

Hitched 961

Chapter 961

Evan couldn't bear to think further, the pain was just too much...

Stepping out from the opposite side of the car, he hurried towards Elliot with a sense of urgency.

They stood at the main entrance, their gaze fixed on the scene before them, feeling nothing but a deep sense of sorrow.

Tarquin, usually so strong and indomitable, was now a shadow of himself, hunched over and weeping into Elysia's shoulder. He resembled an eagle with its wings clipped, radiating vulnerability that tugged at the heartstrings.

Even the strongest among us came into this world from our mothers, starting as helpless infants and growing bit by bit.

No matter the age, the mention of a mother always brings out the child within, revealing a fragile side.

The trio felt a profound empathy for both Tarquin and Elysia.

Tarquin's pain was palpable, and it was clear Elysia shared in his suffering.

While their hearts ached, they also felt a burning anger towards Gideon, an anger that ran deep.

Elliot sniffled hard, leading his brothers upstairs to the den, leaving Tarquin and Elysia in the privacy they needed.

Only Elysia could soothe Tarquin's wounded soul, for it was only with her that he allowed himself to be truly vulnerable.

Once inside, Elliot immediately asked Evan, "What's the situation at Sage Hall now?"

Wiping away a tear, Evan replied, "Dad knew you had plans, so he didn't tip Gideon off. He switched the ashes, leaving the fake ones at the bottom of the well and brought grandma's ashes back."

"And the monks?"

"To avoid any mishaps, I knocked them out. They won't be waking up for a few days."

Evan quickly added, "Brother, have you settled things with Gideon? Can I go after him now?!"

"Yes! The contracts are all signed, his shares are now in my possession! And he owes me a fortune, even selling all his assets won't cover his debt to me! If we go to the police, he'd be locked away for life!"

Gideon's pursuit of fame and power was now a distant dream, utterly shattered by Elliot in a devastating blow that was worse than death.

But it wasn't enough, not for the depth of his sins.

So, Elliot didn't call the police, choosing instead to keep Gideon as a target for their wrath.

"We can't call the police! Handing him over would be letting him off too easily! You guys stay with dad and mom, I'm going after him!"

He was at his breaking point, desperate to confront Gideon before he exploded with rage.

Elijah intervened, handing him a small bottle of pills.

Evan looked puzzled, "What's this?"

"Heart Saver Pills."

"I don't need these! I'm angry, sure, but not in need of medication."

"They're for Gideon."

Evan frowned, "For him? I wish he'd just drop dead!"

Elijah explained, "He can't die that easily. Death would be too kind."

Understanding dawned on Evan, "Right, you're correct. We can't let him off that easily!"

Pocketing the bottle of pills, Evan left with White in tow.

No sooner had he left than a shadowy figure followed him, keeping a discreet distance.

Evan was aware but unconcerned. His only focus was on confronting Gideon.

However, this shadow followed him all the way to the mid-slope, where Gideon's private villa was located. Evan, suspecting sabotage, confronted the figure in a sudden turnaround.

The figure was imposing, his face marred with long scars - the very man hidden within the restricted zones of Sage Hall.

Chapter 962

Evan was already in a foul mood, and seeing him only made things worse!

He had a bone to pick with his mentor, and now he was guarding Gideon's grandmother's ashes - definitely an enemy in Evan's book!

"Why sneak around? If you want a fight, let's get on with it!" Evan snapped.

The man with the scar seemed amused. "Aren't you afraid of me?"

Evan gritted his teeth. "Fight or shut it!"

Without another word, Evan launched himself at the man, his fists blazing with a fury that was both fast and ferocious.

He was burning with anger and wanted a swift victory.

He still needed to settle scores with Gideon!

The scarred man dodged easily, his tone almost approving, "Brave and impulsive, much better than that cowardly old fool."

"Don't you dare talk about my great-grandpa like that!"

Evan was fiercely protective, his punches growing more vicious.

But the scarred man knew his moves well, dodging with ease and fighting back just as leisurely,

"I came to find you because I want to know where your mentor is. Either tell me willingly, or let me take you with me - make him show himself. You can't beat me!"

"I won't tell you where my mentor is, and I won't go with you! And whether I can beat you isn't for you to decide!"

With that, Evan signaled to White, who lunged at the scarred man.

Sensing danger, the man quickly stepped back, eyeing White warily, "What the hell is that?!"

White charged again, but the man caught its tail, only to release it quickly when White snapped at him.

White landed back on Evan, ready to charge again but was held back.

"You dare play dirty?" the scarred man sneered.

"All fair in love and war!" Evan retorted with righteous indignation.

The scarred man was momentarily lost for words.

"So, are we fighting or not? I'm telling you, there's no way I'm going with you. And if you're thinking of kidnapping me to blackmail my mentor, forget it! And, I'm after Gideon. If you're on his side, you'd better be ready to fight me later!"

The scarred man frowned, "What beef do you have with Gideon that involves me?"

"Aren't you one of his men?"

"He's nothing to me. I wouldn't even let him shine my shoes!"

Evan looked surprised, "You're not with Gideon? Then why guard his grandmother's ashes?"

"I needed a quiet place to lie low and someone to gather information for me. Guarding the ashes was just to ensure his loyalty."

Evan nodded, understanding the situation better. It made sense; such a formidable person couldn't possibly be Gideon's lackey.

Suddenly, the scarred man made an offer, "You've got a score to settle with Gideon, let me handle him. In exchange, you tell me where your mentor is. Deal?"

"No deal! My revenge, my business! And don't think you can trick me. I'm not a kid; I won't fall for it! No matter what, I'm not betraying my mentor." Evan had promised his mentor not to disclose any information about him and he intended to keep that promise.

Taking a few steps forward, Evan didn't notice the man didn't follow until he looked back. The scarred man just stood there, watching him. Evan frowned. Was he just going to let him go?

No fight? No kidnapping attempt?

This guy was odd, Evan thought, but he had bigger fish to fry - Gideon.

If he didn't get back at Gideon, he felt like he would explode with anger!

Chapter 963

No sooner had Evan taken a few steps away from his last meeting, his phone buzzed in his pocket. It was Elijah.

Whatever Elijah said caused Evan to furrow his brows, nodding slightly, "Alright, I'll follow your lead. I won't make a move until you're done!"

...

At the halfway point up the hill, nestled among lush greenery, sat Gideon's luxurious villa.

Gideon was still basking in a sense of triumph.

With the contract signed, the crisis looming over him seemed to have been completely averted.

Now, with Alpha's backing, taking down Tarquin would be a piece of cake. His plan was simple: use Alpha's power to crush Tarquin, then, once he'd regained his strength, find a way to topple Alpha himself.

He dreamed of devouring the assets of both Tarquin and Alpha, becoming the wealthiest person in the world. Who would dare challenge him then? He envisioned owning a lion's share of the economy, standing at the pinnacle, looking down on everyone with disdain.

People would only speak of Gideon with envy and admiration.

Lost in his dreams of grandeur, an eerie chill swept through the room, followed by a shadow flitting past the window.

"Who's there?!"

The wind was the only response, leaving Gideon puzzled and staring outside. Just as he was about to dismiss it as a trick of the light, a sinister voice broke the silence,

"Gideon, for the suffering you've caused and the souls you've oppressed, your end is near..."

His heart skipped a beat, his expression turning to one of horror.

That was Elizabeth's voice!

"Who's playing these tricks?!"

Summoning his courage, he wheeled himself closer to the window. As he approached, Elizabeth suddenly materialized outside!

Her hair was disheveled, her face as pale as death, her eyes piercing him like knives. Her voice was a cold whisper,

"Gideon, your many sins have sealed your fate. Your end is near."

Gideon's eyes widened in sheer terror, instinctively backing away several meters.

Rubbing his eyes and looking again, Elizabeth was still there, repeating, "Gideon, your time has come... your time has come..."

As Elizabeth seemed about to climb through the window, Gideon screamed at the top of his lungs for help.

The study door burst open, and Gideon yelled,

"There's a ghost at the window... there's..."

Before he could finish, the person who entered made his eyes nearly pop out of their sockets.

It wasn't a person; it was Kelsey, long since dead!

She was dressed as she had been on the day of her demise, her eyes bleeding, blood flowing from her nose and mouth, her clothes stained with blood.

Her voice seemed to come from the depths of the underworld,

"Gideon, give me back my life, the lives of my family..."

Gideon was so terrified that he fell out of his wheelchair,

"Ghosts! Ghosts, somebody help!"

Several people rushed in, not living souls, but specters!

Phineas was there!

Keith's two brothers were there!

Keith himself was there!

And a throng of strangers entered!

Some were crying, but instead of tears, blood trickled down their faces!

They approached with bizarre expressions, hands outstretched, blood streaming, lamenting, condemning,

"Gideon, for your wicked deeds, you will not rest in peace. We've come for vengeance!"

"Gideon, your end is upon you. You will suffer beyond measure, doomed to the deepest pits of hell, worse than any of us, hahaha..."

Gideon lay on the floor, his legs useless, unable to run, watching in terror,

"Back off! Get away! Leave me alone! Ahhh!"

The household staff were utterly baffled, "Master?!"

As they tried to help Gideon up, he pushed them away, "Get out! Don't touch me! Don't touch me!"

The staff exchanged confused looks.

Had he gone mad? Was he possessed?

Chapter 964

Evan hid in a secret spot, his brows furrowed as he observed the scene unfolding in the room. Indeed, those who do evil find no peace within their hearts. With just a little coercion, Gideon was nearly scared to death by the fears lurking in the depths of his own mind!

Following Elijah's advice, Evan didn't resort to physical violence against Gideon. Instead, he sneaked a high dose of hallucinogens into Gideon's room, a little gift Elijah had slipped into his pocket before he left.

Elijah also used a voice changer to mimic the voices of Kelsey and Elizabeth, guiding Gideon through his induced nightmare.

Guilty and paranoid, Gideon's deepest fears were triggered under the influence of the drugs.

What he dreaded most now played out before his very eyes!

Though it was just his household staff around him, he saw Elizabeth, Kelsey, Phineas, and all those he had wronged...

"Ahhh, ahhhhhh!" Gideon began to scream, as if he were living through the most terrifying ordeal!

The household staff grew frightened, their faces etched with horror as they questioned Gideon's right-hand man, "What in the world is wrong with the boss?"

Clueless himself, the confidant furrowed his brows and yelled, "Where's the doctor? Get the doctor, now!"

In the next moment, Gideon, in a fit of panic, crawled to his feet and 'bam!' he banged his head against him! His right-hand man shivered with shock, "Boss?!"

Bang, bang, bang-Gideon's forehead was bloodied, but he kept going, driven by some invisible terror, apologizing as he went, "Phineas, I was wrong! I shouldn't have violated your wife, shouldn't have humiliated you, shouldn't have killed your son! I'm bowing down to you in apology!

I confess, it was me who brought disaster upon the Inkster family, it was me who killed your family of four, it was me who raped Kelsey to death! I'm sorry, I'm apologizing, would sending money as a token of my apology do?

I'll arrange for a hefty sum to be sent your way, a lot of money to make amends!

And Elizabeth, I'll stop tormenting you, I'll retrieve your ashes from that cursed place, no longer suppressing your spirit. Go, please go!

And to you all, stop biting me, I'll tell you where your daughter is buried, right behind your house..."

Gideon's mad rant terrified his confidant, "Boss!"

He hurried over to cover Gideon's mouth; such admissions couldn't be made!

But he was pushed away fiercely by Gideon.

Stumbling, he fell to the ground, his head hitting the corner of a table, knocking him out cold!

Gideon kept ranting in madness, dragging his injured legs around the room, "I've confessed, why still torment me? I'm bowing, I'm bowing..."

The household staff, terrified, scattered in screams!

After a while, Gideon fainted...

Seeing this, Evan nudged his earpiece and asked Elijah, "Elijah, is it over?"

Elijah, stationed in Number One Mansion, was busy at his computer, pushing the freshly recorded video to every corner of the nation! However, he cleverly altered the names involved.

People didn't know whom Gideon was referring to, only that he had killed and committed heinous acts!

The video instantly went viral across the inte!

"OMG, OMG, OMG, who is this vile creature?"

"That's Gideon! The former CEO of the Bradford Group! Damn, he's monstrous!"

"Case closed, folks, case closed! No wonder the only son of the Bradford family cut ties and moved abroad! No wonder Mr. Bradford showed no affection for his grandfather!"

"So it wasn't Mr. Bradford and his son being heartless, but this old monster being too wicked!"

Elijah watched with a cold expression as Gideon screamed in terror and cried in the video, banging his head on the floor in a desperate plea for mercy.

Chapter 965

Watching the slew of curses aimed at Gideon and the understanding sympathy for Tarquin and Kendrick in the video comments, Elijah felt his anger subside significantly.

He valued family ties deeply, but in his eyes, Gideon was no longer kin!

Gideon wasn't his great-grandfather; he was the enemy!

"Evan, you can turn off the camera now. I'm done here."

"Alright, shutting it down!"

Evan flipped off the camera and climbed through the window into the room.

First, he locked the study door from the inside, then walked over to Gideon and forcibly fed him a Heart Saver Pill, waking him up with a few well-aimed punches...

As Gideon's eyes fluttered open, a cold splash of water hit his face.

Coughing, Gideon gasped, "Who? Who dares?!"

Evan squatted in front of him, "Awake now?"

Wiping his face, Gideon's expression darkened upon seeing Evan, "What the hell are you doing in my house, you little punk? What do you want?!" The effects of the hallucinogen had worn off, and he was back to his senses.

Evan nodded calmly, "Good, you're awake."

Gideon was still clueless, frowning, "Who brought you here, where's Tarquin? He—"

Before he could finish, Evan flipped him over, straddled him, and began to rain punches down on him, knocking out Gideon's real and false teeth! Shocked, Gideon exclaimed, "You dare hit me, you—"

Punch after punch followed,

"This one's for my dad!"

"This one's for Elijah!"

"This one's for my grandma!"

"This one's for Keith and his family!"

For the Inksters, one punch wasn't enough. Evan let loose a flurry of blows!

Knocking him out cold wasn't an issue; Evan simply fed him another Heart Saver Pill provided by Elijah before waking him to continue the beating! Forget about familial ties or blood relations!

Forget about age or vulnerability!

In his eyes, good was good, and evil was evil!

Right and wrong had nothing to do with family or age!

He wouldn't go easy on Gideon just because he was his great-grandfather!

Nor would he show mercy just because Gideon was old!

Respecting the elderly and caring for the young is a virtue, but only if they are good.

A vile creature like Gideon didn't deserve any respect!

Thinking of Kelsey and the Inkster family, his grandmother's ashes, and those harmed by Gideon, not to mention his grieving father...

Killing this old villain wouldn't even begin to appease his anger!

Taking him down would be a service to society!

Evan Thorne wouldn't go easy on him!

Being merciful to an enemy was cruelty to oneself!

He wasn't about to suffer in silence; he intended to beat him, and beat him hard!

He wanted Gideon to feel every bruise, every pain as if he'd been crushed!

He was going to make him hurt!

Elliot and Elijah made Gideon suffer emotionally; Evan would make him suffer physically!

He'd give him a taste of a fate worse than death!

To see if he would change, to ensure he'd never dare commit atrocities in another life!

By the time the rest of the Bradford family arrived, alerted by the online video, Evan had already left.

Gideon lay on the ground, barely alive!

Teeth gone, bones broken... no, shattered!

His body was limp, but his mind was alert, eyes moving, mouth able to speak,

"Call... call that monster Tarquin! It was... it was his second son! Call the cops! I won't let them get away with this! I'll... I'll have them locked away for life!"

Chapter 966

The Bradford clan was in utter disbelief. Tarquin's second son?

That would be Evan, right?

But he's only five years old!

How could he have possibly roughed up the old man like that?

"Dad, are you sure you got this right? Evan's only five, how could he possibly..."

Gideon's face turned a shade of purple with anger as he roared with all his might,

"I said it was him! Call! Call Tarquin...now!"

Seeing Gideon nearly apoplectic, no one dared to question further, nor did they bother to bring up the matter of the video, hastily dialing Tarquin to

come over.

With the video evidence out, Gideon was toast!

If they could drag Evan into this mess, all the better.

Evan was only five, too young for any legal repercussions. His misdeeds would fall on his guardian to deal with.

And since Evan had given Gideon a beating, Tarquin would have to answer for it!

Coincidentally, Tarquin had been pressuring them about shares recently. Perhaps they could use this incident to settle the matter of the shares once and for all!

So, after the group had called Tarquin and decided against calling the police for the time being, they had their plan. They sent Gideon to the hospital, swearing up and down,

"Dad, rest assured, if Evan really did this to you, we won't let Tarquin off the hook!"

"Right, as Evan's guardian, Tarquin has to take legal responsibility for his son!"

At Number One Mansion.

Elysia and Tarquin were together when they heard about Evan's altercation with Gideon, and they were shocked!

While Tarquin was on the phone, she went to find Evan, who had just come back from outside.

Elysia hurriedly asked him,

"Evan, tell Mommy the truth, did you hit Gideon? Did you really hurt him?"

Evan panicked!

Oh no, he had only thought about getting back at Gideon and forgot how to explain it to Mommy!

Evan blinked rapidly, "Who told Mommy?"

"The Bradford family called!"

Evan was furious, that old rascal dared to snitch!

Had he known it would come to this, he would've left Gideon in no state to talk!

"I..." Evan, thinking quickly on his feet, "I went with our bodyguard, and I just couldn't hold back, so I threw a few punches." "Are you hurt?"

"No, I'm fine. The bodyguard was there, I was safe. But Gideon, that old villain, he's badly hurt!

I just lost it when I thought about Keith's family and Grandma's ashes, I'm so sorry, Mommy, I couldn't hold back."

Elysia frowned, speaking seriously to Evan,

"You don't need to apologize. When family is wronged or bullied, you should stand up for them!

Mommy doesn't want you fighting because she's worried you might get hurt. But standing up for your family and fighting for justice, when you can ensure your own safety, is commendable. Mommy thinks you did the right thing this time!"

Evan's eyes lit up, "Mommy isn't mad?"

Elysia gently stroked Evan's cheek,

"Mommy isn't mad. Mommy is proud that my Evan loves his family so much and is filled with such a sense of justice!"

She was just an ordinary woman with no special talents, but she had her principles!

She didn't believe standing up for wronged family was a mistake!

Nor did she believe fighting for justice was wrong!

Gideon's betrayal of his brother, his harm to his father, and his cruel desecration of his grandmother's ashes, justified Evan's rage.

His anger showed how much he loved his family, and that was something to be praised.

As for the Bradford family, Evan had no direct ties to them, but his anger showed his heart was in the right place, which was also commendable.

Chapter 967

So, Elysia was adamant that Evan did nothing wrong by joining his bodyguard in giving Gideon a good thrashing!

No one could guilt-trip her into thinking otherwise just because Gideon was older. Not on her watch!

"Mommy, what's with the Bradford family calling? Are they looking to cause trouble for you?" Evan asked.

Elysia frowned in concern,

"You don't worry about this, darling. Daddy and I will handle it. You need to head up, brush your teeth, and get some sleep. No more sneaking out, okay?"

"...Okay."

Evan obediently went upstairs, and Elysia turned to find Tarquin in the backyard.

Tarquin had just finished a phone call, his voice hoarse,

"I need to make a trip to the hospital. Don't worry about Evan; I've got it covered."

"I'm coming with you!"

The Bradfords might be a force to reckon with, but even knowing he wouldn't get hurt, she couldn't bear the thought of him facing those heartless devils alone!

He may have been alone before, but now he had her, and she wasn't about to let him face them by himself!

She might not have superpowers, but even a cornered mouse will bite a cat!

Tarquin was reluctant to have her come along, knowing dealing with those people would only lead to frustration. Elysia insisted, "I'll feel better being by your side. Please, let me come."

Unable to resist her, Tarquin agreed to take her along.

As they got into the car, Tarquin received messages from Elliot, Evan, and Elijah.

Elliot: [I've got Gideon's shares now, and he owes me a fortune. He's broke and in debt up to his eyeballs!]

Elijah: [The top ten trending topics are all exposés on Gideon. His reputation is in tatters; he's finished!]

Evan: [I gave him a good beating, kept a backup plan to make sure he wouldn't die, just hurt a lot! Hey, don't worry about it anymore.]

Tarquin felt a lump in his throat as he glanced back towards the house.

The three kids were standing at the window, watching them leave.

Turning to Elysia, he found her eyes filled with compassion and love.

In that moment, happiness seemed tangible.

Tarquin sent a reassuring message back to the kids and pulled Elysia into his embrace.

Kissing the top of her head, he murmured,

"Elysia, I'm so happy."

Elysia hugged him tightly,

"I know today was tough for you, and I'm not sure how to make it better. But I want you to know, the kids and I love you dearly. No matter what happens, we're always here for you, always supporting you, always loving you."

Tarquin's eyes welled up, but he smiled,

"If ghosts do exist in this world, my mom would be so content seeing the life I have now. A wife who loves me, children who adore me I'm truly happy."

"Your happiness would make her happy, just like our children's happiness brings us joy.

When we get a chance, let's go pay our respects, and then lay mom and dad to rest together. They loved each other so much in life, and now they're finally reunited. They must be overjoyed.

After a long struggle comes joy, a reunion of spouses, a house full of children and grandchildren. It's a celebration for our parents, and we should be happy for them too."

"You're right, we should celebrate for them!"

Tarquin sniffed hard, his voice firm but his gaze sharpened with resolve.

The one who truly deserved to be miserable was Gideon!

His days of comfort were thoroughly over!

Chapter 968

When Tarquin and Elysia arrived at the hospital, the Bradford family was putting on quite the performance of crocodile tears!

After a thorough examination by the doctor, it was clear Gideon wasn't going to die, but he was pretty much done for. The man couldn't even sit in a wheelchair anymore, doomed to lie in bed like the living dead.

Allegra Bradford was visibly rattled to see the two of them, seizing the opportunity to lash out, "Like father, like son, huh? Just as vile at such a young age, must run in the family! So what if you share the Bradford blood? A phoenix raised by chickens will only grow to be a chicken!"

Elysia's brows knitted in frustration, retorting without missing a beat, "You're absolutely right. If your son, Lionel Bradford, hadn't been raised in the Bradford nest, maybe he wouldn't have turned out the way he did. Maybe he'd still be living a decent life!"

Oh, it was on. If she dared insult Evan in front of her, Elysia was more than ready to hit where it hurts.

And hit she did, her words cutting deep into Allegra, who, with tears welling up in her eyes, lost it, "You bitch! How dare you speak of my Lionel! I'll make you pay!"

Allegra, blind with rage, lunged forward, intent on a physical altercation.

Verity Bradford, the second Bradford sibling, tried to intervene, "Sis, don't do this. Cool down, please."

"Get out of my way!" Allegra shoved Verity aside.

Verity fell to the ground, twisting her ankle and contorting her face in pain.

Elysia, puzzled, shot Verity a perplexed look, wondering what she was playing at. It was unusual for Verity to try to break up a fight; she usually stayed out of it.

Meanwhile, Allegra hadn't reached Elysia before Tarquin grabbed her wrist, snapping it with a crisp sound. Allegra screamed in agony.

The Bradford family was stunned. Tarquin had always been cold towards the Bradford women, never resorting to physical measures, which is why Allegra felt bold enough to confront him directly. No one expected him to react with such severity.

The room fell silent, save for Allegra's cries.

Tarquin's icy gaze swept over the crowd, "Anyone else wants their wrist broken? I can do that. Want your tongue cut out? I can do that too. Or maybe you don't want to live? I can arrange that as well."

The room was filled with fear, nobody daring to make a sound.

Verity, once again, attempted to steer the situation, "Tarquin, you should go see your granddad. He's asking for you."

Tarquin, with a cold look, took Elysia by the hand and headed for the hospital room.

Verity added, "Tarquin, go in alone. Let Elysia wait outside; your granddad probably wants a private word. Don't worry, I'll take good care of Elysia. In fact, I have a few things to discuss with her."

Tarquin frowned, but before he could respond, Elysia reassured him, "Go ahead, I'll be fine out here. Verity and I will just have a quick chat." Elysia sensed something was off with Verity today and was curious to hear what she had to say. Besides, with Tarquin's bodyguards around, she knew she was in safe hands.

Tarquin, still uneasy, was eventually persuaded after Elysia whispered something in his ear, "Call if you need me."

"Will do!"

As Tarquin entered the room and the door closed behind him, the Bradford family collectively exhaled, relieved.

Turning to Elysia with a cold demeanor, they began, "Some parenting, huh? No sense of danger at all. A child commits a crime at five, and it's on the parents! This gets out, and Evan's done for. Who'd want to associate with him after this? He'll be ostracized by the whole world!"

"Exactly! At five, he's put his great-grandfather in a living grave. What's he going to be like when he grows up? Not even a superhero is as fearsome as he is!"

With Tarquin out of the picture, the crowd grew bold and brash. They traded barbs like kids trading baseball cards, each comment sharper and less polite than the last.

Elysia, frowning deeply, watched them with a quiet disdain, choosing to rise above the noise.

Her heart ached for Tarquin!

The Bradford clan was notorious for their sharp tongues and sharper claws. She couldn't even begin to imagine the kind of torment Tarquin must have endured as a child at their hands!

Once the hubbub died down, Elysia finally spoke up, her voice cutting through the silence. She pointedly asked each of them, "And what's your name? You, you, and you..... and you over there. Let's have it. I'll be remembering."

The instigators of the harsh words frowned, suspicious and wary, "And why exactly do you want to know our names?"

"To make sure I don't mix up the names when it's time to cut out some tongues," Elysia replied, her tone icy.

The group gasped collectively, their lips sealed shut in fear and anger. They remembered all too well Tarquin's warning about losing their tongues if they stepped out of line...

Elysia's gaze was icy as she continued, "When it comes to my son, I don't need your judgments or your gossip. Mind your own business and keep my son's name out of your mouths!"

Allegra, unable to contain her rage, snapped back, "Oh, Elysia, acting all high and mighty just because you snagged a powerful man! Without him, you're nothing!"

Quick as a whip, Elysia retorted, "Why don't you go ahead and try marrying someone powerful yourself? No? Then I suggest you keep quiet."

"You..."

Before Allegra could muster a comeback, she suddenly felt an unbearable itching sensation. She scratched at her face, her neck, her arms, her legs... It was as if her entire body was under siege by an invisible army of itch.

Not just Allegra, but the entire group started scratching furiously, a chorus of discomfort filling the air.

"Elysia, what have you done to us?!" one of them managed to gasp out amidst the scratching.

Elysia didn't bother to hide it, "Just a little lesson to remind you that I don't need a man to stand tall. I can make you itch, I can make you cry, and I can make you bedridden. So, I'd watch my mouth if I were you. No badmouthing my son, myself, or my husband. Understood?"

The Bradford women, overwhelmed by the itching, forgot all about their quarrel with Elysia and scrambled to find a doctor.

Verity, who'd been watching the entire spectacle unfold, looked from the retreating figures of the Bradford women back to Elysia, her eyebrows knitted in surprise and something akin to respect.

"What did you want to say?" Elysia turned to her, noticing her silent contemplation.

"Why am I not itching?" Verity inquired, genuinely puzzled.

"You've been standing by my side; you weren't exposed to the irritant, so you're fine."

"And when did you...?" Verity started to ask, but then shook her head, letting the question hang. She sighed, "I always knew you were skilled in medicine, but I had no idea you were capable of this."

Elysia's voice softened, "I learned medicine to heal, not to harm. That is, unless someone harms me first."

Verity's eyes welled up with tears as she confided, "I wish I were as strong as you. To have a powerful husband and to be powerful in my own right, capable of protecting my kids... You've seen it, the Bradford household is no place for the faint-hearted. I've been living a nightmare."

Elysia eyed her, sensing the shift in the conversation.

Verity, teary-eyed, leaned closer, her voice barely a whisper, "Elysia, you've been with Tarquin for a while now. He must have told you about his parents' death. You know they weren't just accidents, but murder, right?"

Elysia was taken aback, not expecting Verity to broach such a dark topic.

Verity sniffled, glancing around to make sure they were alone, then whispered, "If I tell you who killed his parents, would you grant me a favor?"

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Elysia eyed Verity with a mix of suspicion and concern etched across her face.

How on earth did she come across such vital information?

All these years, Tarquin had been on a relentless hunt for the murderer, without a single clue in sight. How could Verity possibly know anything? "Who's the killer?" she finally asked.

Verity replied, "I'll only tell you if you agree to my request first."

Elysia frowned, "Alright, let's hear your request then."

Tears instantly welled up in Verity's eyes. She stared at Elysia for a few seconds before suddenly dropping to her knees with a thud!

Elysia jumped, startled. "What are you doing? Get up, right now!"

But Verity remained on the floor, her voice breaking as she pleaded,

"Elysia, please, you have to save my son! I wouldn't have come to you if I had any other choice... Please..."

Elysia was shocked. Verity had a son?

Wasn't it common knowledge that she only had a daughter studying abroad?!

"You... Get up first," Elysia insisted.

But Verity shook her head, refusing to rise.

"Elysia, you're the only one who can save him now. Tarquin has a soft spot for you; he listens to you. If you could just plead on my son's behalf, I'm sure he would spare him.

Elysia, as a mother, you must understand the love a mother holds for her son. I'd do anything for his well-being!

Please, I'm begging you... Help save my son, please..."

Elysia, utterly confused by the sudden involvement of Tarquin, forcibly helped Verity up from the ground and seated her on a bench in the hallway. She rummaged through her bag for some tissues and handed them to Verity, then fetched her a cup of lukewarm water.

"Calm down and take your time to explain," Elysia urged.

Verity wiped her tears, took the cup but didn't drink. After a few sniffles, she began,

"The Bradfords have always been a tight-knit clan, with a tradition that the direct daughters of the family don't marry out. Their husbands join our family instead, and any children bear the Bradford name.

By the age-old rules passed down through generations, our children are only entitled to a small portion of the Bradford estate, with no rights to the family's inheritance.

My father had Kendrick and us sisters, but only Kendrick and his descendants were eligible for the inheritance.

However, should anything happen to Kendrick's line, our sons could then vie for the inheritance.

That's why everyone's been secretly hoping for something to happen to Tarquin and Elijah; it would open up an opportunity for the rest to claim the Bradford Group.

But I never shared that sentiment. The Bradford family is like a den of wolves; what good is inheriting the Bradford Group if it doesn't bring happiness?

I never wanted my son to inherit the family's troubles. I hid him away out of love, hoping he could grow up healthy and happy.

But I never imagined that his foster parents, upon learning of his heritage, would encourage him to come back and fight Tarquin for the inheritance!

I know what Tarquin is capable of. It would be as easy for him to eliminate my son as it is to crush an ant!

I've tried reasoning with my son, but he wouldn't listen. He didn't grow up with me, so we're not close.

He's determined to come back and fight for the inheritance, leaving me no choice but to find another way to protect him.

Elysia, could you promise me that if he ever returns and causes trouble, you'll convince Tarquin to spare his life?" Elysia was silent.

Family drama in wealthy families was indeed complicated.

"Though Tarquin can be hot-tempered, he wouldn't commit a grave injustice. If you want to secure a future for your son, he needs to avoid digging his own grave. There's only so much anyone can do if he insists on courting disaster."

Verity's eyes were red-rimmed with emotion.

"I'll keep an eye on him, making sure he doesn't take a fatal path. As long as Tarquin is willing to show mercy, I'm certain he can survive."