up to his old tricks again, playfully shoving him away, "Stop it, I'm dry now."

He fell silent for a moment before diving back into Elysia's arms, wriggling about like a clingy golden retriever.

Tickled by his antics, Elysia laughed while trying to push him away, only to find herself backed against a wall with nowhere to retreat. She exerted more force in her push, exclaiming,

"Cut it out! Big Pup!"

Her voice was indulgent, filled with laughter.

Hearing her call him Big Pup, Tarquin looked up with a fiercely playful glare. Elysia's cheeks flushed as she issued her light-hearted threat in the least menacing tone possible,

"I'll smack you if you don't stop, you hear?"

A mysterious glint appeared in Tarquin's deep eyes as he gazed at her for a few seconds before lowering his head to playfully bite her!

He really was turning into a big wolfhound!

"Hey!" As he nipped at her, Elysia pinched him in retaliation, both careful not to use too much force.

Given Tarquin's size and strength, he naturally dominated their playful 'fight', nibbling at her relentlessly until his nibbles found her lips. Elysia shivered, letting out a muffled groan.

Tarquin, now overtaken by passion yet mindful of her frail state, kissed her intensely for a few minutes before reluctantly letting her go. Elysia, left breathless by his kisses, had her cheeks flushed a deep red.

After a moment of quiet, Tarquin smiled and said, "I'll feed you some soup."

Elysia, unaccustomed to being fed, refused.

But he insisted, and she couldn't resist him.

The soup was still hot, so he would carefully blow on it before feeding her, displaying both patience and care.

Knowing he hadn't eaten either, Elysia invited him to share, and they took turns with the spoon, one sip at a time.

After finishing the soup, Benjamin stopped by to check on Elysia. Once assured she was alright, he left.

Late into the night, Tarquin sat beside Elysia's bed, keeping her company. Knowing he hadn't rested all day, Elysia suggested he get some sleep. He refused, saying he couldn't relax without seeing her.

Elysia, having slept through the day, wasn't tired and didn't want to keep him up. After some thought, she said,

"Come up and join me, then."

Tarquin froze, a mix of surprise and confusion on his face. They had been together for a while but hadn't shared a bed for the night; at most, they had cuddled during intimate moments, but Elysia had always set boundaries for the night.

Her invitation caught Tarquin off guard.

Elysia, her cheeks burning at his stare, added, "If you don't want to, forget it."

"I want to!" Tarquin quickly climbed into the bed.

Elysia reminded him, "You're here to rest, no funny business!"

Tarquin grinned, "Can we cuddle, at least?"

Before she could respond, he wrapped his arms around her.

Tarquin rested his chin on her head, "It feels like I'm holding the whole world."

Elysia nestled into him, her heart fluttering.

When Tarquin wanted to chat, she insisted she wanted to rest, silencing him.

Soon, Tarquin fell asleep.

Listening to his steady breathing, Elysia carefully lifted her head to admire him.

From her angle, she could see his chiseled profile and his stunning features, flawless as if sculpted with precision.

Unable to resist, Elysia reached out to touch his chin...

But her phone suddenly rang, startling her.

Tarquin stirred, tightening his embrace.

Elysia waited until she was sure Tarquin had fallen back into a deep sleep before cautiously checking her phone.

The message she saw sent her into a whirlwind of surprise and concern!

Chapter 707

"Drop him, girl. Being with him is like dancing on a tightrope."

Elysia knew this message came from that mysterious dude who had a bone to pick with Tarin. He'd been gunning for Tarin's downfall, hoping to see him bite the dust!

She wasn't exactly Tarin's fan club president before they started dating. To her, he seemed like a walking disaster.

But now that Tarin was her main squeeze, she downright loathed the guy!

Her boyfriend's enemy was her enemy.

Elysia frowned, thumbing a rapid response, "Was that car wreck today your handiwork?"

The reply came swift, "Not me, but I've got the 411 on who did."

Elysia pressed, "Who?"

"Mate, it's someone in your circle."

Elysia's brows knitted tighter. Someone she knew?

Before she could dig deeper, he added, "But I'm zipping it on their details. Enemy of my enemy and all that jazz. Can't throw them under the bus." Elysia's frustration grew.

He went on, "Just a friendly heads-up, your boy's like a black cat - bad luck follows him. There's a line of folks wanting to take him down. Jump ship while you can, love. Don't wait till you're kicking yourself."

Elysia bristled,

"The man I'm into isn't a jinx; he's golden. And whatever he is, I'm all in. Save your breath. Nothing you say is going to make me walk away!" Her message sailed into the void.

Elysia clutched her phone, waiting for a reply that never came.

That night, sleep was a stranger, and just before dawn, she finally drifted off, only for nightmares to seize her.

She dreamt of Tarin, bloodied and battered, fleeing for his life with a mob hot on his heels - some armed with knives, others with guns, all baying for blood.

As they nearly caught up, Tarin stumbled, and the mob swarmed...

"No! Stop! Ahhhh-"

Elysia's scream tore through the silence, waking her. Tarquin was right there, concern etched on his face, "What's wrong?"

Seeing his unblemished face, her eyes welled up, and she collapsed into his arms, sobbing.

Tarquin, heart aching, held her close, "Nightmare?"

Elysia couldn't speak, only cry. Tarquin soothed her, "Dreams, they're a twisted mirror. A nightmare means there's something good on the horizon." Elysia, sniffing, said, "They say we're born of our parents' flesh and blood, that your life isn't mine to fret over, but I can't bear the thought of anything happening to you! If you don't take care, I'll... I'll be so mad!"

"...My life might come from my folks, but it belongs to you and our future kids now. I'll keep safe, for you and them."

Tarquin then asked, "Did you dream I was in trouble?"

Elysia, lips quivering, managed, "So many were after you... You were hurt, covered in blood, and then... then you fell, and they... they were all over you, hitting you..."

As she recalled the dream, tears flowed even harder.

Moved and pained by her distress, Tarquin wiped her tears, holding her tight, trying to kiss the sorrow away until she calmed down, "Don't believe the nightmares. Look at me, right here beside you, safe and sound."

Elysia, still sobbing, whispered, "Do you have a lot of enemies?"

"...Back in my business days, I might've stepped on a few toes."

Her worry was palpable, "How bad did it get, for them to want you dead?"

Chapter 708

Tarquin frowned slightly, mulling over the age-old problem: it always came down to money.

Standing tall on his financial pedestal, it was inevitable that he'd catch the eye of those looking to pull him down and claim his wealth as their own. If he were just an average Joe, he wouldn't have a target on his back.

He had yet to come clean to Elysia about the full extent of his wealth, deliberately avoiding the topic of money. He asked her, "Being with me could be dangerous. Does that scare you?"

"Frightened?... But I won't leave you because of it!"

Tarquin was profoundly moved, pulling Elysia into a tight embrace.

Reflecting on recent events the night before, he suspected someone was stirring up trouble to intimidate Elysia. They wanted her to realize the danger of being with him, hoping she'd get cold feet and leave him of her own accord.

The thought made him anxious, knowing Elysia's timid nature. Hearing her commitment left him deeply touched.

"Check this out," Elysia said, pulling away to show him a message on her phone.

Tarquin studied the screen, immediately thinking of the mysterious figure who seemed to be using the danger surrounding him to drive Elysia away. But if the car accident wasn't their doing, who else could it be?

The suspects boiled down to three: the mystery person, Keith, and Elysia's estranged husband!

If the mysterious figure wasn't the mastermind, then it had to be Keith or her husband, both of whom had motives.

After their last altercation, Tarquin hadn't seen Keith, even going so far as to have someone dig into Keith's background in his hometown, still awaiting findings.

And Elysia's husband was an enigma, untraceable. Asking Blossom led nowhere; interrogating Elliot got him silence; Elysia herself remained tight-lipped.

He was still in the dark about her husband's identity.

Yet, identifying the mastermind was secondary to securing Elysia's peace of mind.

"I've called the police," Tarquin reassured her, "Just tell them the truth, no need to hold back."

"You did?" Elysia blinked in surprise.

"Yeah, you were right. It's a serious matter; it deserves police attention."

Elysia's spirits lifted, "Exactly, with the police involved, investigations go faster, and those out to get you will think twice. Criminals fear the law." Tarquin nodded in agreement.

The police took their statements that morning, informing them that the assailant responsible for the highway crash had been apprehended and was currently under police custody. They were also tracking down the other involved parties.

Relief washed over Elysia, visibly rejuvenating her.

Tarquin, watching quietly, felt a weight lift from his shoulders. Her well-being was his solace.

At noon, Axel's call came unexpectedly, "Can you talk?"

Glancing at Elysia, who was engaged in conversation with Blossom about the kids, Tarquin excused himself, "Give me a sec, I'll step out."

He headed towards the hospital's designated smoking area, phone in hand, "Go ahead."

Axel was straight to the point, "We've found the mole."

Chapter 709

Tarquin frowned, "Who?"

"Declan."

Tarquin's eyes narrowed sharply!

He didn't speak, instead, he pocketed one hand and walked over to the smoking area, tucking his phone between his ear and shoulder as he lit up a cigarette.

Declan had been with him for a decade, mentored personally by Axel. He was one of his secondary bodyguards.

Axel was the only primary one.

Though there were several at the secondary level, those were his core team members.

And in his world, core team members meant brothers!

Declan's betrayal felt as if he had been stabbed in the back by his own brother.

Tarquin didn't explode in anger. Instead, he furrowed his brows deeper, taking half a cigarette's time before asking, "Why?"

"The other side threatened him with his ex-girlfriend and kid, forced him to betray you."

Tarquin clenched his jaw in surprise, "Declan has a kid?"

"Yeah, his ex found out she was pregnant after they broke up. Couldn't bear to terminate it, so she had the kid behind Declan's back. He had no clue until someone spilled the beans to him a month ago. He secretly met the kid, ran a paternity test, and sure enough, the child was his. The ex admitted it too."

That was all Axel had to say. The rest was up to Tarquin to decide.

After finishing the rest of his cigarette in two quick drags and lighting another, Tarquin asked, "The kid and his mother, they're with them?" "Yeah."

After a brief silence, Tarquin said, "Use me as bait, set something up to get them out."

Axel hesitated, "Using you to save them definitely means setting up something life-threatening."

With the mother and child held hostage to manipulate Declan, any plan to demand their release would require significant leverage.

It would have to concern Tarquin's life to be considered sufficient.

"Don't worry about me; I won't die."

Axel's lips twitched, but he said no more.

Outsiders called Tarquin a merciless devil, born cold-blooded and brutal without a shred of humanity. But deep down, he was just like Elizabeth and Kendrick, inherently good.

It was the harsh realities of his upbringing that forged his current demeanor, the impenetrable armor he wore, built from past wounds and scars. His strength now was a testament to the depth of his past injuries.

After a few seconds of silence, Axel asked, "What about Declan? He's ashamed, wants to end it."

Tarquin's temper flared at that,

"What right does he have to die now? His woman and child are still in the hands of others! He can think about dying once they're safe! Then, he can die however he wants; nobody will care!"

Hanging up, Tarquin adjusted his tie, feeling irate.

Regardless of the reasons, the fact remained that he had been betrayed by a brother!

Yet, he couldn't find a reason to justify killing him!

He was angry at Declan for the lack of loyalty, yet he understood his actions.

He even thought Declan wasn't in the wrong. If he were in the same situation, he might have done the same.

So, for now, he couldn't vent his anger on Declan, leaving him to stew in his frustration.

Seeing Blossom emerge from the hospital room, Tarquin stubbed out his cigarette and headed back in.

Upon entering, Elysia immediately noticed the smell of smoke, worry etched on her face as she asked, "Something wrong?"

"Hm?"

"You've been smoking a lot; you must be stressed."

Elysia knew about his smoking habit and had been keeping him in check for his health. He had been complying, noticeably reducing his intake.

But now, seeing him revert to smoking heavily, she knew something was bothering him.

Tarquin offered a smile, "No, just the cravings hitting hard. Got carried away; I'll be more careful next time."

Seeing he didn't want to talk about it, she didn't press further, opening her arms instead, "Hug?"

Tarquin hesitated, "I smell like smoke."

"I don't mind."

His lips curled into an immediate smile as he embraced Elysia.

As she hugged him, gently rubbing his back, she murmured, "Just two more months till your birthday."

Chapter 710

"Huh? How'd you know that?" "I asked Elijah."

"Why'd you go and do that?"

"I wanted to surprise you."

Tarquin let go of her, a sparkle in his eyes, "What kind of surprise?"

Elysia teased, "If I told you, it wouldn't be a surprise anymore. But I promise, it'll make you so happy you'll feel like you're flying."

Tarquin's gaze sharpened, "Are you suggesting we... you know?"

Elysia blinked, confused for a moment, "Do what?"

"Make love."

Elysia's face flushed a deep red, "You... shameless!"

She pushed him away and dove under the covers, embarrassed.

Tarquin chuckled, "Well, what else could make me feel like flying?"

Elysia ignored him from her cocoon of blankets. She had wanted to cheer him up since he seemed down, and here he was, taking the conversation in a completely different direction.

Tarquin felt his mood lift inexplicably. He climbed into bed, intending to tease her further, but his phone rang. It was Lowell.

After a brief conversation, Tarquin's eyes narrowed slightly. He ended the call and excitedly told Elysia,

"Elysia, I've got great news."

He jumped out of bed, grabbed the remote, and turned on the TV to the news channel.

The local Jindale City station was reporting on yesterday's incident. The culprits and their vehicle had been caught...

This was indeed fantastic news!

Elysia quickly forgot their previous conversation, thrilled, "They caught them already?"

"Yeah, the police are pretty efficient."

Elysia took his word for it, praising the police before inquiring about the reason behind the attack.

"...The police are still investigating, but with the perpetrators caught, there's no need to worry."

Elysia nodded in agreement, thinking simply that catching these people meant everything was okay now.

She felt completely relieved and checked out of the hospital to return home that afternoon.

Tarquin dropped her off without entering. He was in a rush to leave.

Axel had called not long ago, saying Declan wanted to see him. Tarquin was still harboring some resentment towards Declan but agreed to meet. Elysia stood in the hallway, asking, "Will you be back for dinner tonight?"

"Not sure, don't wait up for me. Just have dinner without me."

"Okay, just text me whether you're coming back or not."

"Will do."

"And if you need money for work, just let me know. I haven't touched the million you gave me."

Tarquin felt touched but also guilty.

He hadn't yet dared to reveal his true identity to Elysia.

Firstly, because Elliot hadn't come clean yet, he didn't dare to either, fearing she'd be scared off upon discovering he was a billionaire. Secondly, his initial reason for hiding his identity was to see if she'd be interested in him regardless of his wealth, which wasn't exactly honest. Now, he worried she'd be upset upon learning the truth.

He kept putting off the revelation, and now, he continued to hide it.

After they got together, Elysia had asked about his job, and he casually mentioned he was involved in a startup, specifically in environmental protection. Coincidentally, the Bradford Group was investing billions in an environmental project at the time, so he went with that story.

Elysia, innocent as she was, believed every word and even supported him, praising the environmental sector for its potential to both earn money and contribute to environmental protection.

He planned to come clean once Elysia shared why she didn't want him moving in with her.

Tarquin gently kissed Elysia on the forehead, "What's mine is yours, but I don't need it."

"Mine is yours too. Just say the word if you need anything."

Tarquin smiled, "Okay."

After Elysia went inside, Tarquin took the elevator down. As the doors opened, his expression instantly changed.

Coincidentally, Keith was in the elevator.