

Bound love 1441

Chapter 1441:

Those words struck a chord in Lowell. He realized then that she was the one.

Lowell felt a jolt of shock ripple through him. After pressing his lips together in contemplation, he finally spoke with a faint smile. “Don’t worry, I’ll give you a satisfactory answer soon.”

Tracy scoffed, her cold gaze cutting him off before he could say more. Words clearly weren’t on her agenda.

Unfazed, Lowell reached out and wrapped Tracy in his arms, pulling her onto the bed with him.

Caught completely off guard, Tracy blinked in surprise. “What are you doing now?”

“Relax,” Lowell murmured, his voice low and unbothered. “I just want to hold you while I sleep. Nothing more.”

Seeing no point in resisting, Tracy let herself be enveloped in his warmth. The room fell silent as Lowell drifted into a deep slumber. Tracy, however, wasn’t far behind. The night’s escapades had left her drained, her body yearning for rest.

Still, once she felt Lowell’s breathing steady, she carefully untangled herself from his arms. With deliberate quietness, she slipped out of bed and dressed in the dim light. Every movement was a dance of precision, ensuring Lowell remained undisturbed.

As she rubbed her waist while leaving the room, her gaze briefly flicked over the scattered gifts on the floor, but she didn’t give them a second thought. All she wanted was to get home and sink into her own bed.

When she reached the parking lot and approached her car, she stopped in her tracks. There, seated in the driver’s seat, was a shadowy figure. For a heartbeat, she tensed—until recognition dawned on her. She sighed, a mix of exasperation and disbelief in her voice. “What are you doing here? I thought you were supposed to be keeping a low profile.”

The man, barely visible in the cloak of darkness, wore a black baseball cap and jacket that camouflaged him perfectly. His tone was smooth, almost lazy. “You were taking too long. Figured you were still here, so I came to give you a lift.”

His eyes flicked over Tracy, sharp and observant. “So, how’d it go?”

Tracy allowed herself a small, triumphant smile. “Better than I’d hoped. Everything’s falling into place. Pretty soon, my goal will be within reach.” Her fingers brushed against her abdomen, a flicker of delight crossing her face.

“Good to hear.” The man tilted his head toward the passenger seat. “Hop in. I’ll get you home.”

Without a second thought, Tracy climbed into the car, shutting the door softly behind her.

The next morning, Lowell stirred from his sleep, reaching out instinctively—only to find the space beside him empty.

When he was fully dressed and made his way to his office, he noticed something curious on his desk. Sitting there, bold as brass, was a pair of lace panties. Lifting them delicately, Lowell’s brow furrowed, his curiosity piqued. Beneath the lingerie was a small piece of paper.

On it was scribbled a phone number.

Lowell had no idea when Tracy had slipped away, but the sight of her number scrawled on the paper brought an undeniable lift to his mood. A grin tugged at the corners of his lips, a spark of satisfaction warming him.

Elyse was lounging at home, flipping through TV channels, when her phone buzzed with a message. It was from Victor, inviting her to a charity gala his family was hosting.

Chapter 1442:

She stared at the screen, a wave of frustration washing over her. Finally, she typed back, her tone laced with exasperation. “Haven’t you spoken to your parents about your true feelings for me?”

Victor replied almost instantly, his annoyance apparent. "I have, but they're stubborn. They want us to spend time together first." Elyse sighed, rubbing her temples as if the motion could somehow untangle the mess she was stuck in.

After a moment of silence, Victor hesitated. "If you're not up for it, I can tell my parents you're busy with work. You don't have to come."

Elyse's fingers hovered over her phone. "If I skip it, will it make things harder for you?" she finally asked.

Victor's reply was candid. "Honestly, yes. They'll just double down on trying to push us together."

Elyse let out another sigh, resignation settling in. "Fine. I'll go. I might as well use this chance to talk to them."

Victor seemed relieved. "This might actually work."

After a brief pause, she added, "Alright, I'll be there."

Victor quickly followed up. "Want me to pick you up?"

Elyse shook her head. "No, thanks. I'll manage on my own."

Once they finalized the time, Elyse ended the conversation and decided to pay Jayden a visit.

At Jayden's company, she arrived just as he was stepping out of a meeting. Her sudden appearance turned heads, and curiosity buzzed among the staff.

Jayden, calm and commanding as ever, noticed the whispering and promptly addressed it. "Stop speculating. She's my girl. Treat her with the same respect you'd give me."

The employees were stunned, their interest piqued even further. Without giving them a chance to react, Jayden guided Elyse into his office.

He closed the door and immediately pulled Elyse into a warm embrace. His voice was filled with delight as he said, “This is the first time you’ve visited my company. You have no idea how happy it makes me.”

Elyse blinked, feeling a bit awkward. She scratched her head and replied, “I only know how to play the violin. What good am I to your company?”

Jayden chuckled, his tone softening. “You being here is more than enough. It’s the best gift I could ask for.”

Elyse rolled her eyes, brushing off his sentimental words. She decided to cut to the chase. “The Hayes family is hosting a charity gala, and I’ve agreed to attend. It’s the day after tomorrow. Are you free to come?”

Jayden’s expression shifted slightly, a hint of a frown tugging at his lips. “The day after tomorrow? What a coincidence. I have to head back to Watscar then. It’s time to settle the Owen family affairs once and for all.”

Elyse was momentarily stunned. “I’ve heard the Owen family is on the brink of collapse. Is it really that bad?”

Jayden nodded gravely. “It is. But the main reason for their downfall is Enzo. He’s the one who cared the most about the Owen family, and now everyone else is paying the price for his choices.”

Elyse finally got a straight answer and said with a touch of resolve, “Well then, you tackle the Owen family’s issues, and I’ll fly solo at the charity gala.”

Resolute, she turned to leave.

Chapter 1443:

Jayden reached out in a flash, his tone tinged with surprise. “You’re heading out just like that?”

Elyse gave him a baffled look. “If I’m not leaving, what am I supposed to do? Your work isn’t exactly my cup of tea.”

“Believe me, just having you here boosts my drive like nothing else,” Jayden admitted.

Elyse hesitated, then threw a playful jab. “Who’s feeding you these lines?”

Jayden shot back, “Aren’t they your style?”

“They smack of Peyton’s influence. He’s been coaching you, hasn’t he?” Elyse probed with a smirk.

Jayden paused, his voice a mixture of amusement and dismay. “You weren’t supposed to roll your eyes at that. Peyton swore it was irresistible.”

Elyse let out a hearty sigh. “Peyton’s hardly an expert in romance. He has never been in love. What does he really know about women?”

At this, Jayden’s smile faded, and he fell silent. He should never have listened to Peyton.

Shaking her head, Elyse stretched out on the sofa, stifling a yawn. “If you want company, me napping here has to count, right?”

Seeing her settle down, Jayden’s mood lightened. “There’s a lounge in my office. How about you take the bed there?”

After a moment’s thought, Elyse agreed as she stood up. “That sounds perfect. I’m really sleepy. Lead the way!”

Jayden guided her to the lounge, where Elyse quickly dozed off.

Jayden lingered, watching her sleep, his heart swelling with affection.

He eventually left her side and made his way back to his office. Once there, he grabbed the phone and dialed Peyton.

Peyton answered with his usual nonchalance, “Hey, what’s up? Missing me already?”

Jayden didn’t mince words. “Your so-called foolproof sweet talk fell flat with Elyse.”

From the other end, Peyton’s voice boomed in disbelief. “No way! Those lines are golden. Give me the play-by-play!”

After Jayden outlined the debacle, Peyton paused for a long stretch, then said slowly, “Timing’s the soul of sweet talk, and you, my friend, lacked sincerity. It’s no wonder she found it cheesy.”

“How can you say I wasn’t sincere? My feelings for her are as deep as the ocean,” Jayden countered.

Peyton exhaled deeply. “You claim sincerity, yet you come off as if you’re high and mighty.”

Realizing Jayden wasn’t cut out for this, Peyton suggested, “Maybe you should ditch the sweet talk. It’s not your strong suit, and I don’t want Elyse blaming me for your fumbles.”

Jayden, stubborn as ever, retorted, “Maybe you’re just a lousy teacher.”

“Look, don’t drag me into your love life anymore. Go bother Clive,” Peyton snapped back.

Jayden responded, “He’s up to his neck in work. He doesn’t have time for my romantic dilemmas.”

Chapter 1444:

Peyton, clearly annoyed, shot back, “What? He’s too busy, but I’m not? I’m the deputy director at the hospital now. My plate is overflowing.”

Jayden couldn’t resist a tease. “Still the deputy? Hasn’t your dad handed over the reins yet?”

“Not yet. He’s still relishing the role,” Peyton admitted, then sighed comfortably. “You know, it’s a cushy life—success and wealth just seem to land in my lap.”

Jayden let Peyton boast for a bit but soon grew tired of it and quickly found a way to end the call.

As he was about to dive back into work, his phone rang again. This time it was Brook. Jayden's eyebrows raised in mild surprise as he answered.

Brook's voice sounded worn out as he said, "I need a favor, Jayden. It's urgent."

Jayden raised an eyebrow. "This is a first. What's up?"

"It's about Jennie Walsh," Brook hesitated.

Jennie? That rang a bell.

Jayden recalled and confirmed, "Your ex-girlfriend, right? I remember her."

With a strain in his voice, Brook revealed, "She's missing. Can you help me track her down?"

Elyse opened her eyes to the dim glow of the late afternoon, her mind foggy from the remnants of sleep. She shuffled out of bed, craving water, and noticed two glasses resting on the table. Confused, she asked, "Who stopped by? Was it a client?"

"Someone I didn't plan to meet," Jayden said, his fingers flying across the screen of his phone. He stayed engrossed in texting for a while before he finally placed the device aside.

When he looked up, he saw her staring blankly at the wall. "I still have some work to finish. Once I'm done, I'll take you out for dinner."

Elyse offered a small, awkward smile. "Alright. I could really use a glass of red wine."

Jayden chuckled and said, "Feeling a bit parched, huh? Alright, red wine it is." Without missing a beat, he returned to his task.

Elyse spent the time catching up with Chloe about her new job. After they wrapped up, she let out a weary sigh. The stress of her demanding job was beginning to take a toll on her. When Jayden finally stood up, he declared, "Let's eat."

Elyse grabbed her purse and followed him out of the office. They ended up choosing a restaurant near the mall.

As Elyse settled into her seat, her attention was drawn to Thea sitting across the room with a man whose hair was dyed a striking shade of blue.

Thea looked effortlessly glamorous in a trendy dress, a designer handbag draped elegantly over one shoulder. In contrast, her companion was a total mismatch, decked out in full leather and chewing gum loudly, his rugged aura practically dominating the space.

Elyse's brows furrowed as she continued to watch Thea.

Jayden, noticing her expression, asked, "Do you not like this spot?"

Elyse shook her head and replied, "No, it's Thea Benson. She's right over there."

Jayden followed her gaze, his eyes immediately catching on the man's vividly blue hair. After giving the duo a quick look, he remarked, "That's your cousin, isn't it? She has... unique taste in men."

Chapter 1445:

Elyse had never spent much time thinking about Thea. They were practically strangers, and honestly, she never saw the need. She assumed their worlds would rarely overlap. Even when Felicia brought up Thea dating someone she would strongly disapprove of, Elyse remained indifferent.

In her mind, Thea's romantic choices weren't her concern. But now, seeing Thea's boyfriend up close, a faint spark of unease flickered in her chest. It suddenly struck her that Thea might be heading straight toward disaster. For reasons she didn't fully understand, Elyse felt an unexpected urge to step in.

Jayden noticed the shift in her expression and said, “Something’s different. You feel like stepping in now, don’t you?”

Elyse frowned slightly. “I do care, but helping her depends entirely on whether she’s willing to accept it. If she isn’t open to it, the best I can do is share some advice.”

Meanwhile, Thea, who had just settled into her seat, caught sight of Elyse. Her eyes widened briefly in surprise before she quickly looked down, pretending not to notice, as though hoping Elyse would follow suit.

Both women avoided acknowledging each other as they placed their orders in tense silence.

About ten minutes later, the clatter of dishes and a booming voice broke through the chatter in the restaurant. Elyse turned toward the commotion and saw Thea’s boyfriend slam his fist onto the table. “Where is it?” he growled. “Can’t you hear me? If you can’t pay attention, then get out of my sight!”

In his rage, he swept the plates and food onto the floor, creating a chaotic mess.

Thea screamed, pressing her hands over her ears. She shook violently, too frightened to say a word.

Elyse’s brows drew together in a deep frown. Thea, though adopted by Felicia, had grown up under her guidance, surrounded by grace and civility. Everyone in their household, even when upset, handled conflict with composure. This kind of uncontrolled fury was entirely unfamiliar to Thea, leaving her paralyzed with fear.

The man’s rage only grew more intense as Thea’s fear became more apparent. He stormed toward her, grabbed a fistful of her hair, and yanked her head back. “Can you hear me now? Where is the thing I told you to bring?” he snarled.

Thea’s tears flowed freely as her body shook with uncontrollable tremors. Her lips quivered, but no words came out.

“Speak up! What are you, mute?” he growled, his voice booming across the room.

The restaurant manager and several staff members hurried over, desperately trying to separate Thea from him.

The man paid them no attention. Instead, he snatched a plate and hurled it across the room. It shattered against the wall, scattering shards of glass everywhere.

A nearby woman screamed in shock. “What is wrong with you?! You scratched my purse!”

She shot to her feet, fury etched across her face as she marched toward him. “Are you out of your mind? Hitting your own girlfriend is bad enough, but now you’ve ruined my purse! You’re going to pay for this!”

The man sneered and gave Thea’s cheek a mocking pat. “She says you owe her. So, what are you going to do about it?”

Startled, Thea stuttered, “I’ll pay! Whatever it takes, I’ll cover it!” Her boyfriend couldn’t hide his smirk. “You hear that? She’s footing the bill. Whatever you fancy, charge it to her.”

Chapter 1446:

The woman, irritated by his cocky demeanor, let out a mocking laugh.

“Unbelievable! You lot are beyond hope!”

“She’s paying up, and you still throw insults? Just who do you think you are?” he snapped back.

With a sneer, the woman retorted, “This purse is valued at 2.7 million dollars. You promised to settle it, didn’t you? Let’s get this over with so I can get out of this sickening place.”

“What? 2.7 billion for that tacky purse? You’re clearly trying to pull one over on us,” Theo’s boyfriend scoffed, convinced the purse was a counterfeit and accusing her of a swindle.

But Thea, who grew up surrounded by luxury, knew all too well that the purse was genuine. Recognizing its authenticity filled her with dread.

Her recent fallout with Felicia had slashed her monthly allowance from a lavish hundred thousand to a mere fifty thousand. Even pooling her savings from previous years, she barely scraped together just over a million—not nearly enough to cover the steep cost.

Though Felicia had left her ten million in cash, it was out of reach for now.

Realizing the purse was out of her budget, Thea understood she'd need to make an uncomfortable call to her family. And if Felicia got wind of this, would she even spare her the fifty thousand?

Caught in a whirl of worry and indecision, Thea's silence spoke volumes. Her boyfriend, mistaking her quiet for defiance, felt his pride sting. Overcome with anger, he shoved Thea to the floor and began his assault with a fury that shocked the bystanders.

"You selfish witch! Refusing to help me out? I'll teach you a thing or two!" His outrage echoed through the diner, turning heads.

Unable to watch any longer, Elyse snapped, "Lay off her! Do you really think you're the only one here with guts?" Driven by a surge of protectiveness, she grabbed a wine bottle and swung it hard against the man's head. The impact brought an instant, eerie silence as his rampage came to a sudden halt.

Elyse didn't even glance at the man as she helped a sobbing Thea to her feet, gently draping her coat over Thea's shoulders.

With Elyse's comforting presence, Thea found a semblance of security, her body shaking as she took refuge behind her.

The man, feeling the back of his head and seeing blood on his fingers, glared at Elyse. "You split my head open. Fork over three million, or we're not done here."

Elyse laughed. "Three million? That's convenient—just enough to settle your supposed debt and leave you with a tidy profit. Quite the entrepreneur, aren't you?"

Undeterred, the man shot back, "Blame yourself for stepping in. Enough talk—give me the money, or we're here all night."

Elyse turned to the woman, asking wryly, “I seem to have stumbled upon a scammer. Should we call the police?”

Caught off guard, the woman hesitated but then snapped back, “I’ve got someone who wrecked my purse and won’t pay. I’m calling the cops.”

Both women dialed the police, sending Theo’s boyfriend into a panic. “Forget the money—I’m okay, it’s just a scratch. Let’s forget all this,” he blurted out in desperation.

Then, turning to Thea, he said, “And forget about the Maserati. Just pull together whatever you have and pay for the purse!”

Chapter 1447:

Cowering behind Elyse, Thea murmured, “I don’t have 2.7 million. I just can’t afford it.”

The woman laughed derisively. “If your girlfriend can’t pay, then it’s on you,” she said, pointing at the man.

Furious, he exploded. “Aren’t you a rich heiress? How can you not have 2.7 million? You just don’t want to pay. How could I have ever cared so much for you? You ungrateful woman!”

“Enough babbling—pay up!” the woman demanded, relentless.

As the police arrived and with no funds to offer, Theo’s boyfriend hesitated only a moment before he bolted through the crowd and disappeared.

With him gone, Elyse’s role as protector seemed to diminish.

She turned to Thea, who looked utterly defeated, and asked, “Growing up a Benson, how did you never develop better taste? Do you really think that man was a catch?”

Thea bit her lower lip, lost for words.

Elyse, feeling somewhat detached yet protective, advised, “Once all this settles, go home and think hard about whether you want to keep seeing someone like that. Don’t let a moment of anger lead you to settle for such a lousy man.”

She paused, then added softly, “And don’t worry. I won’t tell anyone about today.”

“I’ll give you this coat. Consider it a gift. You don’t need to return it,” Elyse said before she turned to reclaim her spot at the dining table.

Thea watched Elyse’s retreating figure, a whirl of thoughts swirling in her head, then quietly, she exited.

Jayden caught Thea’s departure out of the corner of his eye and wondered aloud, “Can’t wait to step in to shield your young cousin from harm?”

“It’s not just because she’s my cousin,” Elyse replied. “I couldn’t just stand by and watch any woman be mistreated.”

“That’s quite the noble stance, isn’t it?” Jayden remarked with a hint of concern. “But what about your safety? That guy earlier was a loose cannon. People who ignore the rules and prey on the vulnerable are a dangerous breed.”

Elyse gave it some serious thought, then nodded in agreement. “You’re spot on. If you hadn’t been here, I doubt I would’ve stepped in so boldly.”

Jayden raised an eyebrow, then cracked a smile. “So, I’m the secret to your bravery?”

“Exactly,” Elyse chuckled. “Without you, would I even dare to jump in? More likely, I’d find a safe spot to hide and dial for the police.”

Caught off guard by her straightforwardness, Jayden was momentarily speechless. He’d never heard such unguarded words from her. His thoughts churned, and it dawned on him that the most sincere forms of affection are those expressed in the spur of the moment. A swell of pride washed over him.

Outside the restaurant, Thea sat by a flowerbed near the mall, her mind a tangled mess. Just as she began piecing her thoughts together, her phone rang.

It was the police. They had nabbed Theo's boyfriend and needed her to come in and make a statement.

After ending the call, Thea slowly rose and flagged down a taxi to head to the police station.

By the time she arrived back home, it was well past midnight.

Chapter 1448:

"Why are you back so late? Were you out on a date with that loser?"

Felicia's voice cut through the stillness as Thea passed the living room. The lights were ablaze, and there sat Felicia, draped in her nightgown, eyeing Thea with a sharp gaze.

Feeling cornered by Felicia's scrutiny, Thea avoided her eyes and muttered, "You could say it was a date."

Felicia's heart sank as she pointed at Thea, her voice trembling. "How many times must I warn you? That man is no good for you. I've introduced you to decent men, yet you chase after the worst. I can't understand why."

Thea clenched her jaw, firing back, "You think you know what I need? Do my thoughts even matter to you? It seems like you're more interested in managing my life than in my happiness. You don't love me for me; you care about the lineage. It's always been Elyse, hasn't it?"

"Ungrateful! Is that really your belief?" Felicia exploded in anger. "Controlling your life? If I were, would I let you come home at this hour or see him at all? I'd have locked you up to think things over!"

Tears sprang to Thea's eyes as she shouted back, her voice cracking. "What else will you threaten me with? Go on! I'm done caring about your approval!"

Felicia grasped at her chest, struggling to breathe.

Thea, though scared, stood firm, biting her lip defiantly.

Felicia's rage almost overcame her, but after several deep breaths, she managed to steady herself. Her face turned ghostly pale, aging visibly as she whispered, "You think I don't love you, that I favor Elyse over you? You're so blind."

Thea snorted. "Do you even love me? If so, why the meager allowance? Fifty thousand a month—do you think that's sufficient? As a Benson, I'm living worse than a regular employee."

A flicker of sadness and disappointment passed through Felicia's eyes as she murmured, "Is that how you see me?"

"After everything I've done—treating you like my own flesh and blood, devoting myself to you—how do you repay my love? You never saw me as your own granddaughter!" Thea's eyes, bright with unshed tears, blazed with years of pent-up anger and betrayal.

Felicia observed Thea with an inscrutable expression before releasing a weary sigh. "If you truly believe I've wronged you, that I've failed you... then perhaps that's how it must be."

"So you finally acknowledge it," Thea sneered, bitter triumph lacing her words.

Ice crystallized in Felicia's tone. "Blood relation or not, I've never done you wrong. The inheritance will come to you—as is your right—but not on your terms, not today."

"Why must I wait? I need it now!" Thea's composure shattered. Her mind raced to her boyfriend's expectations. With that money, she could silence his anger, buy his affection with the car he demanded.

Wisdom and resignation mingled in Felicia's steady gaze. "In your current state, do you honestly believe you're equipped to handle such wealth? Each month, money appears in your account while you idle away your days at home, neither working nor growing. Among all your cousins, you alone drift without purpose or drive. Have you ever wondered about the source of your monthly allowance?"

“I’ve wanted to work,” Thea shot back, defensive. “You barred me from the family business!”

Felicia’s laugh held no warmth. “Is our company the world’s sole employer? You studied painting. You graduated a year ago. How many paintings have you created in that time? I made you a promise, didn’t I? Show me dedication to your craft, and I’d open doors to your first solo exhibition. But here we stand, and your canvas remains untouched. Instead, you’ve mastered the art of spending, drowning yourself in designer labels and hollow luxuries.”

Chapter 1449:

The weight of truth pressed down on Thea’s shoulders, causing them to sag. Her earlier fire dimmed to embers, her voice softening like a withering flower.

“This past year, I’ve devoted myself to your care. Not a single day of respite. How can creativity flourish in such constraints?”

“Those obligations no longer bind you,” Felicia countered smoothly. “Yet instead of seeking inspiration in distant horizons, you waste precious hours with that parasitic boyfriend of yours. Tell me, Thea, just how much money have you poured into him?”

“Enough!” Thea exploded, her face twisting with defensive fury. “Don’t you dare reduce my love to mere transactions! You know nothing about matters of the heart!” With one last venomous glare, she spun on her heel and fled, leaving only the echo of her footsteps in her wake.

After Thea’s dramatic exit, Pearce strolled over, arms crossed over his chest. His gaze lingered on Thea’s retreating figure before settling on Felicia with grave intensity. “I’ve had to clean up quite the situation involving Thea today. Care to hear the unsavory details?”

The fire of confrontation had drained from Felicia, leaving her collapsed in her chair like a withered autumn leaf. Age seemed to etch deeper lines into her face with each passing moment. She lifted weary eyes to meet his. “What situation?”

“Her boyfriend turned violent in public—a restaurant scene caught on camera. I managed to contain the footage before it spread like wildfire online.”

Horror bloomed across Felicia’s features. “He attacked her?”

Pearce's jaw tightened. "Indeed. Not content with just that, he damaged my friend's wife's designer purse and tried forcing Thea to foot the bill."

"Thankfully," he continued, his voice softening slightly, "my friend's wife recognized Thea. Instead of demanding payment, she contacted the police."

Felicia sank deeper into her chair, disappointment and worry etching her face.

"You understand Thea's nature better than anyone," Pearce said softly. "That's why you've kept the inheritance from her grasp. She remains blind to both herself and your intentions."

Felicia's shoulders sagged with the weight of resignation. "What more can I do? I've tried everything within my power. Her choices are her own now."

Pearce's voice was cold. "Grandma, you have to admit, she may wear the Benson name, but her blood tells a different story. Each day, she treads closer to her father's path."

The silence stretched between them before Felicia broke it. "Is this why you've never accepted her?"

Pearce's tone was utterly composed, carrying the smooth indifference of polished marble. "Yes, I reserve my affection for family alone. To me, she's nothing more than a charity case you took in. Were it not for your protection, she'd have been overseas years ago, certainly not living off a five-figure monthly allowance."

A hollow laugh escaped Felicia's lips. "Planning to send her away once I'm gone?"

"That was the original plan." Pearce's lips curved into something dangerous. "But circumstances change."

Felicia asked, "Why did you change your mind?"

With a sneer, Pearce replied, "Because I realized Thea doesn't need my special arrangements. She's perfectly capable of ruining herself. I just need to sit back and watch it happen."

After a weighty silence, Felicia inquired, “And if it really comes to that, will you show any mercy and let her off the hook?”

Chapter 1450:

Pearce shot back, “Grandma, are you seriously thinking of shielding her? How long can you protect her?”

Letting out a weary sigh, Pearce added, “Look, I can extend a hand this time for your sake, but I can’t protect her forever. If we don’t let her face the music when she slips up and just clean up her mess, she’s only going to dive deeper into trouble. Imagine she causes a real disaster, are you going to take the fall for her?”

Felicia stayed silent, her head hung low like a scolded child.

Pearce pressed on, “And what if she commits a crime? Will you always be there to take the rap? It’s high time you faced reality. Thea needs to be thrown in at the deep end. If she keeps floating through life on a cloud of privilege, she’s doomed.”

Unable to bear it any longer, Felicia sighed deeply, stood, and declared, “Fine. I’m washing my hands of her troubles.”

Pearce tentatively ventured, “What about her monthly allowance? I’ve been handling it, but you know, in the Benson family, kids hustle for their own cash from their teens. Even the ones who aren’t sharp pencils make their own way after college. Yet, here she is, a non-family member, blowing through our money like there’s no tomorrow.”

It finally dawned on Felicia that Pearce was plotting to snip Thea’s financial wings.

After a moment’s reflection, Felicia responded, “The reins are yours now. You run the company and call the shots in the family.”

At that, Pearce’s face broke into a real smile for the first time that night. “That’s all I needed to hear, Grandma.”

With a dignified air, Felicia walked away, hands clasped behind her back.

Pearce turned and retreated to his room. That very night, he packed his bags and struck out on his own.

Thea, the only wild card in the family, had always been cloaked in Felicia's protection. From allowances to liberties, Thea, an outsider, had been living it up, better than any of the others.

The Benson progeny. Now, with a rift between Thea and Felicia, Pearce saw it as just another episode of her milking Felicia's soft spot.

Displeased with Thea's freeloading as an outsider for ages, Pearce was now ready to turn the tide.

With the family's reins firmly in his hands, the countdown to Thea's charmed life was ticking.

Two days later, Elyse spent the entire afternoon getting ready for the charity gala.

With Jayden out of the picture for the evening, she decided to bring Chloe along for what she called "the free feast."

Once they were dressed, Elyse and Chloe headed to the event.

As they arrived, Victor broke away from the crowd, flashing a wide grin. "You look stunning in that outfit, Elyse."

Twirling in her dress, Elyse beamed. "It's silk. Chloe told me I shine in purple, so I picked this one out just for tonight."

Victor turned to Chloe and gave her a thumbs-up. "Spot on! That's the keen eye of an agent."

Chloe, soaking up the praise, responded with a grin, "Of course! I know every side of my artist like the back of my hand."

Victor suggested, "There's a charity auction coming up. How about we grab a bite before it starts?"

Elyse nodded, her smile unwavering. “Sure, let’s do that. We’ve been on our feet all afternoon and barely grabbed a snack.”