

## Bound love 1691

Chapter 1691:

Leon's face reddened with paternal rage. "Everything to you? The man looks down on you like you're dirt beneath his shoes! He even raised his hand against you! You grovel for mere scraps of his attention, and he still treats you like a nuisance!"

"Dad, don't say that," Dolores snapped, her lips trembling.

"I'm speaking the harsh truth you refuse to hear!" Leon's voice thundered through the room.

Noticing the storm clouds gathering on Dolores's face, Lucille stepped between them like a practiced peacemaker. "Now, now, let's not get carried away. She's smitten with Shaun, that's all there is to it. We're her parents—we should be supporting her, not tearing her dreams apart."

She drew a thoughtful breath before continuing, "You mentioned having a plan to make Shaun accept Dolores. What did you have in mind?"

Leon shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "Well... what if we orchestrated a situation? Get Shaun and Dolores together somehow... then leak it to the press? He'd have no choice but to acknowledge their relationship. The evidence would be undeniable. What do you think?"

Lucille's expression wavered with uncertainty. "Would such a scheme actually work?"

Dolores, however, practically bounced with excitement. "It's absolutely perfect! Of course, it would work!" She clasped her father's hands, her face radiant with joy. "Dad, you're brilliant! What an amazing plan!"

"It's really just a last resort," Leon mumbled, looking somewhat abashed. "I wouldn't dream of such underhanded tactics if it weren't for your future happiness."

A warm smile spread across Lucille's face. "Everything we do is for Dolores. Her happiness is all that matters."

Moved by their devotion, tears welled up in Dolores's eyes. "I know how much you two love me. I'm truly blessed to be your daughter."

As the three of them basked in their shared moment of familial warmth, Lowell sat motionless in his chair, watching. An unsettling realization crept through his mind like a shadow. Something felt off about them.

The thought nagged at him, but the wrongness remained frustratingly out of reach, like trying to recall a nightmare upon waking.

An icy dread crept through his veins as he observed them. The realization struck him like a physical blow—living with this family was nothing short of terrifying.

His heart ached with a desperate longing for his girlfriend and the safety of home.

Suddenly, Dolores's piercing gaze swiveled toward him, breaking his reverie. "Lowell," she said, her eyes narrowing to calculating slits, "what do you think of Dad's suggestion?"

"You won't be able to pull it off," Lowell replied, his voice steady despite his unease.

Dolores's expression turned razor-sharp. "That's not what I asked. I asked if you think his plan is good."

"Good or bad isn't the point," Lowell countered, frowning. "It's completely impossible."

Chapter 1692:

Indignation blazed across Dolores's features. "If you think it's so difficult, then you should be the one to figure out how to make it happen!"

"You want me to do this?" Lowell stared at her, disbelief etched across his face.

"Yes, of course. Who else?" Dolores's voice took on a sickeningly sweet tone. "You're my brother. Shouldn't you be the one to ensure my happiness?"

Lowell's stomach twisted into knots. That phrase... it echoed through his memory like a distant warning bell.

Misinterpreting Lowell's silence as hesitation, Lucille leaned forward with a gentle yet somehow menacing smile. "Sweetheart," she cooed, "this is about your sister's lifelong happiness. We'd feel so much better if you were the one to handle this."

Leon bobbed his head in agreement. "That's right, son. You handle this. I'm too old for such schemes."

Lucille's voice dripped with honeyed venom. "Besides, you're quite experienced in safeguarding your sister's happiness, aren't you? Just like before. Remember when she couldn't bear the thought of Shaun's wedding? You found such a clever way to destroy his special day. You did brilliantly, Lowell."

A shadow of revulsion crept across Lowell's features. Now he remembered why those words had struck such a familiar chord. The echoes of past manipulation rang clear as day.

The silence stretched taut as a wire before Lowell broke it, his voice devoid of emotion. "Even if I attempted this, it would fail. Just abandon the idea."

"You're inventing excuses because you don't want to help me, aren't you?" Dolores's eyes narrowed to suspicious slits.

Lowell exhaled sharply, frustration evident. "Do you have any concept of how deeply Shaun despises you right now? He refuses to acknowledge my existence. How exactly am I supposed to lure him out when he won't even speak to me?"

"If no opportunity presents itself, you manufacture one!" Dolores's voice cut like a blade. "It's that straightforward! Are you telling me you're incapable of even that?"

A bitter laugh escaped Lowell's throat. "So, in your warped perspective, this is simple? Fine. Then you do it. Don't expect us to assist you in your delusional scheme to trap a man."

“You want to sleep with Shaun? Then seduce him yourself,” Lowell said coolly, arms crossed. “Don’t drag the whole family into this just because you can’t make it happen. Honestly, it’s pathetic.”

Dolores’s face went deathly pale before flushing a furious crimson. Her jaw clenched, trembling with rage. “Lowell, I’m your sister! How dare you talk to me like that?”

Lowell met her glare with a look of pure revulsion. “And because you’re my sister, I’m telling you the truth.”

Dolores’s eyes narrowed into slits. “Cut the crap. You’re just refusing to help me, aren’t you?”

Lowell gave her a slow, unimpressed look. “I think I made myself pretty damn clear. If you’re so desperate to get into Shaun’s bed, find a way. Drug him, kidnap him—do whatever sick plan you’ve got brewing. Just don’t expect us to clean up after you.”

Chapter 1693:

Lucille, who had been listening in tense silence, finally snapped. “Lowell, how can you be so heartless? She’s your sister! Can’t you just help her?”

The second Lucille took her side, Dolores’s scowl flipped into a smug smirk as she shot Lowell a triumphant glare.

Unfazed, he sighed. “Mom, Dolores is a grown woman. Stop bailing her out like she’s some helpless child.”

Lucille frowned, caught in the middle of the dispute. “It’s a small thing, Lowell. It wouldn’t kill you to lend a hand. We’re family—shouldn’t we support each other?”

Dolores folded her arms and let out a derisive snort. “Mom, don’t bother. Lowell’s too caught up in his booming career and perfect little love life to give a damn about us.”

She let the words hang before adding with a saccharine smile, “Oh, right. He probably doesn’t consider us his family anymore. Soon enough, he’ll have a new one. Don’t waste your breath on him.”

Leon, who had been quiet until now, finally spoke in a deep, serious tone. “Is what Dolores said true, Lowell? Have you found someone? Who is she? What family does she come from?”

Before Lowell could utter a word, Dolores pounced. “If she were from some prestigious family, he wouldn’t be so secretive. He’s obviously dating some nobody, and that’s why he’s hiding her.”

That did it. Lowell’s composure shattered, fury flashing in his eyes. His voice was a sharp lash of anger. “Dolores, you can’t even manage your own life, so stay the hell out of mine!”

Lucille wrung her hands, visibly distressed. “Lowell... is it true? Are you really involved with some—some poor girl? You’re the future of our family! Our entire legacy rests on you. You need someone who can elevate you, not drag you down!”

“Enough!” Lowell raked a hand through his hair. “I’m not dating anyone. Don’t listen to Dolores. I’ve been drowning in work—I haven’t even had time to consider it.”

Dolores hissed under her breath. “Liar. You’re totally seeing someone. You just won’t admit it.”

“Quiet!” Leon’s voice cracked like a whip. “Both of you, shut it!”

His glare pinned them both in place—Dolores, still simmering, and Lowell, visibly annoyed. He exhaled sharply. “Lowell is busy running the company. Let him be. And as for you...”

He leveled Dolores with a look. “Lowell’s right. If you’re so obsessed with Shaun, go after him yourself. Your mom and I are too old for this nonsense. We covered for you with that forged document, played along with your ridiculous schemes—but don’t expect us to clean up your mess again.”

Dolores’s eyes widened in disbelief. “Dad! You have to help me! I’m your daughter!”

“Being my daughter doesn’t mean I’m obligated to clean up your messes forever,” Leon snapped. “Look at Lowell. Since he took over the company, he’s handled everything on his own without causing us a single worry.”

Dolores gawked at him, stunned. He'd agreed to help—so why was he suddenly backing out?

Leon didn't spare her another glance as he pulled a distraught Lucille away. "Enough. Deal with Shaun yourself. Don't drag your mom and me into this again!"

Chapter 1694:

Lucille, visibly shaken, allowed herself to be led away, casting a sympathetic glance back at her daughter.

Left alone, Dolores stood rooted in place, bewildered. "What's gotten into Dad? He promised he'd help me."

Lowell barely looked up as he gathered the scattered papers on his desk. His tone was casual, almost amused. "He changed his mind because the second he..."

Calmed down, he realized how ridiculously stupid it would be to help you manipulate Shaun into sleeping with you."

A tense silence stretched between them. Then, slowly, Dolores's lips curled into a knowing smile. "You really are seeing someone Mom and Dad wouldn't approve of, aren't you?"

"Nope."

Dolores took a slow, deliberate step forward, the sharp click of her heels punctuating the silence. She lifted Lowell's chin with a single finger. She purred, "You might have them fooled, but you can't fool me."

Lowell raised his head and locked eyes with Dolores, her smile laced with mischief. He replied sharply, "Dolores, mind your own affairs. Push me, and you'll regret it."

Dolores quirked an eyebrow and teased, "Are you hinting you've got a girlfriend? What sort of woman has caught your eye?"

Lowell's laugh was cold and biting. "That's none of your concern. Best of luck with your plan of snaring Shaun."

With those words, he gathered his documents and left the office. He departed hastily, burdened with a meeting and no time to indulge her nonsense.

The meeting dragged into the night, leaving Lowell drained as he returned to the house he shared with Tracy.

Navigating the dark house without a flicker of light, he made his way to the bedroom. The sound of Tracy's humming floated through the door, and her melody chased away the shadows in his heart. He entered the room and wrapped her in an embrace.

He nestled his face in her neck, inhaling deeply, and asked, "What has made you so joyful today?"

"I was just pondering how close we are to our special day," Tracy hummed in response.

Lowell, caught off guard, exclaimed, "Really? It seemed much further away!"

Tracy's smile was tinged with sympathy. "I hate to see you wait. It won't be long now until we can share our joy openly with everyone."

His heart sank at her words, a shadow cast over his fleeting joy. How would he break the news to his parents? They had dreams of him marrying into wealth to boost the family's fortunes. In his family's eyes, love was secondary to wealth—a bitter truth, as the two seldom mingled.

He pondered the future challenges of continuing his relationship with Tracy.

As Lowell wrestled with his thoughts, Tracy sensed his unease. "Is something wrong? You seem hesitant."

He quickly reassured her with a tighter embrace. "No, I'm truly happy. I want this."

Chapter 1695:

Her smile turned skeptical, doubting his conviction. He had kept her background a secret, satisfied to leave it unexplored. How could he genuinely be excited about going public with their relationship?

Tracy, stifling a yawn, suggested softly, "Let's head to bed early tonight."

"Okay," he agreed.

"Go ahead to bed," Lowell said as he released her. "I'll follow after a quick wash."

Tracy nodded. "Sure, I'll wait for you."

Lowell quietly made his way to the bathroom, lost in his thoughts as he prepared for a shower.

Tracy was restless in bed, her hand gravitating toward her abdomen. The moment for truth was near. She was resolute not to absolve Lowell, Dolores, or the Ruiz family as a whole.

After half an hour, Lowell finished in the bathroom and slipped quietly beside Tracy. He wrapped his arms around her, feeling content just to be close without any further intimacy.

After some time, his voice broke the silence. "What if we can't see this through to the end? Would you hold it against me?"

"Why would I hold that against you? Relationships are unpredictable, and much depends on your moral compass," Tracy responded.

Lowell's brow furrowed in confusion. "How is my moral compass involved?"

"It's crucial. A strong moral foundation is essential for maintaining any relationship," Tracy explained with emphasis.

Yet, Lowell felt disconnected and confused, his thoughts clouded.



Noticing his unusual behavior, Tracy probed, “You seem off tonight. What’s on your mind?”

“Do you think you could be pregnant, since we’ve been careless?” Lowell asked, a note of worry in his voice.

Tracy paused to consider his words, then chuckled. “Getting pregnant isn’t always straightforward. Many couples struggle for years without success. And we haven’t really been trying, so I doubt I’m pregnant.”

Lowell pondered her words, finding reassurance in them after some thought. They hadn’t been together frequently enough to seriously consider the likelihood of conception. Relieved by this realization, Lowell sighed.

“I’m really tired tonight. Let’s go to sleep.”

Tracy agreed, feeling weary herself. “Yes, let’s rest.”

As the night faded, Tracy woke to find Lowell already gone.

She opened the curtains and peered out to see Shaun standing outside.

Through narrowed eyes, Tracy watched Shaun gazing intently at her window, irritation prickling beneath her skin.

In a swift motion, she slammed the window shut and stormed downstairs, her pajamas rustling with each determined step. At the villa’s entrance, she confronted him head-on. “I told you not to show up again. Didn’t you hear me?”

A sheepish smile spread across Shaun’s face at the sight of her. “After I saw you yesterday, I couldn’t eat or sleep—you were all I could think about. That’s why I came so early this morning.”

Chapter 1696:

Noting Tracy’s thunderous expression, he hastily added, “Don’t worry, I was careful. Lowell didn’t notice me.”

Tracy's face hardened into an icy mask. "I really don't understand why you're putting on this act. Have you forgotten everything that happened between us?"

"No, I haven't forgotten. I remember it all," Shaun replied, his voice wavering with nervousness. "But after everything that's happened, I've learned a lot. I've come to understand myself better."

Tracy studied him for a long moment before speaking, her voice barely above a whisper. "It's good to hear that you've learned a lot, considering how arrogant you used to be. You really couldn't see yourself at all back then."

Hope flickered in Shaun's eyes. "Does that mean you'll reconsider coming back to me?"

Tracy's head moved in a slow, deliberate shake. "No, because it's too late. We can't go back to the way things were."

Dissatisfaction colored Shaun's eyes with a reddish tinge. "Why can't we go back? We're both single. Why can't we be together?"

Before she could respond, he cut her off, seemingly anticipating her words. "Don't mention Lowell. I know better than you do that he will never marry you!"

His voice rose with fierce determination. "But I'm not like him. I will marry you. No matter who tries to stop me, I will marry you. You're the only one for me!"

Tracy was stunned for a long time before she finally gave a smile. "It's too late, Shaun. You don't understand what I've been through, and you don't understand me."

Confusion etched deep lines in Shaun's face. "What do you mean it's too late? Explain it to me!"

Pity softened Tracy's gaze. "Stop asking. It's not good for either of us."

Shaun's hands gripped her shoulders, his stance unyielding. "Tracy, I'm telling you, no matter how much we argued, no matter what happened while we were apart, I still only want you. Besides you, there will be no other woman in my life. I'd rather live my whole life alone!"

A bitter laugh escaped Tracy's lips as she regarded his earnest yet obsessive demeanor.

With deliberate slowness, she took one of his hands and placed it against her abdomen, watching his puzzled expression.

"What are you doing? Is your stomach hurting because of your period?" Shaun's confusion was evident in his voice.

Tracy remained silent, her steady gaze fixed on him.

Seconds ticked by as understanding dawned on his face, transforming confusion into shock and fear.

He yanked his hand away as if burned. "No, this isn't what I think it is. I just thought for a moment that you were pregnant. How could it be possible!"

Tracy regarded him with a sideways glance, taking in his bewilderment and disbelief. "You guessed right. It's exactly what you thought. I'm pregnant."

The news hit Shaun like a physical blow, causing him to stagger backward.

When he finally found his voice, it trembled. "Are you trying to get back at me? Why use this method? If you really hate me, just stab me. As long as it makes you feel better, I can take it."

Chapter 1697:

Amusement danced in Tracy's eyes. "Get back at you? Don't give yourself too much credit, Shaun. You're not that important in my life."

Understanding dawned in Shaun's eyes. "You're pregnant with Lowell's child. Are you trying to get back at him?"

A mysterious smile curved Tracy's lips. "More precisely, it's revenge on the entire Ruiz family. Lowell, Dolores, and that damned Ruiz family in Liverton. I won't let any of them off the hook!"

Shaun found the woman standing before him to be like a stranger wearing a familiar face.

Raw hatred and madness blazed in Tracy's eyes, a testament to how her past torments had transformed her. She had crossed a threshold from which there could be no return.

Yet Shaun had no right to judge her descent into darkness, for his own hands had carved the path she now walked.

His blindness and pride had been the architects of her transformation, pushing her past the point of redemption.

Tracy caught his shocked expression, but his opinion had long since lost its value to her.

Her hands cradled her belly with tender devotion, yet the wild gleam in her eyes betrayed an inner tempest that threatened to break free. "I am so looking forward to this child," she said, her voice dripping with sweet anticipation. "In a few days, I can go to the hospital for a check-up, and once I have the report, I will tell Lowell about my pregnancy."

Shaun latched onto the peculiar detail in her words. "Are you saying that Lowell doesn't know you're pregnant, and this is your decision alone?"

Tracy's eyebrow arched like a drawn bow. "Why should I ask for his opinion?"

Shaun stared at Tracy's belly, grappling with a dilemma he'd never imagined facing.

Her fingers traced gentle circles over her abdomen as she spoke. "You should leave now. We are no longer a couple, and I belong to another man. You should go."

With that, Tracy turned on her heel to leave.

Shaun lunged forward, catching her arm, his eyes swimming with anguish. "Tracy, I was wrong in the past. Can you give me a chance to make it up? I'm willing to give you everything—money, status, whatever you want!"

Tracy fixed him with a gaze sharp as broken glass, a mocking smile playing on her lips. “Would you be willing to raise Lowell’s child?”

Shaun nodded with desperate intensity, his voice rising to a shout. “Yes! I would! As long as you’re willing to be with me, I would even accept another man’s child!”

A flicker of surprise crossed Tracy’s face before hardening into contempt. “Don’t joke around. That’s not funny at all.”

She couldn’t fathom Shaun being so noble as to accept another man’s child. He was still the same—spinning pretty words that only served to deceive both her and himself.

Seeing disbelief etched across her features, panic seized Shaun. He clutched her hand, words spilling out in urgent torrents. “I’m not lying. I’m serious. Break up with Lowell and leave with me. I’ll treat you well!”

Chapter 1698:

Desperation contorted his features as he made one final plea. “If you don’t believe me, I’ll get down on my knees and plead with you.” True to his word, Shaun’s knees buckled, and his imposing frame crumpled to the ground.

Tracy’s face hardened into marble as she yanked him upright and struck him across the face with a resounding crack.

Shaun’s fingers found his stinging cheek, his mind reeling as he gripped her shoulders with desperate intensity. “You don’t believe me, do you? You won’t even let me beg for you. You must not believe me.”

Something snapped in Tracy as she struck him again, harder this time. Twin marks blazed crimson across Shaun’s handsome features. The sharp sting of those slaps finally pierced through his frenzy, bringing clarity.

His eyes, rimmed with red, sought hers as he fought against the bitter truth. “What do I have to do for you to leave with me?”

Tracy crossed her arms, her demeanor as cold as winter frost. “I won’t leave. I’ve said it before—I want to bring down the Ruiz family. I won’t stop until they’re gone.”

Raw anguish filled Shaun’s eyes as words spilled from his lips. “I can help you. I can find a way to bring them down. I can do these things. You don’t have to do it yourself, especially relying on your pregnancy!” His gaze dropped to her belly, eyes swimming with a mixture of pity and heartache.

Tracy tilted Shaun’s chin up, studying the man before her. Gone was his commanding presence, replaced by something fragile and lost. A soft, knowing smile played across her lips as she spoke with gentle venom. “Shaun, do you feel heartache for me?”

His nod carried the weight of mountains.

“Then why don’t you help me?” Tracy’s hands cradled his face with false tenderness, fingers tracing the marks she’d left behind.

Her voice dropped to a seductive whisper. “Since you care so much, why not help me achieve my goal? Don’t you want me to go with you? If you help me succeed in my revenge, then I can leave with you.” Her words dripped like honey laced with poison.

“Once everything is settled, we can sit down and talk about our unresolved issues.”

Shaun stood very close to Tracy, enveloped in a scent he found both comforting and familiar. It evoked a profound sense of longing as he breathed it in, remembering times past when she was within reach but not cherished as she should have been.

He looked up into her eyes, his expression softening as he nodded.

“Alright, I’ll help you. But afterwards, you must come with me.”

Tracy responded with a soft chuckle, her hand still on his cheek.

She teased him after a brief pause, “You’re being unusually kind today. It feels odd.”

Shaun's voice carried a weight of regret. "I was advised never to hurt those who care for me. Unfortunately, I realized its truth too late—after you had gone."

"It's okay. There's still hope for us, right?" Tracy responded, pulling away slightly after a few hollow promises.

She noticed Shaun's puzzled look and offered a reassuring smile. "I'm not leaving you behind. It's just time for you to go. You shouldn't linger here indefinitely. Return to work and put your focus there."

Chapter 1699:

Shaun protested, his tone resolute. "I can stay out of sight here. I want to keep you safe."

"I'm staying put and not venturing out. Your presence here would only attract Lowell's notice," Tracy countered.

"I'll be discreet. He won't discover me here," Shaun persisted.

Tracy's face hardened. "Don't jeopardize my plan. Remember, once it succeeds, I'll be leaving with you."

After a pause, Shaun tentatively asked, "Should I inform Elyse about your pregnancy?"

Tracy's reaction was fierce. "Absolutely not! Don't breathe a word of it to her or about us!"

"Why not? Don't you miss her?" Shaun asked, puzzled by her intensity.

Tracy replied, flustered and quickly, "What use would it be to tell her about my actions now? It would only cause her unnecessary worry. Just keep it to yourself!"

"But Elyse is concerned about you. She should at least know you're alright," Shaun suggested.

“I’m perfectly fine! What is there for her to fret over?” Tracy retorted sharply, her patience waning. “Either stop interfering, or forget about us being together!”

Stunned into silence by her words, Shaun closed his mouth obediently. Tracy gave him a sharp look, then turned and shut the door behind her. As she walked away, Shaun touched his cheek, still feeling the sting of her slaps.

He lingered by the door for a moment before finally walking away.

He made his way directly to Jayden’s company.

Earlier that day, Jayden had spent time with Elyse, causing him to arrive at the office later than usual.

Upon Jayden’s arrival, Shaun stormed into his office and collapsed onto the sofa.

Jayden, taken aback by Shaun’s sudden appearance, quickly dialed the receptionist and demanded, “How did you allow unauthorized people into the building?”

Shaun’s expression turned grim. “At this point, we are allies, even partners, and you’re calling me unauthorized?”

Jayden ended the call and clarified, “To be clear, I have an alliance with your father, not you. Your father wouldn’t presume to just barge into my office like this.”

“I’m not like my father. Our relationship is different,” Shaun countered.

There was a brief silence before Jayden chuckled.

Shaun, unable to contain his arrogance, boasted, “I visited Tracy this morning. She’s considering giving us another chance. This time, I’ll make sure she’s treated right and never suffers.”

Jayden leaned back in his chair, his curiosity piqued, and he questioned, “Do you genuinely believe her?”



“Absolutely. I’ve worked tirelessly for this opportunity. You can’t imagine what I’ve done to achieve this,” Shaun asserted.

Chapter 1700:

Jayden’s eyes then fell on the dust coating Shaun’s black pants.

“Were you kneeling?” he inquired.

Shaun, caught off guard, responded, “How could you tell?”

Jayden, unimpressed and seeking further details, took a deep breath to steady himself and pressed, “There must have been more to your conversation. What else did you two discuss? Share it with me.”

Shaun, recalling Tracy’s words, knitted his brows and shared cautiously, “Tracy is very hesitant about seeing Elyse. When I suggested we visit her, Tracy was clearly against it and quite resistant.”

“Tracy’s refusal is telling,” Jayden mused. “She clearly cares for Elyse, yet can’t face her. That kind of avoidance screams guilt.”

Stroking his chin thoughtfully, he pressed on, “And that guilt? It suggests she’s orchestrating something she knows would break Elyse’s heart. Something that would make Elyse look at her differently. What exactly is Tracy hiding?”

Shaun felt ice crawl down his spine. How had Jayden cut straight to the core truth with such precision?

The weight of his promise to Tracy pressed heavily on his conscience. Jayden studied Shaun’s hesitation with calculating eyes. “You know something, don’t you? What’s Tracy’s real game here? She’s dating Lowell, but how does that fit into her revenge? If she wanted him dead, she wouldn’t need to play girlfriend, would she?”

Shaun’s mind raced, torn between loyalty and the pressure of Jayden’s razor-sharp deductions.

“You’re holding back information,” Jayden observed, reading Shaun’s face like an open book.

Shaun’s brow furrowed defensively. “What would I know? She doesn’t tell me everything.”

“Then help me understand,” Jayden pressed. “What kind of revenge requires Tracy to stay by Lowell’s side? And this promise she made you — about coming back to you after it’s done? The pieces don’t fit.”

Shaun reached for his water glass, buying time with a long sip. “What’s not to understand? She’s realized I’m the better choice. She’ll dump Lowell and leave with me.”

Jayden leaned forward, resting his chin on his hand with keen interest. “If it were that simple, why avoid Elyse like the plague? No, she’s hiding from Elyse because she’s crossed a line. I just need to know what kind of revenge she’s plotting in the shadows.”

“Well...” Shaun clenched his jaw, determined to keep Tracy’s secret locked away.

Jayden, reading volumes in Shaun’s expression, knew he’d struck gold. He rose slowly and moved closer, his eyes boring into Shaun’s face. Shaun shifted uncomfortably. “Why are you invading my personal space? This is getting weird.”

“Weird? Please. Those slap marks from Tracy are still fresh on your face. Next time, at least wait for them to fade before showing up here.” Jayden’s voice took on an edge of frustration. “After everything Elyse and I have done for you, you’re still going to protect Tracy’s secrets?”

Shaun held his ground, though his resolve was wavering. “Just drop it. I’ll handle Tracy’s situation myself.”