

Bound love 1341

Chapter 1341:

Elyse remained silent, finding solace in his embrace, a blank expression crossing her face.

Jayden cherished moments like these, always seizing the chance to hold her close.

Suddenly, Elyse snapped out of her trance and gave Jayden a playful pinch. “Don’t start getting any ideas,” she warned with a half-smile.

He sighed, a soft expression on his face; their moments together were always too brief.

As he glanced out the window, noting the morning light, he suggested, “You should head home and get some rest. I’ll make sure someone stays with Shaun at the hospital.”

Acknowledging his advice, Elyse, visibly tired from the long night, headed for the door. As she opened it, she nearly collided with Dolores.

Elyse stopped, taken aback. “Dolores, what are you doing here?”

Tears rimmed Dolores’ eyes, her face etched with grief. “Where’s Shaun? Is he alright?” she managed to ask.

At the mention of Shaun, Elyse turned to look at him lying on the hospital bed, his condition stark against the sterile sheets. Dolores caught her glance and followed it. Seeing Shaun, pale and bandaged, looking as though death had brushed by him, Dolores crumbled, rushing to his side.

gVlnove/sem , the heart of fiction

“No, Shaun!” she wailed, clinging to him, her sobs filling the room.

Elyse watched, feeling out of place. She tried to reassure her. “His surgery went well. He’s going to be fine. We just need to wait for him to wake up.”

But Dolores seemed to hear none of it, lost in her tears, mourning over Shaun as if he were already gone.

Confused by such a profound display of emotion, Elyse exchanged a bewildered look with Jayden, who could only shrug in response.

Eventually, Dolores composed herself enough to stand, her eyes fierce with resolve. “Who did this to him? Tell me! I won’t let them get away with it!”

“We don’t know yet,” Elyse replied, her voice steady despite the uncertainty and fear that lay beneath.

Dolores’ expression morphed swiftly after the revelation. Her eyes, alight with suspicion, bore into Elyse.

She probed, her voice dripping with malice, “You’re clueless about who attacked Shaun? Yet, it all went down right outside your doorstep, didn’t it? You’re definitely hiding something. You must be shielding the perpetrator.”

Elyse bristled at the charge, her mind racing. How dare Dolores insinuate they were sheltering the perpetrator when they had been the ones to save Shaun?

Before Elyse could retaliate, Jayden gently held her back.

With a voice as calm as still water, he said, “If you believe we’re in cahoots with the perpetrator, feel free to inform the authorities. Let’s keep our heads here, shall we?”

Dolores squinted. “Guilty conscience, perhaps?”

Jayden’s smile was tinged with irony. “Looking for a scapegoat? Sorry, you’re barking up the wrong tree.”

A pause fell as Dolores pondered, her silence heavy. .

Chapter 1342:

Elyse, skepticism painting her features, challenged, “We’ve kept Shaun’s accident under wraps. It should be a secret, right? How did you come by such information? Are you the instigator? Or have you been shadowing him all this time?”

Dolores assumed a haughty stance, arms crossed, chin lifted slightly as she peered down at Elyse. “Your baseless suspicions are tiresome. Shaun’s assistant clued me in immediately. I drove through the night from another city.”

Jayden nodded slightly. “Indeed, I asked that Shaun’s assistant be updated on his condition.”

Dolores arched an eyebrow, her tone smug. “See? He just confirmed it. Your suspicions are unfounded.”

Elyse scoffed, her frustration clear. “Smug, aren’t you? If you truly care about Shaun, chase after the real villain instead of flinging accusations here.”

Her gaze intensified, piercing. “And as for you, Dolores, in my eyes, you’re the one behind Tracy’s death. Rest assured, I’ll dig up the dirt on your misdeeds and see you behind bars soon.”

Dolores tilted her head, amusement flickering in her eyes. “What has her death got to do with me? Have you lost your mind?”

Before Elyse could unleash her fury, Jayden’s voice boomed. His stance was formidable as he thundered, “Enough! Leave this instant!”

Unperturbed, Dolores looked at Jayden dismissively. The Owens were embroiled in their own turmoil, and Jayden had long cut ties with them. To her, his threats were trivial.

She retorted with an eye roll, “Leave because you said so? It seems you’re the one unraveling here.”

“Really?” As Jayden’s words echoed through the room, four bodyguards clad in black swiftly entered.

Two positioned themselves at the door, their presence formidable, while the other two advanced towards Dolores, their approach exuding an air of undeniable authority.

Dolores instinctively retreated, her voice tinged with caution. “What are you doing? Don’t think you can just manhandle me!”

Jayden’s irritation was palpable as he commanded, “Escort her out. This room is off-limits to anyone but hospital staff.”

“Yes, sir,” came the synchronized reply from the bodyguards.

Before Dolores could muster a response, she found herself firmly grasped by the arms and ushered towards the exit.

Seething with indignation, Dolores hurled accusations. “What right do you have to throw me out? I bet you’re the one behind this, keeping Shaun here to harm him further.”

Elyse, overhearing Dolores’ wild claims, couldn’t help but express her disbelief. “Didn’t she pursue her studies abroad for years? How can she be so illogical, spouting such baseless accusations?”

Jayden let out a soft chuckle. “Perhaps it was her family’s wealth, not her own abilities, that secured her admission to a university abroad.”

Elyse recalled a past conversation, her tone uncertain. “But Tracy once said Dolores was intelligent and sharp.”

Jayden scoffed dismissively. “That was merely Tracy’s view. Truly gifted students don’t behave like Dolores.” .

Chapter 1343:

With that, Elyse and Jayden exited the hospital together. In the corridor, realization dawned on Dolores that she had no leverage to take Shaun and, compounded by Jayden’s strict orders, her options were severely curtailed. Frantically, she dialed her brother, Lowell, on her phone. Lowell was taken aback by Jayden’s extensive involvement.

After a brief pause, Lowell advised, “Dolores, don’t do anything reckless. We should wait and see.”

Dolores bit her lip, frustration evident in her voice. “But this is my chance. Whether Shaun returns to me hinges on this moment.”

Lowell responded soothingly, “Don’t act on impulse. With Jayden’s men watching over him and the real perpetrator still at large, any attempt to take Shaun now could backfire spectacularly.”

Elyse collapsed into the car’s backseat, her mind entangled with thoughts of Dolores’s recent actions. Each reflection deepened her suspicion, painting Dolores increasingly as the likely perpetrator.

Desperate to untangle her thoughts, she turned to Jayden, who seemed to anticipate her turmoil.

“Dolores isn’t the culprit,” he assured her. “Remember, when Shaun had the accident, she was right in Heathfield—she hasn’t misled us.”

“But then, who lurks behind this mystery?” Elyse pressed, her voice tinged with frustration.

“The answer is simpler than we think,” Jayden suggested with a calm resolve. “We must look towards those who harbored a grudge against Shaun. Reflect on that—who truly despised him?”

Elyse’s response came hesitantly, laced with confusion. “I hardly know him. How could I pinpoint his adversaries?”

“You know them better than you think,” Jayden pressed gently. “It’s Tracy.”

The name struck Elyse like a cold gust. “That’s absurd! Tracy? But she’s presumed dead!”

“Yet, didn’t Shaun spot her in Cedarvale not long ago?” Jayden countered, his voice even. “Consider what she endured before her disappearance; such events could forge a vendetta.”

Elyse grappled with the implications, her rebuttal soft but firm. “You’re basing this on the assumption Tracy still breathes.”

“Consider this—my team scoured the seas for a month; Tracy’s body remained elusive. She might indeed be among the living,” Jayden posited.

Silenced by the exchange, Elyse found herself at a loss.

Jayden, noting her crestfallen look, offered consolation. “Let’s not spiral into these theories now. Return home, rest, and recharge. We’ll revisit this quandary once Shaun emerges from his slumber.”

Acknowledging the wisdom in his words, Elyse consented with a weary nod.

After a night fraught with tension, the pair sought refuge in their shared room to recover.

Elyse’s rest extended well into the afternoon; she awoke disoriented, descending the stairs to feed her lingering hunger.

Mid-meal, the housemaid, standing in for Driscoll, approached with a deference that filled the room. “Debora Owen visits again. Shall we allow her entry?”

“Has Jayden risen?” Elyse inquired, hopeful. .

Chapter 1344:

“He is still at rest,” the maid replied.

With the weight of familial complexities pressing down, Elyse made a decisive call. “Please, ask Debora to return later. Jayden isn’t prepared to entertain visitors just yet.” The maid nodded, retreating to manage the delicate refusal.

Post-meal, Elyse retreated to her sanctuary, the strains of her violin briefly displacing her worries before she succumbed again to sleep.

Roused at eight PM, she found Jayden awake at last.

Driscoll approached with a gentle urgency. “Debora Owen has persisted at our doorstep for hours, despite our attempts to dissuade her. She remains adamant about meeting Jayden before she departs.”

Startled by the persistence, Elyse exclaimed, “Has she really been waiting since this afternoon?”

Affirming, Driscoll added, “We’ve informed her of your unavailability, yet she stands firm in her resolve to wait.”

As Elyse bit into her chicken, she cast a glance at Jayden, curious to see how he would handle the unfolding situation.

Jayden’s expression darkened slightly before he conceded. “Let her in.”

Debora entered, her gaze immediately drawn to the inviting spread on the table. Her stomach betrayed her with a loud rumble.

Catching the sound, Elyse offered warmly, “Why don’t you join us for dinner?”

After a brief hesitation, Debora nodded and took a seat.

As she ate, she seemed to reflect on her decision to wait outside all day without any provisions. She devoured her meal with an intensity that filled the room.

Finally, leaning back and dabbing at her lips with a napkin, she looked more settled.

Jayden, resting his chin on his hand, took the moment to probe. “Now that you’re fed, tell us—what brought you here today?”

Debora’s expression shifted to one of distress as she responded, “My family is in dire straits. This morning, someone approached, offering aid during these tough times in exchange for 30% of the company shares. They’re exploiting our misfortune.”

Jayden, pouring a glass of juice for himself and one for Elyse with methodical calm, replied leisurely, “And how does this involve me? I don’t hold any shares.”

There was a time when Jayden had shares, but all that changed after his car accident, when he feigned a broken leg only for Enzo to seize all his shares.

Since that day, Jayden's influence and standing within the Owen family had diminished significantly.

Debora, her voice tinged with desperation, pleaded, "Jayden, can you really just watch and do nothing?"

"I've made myself perfectly clear. This isn't something you can handle. I need to speak with your parents directly," Jayden said, his tone steady and unyielding.

Debora forced a bitter smile. "But they..." Her voice faltered. She knew her parents too well—they'd never swallow their pride to approach Jayden. Instead, they'd just push her to do it for them. .

Chapter 1345:

"I've been more than patient. I gave them a chance, and they turned it down."

Jayden's gaze sharpened, giving him an air of quiet authority. "I'm not the one refusing to cooperate."

Debora felt the walls closing in. "Jayden, please. You know how proud my parents are—they'll never come to you. I'm the only one who can."

Jayden let out a low chuckle. "That's not my problem. If they're pressuring you, then tell them no. Or are you saying you can't?"

"It's not that simple! Everything is falling apart. I'm just trying to hold it all together!" Her voice cracked as tears streamed down her face, the weight of the situation overwhelming her.

Elyse sighed, crossing her arms. "Crying isn't going to fix anything, you know."

Debora snapped her head toward her. “It’s none of your business! Can’t I even cry in peace? Just leave me alone!”

“Then go cry to your parents,” Elyse retorted without missing a beat. “Why are you crying in front of us?”

But Debora wasn’t listening. Lost in her despair, she sobbed harder, her cries growing louder. The sound grated on both Jayden and Elyse, but Debora didn’t seem to care.

Finally, Jayden’s patience wore thin. “Debora, if you don’t stop crying, I won’t help you.”

The sobs stopped abruptly. Debora sniffled, her voice small and hesitant. “So, does that mean you’ll help us?”

Jayden smirked, his response cutting. “No.”

Debora burst into tears again, her cries even louder this time.

Elyse rubbed her temples, exasperated. She elbowed Jayden lightly, silently urging him to do something.

Jayden sighed, equally fed up. This wasn’t the first time Debora had hounded him about family matters, and he was tired of it. “Fine. I’ll stop by Owen Group tomorrow if I have the time.”

Debora’s tears immediately slowed. She wiped at her face with trembling hands. “Really? You mean it?”

Jayden raised an eyebrow. “Don’t get too excited. I’m only going to take a look. I haven’t promised anything.”

Debora clasped her hands together, her voice still thick with emotion. “You don’t understand. Owen Group is in chaos. It’s crumbling. You’re the only one who can save it.”

Jayden’s tone remained calm, almost indifferent. “Flattery won’t change my stance. I’ve already laid out my terms. If they’re not met, I won’t intervene.”

Elyse cut in, her voice firm. “Debora, he’s agreed to go. That’s enough for now. Go home and get some rest.”

Driscoll handed Debora a tissue. She took it, dabbing at her swollen eyes. “Okay,” she mumbled. “I won’t bother you anymore.”

With that, she left, casting hesitant glances over her shoulder as though hoping Jayden might stop her.

Once Debora was gone, Elyse turned to Jayden, her curiosity piqued. “What’s really going on with the Owens? Why is she so desperate? Are they really about to go under?” .

Chapter 1346:

Jayden shook his head. “Not completely broke. But they’re hanging by a thread. It would soon be taken over by others.”

Elyse’s eyes widened. Would the Owen Group really be on the brink of collapse?

“How is that even possible? The company was established long ago and held great sway in the city. How could it be taken over by others so soon?”

Jayden leaned back in his chair, his expression unreadable. “Longevity doesn’t mean invincibility. They ignored a massive internal issue until it spiraled out of control. By the time they caught on, the damage was done.”

Elyse frowned. “Who could cause that kind of mess? Doesn’t the Owen Group have checks in place?”

Jayden’s voice turned cold. “Enzo. After I cut ties with the company, he got ambitious. He wanted a piece of the international market but had no idea what he was doing. Desperate to make a name for himself, he went rogue. Made reckless decisions and burned through company funds like it was nothing.”

Elyse was stunned. “No one stopped him? How did he get away with that?”

Jayden’s lips curled into a bitter smile. “He was untouchable. Everyone at Owen Group worshipped him. No one dared question his decisions, even when they were disastrous.”

Elyse shook her head, trying to process it. “The man who loved Owen Group the most is the one who nearly destroyed it. The irony is almost cruel.”

Jayden shrugged. “Too bad he’s not around to see it. He left them buried in debt and scrambling to survive. The legend of Enzo Owen? Shattered.”

Elyse stayed quiet, lost in thought. The weight of Enzo’s actions hung heavily in the air. The man who once protected Owen Group had unknowingly sealed its fate. If he could see what had become of his legacy, she wondered, would he regret it?

The day after his business concluded, Jayden hopped on a plane back to the city, making his punctual arrival at the Owen Group headquarters as if by clockwork.

Earlier that same morning, Debora had returned and was already waiting at the entrance, her anticipation palpable. As the clock struck four, Jayden’s sleek car rolled up to the building. He exited with purpose, striding confidently into the lobby.

Upon seeing him, Debora exhaled a sigh of relief and quickly approached, her face alight with joy. “You’re finally here!”

Jayden offered her a nod. “Take me to Brook.”

A flicker of concern crossed Debora’s face. “He’s...”

“What’s wrong?” Jayden’s frown deepened, a crease of worry marking his brow.

“The suitors for Owen Group have arrived. Brook’s tied up in negotiations with them,” Debora explained, her voice tinged with a hint of sorrow. Then, as if struck by a sudden thought, her eyes sparkled with optimism. “Jayden, would you like to join them?”

After a moment's hesitation, Jayden replied, "I came only to see Brook. No one else." .

Chapter 1347:

A trace of disappointment shadowed Debora's features, yet she quickly masked it. As long as Jayden showed concern for Owen Group, she clung to the hope that he wouldn't let it dissolve into obscurity.

"Follow me," she offered warmly. "I'll lead you to him."

Their path to the elevator was like a small parade; employees caught glimpses of Jayden, their expressions morphing from shock to elation.

Before Jayden could step into the elevator, whispers had already turned into a cacophony of chatter in the company's group chat.

They believed Jayden was back to seize the helm. His return heralded a beacon of hope: with him at the reins, their looming crisis could be thwarted, securing their livelihoods.

While the chat bubbled with frenetic energy, Jayden remained detached. His sole mission at Owen Group was to reunite with Brook.

Debora ushered him into her office. "Jayden, please make yourself comfortable here. I'll retrieve Brook from his meeting."

Jayden sank into the sofa, a picture of calm. "No rush. Inform Brook he can take his time." With a nod, Debora left.

Jayden took the opportunity to catch up on work. About fifteen minutes later, the door swung open abruptly, and Greg stormed in.

Seeing Jayden nonchalantly scrolling through his phone, Greg's face contorted with anger. "You traitor! How dare you show your face here!"

Jayden looked up, his expression one of mild confusion. He struggled to place Greg within the complex hierarchy of Owen Group.

“Remind me, what exactly is your role here? Your name isn’t familiar from the senior management meetings.”

Greg bristled at the question. “Why do you insult me?”

“I merely asked about your position, and you’re offended?” Jayden raised an eyebrow, his tone even. “It appears you’re a smaller gear in this vast machine, lacking any significant influence?”

“I just lack the experience!” Greg retorted, his defense tinged with frustration. “Once I’ve gained it, moving into management is inevitable.”

Jayden’s response was a silent, thoughtful gaze.

Jayden was well aware of Owen Group’s strict policy against promoting inexperienced and young clan members to management roles.

The only exceptions to this rule had been himself, Brook, and Debora.

Bryce and Greg, on the other hand, were mere entry-level employees.

Engaging in a pointless debate with Greg held no appeal for Jayden. “Shouldn’t you be at work?” he redirected smoothly. “What brings you here?”

“Humph! I’m here to see you, obviously!” Greg retorted, arms folded defiantly, looking down his nose at Jayden. He gave Jayden a disdainful once-over. “Have you come back to take charge?” .

Chapter 1348:

Jayden raised an eyebrow. “Who told you that?”

Greg's response dripped with sarcasm. "It's the talk of the entire company's group chat." He scoffed. "Everyone's convinced Owen Group is saved with you back. They're all saying you'll stop the takeover!"

Jayden nodded solemnly. "They're correct. If I return, Owen Group will indeed be saved."

"You think you're some kind of hero?" Greg burst out. "Owen Group doesn't need you to survive!"

At that moment, Debora entered. Her eyes narrowed upon seeing Greg. "Shouldn't you be at your desk working? What are you doing here?"

Greg pointed an accusing finger at Jayden. "I heard he's here!"

"I'm well aware," Debora snapped back. "I invited him."

"But he's a traitor!" Greg's voice was tinged with disbelief.

"Enough, Greg! Get back to your office and stop parading around like you run this place. You're in no position to confront Jayden," Debora's voice was sharp, her patience clearly worn thin.

With a firm hand, she ushered Greg out of the office, then turned back to Jayden. "Let's go. We shouldn't keep Brook waiting any longer."

Debora led Jayden through the bustling corridors to Brook's dimly lit office.

Brook appeared worn out, the recent tumultuous events casting shadows across his weary face.

"Brook, Jayden's arrived. Perhaps you two should have..."

Casting a quick glance at Jayden, then at Brook, Debora noted the lack of invitation in their stoic expressions. With a subtle nod, she excused herself, disappearing as silently as she had entered.

Brook released a heavy sigh, his eyes slowly rising to meet Jayden's. "Why are you here? After walking out on us, why come back? If you've chosen to leave, then keep your distance."

“I’ve come to propose a partnership. Are you interested?” Jayden countered, his smirk barely concealing his anticipation.

Brook’s confusion flickered momentarily before he gave a slow, contemplative nod.

Elsewhere, Greg stomped back to his desk, fury boiling within him.

Sneaking a call to his parents behind Debora’s back, his voice trembled with outrage.

“Dad! You need to come to the company—Jayden’s returned!” Greg bellowed into the phone. “He’s prancing around as if he owns the place, looking down on everyone here!”

The catharsis of his rant left Greg slightly relieved. Hanging up, he was startled by Debora suddenly at his side, tapping on his desk.

“Good Lord, Debora! You nearly gave me a heart attack!” he exclaimed, quickly averting his gaze.

Debora’s gaze sharpened. “Is there something you’re not telling me?” .

Chapter 1349:

“No, nothing,” Greg replied hastily, trying to appear innocent. “What’s up?”

“Have you completed that proposal I requested? I need it urgently.” Debora’s tone was laced with restrained irritation.

Greg hesitated, fumbling for words.

Debora frowned deeply. “Don’t tell me it’s still not ready. You’ve been here over two months and produced nothing. If you can’t manage the job, perhaps it’s best you step aside.”

Greg muttered under his breath, “The company’s practically in disarray. If we can hold on, the chairmanship might just be within our reach.” Silence fell, heavy and expectant.

Greg pressed his point further. “Brook is our main hurdle. If he fails to sort out this mess, do you really think he’ll hold his position? Wake up, Debora. It’s time for action. We need to seize the reins!”

Debora had reached her breaking point. With a forceful slam of her hand on the table, she burst out, “Enough! I don’t want to hear another word about it! You’re barely managing as an assistant manager, and you’re dreaming about the chairman’s seat?”

Realization dawned on Greg. He saw the strain in Debora’s eyes—her tireless dedication sharply contrasting with his minimal contributions.

Muted by his own shortcomings, Greg bowed his head, unable to muster a response.

Sensing she may have been too harsh, Debora took several calming breaths. Her voice softened but still carried an edge. “Just... forget about Jayden. Your focus should be on the proposal. That’s your priority.” Without waiting for a reply, she spun around and strode out.

Back in the solitude of her office, Debora let her guard down. Tears traced her cheeks, a silent testament to her bottled-up stress.

After regaining her composure, she tidied up her appearance, blotting her tears and fixing her makeup.

Jayden’s unexpected return to her office caught her off guard, his observant eyes immediately noticing her distress. “You’ve been crying again.”

Embarrassed, Debora quickly wiped her face. “You finished up quickly. I wasn’t expecting you back so soon.”

Jayden simply nodded. “We came to an agreement faster than anticipated; it was straightforward.”

Debora’s brow furrowed, her mind whirling with questions. What exactly did you discuss? You’re really teaming up? Jayden, since when are you and Brook on such compatible terms? I could never picture you two as allies.

“We’re businessmen, Debora,” Jayden explained, the hint of a sly smile playing at the corners of his mouth. “Where there’s profit to be made, paths align.”

That smile, cryptic and unsettling, sent a chill through Debora, planting seeds of unease that rooted deep within her.

Chapter 1350:

Debora swallowed the lump of fear rising in her throat, willing her voice to remain steady. “What did you and Brook talk about? Was it about the company? Will you help us?”

Jayden’s response was sharp, almost dismissive. “That’s none of your business.”

Frustration seeped into Debora’s voice. “But you promised!”

“I promised to visit Owen Group,” Jayden leaned back, correcting her coolly, one eyebrow raised. “I didn’t promise to save it. Tell me, Debora, what exactly do you have to offer in return for saving the company?”

Debora blinked, taken aback by the unexpected question. “What do you mean?”

His voice turned icily pragmatic. “I’ve already left Owen Group. There’s a massive financial shortfall—one you’re asking me to fix. And you think I’d do that for free?”

Debora was so shocked that the words stuck in her throat. “But... you’re still an Owen. Saving the family business would give you a reason to return. Isn’t that enough?”

Jayden’s laugh was low, cutting. “So, my reward for pulling Owen Group out of ruin is... being allowed back in?” His sarcasm hit with the force of a hammer.

Debora paled, her confidence crumbling. She didn’t know how to respond. He seemed like a stranger to her now. Or perhaps, she bitterly realized, she had never truly known him at all.

When Jayden had been with Owen Group, he had thrown himself into it with everything he had, effortlessly steering the company to success.

As Enzo had once said, Owen Group wasn't just a company to Jayden—it was a cause. It was something Jayden would have laid down his life for.

But that was then. Now, as Debora stood facing him, she realized the truth with chilling clarity: the Jayden she once believed in no longer existed.

Her voice softened, trembling with hesitation. “Jayden, what would it take for you to come back to Owen Group?”

Before he could answer, the office door flew open with a bang, and Seth Owen stormed in like a thundercloud. His eyes, blazing with fury, locked onto Jayden.

Debora gasped, spinning toward the intruder. “What are you doing here?”

Seth's lip curled into a sneer. “I have every reason to be here. How else would I get the chance to confront the traitor in person?”

Jayden didn't flinch. If anything, his expression grew colder, his calm a sharp contrast to Seth's fury. “The company's falling apart, and yet here you are, wasting energy hurling insults. I almost admire your misplaced confidence.”

Seth clenched his fists, his voice rising. “The company is collapsing because of you! Fix it, or—I”

Jayden's smile vanished, his gaze hardening into steel. “Or what?” His voice dropped low, menacing. “Go on. Finish that sentence.”

The tension was suffocating. Debora quickly stepped between them, her hands raised in a placating gesture. “Dad, stop! Please don't make this worse. I finally got Jayden to listen. Don't push him away again!”