

Bound love 1711

Chapter 1711:

Bewilderment crossed Dolores's face at his outburst. "What's wrong with you? I haven't done anything to make things difficult for you, have I? You're my brother. Isn't it natural for you to help me?"

Lowell shook his head, weariness seeping into his features. "No, I shouldn't help you. It's because I helped you that I regret it. I regret meddling in your affairs."

Confusion flickered across Dolores's face, but Lowell knew better than to expect understanding from her. His voice turned to ice as he delivered his final verdict. "There's nothing more to discuss. Leave. I need to start working."

Dolores exhaled sharply, her glare piercing through Lowell before she snatched her purse and stormed out of the office.

As the echoes of his sister's departure faded, Lowell released a heavy sigh of relief, the tension slowly draining from his shoulders.

Though he had once been his sister's willing accomplice, that single incident had changed everything. Now, the mere thought of helping Dolores filled him with revulsion.

Lowell raised his left hand, studying it in the harsh office light. The memory of that day—when he personally ended a young girl's life—remained etched into his very being.

The secret weighed on him like a gravestone. He'd never breathed a word of it to anyone, carrying this darkness in his heart. The knowledge that he had killed for Dolores haunted him.

"I won't help her again. Never again," he murmured softly into the empty office.

Shaun sat at an outdoor café in the mall, relishing a rare break from work.

Across from him, his bodyguard leaned in and murmured, “The Ruiz family has been showing up a lot lately. I have a feeling they’re planning something.”

Shaun set his coffee cup down, his expression unreadable. “Your boss once told me Dolores seems gentle, but underneath it, she’s unhinged. If her plans don’t work out, she’ll find another way to make them happen.”

The bodyguard frowned, uncertain of where this was going.

Shaun took a slow sip of his coffee and said casually, “Find a guy. If Dolores really makes a move, let him enjoy her company.”

The bodyguard caught on instantly and sent a quick message, putting the plan in motion.

Shaun set his coffee cup down, a prickle of awareness running through him. His gaze flicked to the far corner of the mall, where someone was inching closer, tying—and failing—to be discreet.

He grimaced. Dolores’s people were as incompetent as she was.

Then again, fools had their uses. Less effort, less trouble.

What really mattered was Tracy’s situation. That was where his focus needed to be.

He picked up his phone and sent Tracy a quick message, asking what she was doing.

A moment later, her reply came—a photo of a report.

His breath hitched. Staring at the image, he felt a jolt of surprise. He glanced at the bodyguard and said casually, “Go buy some snacks.”

Chapter 1712:

The bodyguard hesitated but nodded, disappearing into the crowd. The moment Jayden’s informant was out of sight, Shaun dialed Tracy’s number.

Lowering his voice, he asked, “Is this... a prenatal checkup report? Are you alone?”

Tracy hadn’t expected him to call, but she answered honestly. “Yeah, I’m here for a prenatal checkup. It’s crazy to think there’s a tiny life inside me.”

She rested a hand on her stomach, a wild smile creeping across her lips. “I can’t wait to see Lowell’s reaction. Will he be happy... or furious?”

Shaun had brushed off her recklessness before, but now the full weight of her madness hit him. Her heart wasn’t just broken—it was long dead, kept alive only by hatred.

He couldn’t begin to grasp the depths of it, nor did he know if he could ever withstand such consuming bitterness himself.

Taking a steadying breath, he said, “Which hospital are you at? I’ll come be with you.”

Tracy’s voice turned cold. “No need. I’m already leaving.”

Something twisted inside him, sharp and unbearable. “Tracy, don’t say things like that. Let me be there for you. I’ll protect you.”

Tracy’s voice was detached. “Don’t worry about me. I can handle myself. Besides, what happens next is between me and Lowell. You should stay out of it.”

Frustration flared in Shaun’s chest. “Do you really think Lowell won’t kill you? That lying to him and carrying his child will somehow make him spare you? He won’t, Tracy. He’ll kill you. You still have a choice—come back to me!”

She let out a sharp, bitter laugh. “Then let him kill me.” And with that, she hung up.

Shaun stared at the screen, stunned. He hadn’t expected her to be this stubborn, this reckless. As his anger ebbed, all that remained was a crushing sense of helplessness.

Deep down, he knew—he had played a part in this. He had pushed her to the edge, and now, she had no intention of stepping back.

As Shaun mulled over his next move, the bodyguard returned, holding up a bag of snacks. “Mr. Kennedy, here are the snacks you wanted. I wasn’t sure what you liked, so I got a little of everything.”

Shaun barely glanced at the bag before shifting gears. “Did you find the man I asked for?”

The bodyguard gave a curt nod. “We’re on it. Plenty of people are willing to take this kind of job.”

Shaun nodded, his mind already setting things into motion.

Later that night, as the clock inched past eleven and neared midnight, Lowell finally wrapped up his work. With a major project in full swing, the company’s workload had skyrocketed, keeping him at the office later than usual.

After a long, grueling day, he returned home, exhaustion pressing heavily on his shoulders.

The moment he opened the door, the darkness lifted. Warm light flooded the room, revealing a ceiling draped in twinkling lights.

Lowell hesitated at the doorway, taking in the scene. The living room was meticulously decorated, and the table was set with an extravagant feast. Everything looked carefully arranged, down to the last detail.

His gaze drifted over the steaming dishes, their rich aroma filling the air. Tracy must have prepared this.

Then, it hit him. The surprise. She had mentioned planning something special, and yet, he had come home so late.

Guilt settled over him like a weight.

Scanning the room, he realized she was nowhere in sight. “Babe?” he called, stepping further inside. “Babe, where are you? I’m back.”

Silence. A flicker of unease crept in. “Are you upset that I’m late?” he tried again, his voice softer. “I’m sorry—work was insane. Please don’t hide from me.”

Just as he finished speaking, footsteps echoed behind him.

Chapter 1713:

Lowell heard footsteps and eagerly turned around, his heart pounding with anticipation. Her features were still concealed beneath a mask that covered most of her face. She stood there, her eyes gleaming, a quiet smile playing on her lips.

Unable to contain his excitement, Lowell exclaimed, “Babe, is this the surprise you mentioned? I can hardly wait!”

Tracy’s smile deepened. “I’ve prepared not one, but two surprises for you tonight. One of them is hidden in the living room—you’ll have to find it yourself.”

Lowell admired how effortlessly she kept things thrilling, and his anticipation surged to its peak. His voice brimmed with eagerness as he asked, “Can I see your face now?”

Tracy gave a gentle nod. “Of course, you can take off my mask.”

With a mixture of eagerness and nervousness, Lowell stepped closer. As their gazes met, an unexpected shyness gripped him. He took a few deep breaths, steadying himself before gently lifting the mask from her face.

For months, he had imagined countless versions of the face hidden beneath. He knew she wasn’t unattractive, but just how beautiful she might be had remained a mystery. But the moment her face was fully revealed, the smile on his lips faltered. The mask slipped from his trembling fingers and fell soundlessly to the floor.

Everything around him faded into silence. The air grew thick, his heartbeat a deafening drum in his ears. He parted his lips, his voice barely above a whisper, trembling with disbelief. “You... you’re Tracy.”

Tracy’s soft smile never wavered. She held his gaze, reading every flicker of emotion in his eyes.

“Yes,” she said simply. “It’s me.”

Lowell’s breath hitched. He took a step back, then another, and another—instinctively putting space between them. His mind reeled. Horror crept into his voice as he stammered, “How are you here? Where’s my girlfriend? No... You— You fell. You fell off that cliff. You didn’t survive.”

Tracy arched an eyebrow, a hint of amusement flickering in her eyes. “I am your girlfriend. We’ve been together for months, Lowell. Every single day, every single night. Don’t you recognize me?”

Lowell shook his head vehemently, his mind refusing to accept what his eyes saw. “No... this isn’t possible. You’re not her. Where is she? Did you do something to her? Are you here for revenge?”

With slow, deliberate steps, Tracy moved closer. “Revenge?” she mused, her voice laced with something unreadable. “I love you too much for that. Have you truly forgotten? Every night, you hold me close, whispering sweet words, telling me over and over how much you love me.”

Lowell’s face darkened. Those words—those tender confessions—he had spoken them countless times. But how could the woman he cherished be Tracy?

Silence stretched between them, heavy and suffocating. Eventually, the weight of reality pressed down on him, forcing the truth into focus. His voice was hoarse when he finally spoke. “So that’s why you never showed me your face. You were afraid I’d find out who you really are.”

Tracy’s lips curled into a knowing smile, her eyes gleaming. In a soft voice, she murmured, “Lowell, does it really matter who I am? My love for you is unwavering, unshaken. So what if I’m Tracy? Haven’t I been by your side, devoted and true? If you can accept that, nothing else has to change.” She let her words linger before adding, “Didn’t you promise me? Once your work was done, you’d take me on a trip abroad. I remember every single thing you promised.”

Chapter 1714:

Lowell's expression twisted as conflicting emotions warred within him. This revelation—this cruel, bewildering twist of fate—left him reeling.

Seeing his turmoil, Tracy tilted her head, her voice light, almost playful. "Aren't you forgetting something? There's still another surprise. Don't you want to find it?"

Lowell was momentarily stunned, but his mind latched onto the distraction. He began searching the living room, his movements stiff, his thoughts a whirlwind. Then, in the corner, he spotted a bag. A neatly wrapped gift. His fingers felt numb as he opened it. And then—his world tilted. His face drained of color as he stared at the contents.

An ultrasound report. His voice came out in a strangled gasp. "You're... pregnant?"

Tracy's eyes twinkled with unmistakable delight. She clasped her hands together, swaying slightly. "Take a good look. Our baby is growing strong and healthy."

"I don't know yet if it's a boy or a girl, but with our resources, we can provide for either, can't we?"

Lowell's grip on the report tightened as a storm of emotions churned inside him. He swallowed hard, struggling to steady his breath. Then, his voice turned cold, unyielding. "Get rid of it."

For the first time, Tracy hesitated. Then, her expression shifted—something sharp, something dark flickered across her face. She let out a low, chilling laugh. "Get rid of it? No way. That's not going to happen. This baby... This baby is my only leverage."

A fresh wave of shock slammed into Lowell. His hands trembled as he stared at her. "What?" His voice was barely more than a breath. "What do you mean?"

Tracy no longer bothered with pretense. The mask—both literal and figurative—had long since fallen. Her lips curled into a smirk, her voice laced with venom. "You and your sister were merciless. That cliff was treacherous—towering above the raging sea, the waves below ready to devour me whole. And yet, you let go of my hand. You watched me fall."

Lowell stiffened. The memory of that day flashed before his eyes—so vivid, so raw, it felt like it was happening all over again. For just a fraction of a second, a flicker of pain crossed his face. But it was fleeting—quickly buried beneath layers of hardened emotion.

Tracy placed a hand on her abdomen, her touch surprisingly gentle despite the madness gleaming in her eyes. A strange tenderness laced her voice as she spoke. “But none of that matters. You all may have tried to kill me, but what doesn’t kill me only makes me stronger. And I’m happy to have this baby.”

Lifting her head, she smiled. “From now on, my baby and I will be part of the Ruiz family. We’ll live with you all. How does that sound?”

At that moment, clarity struck Lowell—Tracy’s actions weren’t driven by love, but by pure, seething hatred. She despised his family and wanted nothing more than to shatter their peace.

He rubbed his face, exhaustion weighing on him. Maybe he was just too drained today. His head felt light, almost dizzy. Still, he forced himself to think. He needed to make a decision—not just for himself, but for Tracy as well.

His gaze drifted to her abdomen. After a long pause, he finally spoke. “We should go to the hospital and terminate the pregnancy. This child cannot be born.”

Tracy’s expression darkened. Her voice was firm. “Why not? I’m your girlfriend. You promised to marry me. Now that I’m carrying your child, all that’s left is a wedding!”

Lowell felt like she was deliberately pushing him to the edge, trapping him with no escape.

The tension was suffocating—until his phone suddenly rang.

Chapter 1715:

He glanced at the caller ID. Dolores. With a deep sigh, he answered. The moment he did, her frantic voice burst through the line. “Lowell, you have to save me! I’ve been kidnapped! No—I’ve been drugged! I’m burning up! I need a man, Lowell!”

Her words came in desperate gasps, but Lowell caught the meaning.

Frowning, he scoffed. “You got kidnapped, yet somehow managed to call me? Dolores, if you’re going to lie, at least make it believable.”

Dolores whimpered. “I swear it’s true! I was supposed to seduce Shaun tonight, but then... then... Lowell, please! There are so many men in this room. I’m terrified!”

Before Lowell could respond, her voice abruptly cut off. A moment later, a different voice came through—cold, familiar. Shaun.

“Your family business has been thriving lately,” Shaun said casually. “You’ve made quite a bit of money, haven’t you?” he asked.

The second Lowell heard his voice, everything clicked into place. His expression darkened. “You got your memory back? Since when? Could it be...”

Shaun chuckled. “Among all the Ruiz family members, you’re the only one I don’t completely despise. You’re smart. You know when to push forward and when to retreat—unlike your stupid sister.”

Lowell immediately grasped the implication. Shaun had regained his memory long ago and had likely seen through Dolores’s scheme to trap him into marriage.

Understanding this, Lowell exhaled sharply. “Shaun, I apologize on behalf of my sister. She was foolish to try and manipulate you.” He hesitated, then added, “Could you let her go?”

Shaun let out a low chuckle. “Lowell, I know you’ve always protected your family, but you’re blinded by them. Especially Dolores.”

Lowell didn’t understand Shaun’s words. Just as he was about to ask, a notification popped up on his screen—Shaun had sent him a video.

With a sinking feeling, Lowell tapped it open. Dolores appeared on the screen, surrounded by men, her demeanor nothing like the frantic, helpless woman from moments ago. She was smiling, laughing, openly seducing the man in front of her. There was no force, no coercion. She was enjoying herself.

Lowell's stomach churned. His own sister had just begged for his help, claiming to be in danger—yet here she was, indulging herself without a care.

His jaw clenched. "Shaun, was this really necessary?"

Shaun's voice remained indifferent. "Consider this a warning. Your blind loyalty to your sister will drag you down one day. Think about it—hasn't Dolores ever set you up before?"

Lowell's expression hardened.

Of course, she had.

And the proof stood right in front of him—Tracy, pregnant with his child, forcing him into marriage. He had schemed with Dolores against Tracy, and now, the consequences had come full circle.

Hanging up the call, Lowell's grip tightened around his phone. His eyes turned ice-cold. Suddenly, anger surged through him. Grabbing Tracy's wrist with force, he growled, "We're going to the hospital. Now. This pregnancy ends today."

Tracy's eyes burned with defiance. She wrenched her hand away. "No! I will never terminate this pregnancy! Don't even think about it!"

Lowell yanked Tracy out of the villa, his grip unrelenting as he all but dragged her along. She barely stumbled to keep up before they reached the parking garage.

Chapter 1716:

But at the entrance, someone stood waiting.

Tracy, unfazed, assumed it was Hardy coming to her rescue. But as they got closer, her confidence wavered. It wasn't Hardy. It was Jayden.

Lowell's frown deepened, his tone sharp. "What the hell are you doing in my private parking garage? What do you want?"

Jayden twirled the ring on his finger, his voice smooth, edged with mockery. "Got lost. Thought I'd ask for directions." He smirked. "Just trying to find my way home."

Lowell's expression darkened. "Move. You're in my way."

Jayden smirked. "Afraid I can't do that."

He took a step past Lowell, his gaze locking onto Tracy. She instinctively looked away, guilt flickering across her face.

Lowell caught the subtle reaction, and something clicked. His grip tightened around her wrist. "I see. You're here for Tracy." His voice dripped with possession. "Too bad—she's mine now."

Tracy flinched, pain shooting through her wrist. She turned to glare at him, resentment burning in her eyes.

Jayden didn't acknowledge Lowell's words. His focus remained on Tracy as he said, "Elyse asked me to bring you back. She heard you're planning to marry Lowell, and she's completely against it." His voice hardened. "Tracy, come with me. Don't make me ashamed to face my wife."

Tracy froze. Her resolve wavered. Lowell was dragging her to the hospital to terminate her pregnancy. But this child was her last card to play—the one thing that could shatter the Ruiz family's peace. She couldn't let him take it from her.

If it came down to it, she'd rather leave with Jayden than let Lowell force her into that hospital.

Sensing her hesitation, Lowell's voice dropped into a low, warning tone. "Tracy, you're mine. Do you really think I'd hurt you?" His grip on her wrist tightened.

"I'm only doing what's best for us. This isn't the right time for a child, but later... I'll marry you. We can have as many kids as you want."

Tracy's lips curled into a faint, mocking smile. Her eyes, cold and sharp, met his. "I don't believe a single word you say."

Lowell's jaw tensed, his expression darkening. "You don't believe me?" His voice was clipped, filled with quiet rage. "Then who do you believe? Jayden?" His gaze flicked toward the other man before snapping back to her. "Don't forget—you are my girlfriend now."

Tracy suddenly wrenched her hand free from his grip. "You want to get rid of my child and abandon me? Over my dead body!"

Lowell's face twisted with rage. "You're insane! You'd go against me for the sake of a child?"

Tracy didn't answer. She didn't need to. Instead, she turned on her heel and walked toward Jayden without so much as a glance at Lowell.

Fury surged through Lowell, and he moved to stop her. But Jayden stepped in front of him, blocking his path.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Lowell spat, his voice seething with anger. "Do you even know whose territory you're standing on?"

Jayden raised an eyebrow, his smirk nothing short of arrogant. "Your territory?" He chuckled, unbothered. "So what? I come and go as I please, and there's nothing you can do about it. And even if Tracy is your girlfriend now..." He took a step closer, his gaze sharp. "If I want her, I'll take her."

Lowell's blood boiled at Jayden's audacity. His control snapped, and he swung a punch at him.

Chapter 1717:

Jayden effortlessly dodged, countering the move with a swift step to the side. "My car's outside," he called out to Tracy, never breaking his focus on Lowell. "Get in. The driver will take you away."

Tracy nodded, her expression set, and without hesitation, she moved toward the exit, leaving the scene behind.

“Stop! Tracy, don’t you dare leave!” Lowell’s voice cracked with fury as he shouted after her. But she didn’t even falter. Lowell lunged forward, intent on catching up, but Jayden stepped into his path again, blocking him with ease.

“Don’t bother,” Jayden said, his tone calm, almost amused. “She’s been planning to make things difficult for you from the start. Before you worry about her, maybe you should deal with me first.” He gave a faint, almost smug smile.

Lowell’s face drained of color as realization hit him. “Are you telling me you knew all along that Tracy was spying on me, pretending to be my girlfriend... and you didn’t say anything?” His voice was a mix of disbelief and growing anger.

Jayden feigned innocence, raising his hands in mock defense. “Don’t blame me for things I didn’t do. Elyse and I only found out a couple of days ago. Before that, we had no idea.”

Lowell let out a low, cold laugh. “You really expect me to believe that?”

Jayden shrugged nonchalantly. “Whether you believe me or not doesn’t change the outcome, does it?”

Lowell’s jaw clenched, his expression growing even darker. The truth gnawed at him, no matter how he tried to twist it. Tracy was pregnant with his child. And now, he was left with the mess of figuring out how to deal with it.

Tracy left Lowell’s house, her heart still racing as she made her way to the street. She spotted a car parked with its hazard lights flashing, and without a second thought, she walked over to it. She opened the door, slid inside, and shut it behind her, letting out a long sigh of relief as the weight of the moment seemed to lift.

But just as she allowed herself to relax, a sudden chill ran down her spine. She turned sharply, her breath catching as her eyes locked with Elyse’s.

Elyse sat in the back seat, arms crossed, her gaze calm but filled with quiet reproach.

Tracy quickly looked away, guilt flooding her. She felt the weight of the betrayal settle in—she knew she’d broken something between them.

Unable to bear the suffocating silence, Tracy reached for the door handle, desperate to escape. But the door didn't budge. It was locked.

Elyse sighed softly, her voice gentle yet firm. "Where do you think you can run to? You're pregnant now, Tracy. It's time to be sensible—for your sake, and for the baby."

Tracy's lips quivered, her voice barely steady. "How... how did you know I was pregnant?"

Elyse remained calm. "Well, the hospital where you had your prenatal checkup happens to be owned by a close friend of mine. He was overseeing the facility when he saw you leaving the obstetrics and gynecology department."

Tracy fell silent for a moment, then let out a bitter laugh. "Your friend... I see. It—must be Peyton Ellis. I didn't know he had a hospital in Cambape."

Elyse nodded. "After Peyton told us, we confronted Shaun. But for some reason, he refused to say anything. Whatever deal he made with you, he kept it to himself. So, we had no choice but to investigate on our own."

Tracy chuckled softly. "And I suppose your investigation was spot on? You even figured out that I'd confess everything to Lowell today."

Chapter 1718:

Elyse smiled faintly. "I know you too well. And with how often you've been going out lately, it wasn't hard to suspect something."

Tracy leaned back in the seat, closing her eyes. Her smile was filled with sorrow, heavy with despair.

She had tried so hard to keep it hidden, to stop Elyse from finding out. Yet, despite everything, Elyse had uncovered the truth.

And now, the last person she wanted to know had seen her most vengeful side. Shame washed over her. She no longer had the courage to face Elyse.

Elyse turned to the driver and spoke softly. “Take us to the hospital.”

The driver nodded and pressed down on the gas.

When they arrived, Tracy spotted Peyton standing in the hospital lobby, surrounded by a group of doctors and nurses.

She let out a self-mocking laugh. “I didn’t realize my visit warranted such a grand welcome. So many people waiting just for me.”

Elyse’s expression remained neutral. “Go with the doctors. They need to run another prenatal checkup.”

Tracy’s voice carried a tinge of sadness. “Aren’t you going to force me to get rid of this child?”

Elyse shook her head. “It’s your child. I have no right to make that decision. If you want to keep it, I’ll support you and the baby.”

Tracy lifted her gaze, studying Elyse’s face. There was no expression, no visible emotion, but in Elyse’s eyes—deep within them—Tracy saw something raw: pain, helplessness. She saw it all too clearly. Without another word, she turned and followed the doctors into the obstetrics department.

Peyton stayed behind. He was a surgeon, not an obstetrician—there was little he could do inside. Instead, he remained by Elyse’s side, watching Tracy disappear down the hall. In a low voice, he asked, “How did your friend’s life end up like this?”

Elyse’s gaze lingered on Tracy’s retreating figure. Her voice was soft, distant. “She didn’t choose this. She was pushed into a corner, with nowhere else to turn.”

Perhaps it was Tracy’s hatred that had kept her going, navigating through a world filled with unseen dangers, where death lurked at every step. But now, on solid ground, that hatred had nowhere to go. And Tracy was unraveling.

Elyse murmured, almost to herself, “How could I blame her? She’s only doing what she must to survive.”

“What?” Peyton hadn’t caught her words. He turned to her, only to see tears streaming down her face.

His eyes widened in alarm. “Why are you crying? Tracy is alive, and the baby is healthy. It’s not like things are beyond repair.” Fumbling, he searched his pockets for a tissue.

Elyse wiped her tears with the back of her hand and forced a faint smile. “It’s fine. From now on, I’ll be there for her.”

An hour later, Tracy returned with her prenatal report in hand. She walked up to Elyse and stated plainly, “You are healthy. The baby is healthy too.”

Elyse took the report and began to review it when Jayden arrived.

She glanced behind him, surprised to see he was alone. “Lowell didn’t come with you? I thought he’d be here.”

Chapter 1719:

Jayden shrugged. “He wanted to, but halfway through, he got a call from Dolores.”

Elyse frowned. “What happened?”

Jayden smirked slightly, shaking his head. “Apparently, she was having the time of her life with a bunch of men. But the problem is, she invited a ton of paparazzi, planning to stage a scandal with Shaun. Instead, they caught her in...”

“Compromising situation with multiple men. The whole thing has exploded, and Lowell had to rush over to deal with it.”

Elyse was momentarily stunned. It took her a long moment to process before she finally asked, “Can Dolores even recover from this scandal?”

Jayden exhaled. “Hard to say. It all depends on Lowell’s ability to clean up the mess.” Then, his gaze shifted to Tracy, who had been silent this entire time. “What about you?” he asked.

Tracy narrowed her eyes slightly. “What does that have to do with me?”

Jayden shook his head. “I’m not talking about you and Dolores. I’m asking about the baby. Are you really planning to keep it?” His voice was steady, serious.

Tracy’s expression turned cold. “For now, keeping the baby still serves a purpose.”

Elyse silently handed Jayden the prenatal report. He skimmed through it before looking back at Tracy. “Do you think Lowell will let you keep it?” he asked.

Tracy let out a bitter chuckle. “If he’s unhappy, then I will be happy.”

Peyton couldn’t hold back any longer. His brow furrowed with concern as he said, “If all you want is to get back at Lowell, there are other ways to do it. Don’t drag a child into your revenge. The poor child doesn’t deserve to be caught in the middle of this.”

“The poor child? What about me? Aren’t I the one who’s pitiful?” Tracy’s words sliced through the air, sharp and biting.

Peyton recoiled, caught off guard by her sudden outburst. He touched his face awkwardly, his voice lowering in an attempt to calm her. “I didn’t mean it like that. I just want you to think this through. Don’t make a decision you might regret.”

Tracy’s glare cut through him, her eyes brimming with both pain and distrust.

Since the moment she had fallen off that cliff, the fragile security she’d spent years building had shattered completely. Her once steady sense of self had unraveled, leaving behind only a desperate will to survive—a will so fierce, it had driven her to cling to twisted beliefs, if only to feel in control again. Elyse, fully understanding Tracy’s mindset, felt a surge of pity for her. But it was quickly overshadowed by an equally strong sense of helplessness.

Jayden let out a heavy sigh. “We’re not asking you to end the pregnancy. We just don’t want this child to become another casualty of your anger. If you want to get back at the Ruiz family, Peyton and I will find a way to help you.”

Peyton froze, his finger pointing at himself in disbelief. “Wait, why am I involved in this?”

Jayden glanced at him, unimpressed. “You think I’m going to handle this alone?”

Peyton scratched his nose awkwardly. “Look, my family runs a hospital. Taking down the Ruiz family doesn’t exactly benefit me.”

Jayden smirked. “Then how about you help me bring them down, and I’ll get all the benefits?”

Peyton rolled his eyes. “You wish.” He already had a feeling Jayden was after something more than just revenge.

Elyse stepped forward, gently taking Tracy’s hand. “It’s late. Let’s not discuss this anymore tonight. We all need some rest.”

Chapter 1720:

Tracy’s emotions seemed to settle at Elyse’s words, though only for a moment. The weight of everything still hung in the air.

When they finally returned home, Elyse led Tracy to the guest room.

Once she made sure Tracy was comfortably in bed, Elyse turned to leave. But just as she reached the door, Tracy’s quiet voice stopped her. “Don’t go. I can’t sleep. Could you stay with me for a while?”

Tracy’s face was drawn, her eyes betraying a raw vulnerability that Elyse hadn’t seen in a long time.

Elyse paused, torn, but then offered softly, “How about I play you something on the violin? One of your favorite pieces. Would that help?”

Tracy nodded, a hint of relief flashing across her face. “Okay.”

Elyse stepped out of the room to fetch her violin. When she returned, she stood beside Tracy’s bed and began.

As the familiar melody began to weave its way through the air, the turbulent storm raging in Tracy’s heart seemed to find some calm. Slowly, her anxiety loosened its grip, and an unusual sense of peace settled in its place.

Tracy lay still, listening for what felt like an eternity. When the last notes faded, she broke the silence with a question that had been eating at her for far too long. “Are you disappointed in me? I... I’m terrible.”

Elyse studied her for a moment, her voice gentle yet firm. “I love you more than you could ever imagine. That’s why I keep trying to understand what you’re going through, trying to piece together your feelings. Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I remind myself—if I were in your shoes, I don’t know if I could’ve done any better. I don’t know if I would’ve survived either. I might’ve drowned in that ocean.”

Tracy was quiet for a long time, her thoughts drifting before she finally spoke, her voice barely above a whisper, “That day, after I fell from the cliff, I grabbed onto a floating plank. It was broken, just some trash in the sea... but it saved my life.”

Elyse’s lips curled into a soft smile. “See? Even the universe wasn’t ready to give up on you. It gave you a way to survive.”

Tracy closed her eyes slowly, curling up beneath the blanket as if seeking comfort in the soft fabric. Her voice trembled as she whispered, “I was so scared. Out there, in the ocean, I was completely alone. That broken plank—it was my only lifeline. I was terrified of losing it. Without it, I wouldn’t have had a chance. Not even a sliver of one.”

Sensing Tracy’s heavy mood, Elyse immediately knelt by the bed, gently taking her hand and holding it tightly. She spoke softly, her words a steady comfort. “But you survived. All the pain, all the struggles—they’re part of what makes you strong. Don’t be afraid of them. You’re stronger than you think.”

Tracy shook her head, tears streaming down her face, the weight of everything pressing down on her.

Elyse continued, her voice a calm, soothing rhythm, offering reassurance. Slowly, Tracy's sobs quieted, and exhaustion overtook her. With a final, deep breath, she drifted into a peaceful sleep.

Elyse sighed quietly, relief flooding her as she carefully left the room. Outside, she found Jayden leaning against the doorframe, his arms crossed and a look of concern on his face.

"How is she? Did she agree to terminate the pregnancy?" he asked, his voice low and tense.

Elyse sighed, her voice heavy with understanding. "Let's not focus on that right now. Revenge is the only thing that's keeping Tracy going. If you take that away from her, it's like taking away her reason to live."