

## Bound love 1471

Chapter 1471:

“That’s something I’ll never get used to!” Freda snapped, her tone charged with emotion. Just picturing those women swooning over Gavin made her want to scream.

“What happened next?” Elyse gently prodded.

Freda suddenly covered her face, her cheeks aglow.

“You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to,” Elyse said softly after a pause.

“No, it’s... it’s actually something wonderful,” Freda stammered, her hands still shielding her face.

“Something wonderful? Like what?” Elyse encouraged.

Taking a deep breath, Freda began, her voice trembling slightly. “At that party, some drunk started hassling me. I felt really vulnerable because no one seemed to notice or...”

“Just when I thought it couldn’t get any worse, Gavin appeared out of nowhere and put him in his place.”

“You fell for him because he swept in and saved the day?” Elyse asked, tilting her head slightly.

“Of course not! Do I seem that shallow?” Freda retorted, her voice pitching up. “I was thankful, sure, but he hardly gave me a second glance after that. I just let it go and walked away.”

Elyse let out a sigh. “But if you weren’t head over heels then, what changed your mind about him?”

Freda scratched her head, pondering. “It all changed after the party. That incident kind of shattered my preconceptions about him. I started seeing him in a new light.”

Elyse studied Freda closely. “How long have you been trying to catch his attention?”

“About two weeks? He came back to town, and I sort of... tagged along,” Freda admitted. She then added with a hint of frustration, “He’s difficult! I’ve been all over him for two weeks, and he hasn’t even shared his number!”

Elyse couldn’t help but chuckle. “So you’re saying you’ve made zero headway?”

Freda exhaled deeply, her shoulders drooping. “Exactly. I’m out of ideas, which is why I came to you.”

Elyse’s eyes widened in surprise. “You can’t be serious! I can’t get tangled up in this!”

“Why not?” Freda pressed, her voice tinged with desperation. “Just because we’ve had our ups and downs, you won’t help me now? If I win him over, we could end up being good friends!”

Elyse winced, shaking her head. “You’re missing the point about Gavin. He values directness. Using me to orchestrate things won’t endear you to him.”

Freda looked perplexed. “Why not?”

“Gavin values genuineness,” Elyse explained with patience. “Bringing me into the mix would mean meddling in something that should be purely between you two. He wouldn’t see it as a gesture of love.”

Freda’s face reflected her confusion slowly turning into understanding.

Elyse continued, “A true relationship is crafted by the two people involved. If I step in, it diminishes the personal experiences and emotions that you and Gavin should be building together. Handling it on your own makes those moments invaluable, uniquely yours and his.”

Chapter 1472:

A light of realization flickered across Freda’s face. “Oh, I see now!” However, her moment of clarity was short-lived as her shoulders sagged again, and a sigh of defeat escaped her. “But he’s

just so elusive!” she lamented. “I can’t even get his number! How am I supposed to make any progress with him?”

Elyse offered a gentle smile, her voice soothing. “Take a breather, Freda. Gavin doesn’t strike me as the type to be easily charmed. Since you’ve decided to win him over, you’ve got to brace yourself for the challenge.”

Freda flopped onto the sofa, clutching a cushion as though it were her lifeline. Her face twisted in distress, her mind clearly running in circles. Suddenly, her eyes lit up with a spark of realization. “Do you think Gavin and I make a good match?” she blurted out, her tone hopeful yet uncertain.

Elyse stretched out lazily on the sofa, her expression indifferent. “Who knows? I’m not about to fill your head with false hope. What if he stays out of reach?”

Freda groaned, throwing her head back dramatically. “Ugh, he’s impossible! What’s it going to take for me to get his phone number?”

“Easy,” Elyse replied with a sigh, sounding more practical than sympathetic. “Just ask him outright. If he’s willing to share it, that’s a sign he might be interested. If not—well, at least you’ll know where you stand.”

Freda hesitated, her hands clutching the cushion tighter. “But what if he says no? I don’t think I can handle that kind of rejection,” she admitted in a small voice.

Elyse gave a nonchalant shrug. “Then you’re on your own. No guts, no glow.”

Freda buried her face in the cushion, her muffled groan signaling she was retreating into her own bubble of despair.

The room was quiet until the sound of footsteps broke the stillness. Jayden wandered downstairs, yawning and rubbing his eyes, still half-asleep. “Why are you up so early?” he asked groggily.

Elyse glanced his way. “Got hungry and decided to raid the fridge. Aren’t you starving?”

Jayden shook his head. “Nah, I’m good,” he said, his gaze landing on the figure curled up on the sofa. He frowned, pointing at Freda. “And who’s this? Why’s she here?”

“Freda Jimenez,” Elyse explained in her usual straightforward manner. “She’s got her sights set on Gavin and thought I could play Cupid.”

Jayden raised an eyebrow, intrigued. “She’s into Gavin? Isn’t she Theo Ward’s ex?”

At the mention of Theo, Freda sprang to life like a cat whose tail had been stepped on. “Don’t you dare bring up his name! Just hearing it makes my blood boil.”

Jayden didn’t bat an eye at her outburst, his calm demeanor unshaken. “Well, for what it’s worth, his company’s back on track. His mom’s in a tizzy, scared he might pack up and leave for good this time.”

Hearing Theo’s name again caught Elyse off guard. She hadn’t given him a second thought in ages. Now, with Jayden’s comment, memories of her past with Theo felt like they belonged to another lifetime.

Gripping her head in frustration, Freda groaned, “I told you not to bring him up. I couldn’t care less about his situation or whether his business tanks or thrives. I just want Gavin’s number.”

Jayden shot Freda a measured look before suggesting, “Elyse, why don’t we invite Gavin over for dinner? If you want his number, you’ll have to charm it out of him yourself.”

Elyse’s eyes widened. “You’re inviting Gavin for dinner? Isn’t that a bit too obvious?”

Chapter 1473:

Jayden shrugged. “Well, if we don’t give her a shot, she’s just going to keep camping out here.”

Elyse turned to Freda, catching the fleeting smugness that danced across her face before Freda quickly masked it. She immediately pieced it together. It was clear now—Freda was set on meeting Gavin today, no matter what it took.

With a resigned sigh, Elyse stood, heading to her room to make the call.

As Elyse disappeared upstairs, Freda leaned toward Jayden, a glint of curiosity in her eyes. “So, have you and Elyse patched things up? Word on the street was you two broke up. I felt bad for you.”

Jayden paused thoughtfully. “We’re on the mend. I think things are heading in the right direction.”

Propping her chin in her palm, Freda sighed wistfully, “Your love story with Elyse—it’s almost too good to be true. Seriously, it’s something out of a romance novel.”

Jayden let out a low laugh. “And your story with Gavin is quite the page-turner, too. By the way, does he know you used to be with Theo?”

“Hey, I told you not to bring him up. Are you trying to hit me where it hurts?” Freda shot Jayden a glare so fierce, she practically wished she could strangle him with her gaze.

But Jayden simply met her glare with a sharp, unspoken challenge, and Freda fell silent, her defiance dissolving in an instant.

Meanwhile, upstairs, Elyse dialed Gavin’s number. When he picked up, she greeted him warmly and invited him over for dinner.

“Perfect timing,” Gavin replied. “There’s something I’ve been meaning to discuss with you. I’ll swing by this evening.”

Elyse blinked in surprise. “Oh? What do you want to talk about?”

“It’s good news,” Gavin said cryptically. Then, his tone shifted. “By the way, how are things going with you and Jayden?”

The sudden change of topic caught Elyse off guard, and she fumbled for a response. “Things are... good. You don’t need to worry about me. I’ve got everything under control.”

Gavin had a skeptical tone. “If you can really handle them, we won’t have to worry about you.”

Elyse listened, warmth swirling in her chest. She replied with a hint of defiance, “Alright, just don’t talk about me that way. It gets under my skin.”

Gavin exhaled slowly. “See you later, then.”

Elyse nodded and ended the call. She descended the stairs to find Freda huddled on the sofa, tears streaming down her face, while Jayden nonchalantly snacked on chips.

Elyse’s eyes widened in alarm as she hurried over. “Freda, why the waterworks?”

Freda pointed accusingly at Jayden and blurted out, “He won’t stop mentioning Theo. I’ve asked him a million times to drop it, but he keeps hammering away. He even said... he even said...”

Elyse arched an eyebrow, encouraging her to continue. “And what else did he say?”

“He told me Gavin knows all about my skeletons and my past, and that he won’t want me anymore.” Freda wailed, her voice cracking as she spoke.

Elyse turned a sympathetic gaze to Jayden. “What’s the idea, telling her all this? She’s already skittish, and you’re just throwing fuel on the fire.”

Chapter 1474:

Jayden shrugged, unrepentant. “Just laying out the facts. She’s got her eye on Gavin; she should see the whole picture.”

Freda dabbed at her eyes, took a deep breath, and confessed, “He’s not wrong. I was a piece of work back then. Tried to throw Gavin under the bus once. It’s haunting me. I feel like I’m my own worst enemy.”

Elyse stepped in, her voice soothing. “Hey, that’s all water under the bridge. You wanted Gavin’s number, right? He’s coming over for dinner tonight.”

Freda peeked up, her voice small. “For real? He’s actually coming?”

Elyse nodded firmly. “Yes, he is. So, let’s get you cleaned up. You don’t want him to see you all puffy-eyed and think you’re a mess.”

Freda’s tears stopped as if cut off by a switch. She perked up and asked, “Can I use your makeup? I want to look stunning for him!”

“Absolutely, dig into whatever you need.” Elyse motioned for a maid to take Freda upstairs to get ready.

Once Freda was out of earshot, Jayden smiled. “I’m surprised you’re being so nice to her. She’s caused you trouble before, and now she’s after Gavin. I would’ve thought you’d turn her away.”

Elyse responded with a touch of grace, “Freda has hurt me in the past, but it never went too deep. I can afford to be forgiving. As for her chasing after Gavin, who am I to stand in the way? The choice is Gavin’s to make, not mine.”

Jayden probed further. “But what if he accepts her? Wouldn’t that feel like a betrayal from someone you’re close to?”

Elyse pondered the question, her expression thoughtful. “Feelings are a tricky business. If they find happiness together, then maybe it was meant to be.”

Jayden laughed softly. “That’s quite an open-minded take.”

He gestured to Elyse with a playful smirk. “Come here.”

Elyse glanced around at the other maids lingering in the room and asked with a puzzled look, “Come where? What do you mean?”

“Hey, did you forget about last night already?” Jayden pulled her close, tugging her onto his lap.

Elyse squirmed a few times but eventually rested her head against his chest, her face flushed with embarrassment.

“Why so bashful? We’re together, aren’t we? It’s normal to show a little affection,” Jayden teased.

Elyse quickly covered his mouth with her hand. “Hush! Aren’t you a bit too loud?”

Jayden admired Elyse for many things, but her shyness was something he felt needed a gentle nudge. Even simple displays of affection had to be hidden away.

He pondered over the idea of helping her become more confident. Jayden hugged Elyse tightly and whispered just loud enough for her to hear, “You’ve seen me naked. You have to be responsible.”

Elyse, looking bewildered, responded in surprise, “When did we undress last night?” Then, a thought struck her. “Haven’t we been down this road before?”

Jayden pinched her cheek playfully and insisted, “Who else understands my past like you do? I feel so naked before you, so now you’ve got to take responsibility.”

Elyse’s jaw dropped slightly as she stared at Jayden, who looked thoroughly annoyed. Then, like a spark lighting a flame, a sly grin spread across her face. “Aha! I’ve figured it out!”

Chapter 1475:

Jayden sighed, his frustration evident, and reached for her hand. “After everything we’ve been through, you’re not seriously thinking about leaving me, are you?”

Elyse raised an eyebrow, her grin widening. “Why? Are you scared I might?”

Jayden opened his mouth to respond but froze when he caught the teasing glint in her eyes. His irritation faded, replaced by a sudden, unexplainable shyness.

“Would you?” he asked with a smile.

Elyse scoffed, tossing her hair back with a casual flick. “Unlike you, I have a strong sense of responsibility. I wouldn’t just abandon you. Unless, of course, that sense of responsibility disappeared.”

Jayden frowned, his expression darkening. “So, you’re saying you’re only with me out of responsibility?”

Elyse paused, as if considering her answer carefully. “Not entirely,” she said finally, her tone light yet deliberate.

“Then what else?” Jayden pressed, his jaw tightening. He leaned in slightly, daring her to give him an answer he wouldn’t like. If she said it was just a habit or some excuse, he wasn’t going to let her off so easily.

Elyse tilted her head, dragging out her response with a hint of mischief. “It’s because I’m in love with you.”

Jayden froze on the spot. His eyes widened, and his mouth fell open slightly.

Elyse couldn’t help but laugh at his stunned reaction.

“What’s the matter?” she teased, her eyes sparkling with amusement. “Didn’t see that coming?”

Jayden rubbed the back of his neck, trying to play it cool even as his cheeks burned. “You’re messing with me, aren’t you?”

Elyse’s grin only grew wider. “Maybe,” she said playfully, thoroughly enjoying his flustered state.

Jayden narrowed his eyes, irritation resurfacing as a sly grin spread across his face. He reached out, pinching her lips gently before leaning down to kiss her. The gesture was slightly rough but unmistakably affectionate. “Pretty bold of you, teasing me like that.”

Elyse raised an eyebrow as she pulled back. “Am I not allowed to tease you?”

Jayden’s gaze softened, his voice dropping to a low murmur. “You can tease me all you want. Just don’t expect to get away with it so easily.”

Elyse smirked, pinching his cheek like he often did to her. “Be a good boy and let me do whatever I want.”

Jayden’s eyes darkened, a dangerous glint flashing through them. “You’re not getting away with this tonight.”

Before Elyse could respond, she gave his cheek a firm tug. Jayden winced, sucking in a sharp breath.

From behind them, a voice broke the moment. “Ugh! What’s with all the lovey-dovey nonsense? Some of us are on a schedule here!”

Elyse turned, spotting Freda standing there, holding up two dresses—both of them hers. “What are you doing with my dresses?” Elyse asked, narrowing her eyes in confusion.

Freda hesitated for a moment, then blurted out, “Uh... I was borrowing them!” Her voice was a strange mix of guilt and defiance.

Elyse crossed her arms, her expression skeptical. “Both of them? And these are backless, high-slit gowns. It’s just a casual dinner. Isn’t that a little over the top?”

Chapter 1476:

Freda pouted, clutching the dresses tighter. “It might be a casual dinner for you, but for me, this is a rare opportunity. I want to impress Gavin.”

Jayden snorted. “I think his lasting impression of you was when you were with Theo Ward.”

Freda glared at him, her cheeks flushing with embarrassment. “Shut up, Jayden!” She looked ready to strangle him on the spot.

Elyse sighed, already tired of the argument. “Fine. Wear them if you want,” she relented.

Freda’s face lit up instantly. “Thanks! Once Gavin and I are together, I’ll make sure to treat you well. And we can be best friends.”

Elyse raised an eyebrow, her lips twitching in amusement. She wasn't sure how to respond to such an absurd promise, so she settled for a wry smile.

Jayden, however, wasn't ready to let it go. "Why is she so confident she'll end up with Gavin?" he asked, glancing at Elyse.

Elyse frowned at him. "Why do you think she won't?"

Jayden shrugged, leaning back lazily. "Ultimately, it's Gavin's decision. But have you ever heard him talk about love? He comes off like a man who will die alone."

Elyse scowled. "Don't say that about him. He's just selective. He'd rather be alone than settle for the wrong person."

Jayden shook his head, a small smirk on his face. "Even if he were to give Freda a chance, it'd be a long, uphill battle. He strikes me as the type to make people suffer before letting them in."

Elyse tilted her head, clearly confused. "Why do you see him that way? Is there anything positive you can say about him?"

Jayden gave her a meaningful look, his tone turning serious. "You don't get it. Men like Gavin are proud, stubborn, and impossible to figure out. Someone like Freda, with her tough exterior but soft heart? She's easy prey for him."

Elyse's worry deepened, her brows furrowing. "You make Gavin sound like some manipulative mastermind. I think you're being unfair."

Jayden rolled his eyes, smirking. "Oh, so you think I'm making this up? Fine. Just wait until Gavin gets here. Then you'll see I'm not pulling your leg."

Elyse folded her arms, her lips twitching with barely contained skepticism. "Alright then, we'll wait and see."

Gavin had no idea that Jayden and Elyse were waiting on him like characters in a personal drama.

When Gavin arrived at Jayden's place, a neatly wrapped gift in hand, he was met by Elyse's piercing gaze. Handing her the gift, he quirked a brow and asked, "What's with the intense stare? Did I grow a second nose or something?"

Elyse quickly shook her head, then blurted out without thinking, "Two noses? What are you, a monster?"

Gavin froze, caught off guard for a beat before a grin broke across his face. "Well, if your violin practice gets any worse, you'll know whether I'm a monster or not."

Elyse groaned, waving her hand as if to shoo the awkwardness away. "Never mind. Forget I said anything, okay?"

With a chuckle, Gavin wandered into the living room, where Jayden was lounging on the sofa, sipping tea like he had all the time in the world. "Well, aren't you the picture of relaxation today?" he remarked, his gaze shifting to the four teacups neatly arranged on the table. "Four cups?" Gavin asked, his brow lifting. "Expecting someone else besides me?"

Chapter 1477:

Before Jayden could answer, the sharp, rhythmic click of high heels echoed through the house, cutting through the air like a dramatic drumroll.

Every head turned toward the staircase as Freda appeared, descending like she owned the moment. Her hair was swept into an impeccable half-updo, framing her face like a masterpiece. A dazzling crimson gown clung to her every curve, shimmering like starlight with every calculated step. The unmistakable red soles of her towering heels punctuated her entrance like exclamation marks.

Her long legs seemed to stretch on forever, and the elegant dip of her collarbone flowed seamlessly into a décolletage that left little to the imagination.

When her gaze landed on Gavin, a slow, knowing smile curled her lips, her eyes captivating.

Elyse and Jayden shared a quick, knowing glance.

It was supposed to be a casual dinner, but Freda looked like she had stepped straight out of a magazine. And the fact that she chose the stairs over the perfectly good elevator? Freda's intentions were anything but subtle.

Elyse, recovering from her surprise, met Freda at the bottom of the stairs. Lowering her voice into a conspiratorial whisper, she said, "You're being way too obvious! Gavin's not blind, you know. Tone it down a bit!"

"Tone it down?!" Freda shot back, her voice brimming with sass. "And how exactly am I supposed to charm him then?" Her sharp response left Elyse momentarily speechless.

Spotting Freda's dazzling outfit, Gavin greeted her with a wry smile. "Heading to a gala?"

Jayden couldn't hold back his laughter any longer.

Freda, pretending she couldn't hear, gracefully floated over to Gavin and slipped her arm through his. "I heard you were coming, so I got a little dressed up. Don't I look nice?"

Gavin gently freed his arm. "You do look nice."

Freda beamed with triumph and turned to Elyse, her giggle bubbling up. "Did you hear that? He said I look nice!"

Elyse caught Gavin's expression—an intriguing mix of emotions flickering across his face. She opened her mouth to say something but thought better of it.

Gavin turned to Jayden. "When's dinner?"

"Soon," Jayden replied. "We can chat until then."

At this, Gavin gave Freda a pointed look and settled into a seat beside Jayden.

Freda gazed longingly at Jayden, wishing he would trade spots with her, but she didn't dare ask.

Once seated, Gavin dove straight into business. “Elyse, I’ve got an invitation for you from Edward. He asked me to pass it along.”

Elyse looked genuinely surprised. “Edward? What invitation?” she asked, her brows furrowing as she tried to piece it together.

“Looks like there’s a banquet next week where they’d like you to perform. Are you available?” Gavin inquired.

Elyse glanced at Jayden, who remained silent. She then took out her phone and texted Chloe. After a brief confirmation, she nodded. “Yes, I’d love to.”

“Great,” Gavin said, flashing a small, approving smile. “I’ll let him know.”

With the business wrapped up, Freda fluttered her lashes and grinned mischievously. “Now that the serious stuff is out of the way, how about we switch gears? Let’s talk about something more fun—like love, or maybe our secret crushes?”

Elyse’s eyes widened in disbelief. Freda was practically throwing herself at Gavin! She couldn’t help but watch Gavin’s expression closely. His frown said it all—he wasn’t amused.

The group shifted into uneasy small talk, the energy tense, until Driscoll’s voice cut through the silence to announce dinner.

Everyone else seemed to enjoy the meal, but Freda sat quietly, her usual sparkle dimmed. She looked out of place, her charm lost in the muted atmosphere. Despite her best attempts, Gavin barely acknowledged her all evening.

After dinner, Elyse couldn’t bear seeing Freda so downcast any longer. She leaned in and asked Gavin quietly, “What do you think of Freda?”

Gavin raised an eyebrow, his tone cool. “Why does it matter? Did she ask you to ask me this?”

Chapter 1478:

Elyse let out a heavy sigh. “She didn’t outright ask me, you know. I just had this gut feeling—like if I didn’t step in, she’d end up sticking around forever.”

Gavin’s brow furrowed as he crossed his arms. “You’re too nice, Elyse. She’s the kind of person who knows how to use that to her advantage.”

Elyse raised an eyebrow at him, her tone laced with curiosity. “Oh? You sound like you’ve got her all figured out.”

“She’s been trying to cozy up to me lately,” Gavin admitted, his voice carrying a mix of annoyance and disbelief.

Elyse’s eyes flickered with something unreadable as she glanced away. “So, what’s your take on her? Are you interested in her?”

Gavin saw through her question in an instant and smirked. “Look at you, all grown up and suddenly prying into my love life.”

“I’m not prying,” Elyse shot back, her tone sharp and defensive. “I’m just curious.”

Without warning, Gavin reached out and patted her head.

“Ugh, stop that!” Elyse swatted his hand away and rubbed the spot, even though it hadn’t actually hurt. Her voice softened, a little unsure now. “I’ve known you for so long, Gavin. I’ve never seen you with anyone before. Freda—despite everything that’s happened between us—is always hanging around you. I mean, it’s hard not to wonder.”

Gavin fell silent, his expression turning contemplative. “I guess I’ve never been the type to chase after relationships,” he admitted, his voice quieter than before. “But you bringing up Freda like this? Honestly, I haven’t even thought about it that way.”

Elyse blinked, clearly frustrated. “You seriously haven’t noticed? She’s so obviously into you. It couldn’t be more obvious if she had a neon sign over her head.”

Gavin frowned, his confusion evident. “Into me? I thought she liked Theo Ward. Isn’t this just some elaborate game to get back at me?”

Elyse gaped at him, disbelief written all over her face. “What are you talking about? She told me she’s over Theo—completely over him. She said she regrets ever getting involved with him. Now, she just wants to focus on you.”

Elyse watched as Gavin’s confusion deepened. His face twisted into an expression so foreign it almost startled her—he looked utterly bewildered.

“I had no idea,” he murmured, his voice low. “I thought she was still holding onto all that baggage. I didn’t realize...”

Elyse exhaled sharply, the realization hitting her like a tidal wave. “This is such a mess. You two need to sort this out yourselves. I shouldn’t be stuck in the middle.”

She glanced at him, her eyes firm but understanding. “Come on. Let’s talk to Freda and get this straightened out.”

When they stepped back into the living room, the space was eerily empty. Freda and Jayden were gone.

Elyse scanned the room carefully, but Freda and Jayden were nowhere to be found. She turned to Driscoll, hoping he’d know where they were.

“They’re in the basement,” Driscoll said with a shrug. “Freda claimed she was heartbroken and needed a drink. She insisted on seeing the wine cellar, so Jayden took her down there.”

Chapter 1479:

Elyse’s jaw dropped, her frustration clear. “He actually went along with that?”

Driscoll let out a chuckle and nodded, clearly amused.

Gavin ran a hand over his face, exhaling loudly. “Heartbroken? When did she even have a relationship to be heartbroken over? She’s so over the top sometimes.”

Elyse tilted her head, watching him closely for a moment. “You know, you seem... more like a human whenever Freda’s involved.”

Gavin raised an eyebrow, his tone light but curious. “Is that supposed to be a compliment or an insult?”

“It’s a good thing,” Elyse replied, her expression earnest. “If you acted like you were unattainable, it would feel...”

Gavin laughed softly. “Stuffy, right?”

Elyse frowned and shook her head. “I didn’t say that. Don’t twist my words into something negative.”

“Look at you, getting all worked up.” Gavin grinned as he gently tapped her forehead with his finger. Then his expression softened, and he sighed. “I’ve spent so long trying to stay neutral and serious. Maybe I do come off as too serious sometimes, but it’s not intentional. And here I thought all these years of spoiling you would’ve earned me a bit of credit.”

Elyse giggled, her cheeks flushing as she quickly stepped behind him, trying to hide her embarrassment.

“Where’s the basement?” Gavin asked, his voice steady again. “Show me the way.”

Elyse’s eyes widened with a mix of excitement and surprise. “Wait, you’re actually going to check on Freda?”

“Yeah,” Gavin said with a slight shrug. “Just to see what’s up with our so-called heartbroken damsel.”

“I know where it is! Follow me!” Elyse chirped, her voice bright as she eagerly led the way.

As they descended the stairs, Freda’s voice grew louder, her dramatic wails echoing through the space.

“I was so good to him!” Freda sobbed, her words punctuated by hiccups. “I chased him all the way back here, and he doesn’t even care! What am I, invisible? Does he really think so lowly of me?” Her voice rose, dripping with indignation. “I was once with Theo—yes, I liked his looks and money. But that wasn’t love! I was just caught up in his value! Why couldn’t Gavin just forget that?”

Freda’s rant continued, her tone switching between despair and outrage. “I went all out today! I got dressed to kill—showed a little leg, added some cleavage, spent forever on my makeup—and what did he do? Nothing! He doesn’t even glance my way! The man just stares at his stupid plate! Honestly, Gavin must be a fool!”

Elyse turned her head cautiously, catching sight of Gavin’s expression. He was smiling, but there was an undeniable chill beneath it, like frost lacing the edges of his grin.

She let out a nervous laugh, trying to ease the tension. “Gavin, Freda’s had a little too much liquor. Don’t take her words too seriously.”

Barely had Elyse finished speaking when Freda, completely oblivious, launched into another tirade. “Do you think Gavin’s gay? I mean, he’s always alone, playing the violin. I never saw him around a woman.”

Chapter 1480:

Elyse stiffened, her heart pounding. She didn’t dare look at Gavin’s face; Freda’s words had crossed the line, and she couldn’t think of a way to defuse the situation.

It wasn’t that she didn’t want to help—Freda’s comment had been downright brutal.

Gavin raised a hand to his face, rubbing his jaw as if testing his own patience. “You don’t think I’m gay too, do you?” he asked, his tone measured but sharp enough to cut through the air.

Elyse’s hands shot up defensively. “Of course not! I’ve never thought that. I was just... curious about what kind of girl you like, that’s all.”

His smile relaxed a little, though the edge in his eyes lingered. “At least you understand. Freda, on the other hand? She’s got no filter.”

Elyse forced a few awkward laughs, her mind racing for something to say that wouldn't make things worse.

Across the room, Freda seemed utterly unbothered. After venting her frustrations, she threw out a bold proclamation. "Jayden! Let's stay out all night and get totally wasted!"

Jayden, who had been lounging lazily on the sofa, gave her a flat look. "You might be single, but I'm not. I'm sleeping with my wife tonight."

Freda didn't miss a beat. She downed her whiskey in one go and slammed the glass down on the table, glaring at him. "All you ever think about is your wife! Don't you have any ambition? Be like me—go out and show everyone a little love!"

Jayden's gaze shifted toward the door, where a figure caught his eye. When he tilted his head, he spotted Gavin standing there. A mischievous grin spread across his face. "Oh yeah? And how exactly do you plan to do that?"

Freda, completely unaware she was walking into a trap, declared proudly, "If a handsome man cries, I won't hesitate to embrace him as a comfort. That's just the kind of person I am!"

Jayden's grin widened, his tone dripping with amusement. "So, what about Gavin? You done with him now? I thought you said you loved him the most."

Freda scowled, slamming her fist on the table. "That jerk doesn't deserve my love! I'm going to find a boyfriend who treats me right, someone who won't make me sad. I want to taste the sweetness of love for once!" Her voice was full of fury, but she seemed utterly convinced of her own righteousness.

Gavin finally had enough. His arms crossed tightly over his chest, he stepped into the room with slow, deliberate strides. His voice was calm, but each word hit like a hammer. "Freda, do enlighten me—when exactly did I think lowly of you?"

When Freda caught sight of Gavin, her steps faltered. Her expression turned hazy, as if she wasn't entirely sure if he was real. Without even processing his words, she walked straight toward him. Then, right in front of everyone, Freda threw her arms around him, holding him as if he were the last person in the world.

Gavin froze, every muscle in his body locking up as though he'd just stepped into a trap.

Elyse gasped, her voice breaking through the stunned silence. "Freda, what are you doing?"

Freda nuzzled her head against Gavin's chest, her voice dripping with a mix of petulance and wounded pride. "Darling, you're finally here. I've missed you so much."