

Bound love 1331

Chapter 1331:

“Such arrogance. But what will you do when your talent fails you? Will you quit the music industry?”

A stunned hush fell over the audience at Celeste’s cutting words.

To suggest Elyse should leave music entirely was more than just disdain—it was an outright declaration of hatred.

But why did Celeste hate her so much? Was it the rumors, the whispers that Elyse had used connections to climb the ranks? Of course, no one had ever proven those rumors, and it was only Celeste who had ever brought them up.

As the air between them thickened with tension, the host quickly intervened, attempting to cool things down before it could escalate further.

Celeste, however, wasn’t about to back down.

“So, if it turns out you did use connections, will you publicly apologize and leave the music industry for good?” she pressed, her tone sharp.

Elyse couldn’t understand the source of Celeste’s deep-rooted animosity.

Why was she so obsessed with accusing her of shady dealings? But Elyse would rather be caught in rumors about illicit affairs than have her talent questioned.

Her pride wouldn’t allow that.

Despite the unfair accusations, Elyse stood firm.

She wasn’t going to let Celeste’s words slide.

“Why won’t you answer me? Scared your talent isn’t enough to back up your claims?” Celeste taunted, her voice laced with venom.

Her aggressive challenge sent a ripple of unease through the audience, but Elyse stood her ground.

After a beat of silence, Elyse met her gaze with unshakable resolve.

“If I prove my talent today, will you publicly apologize? Will you admit your accusations about me using connections were nothing but lies?”

Celeste’s lips twisted into a smug smile as she nodded.

“If you accept my terms, I’ll accept yours.”

Elyse’s eyes never wavered.

“So be it. I accept.”

The host, caught off guard by the sudden turn of events, stood frozen in disbelief.

His eyes flicked between the two women, stunned by the high-stakes wager they had just made.

One risked her entire career in music, while the other risked her reputation, leaving both women teetering on the edge of self-destruction.

Could they truly be so reckless, so oblivious to the consequences of their daring bet?

As the conversation between Elyse and Celeste dwindled, the host seized the moment to advance the proceedings of the eagerly anticipated event.

First in line to test her mettle, Elyse was poised to challenge a contestant not yet revealed.

Fate, however, seemed to weave its own tale as her opponent was none other than the contestant Celeste had openly accused of manipulating his way into the competition.

Chapter 1332:

“Elyse, you’ll be up against Stuart Miller. Shall we see which piece you both will tackle? Are you ready?” the host queried, his voice tinged with intrigue.

With unwavering confidence, Elyse nodded.

“I’m ready.”

The host, buoyed by her aplomb, probed further.

“Is there any piece that gives you pause, or are you apprehensive about drawing perhaps your least practiced one?”

Pausing briefly to collect her thoughts, Elyse replied, “There were once pieces that daunted me, but I’ve devoted time to turn those weaknesses into strengths. Now, I fear no piece.”

Impressed, the host exclaimed, “You truly embody the challenger spirit! Let’s unveil the piece you will perform.”

As all eyes locked onto the stage’s grand screen, it flickered and flipped through the repertoire, building suspense among the audience.

It abruptly stopped.

“The duel between Elyse Lloyd and Stuart Miller will feature ‘Humoresque.’ Stuart, care to take the stage first?”

Stuart stood calm, his earlier scheming paying off.

He had secretly ensured his selection through backstage bribes, aiming to guarantee the piece he had mastered would be chosen.

With a strategy in mind, he proposed, “Ladies first. Elyse, please, after you.”

Gracefully accepting, Elyse responded, “Sure. No problem.”

As Elyse took the stage with serene confidence, Stuart felt a twinge of anxiety.

Her composed nature left him puzzled. Was she also a master of this piece?

He patted his cheeks, silently urging himself to maintain his composure and focus as the competition unfolded.

Elyse then positioned herself at the piano.

As she began to play, the music cascaded from her fingertips with elegant precision.

Meanwhile, Celeste watched from the judges’ panel, her interest piqued.

She knew this piece was neither overly complex nor simplistic—a perfect test of true musical craftsmanship.

The performer had to meticulously balance tone, bow pressure, and speed, ensuring the bow glided in a flawless line between the fingerboard and bridge to sidestep any harsh tones.

Playing this piece was a litmus test for novices, yet it posed an elegant challenge for seasoned violinists to execute a pristine solo.

Elyse, immersed in her performance, ignored Celeste’s critical eyes.

She knew Celeste harbored a bias and would scrutinize her eagerly for any misstep.

Yet, she was unfazed.

Chapter 1333:

Her experiences at the Swan Cup had tempered her, teaching her the art of poise under pressure.

She locked eyes with Celeste, unshaken.

As the final note resonated, the audience's applause swelled throughout the hall.

With a graceful dip of a curtsy, Elyse acknowledged the crowd, her confidence unwavering.

The host lavished praise upon her before she retreated backstage, making way for Stuart's moment in the spotlight.

Stuart approached with a veneer of assurance.

Unacquainted with the trials of the Swan Cup, he underestimated Elyse's seasoned finesse, dismissing her display as mundane, convinced his would surpass hers.

Yet, as the last echoes of his performance faded, the sparse applause left him bewildered and disheartened.

The host beckoned Elyse back to the stage to receive the judges' verdicts.

After the initial judges shared their thoughts, it was Celeste's turn.

She grasped the microphone, her voice stern, addressing Stuart.

"Did you perceive the audience's reaction following each performance?"

Stuart, momentarily taken aback, admitted, "I did."

Celeste's critique was scathing.

"Your basic skills are profoundly deficient.

I've seldom seen such a lack of foundational mastery.

Elyse's command of the violin far exceeds yours.

To seriously consider a future in violin, you must dedicate far more time to refining your technique."

Stuart's annoyance was palpable.

This marked the second instance of Celeste publicly critiquing his abilities, but now she had crossed a line by questioning his fundamental skills.

"Humoresque" was his signature piece.

Overwhelmed by frustration, Stuart seized the microphone and countered forcefully, "I believe my performance was exceptional.

This piece is my specialty.

There's no way I could be outperformed by Elyse."

Chapter 1334:

Celeste's expression subtly shifted.

Although she believed Elyse outperformed Stuart, who was mediocre, Elyse—despite being merely competent—managed to distinguish herself remarkably well. Stuart's attitude, however, deeply disappointed her.

Music represented a profound medium for expressing emotion, and such a significant art form demanded absolute sincerity and commitment.

Pointing directly at Stuart, Celeste declared, "Even though I'm not a fan of Elyse, her performance far surpassed yours. Her skills are undeniably superior. You simply don't measure up."

Stuart's face darkened dramatically. Celeste's cutting remarks were undoubtedly demolishing his musical aspirations.

Elyse turned towards Stuart, her challenge crackling with confidence. "If you're unconvinced, feel free to challenge me again. I'm more than prepared."

Stuart clenched his teeth. "I never expected you to be so arrogant."

Elyse tilted her head, a provocative smile playing across her lips. "Well, I'm here to challenge you contestants. Challenge me, and I'll be absolutely delighted." That smile—sharp and bold, like a dare—was caught perfectly by the cameras, her confidence glowing under the stage lights.

The next day, the episode aired, and it was like pouring gasoline on a fire.

The internet exploded with debates and commentary. Viewers speculated about the wager between Elyse and Celeste, but it was Elyse's audacious grin that set the virtual world ablaze.

Chloe hadn't expected the uproar. "You've gone viral," she said, scrolling through her phone. "People are convinced you're here to crush these amateurs like a wrecking ball."

Elyse shrugged, her smile tinged with resignation. "I'm not that ruthless. I just wanted to prove I earned my spot fair and square. But with Stuart as my opponent? Even Celeste thinks the only reason I won was because he was hopeless."

Chloe's brows furrowed thoughtfully. "Then for the next round, you need to up the stakes. Go after someone who's undeniably strong. What about Nick Martel? He's Celeste's protégé and the frontrunner for the top prize, according to all the online buzz."

Elyse's eyes narrowed in consideration. "Nick Martel, huh? That's a good idea. If I take him down, it'll shut everyone up about favoritism."

But Chloe's expression darkened with concern. "You have to win, Elyse. Celeste's made it pretty clear—she's gunning for you to leave the industry. And if you lose, your solo concert tour? Poof. Gone."

Elyse nodded, the weight of the situation sinking in.

“You’re right. I can’t afford to slip up. I’ll need to study Nick’s performances and see what I’m up against.”

Later that evening, Elyse returned home, drained from the day. She had just changed into her pajamas and was preparing to sleep when her phone buzzed unexpectedly. She hesitated before answering.

“Hello? Grandma, is that you?” Her tone was uncertain but curious.

A warm chuckle came through the line, and Felicia’s voice, filled with delight, replied, “Yes, my dear. It’s me! Pearce gave me your number. I saw you on television. My goodness, you were marvelous!”

Though a little surprised by the call, Elyse responded softly, “Thank you. I’m glad you enjoyed it. I’ll be performing on the show twice more—would you like to come and watch in person?”

Chapter 1335:

Felicia didn’t miss a beat. “Oh, that would be wonderful! I’d be over the moon to see you live, darling. I’m so proud of you.”

“It’s really nothing,” Elyse said gently. “But don’t stay up too late, okay? I need to get some sleep now, too.”

Felicia’s voice brimmed with joy. “Alright. Sweet dreams. Next time, I’ll be right there, cheering you on.”

After exchanging a few more warm words, Elyse hung up. She tossed her phone onto the bed, sighing softly as she settled in.

But just as her head hit the pillow, there came a knock at the door.

Driscoll’s voice called out, “Elyse, you have a visitor.”

Elyse groaned. “At this hour? Who on earth wants to see me now?”

“It’s Shaun,” Driscoll said.

Her eyes shot open. “Shaun? Wait, Shaun Kennedy? What’s he doing here at nearly ten o’clock?”

Rising, she approached and opened the door.

Observing Elyse’s exhausted appearance, Driscoll offered an additional explanation. “He didn’t elaborate on his visit, but I suspect he might be in an even more precarious state than you.”

Perplexed, Elyse inquired, “What do you mean?”

Driscoll gestured toward his eyes. “He bears pronounced dark circles. It appears he hasn’t experienced restful sleep in quite some time.”

Elyse felt momentarily speechless. “If he’s struggling with sleep, perhaps consulting a doctor would be more appropriate. Why come to me?”

Draping a shawl around her shoulders and adopting a cool demeanor, she declared, “Let’s go downstairs. I’ll hear him out.”

Driscoll followed Elyse as she descended to meet Shaun. Approaching the living area, she spotted Shaun seated on the sofa.

The sight of the sofa stirred an unwelcome memory—a fleeting image of her and Jayden sharing an intimate moment just days ago. The thought made her heart skip a beat.

Why was that popping into her head now? She shook it off, scolding herself silently for the distraction.

Clearing her throat, she walked forward and addressed Shaun with a mix of curiosity and annoyance. “What brings you here so late?”

Shaun tilted his head slightly, and Elyse's heart skipped a beat as she took in his ghostly appearance. He looked nothing short of disastrous.

His hair, once neatly styled, now cascaded in wild, untamed locks, a testament to months of neglect. The haunting dark circles under his eyes spoke of countless sleepless nights, painting a portrait of sheer exhaustion. His chin, scruffily bearded, gave him the air of a wanderer lost in time.

As Elyse's eyes roved over Shaun, from his haggard face to his disheveled attire, she couldn't help but mock him with a playful sneer. "Really, Shaun? Looking like a castaway—surely your family hasn't thrown you out with the trash?"

Her laughter filled the room, light and mocking, as she gracefully descended onto the plush couch, her spirits undeniably high.

Yet, Shaun's face remained a mask of serene detachment, untouched by her barbs. With a voice calm as a dormant volcano, he inquired, "Does my plight really bring such joy to your heart?" .

Chapter 1336:

Elyse's smirk was tinged with scorn. Her reply came swift and sharp, laced with venomous glee. "Oh, absolutely. Seeing you fall from grace would be the cherry on my sundae."

Shaun felt a chill creep up his spine, a silent witness to Elyse's malicious satisfaction at his downfall.

With little appetite for further verbal sparring, Elyse took a careful sip of the water handed to her by Driscoll. Setting down the cup, she quizzed, "So, what wind blew you here? What dire need drives you to seek me out?"

Shaun's lips were dry, and he licked them nervously, his expression darkening. "I saw Tracy."

The water went down the wrong pipe, and Elyse erupted in a fit of coughing.

Driscoll was at her side in a heartbeat, offering tissues with a worried frown. "Are you all right?"

Elyse dismissed him with a wave, still coughing, as she wiped her mouth.

Her voice was raspy as she recovered. “You saw who?”

Shaun took a moment, his hands rubbing his weary face before he looked up, his eyes earnest and troubled. “I swear, it was Tracy. In Cedarvale, dressed in the newest fashion. And she wasn’t alone.”

There was a man with her.” His voice cracked as he continued, “They looked... happy. She was holding his arm, laughing freely.”

Elyse’s expression shifted, a storm of confusion and skepticism brewing. She hesitated, then asked, “Are you absolutely sure? You know, Tracy was supposed to be...”

Shaun interrupted, his denial fierce. “No, it can’t be! Lowell wouldn’t... There must be some mistake. Maybe he hid her away only to release her later!”

The sight of Shaun, so utterly heartbroken yet fiercely hopeful, was almost too much for Elyse. It was painful to watch, especially knowing his own role in Tracy’s past agony.

Her face darkened and her tone grew icy. “What makes you think Lowell would let Tracy go? Neither he nor Dolores have hearts of gold. Why would they spare her?”

Shaun, resolute in his belief, countered passionately, “I’ve known them my whole life. You think I don’t know them? They aren’t monsters!”

Elyse’s frustration nearly boiled over. She leaned back against the couch, lifting her gaze to the ceiling as if searching for patience. “All of you are the same. The only true victim here was Tracy, killed by all of you.”

Shaun’s expression tightened, his eyes a mirror of the pain swirling within.

Elyse pressed further. “The woman you saw in Cedarvale — did you actually talk to her? Did she acknowledge you?”

Shaun nodded, a trace of sorrow flickering across his face. “Yes, I approached her right away, trying to reconnect. But she denied being Tracy. She insisted I was mistaken and claimed she’s been married long ago.”

Elyse paused, then said, “Do you have a picture? Let’s see if it really was Tracy.”

Shaun handed her a photograph. Elyse studied it, her expression shifting to surprise. “She does look like Tracy.”

Shaun’s voice grew fervent, almost desperate. “It is Tracy! She must be angry with me, refusing to recognize me.”

Elyse’s skepticism lingered. She shook her head slowly.

“If Tracy is alive, it’s only because Lowell had a change of heart. But it’s hard to believe he would show mercy.” She handed back the photo. .

Chapter 1337:

Shaun clutched the photo, his finger tenderly tracing the image of the woman, his longing palpable.

Elyse watched his sentimental gesture with distaste.

Yet, seeing him in such a state piqued her curiosity. “How did you end up looking so destitute? Has the Kennedy fortune finally dried up? Are you on your way to becoming a vagrant?”

Shaun caught the gleam of anticipation in her eyes, which only fueled his irritation. “No, I’ve just hit a string of bad luck.”

Elyse’s eyebrows rose. “What sort of bad luck?”

Shaun’s brow furrowed deeper. “Since my trip to Cedarvale, it’s been one thing after another. I can’t shake the feeling that someone’s always watching me.”

Elyse scoffed, raising an eyebrow. “Who in their right mind would be watching you? Are you losing it?”

Shaun shook his head, his eyes hardening with resolve. “No, my gut is never wrong. Moreover, someone has been trying to make things difficult for me. This is the latest theory I have come up with.”

“What are you getting at?” Elyse asked.

“Someone wants me dead,” Shaun replied, his tone chilling as he casually tucked the photo away.

Elyse’s breath caught in her throat. She took a second look at him, noticing for the first time how he looked like he’d been dragged through a ditch. “Who would want you dead?”

Shaun chuckled dryly, a sound that held no humor. “I don’t know yet, but I’ll figure it out. Actually, the reason I came here was to ask about Tracy. I haven’t seen her since that day. It’s like she disappeared off the face of the earth.”

Elyse’s expression immediately darkened. “Are you sure it was Tracy?”

Shaun leaned forward, his gaze intense. “I saw her with my own eyes. How could I be mistaken?”

Elyse propped her head up on her hand. “Well, if you are serious, maybe you should talk to Lowell or Dolores. Watch how they react. That should tell you if it was really her.”

Shaun furrowed his brow. “You really think they are involved? What if you’re wrong?”

Elyse scoffed again, the disdain in her voice unmistakable. “And so what if I am? They are hardly saints. Should I go over and apologize to them?”

Her voice dripped with the contempt she had for Lowell and Dolores.

Had Shaun pushed further, he knew she would unleash a tirade he didn’t have the energy to weather.

He tapped his fingers against his knee, deep in thought. Finally, he nodded hesitantly. "Fine. I'll give it a shot." After saying that, he rose to his feet.

Elyse followed him to the door. "But what if it wasn't Tracy? What if you've got it all wrong and mistook someone else for her?"

Shaun shook his head firmly, his jaw set in determination. "That's impossible. It was her. Why else would she be avoiding me? Why else would she refuse to see me?"

Elyse exhaled in exasperation. "Fine, let's pretend it is Tracy. What's your plan then? What are you going to do about it?"

Shaun's gaze flicked to her, his expression distant. "If you and Jayden could work things out, why can't Tracy and I?"

A derisive laugh escaped Elyse. "You've got to be kidding me. Are you comparing yourself to Jayden?" .

Chapter 1338:

The absurdity of Shaun even attempting to measure up to Jayden was laughable. Jayden had never put her in harm's way. On the other hand, Tracy had been teetering on the edge since she got tangled up with Shaun.

"If Tracy's still alive," Shaun began, his voice tinged with desperation, "talk to her for me. Convince her to come back. She can live a happy life with me. Don't let her do something reckless."

Elyse crossed her arms, shaking her head in disdain. "Not a chance. I won't help you."

Shaun's jaw tightened, anger flashing in his eyes. "Why are you so against helping me? Are you that determined to keep Tracy and me apart?"

"Why are you taking your anger out on my wife? You are the one who messed things up with your girl." Jayden strolled into the room confidently, one hand buried in his pocket.

His eyes swept over Shaun's disheveled appearance. "It's been a while. I must say, you've changed a lot."

Shaun ignored the jab and said, "Tracy's alive. I need your help to find her."

Jayden's brow lifted in surprise. He had thought Tracy was long gone.

Elyse jumped in, quickly catching him up on the situation. As the pieces clicked into place, Jayden nodded slowly, his expression shifting to one of realization. No wonder Shaun had stormed in like a man possessed.

"I hate to burst your bubble," Jayden said evenly, his voice as calm as still waters. "But I looked into Tracy's case a while back and confirmed her death. In fact, I uncovered evidence that ties the Ruiz family to it."

"No way! I didn't find anything like that!" Shaun shot back, his voice tinged with disbelief, still struggling to wrap his head around it.

"Three days after you dropped your investigation, Dolores and Lowell were spotted at the cliff where Tracy went missing," Jayden explained.

"Maybe they were there to pay their respects!" Shaun fired back.

Jayden's expression darkened as he shook his head. "I highly doubt that. According to my sources, Dolores was laughing triumphantly. The wind was so fierce that no one could make out their words, but who else returns to the scene of the crime, gloating like that, except the one responsible?"

Shaun gritted his teeth. "Are you certain about this? Laughing doesn't automatically make Dolores the murderer."

Elyse had heard enough. She stepped forward and shoved Shaun with both hands, her frustration spilling over. "You are so blind when it comes to Lowell and Dolores! What's the point of even looking for Tracy? If we do find her, they will try to kill her again!"

Shaun felt the sting as though a hand had struck him hard across the face. A wave of heat surged through his body, his lips clamped shut, his complexion turning ashen. “That’s not what I meant. It’s hard to believe Lowell and Dolores would ever go after Tracy.”

Elyse’s reply was razor-sharp, tinged with incredulity. “And why not? Dolores is utterly smitten with you. Can you truly imagine her watching Tracy steal you away without a fight? And Lowell, that schemer? He was plotting to edge Tracy out long before your wedding, all to safeguard his beloved sister! Don’t play dumb with me. You’re fully aware, yet you stubbornly refuse to accept they might have had a hand in Tracy’s demise!”

Elyse caught her breath, her chest rising and falling dramatically. After regaining her composure, she continued, her voice heavy with scorn. “If you’re going to stubbornly wear blinders, then perhaps Tracy never meant that much to you. You’re merely indulging in a pitiful charade. Stop masquerading as the heartbroken lover. At this point, you’re only deceiving yourself. It’s utterly nauseating.” .

Chapter 1339:

A palpable silence enveloped them, thick and oppressive, until Shaun finally turned to Jayden. “Seems your wife doesn’t mince her words, does she?”

Jayden arched an eyebrow. “She speaks only the truth. Your devotion to Tracy hasn’t exactly been compelling. You seem far more entangled with Dolores and her brother.”

Shaun opened his mouth, perhaps to object, but no words came out. He turned away, leaving the room in a hushed, heavy-footed retreat.

Watching his disheartened departure, Jayden quipped, “Seems like you’ve shattered him.”

Elyse snorted. “Shattered? Please. I’ve barely scratched the surface. The man’s as brittle as early morning frost.”

Jayden chuckled, his arm snaking around Elyse’s waist. “I’m a bit delicate myself,” he murmured playfully. “Mind if I stay over tonight, darling?”

Shaun slumped into his car, pulled a cigarette from the pack, and lit it. Smoke curled from his lips as he stared through the windshield, his eyes vacant and haunted. Had he really been so blind? Was his trust in Lowell and Dolores truly his greatest folly?

Tracy's parting words echoed back at him—she had offered him one last chance just before she vanished. He had clung to that hope more fiercely than anything else in his life, yearning for a fresh start with her. For half a year, he had wrestled with the reality of her demise, immersing himself in the endless tide of work to escape the grip of his grief.

Yet, the harder he tried to bury those haunting thoughts, the more aggressively they surged back into his consciousness, particularly in the solitude of night. A relentless tidal wave of longing swept over him, threatening to engulf his very being.

He hadn't realized that the absence of someone could manifest so physically, so oppressively. It was as though a mountain of stone weighed down upon his chest. This yearning tortured him, a slow, excruciating throb that seemed intent on consuming him from within.

"Tracy, are you hiding from me? Don't you wish to see me anymore?" he whispered into the void. The silence that followed was deafening.

The cigarette dwindled to the filter. With a sigh, Shaun stubbed it out and fired up the engine.

He had only traveled a hundred yards when the steering wheel abruptly slackened under his grip. He stomped on the brakes, to no avail.

With a thunderous crash, the car barreled into a wall.

Inside the house, Jayden and Elyse paused their discussion about sleeping arrangements as the crash echoed through the walls. They stood frozen.

"What was that, Driscoll?" Jayden queried.

"I'll find out, sir," Driscoll responded with due respect.

Moments later, Driscoll returned, his complexion ghostly. "It's Shaun. His car has demolished the back garden wall!"

Elyse inhaled sharply. “Is this some form of retaliation?” With a solemn nod, Driscoll replied, “No. He’s unconscious. I’ve called emergency. An ambulance is en route.”

As fear washed over Elyse, she clutched her chest. A terrifying realization dawned on her. She murmured, “Moments ago, Shaun feared someone was out to end his life.”

Jayden and Elyse dashed outside, drawn by the chaos. They arrived just as the household staff and security were wrestling open the car door to free Shaun, who lay slumped and unconscious.

Elyse gasped at the sight of Shaun, his face smeared with blood. “He’s terribly hurt,” she cried out. .

Chapter 1340:

Jayden surveyed the crumpled vehicle and said, “His car met disaster just down the road. If someone was out to kill him, they nearly had their wish.”

Elyse, despite her aversion to Shaun, harbored no deadly wishes against him.

She voiced her concern, wringing her hands. “Is Shaun going to make it? He was on his way to see Tracy. He just can’t die, not now.”

“Keep your spirits up,” Jayden comforted her. “The paramedics are en route. He’ll pull through. He must; Tracy needs him.”

As they watched, the blood continued its grim trail down Shaun’s face, deepening Elyse’s fear.

When the ambulance finally arrived, it whisked Shaun away within moments.

Jayden turned to Elyse with a plan. “I’m off to the police station to get some answers. Would you mind keeping watch at the hospital?”

Elyse nodded, her face set with resolve, and climbed into the ambulance alongside Driscoll.

Waiting outside the emergency room, Elyse found herself pacing.

Driscoll, seeing her distress, ventured cautiously, “It seems you are quite concerned for Shaun, right?”

Elyse let out a weary sigh. “It’s complicated. I can’t say I like him, but wishing him dead? Never.”

“His injuries are severe, mostly to the head,” Driscoll informed her, his tone somber. “It’s quite grim.”

Her heart sank further. “That bad?”

Driscoll nodded silently, his expression grave.

A new worry crept into Elyse’s thoughts. The accident had happened right outside their home. What if Shaun’s family sought retribution?

By 5 A.M., Shaun was out of surgery, his life hanging in a delicate balance but out of immediate danger.

As the first light of dawn touched the sky, Jayden returned, heavy with news.

“The brakes, steering, and fuel system were sabotaged,” he disclosed. “It happened while he was inside my villa.”

Elyse, despite her exhaustion, was sharply attentive. “All that, in such a brief visit?”

“Exactly,” Jayden confirmed, his eyes dark with concern. “Whoever did this knew exactly what they were doing, slipping past all our security measures without leaving a trace.”

“Won’t we be able to track them down? What’s the next step for the police?” Elyse asked, her voice tinged with desperation.

“They’re on it,” Jayden assured her, massaging his temples wearily. “They’re checking other surveillance in the area. Whoever orchestrated this is no amateur—they’re a master of destruction.”

Elyse moved closer to Jayden, who enveloped her in his arms. “Are you scared?” he asked softly.

She nodded, then hesitated. “It’s terrifying to think that someone capable of such things is lurking around our neighborhood.”

Jayden stroked her hair, trying to soothe her. “Don’t worry. I’ve already stepped up security around here. You’re safe,” he reassured her. .