

## Bound love 191

Chapter 191:

The room fell into a heavy silence, broken only by the sound of everyone's breathing. No one dared to breathe heavily. They were puzzled by Vicky's actions—why she had slapped Elyse and why Elyse had found the courage to slap back.

Vicky rubbed her reddened, swollen cheek. The reason for her singular focus on Elyse was unknown to the others. They didn't realize that she saw Elyse as her biggest threat.

Earlier that afternoon, Vicky had been discussing her future career plans and upcoming international competitions with Abram in the office. Yet abruptly, Abram had shifted the conversation to Elyse.

"In fact, during the concertmaster selection, I had a feeling that Cody was considering taking Elyse as his apprentice," he had said. "He watched her play the violin very intently. Fortunately, he ended up not choosing anyone. I was relieved Cody didn't choose you or Elyse. So you didn't lose."

Vicky's internal reaction to Abram's words remained a mystery to everyone but her. She harbored an inexplicable resentment that she couldn't let go of. "Do you think Elyse is better than me, Mr. Ellsworth?" she had asked Abram directly, desperate for an answer.

Abram looked at her with a complex expression, hinting at thoughts she couldn't decipher. "No one is perfect. She possesses some talents you don't have. You must heed Cody's advice, or else Elyse might surpass you."

This conversation ignited a sense of urgency in Vicky, fueling her fear and disdain for a potential rival. She worried that Elyse might usurp her leading position. Thus, when Rebekah suggested that Elyse was scheming against her, her immediate response was anger. But then fear crept into her heart. She worried that Elyse might not only surpass her but could rally others to sabotage her career in the future.

Regardless of what happened today, Vicky was determined to strike first, hoping to deter Elyse from any thoughts of defeating her. However, Elyse retaliated with two slaps of her own.

"Do you know what you are doing?" Vicky asked, staring intently at Elyse.

Elyse responded emotionlessly, “You dared to strike. Why shouldn’t I? You came here just to slap me, to knock me down permanently, to instill fear, didn’t you?” Her voice chilled further as she continued, “Do you think I can’t see through your intentions? It’s quite clear, Vicky. You’re scared I might threaten your position. You lost your composure and attacked me.”

After a brief pause, she flashed a challenging smile. “I once thought you were beyond reach. Now I see you’re just another person. You’ve been unopposed for so long; your arrogance grew unchecked. But now, you see a rival in me.”

Vicky’s mind was laid bare, her cheeks burning with humiliation and pain from the slaps.

Touching her throbbing cheek, Elyse’s resolve hardened, her determined gaze unsettling Vicky further. Vicky fought to keep her fear at bay, maintaining an indifferent facade. She would never allow anyone to see her vulnerability; it was a fate worse than death for her.

“Do you want to fight this out to the bitter end?” she hissed with a malicious smile. “Let’s see who will win.”

With that, she turned and stormed out, ignoring the others. Left behind, Rebekah still wore a smirk, though it quickly faded under the scrutiny of the room. Grace snorted disdainfully. “Vicky has left. Aren’t you going with her?”

Rebekah, feeling the sting of rejection, glanced subconsciously at Freddy, only to be met with his cold gaze. Stung by the encounter, she exited with her head bowed.

After the two had left, everyone gathered around Elyse to check her face. Bart, noticing the mark from the slap, frowned and said, “Was Vicky out of her mind today? How dare she slap you?”

Darren’s expression darkened. “It’s the first time I’ve seen her lose her composure like that. She’s never acted this way before.”

Elyse, covering her face with her hand, responded coldly. “The gauntlet has been thrown. It’s her and me now, to the bitter end.”

The group fell silent, unsure of what to say. They knew all too well that competition in music could be just as fierce as in any other field. Freddy sighed, feeling responsible. "This is all my fault. I turned Rebekah away earlier, and she must have stirred Vicky up and led her here."

Elyse looked at him and replied, "It's not on you. This is between me and Vicky."

Chapter 192:

Rebekah chased Vicky outside the restaurant only to get smacked in the face as soon as she caught up with her. Passersby on the street watched this embarrassing scene play out, making Rebekah feel humiliated. Holding her cheek, she asked Vicky angrily, "Why did you hit me?"

Vicky's hand hurt from slapping Rebekah with more force than she did Elyse. She said mockingly, "You know why I hit you."

Rebekah couldn't even form words to respond. "Don't worry," Vicky continued with a cold glance. "I don't blame you for disliking Elyse. It actually just makes you less disgusting."

Rebekah gritted her teeth and replied, "Don't worry, I won't give up on taking down Elyse." She added hastily, "I also promise not to ever manipulate you again."

Vicky didn't even look at her after getting what she wanted and walked away. Rebekah followed her awkwardly, covering her bruised cheek from the passersby's curious gazes.

Meanwhile, Elyse ordered an ice pack from the waiter to soothe her cheek, all while continuing with her dinner. After Vicky left, the mood at the table shifted from somber to one of determination and resolve, with everyone vowing never to let her emerge victorious again. Even Elyse was motivated to fight harder.

After dinner, everyone began to leave. Standing on the roadside, Elyse messaged her driver. Suddenly, Freddy walked over and saw the palm print on her cheek. "I saw a different side of you when I witnessed you striking Vicky," he remarked.

Elyse was confused. "What do you mean?"

Freddy shook his head, rubbing his temples. “You were just like your husband Jayden. That icy look of yours made me feel like it was him teaching Vicky a lesson.”

Elyse chuckled. “Well, after marrying Jayden, I learned a lot from him.”

Freddy continued, “Moreover, you’re like his exact copy. It wouldn’t be a surprise if you had someone to take out Vicky.”

Elyse chuckled, feeling in a good mood as she sat in the car and waved Freddy goodbye. “Has Jayden gotten home?” she asked the driver as she pulled out her phone to message him.

The driver smiled. “Yes, he’s already home. He arrived before I even set off.”

Elyse nodded, planning to tell Jayden about Freddy’s comments. But after thinking it over, she decided to talk to him in Driscoll’s presence. And so, she went cheerfully inside the house to find Jayden.

Jayden was busy watching TV on the couch when Elyse walked in with a bright smile. Nonetheless, her swollen cheek caught his eye, and he was taken aback. “Who hit you?” he asked, the room temperature dropping.

Elyse stopped mid-step, rubbing her cheek with a guilty conscience. “It was an orchestra member,” she explained.

Jayden narrowed his gaze when he heard that. “And you didn’t fight back?” he asked sternly.

“Of course, I did,” Elyse replied confidently. “I slapped her so she won’t get the best of me.” Elyse sat on Jayden’s lap and told him everything that happened, hoping to avoid his anger.

Jayden eased up when he learned that Elyse had slapped that girl in return. She also bragged about how Freddy said she reminded him of Jayden, expecting him to be proud of her.

But Jayden raised his eyebrows and said, “How could someone hit you if you were like me?” His words stiffened Elyse’s smile.

“That’s not the point. The point is, I’m becoming more like you,” she said, feeling embarrassed.

Jayden touched the palm print on her face, and his eyes glistened with a dark light. “You’re not like me enough,” he said, leaving Elyse speechless.

She suddenly became aware of how close they were, taking in Jayden’s warm breath on her face and the hair on his face. A weird feeling surged in Elyse’s heart, and the room temperature seemed to rise as Jayden’s hand wrapped around her waist, causing her to breathe heavily.

His increased strength made her cling to him even more tightly, and they almost became one body. Elyse’s mind was jumbled, and she was about to follow Jayden’s lead when Driscoll appeared in the room.

“Please excuse me for disturbing, Kieran Foster and Judy Foster are here to visit you two,” he said respectfully, interrupting the intimate moment.

Chapter 193:

Nestled in Jayden’s arms, Elyse was too embarrassed to look up. She chastised herself for nearly letting things go too far with Jayden in the living room. She had to admit she was becoming more like him, shamelessly so.

Jayden, with a disapproving look, stared at Driscoll. He was frustrated by the interruption; he was so close to having a moment with Elyse. Driscoll, although stoic, was sweating nervously. He hadn’t wanted to interrupt them. He had even sent the servants out to ensure privacy. But then unexpectedly, Kieran and Judy showed up. Driscoll tried persuading them to visit another day, but they stubbornly refused, insisting on seeing Jayden and threatening to camp out at the entrance if necessary. Unable to let that happen, Driscoll felt compelled to disturb Jayden.

As Jayden stroked Elyse’s hair to comfort her, he said briskly, “Let them in.” Once Driscoll left to fetch Kieran and Judy, Elyse sat up, covering her cheeks. She glared at Jayden and said, “This can’t happen again. How embarrassing.”

Raising an eyebrow, Jayden teased her, “Embarrassing? This is our house. Why shouldn’t I be free with my wife?”

His comment made her blush even deeper. As Elyse got up to leave, Jayden pulled her back, holding her close. “Why are you running? Haven’t you heard? Judy is here too. Aren’t you worried or jealous?”

Caught off guard, Elyse paused. “Why did they come to you?” she asked, puzzled.

Jayden shrugged. “How should I know? I can’t make sense of the Foster family.”

After a moment’s thought, Elyse decided to stay in the living room. Her curiosity was piqued. She wondered why Kieran and Judy had come to their house. Was it because of Jayden?

Driscoll reappeared shortly, accompanied by Kieran and Judy, positioning himself discreetly in a corner of the room. Clad in a black suit, Kieran remained expressionless, his gaze shifting briefly from Elyse to Jayden. In contrast, Judy presented a stark difference. Dressed in a white slip dress with her hair neatly coiled up, her appearance was delicate and attractive. Her red, tear-filled eyes rendered her an image of fragility and sorrow.

Upon her entry, she gently called out, “Jayden.” Her tone was sweet yet tinged with sadness. Elyse, nervously adjusting the hem of her blouse, noted Judy’s unwavering focus on Jayden. Initially reserved, Judy now made no effort to conceal her emotions.

Ignoring her, Jayden directed his attention to Kieran. “What brings you and your sister here?” he inquired casually.

Kieran, clearly irritated yet maintaining respect, answered, “My apologies for the disturbance, Mr. Owen. It was my sister’s insistence on visiting you again that brought us here despite my reluctance.”

Jayden, observing Elyse’s discomfort, nonchalantly popped a grape into her mouth. “And what’s the purpose?” he asked casually.

Kieran, barely managing his annoyance, prompted Judy, “It would be best if you explained your reasons for visiting Mr. Owen. Do it quickly.”

Judy’s spirits fell as Jayden remained indifferent to her presence. Tears started to form as she struggled through her words. “Mr. Owen, in the brief time we were together, did you develop any

feelings for me? Did you ever see me as different from other women, even if just for a moment?" Her body shook slightly as she spoke, as if the emotional burden was too much to bear.

Elyse, overhearing this, turned to Kieran with anger evident in her voice. "You're her brother. Is this how you manage her actions? Allowing her to chase after a married man?"

Kieran, visibly upset, replied sternly, "Mrs. Owen, please be careful with your accusations. My sister is not pursuing Mr. Owen. She has genuinely fallen for your husband. She just opted to openly declare her feelings, not conceal them." He added after a pause, "She isn't making advances. She's simply being true to her feelings."

Elyse looked at him, her face filled with disbelief. She was aware of the Foster family's unconventional views, but she hadn't anticipated their blatant disregard for decorum. While most women would be embarrassed to be labeled home wreckers and would keep such actions hidden, the Fosters seemed to openly pursue another woman's husband, even commending her boldness in love. Once more, Elyse found herself taken aback by the Foster family's audacity. Sitting to the side, she was rendered speechless.

#### Chapter 194:

Judy gazed at Jayden with deep affection, as if they were the only two people in the world. She no longer concealed her feelings for him, choosing instead to declare them openly. "Jayden, I first met you two years ago. You were so striking, and I fell for you instantly. Jayden, won't you take another look at me? I truly love you more than Elyse ever could. I accept you as you are," she said, her voice almost a plea, a tear escaping from the corner of her eye. She offered her heart to him, hoping that Jayden would reciprocate with kindness and warm up to her.

Jayden paused, smiling enigmatically. "Did we meet two years ago?"

The hope in Judy's face crumbled. She looked as if she might faint at any moment. Kieran, quick to react, caught her in his arms, his eyes filled with sympathy. "Judy..."

Yet, Judy wasn't ready to give up. She pushed him aside and walked determinedly towards Jayden, a mix of desperation and obsession in her eyes. "Did you never love me?" she asked.

Jayden found her question almost amusing and chose not to respond directly. Instead, he pulled Elyse closer and kissed her cheek. This only fueled Judy's fury. Still, she persisted. "Do you truly love Elyse?"

In response, Jayden embraced Elyse and kissed her on the lips. Elyse was utterly dumbfounded by the unfolding events.

The light faded from Judy's eyes, leaving only despair. Elyse, witnessing this, felt a pang of sympathy. However, Jayden seemed oblivious to Judy's distress, focusing only on Elyse with a gentle smile. To Jayden, Judy might as well have been invisible. No matter how profound her sadness, it seemed to have no impact on him.

"How can you do this to me? I truly love you, Jayden," Judy cried out in despair, her voice breaking. She sobbed, defeated. "You even had me work as a maid. I thought I would do anything if it meant you could see my true feelings. But why are you treating me this way?"

She collapsed to the floor, weeping uncontrollably. Kieran clenched his fists, clearly struggling to maintain his composure. The complexities of love were hard to articulate. Judy's love for Jayden put her at no advantage, and Kieran, as her brother, felt helpless to aid her.

"What are you waiting for? Take your sister and leave my house. How much longer will you linger?" Jayden rubbed his forehead in frustration, his expression darkening with irritation from Judy's cries.

Kieran's face flushed with anger, yet he obeyed Jayden, lifting Judy from the floor. "Don't cry. You've fallen for the wrong person. He doesn't deserve your love," he whispered, casting a furtive glance at Jayden.

Elyse caught Kieran's remark and was taken aback by his boldness in criticizing Jayden.

"No, I won't leave. I want to stay here. I'm willing to look after Jayden for the rest of my life. He can't be happy without me. I am the only one who truly loves him," Judy proclaimed, lost in her delusion, refusing to leave.

It took all of Kieran's strength to finally get her to her feet.



“I’m very disappointed in you, Mr. Owen. You could have chosen a gentler way to handle this, but you picked the most painful one for her,” Kieran said, pausing at the door to look back at Jayden.

Jayden responded coldly, “Why should I act according to your wishes? Is she important to me?”

His final words struck Judy like a dagger to the heart, causing her to burst into tears once more.

A flash of malice crossed Kieran’s eyes as he said, “I’ll remember this. We’ll see what happens.” With that, he left with Judy.

As the sound of Judy’s sobs faded, Elyse was left with mixed feelings. She turned to Jayden and remarked, “They’re so odd. I just can’t understand them.”

Jayden gave her a brief glance and advised, “Don’t try to make sense of someone who’s not sane. It’ll only drag you down.”

After a moment of reflection, Elyse asked uncertainly, “Do you think Judy genuinely likes you?”

Jayden gently tapped her forehead and responded, “How can anyone from the Foster family truly love? Do you actually believe what Judy said?”

Elyse rubbed her forehead, still somewhat skeptical. “She seemed so pitiful. Every gesture and expression appeared so perfectly poised. Even in her breakdown at the end, she looked incredibly beautiful and elegant.”

Jayden raised an eyebrow and questioned, “Do you think it’s normal for someone to look that beautiful and elegant even in the midst of a breakdown?”

Chapter 195:

Elyse was left speechless by Jayden’s words, which seemed to carry some truth. Now Judy’s previous words and actions seemed somewhat insincere to her. “It’s better to continue what we started earlier rather than dwell on Judy’s true intentions,” Jayden said, his gaze more intense as he leaned in closer. Elyse shivered, quickly putting her hands up to stop him. Unable to meet his intense, affectionate gaze, she stammered awkwardly, “W-we didn’t take a shower, and we can’t do

this in the living room.” With that, she pushed Jayden away and dashed upstairs, her haste giving her an adorable appearance.

Jayden watched her go, a playful smile on his lips. He gave her some time to come to terms with the situation.

Meanwhile, Kieran was escorting Judy home. She cried throughout the journey and eventually exhausted herself into sleep upon reaching her bed.

Bathed in the cold moonlight, she lay in a soft bed, dressed in a white slip nightdress. Kieran sat by her side, gently caressing her face. Her eyes swollen from tears and her reddened eyelids and nose made her look deeply pitiable. In a cold, quiet murmur, Kieran reflected, “My sister is so pitiable, yet Jayden shows no interest. He doesn’t even seem like a man.”

Hearing Jayden’s name in her sleep, Judy let out a pained sob. She suffered even in her dreams. Kieran offered her soothing words, “Don’t be sad, Judy. I’m here for you. Those who have hurt you won’t have it easy.” His resolve was firm. He would not let Jayden and Elyse off the hook.

At eight o’clock in the evening, Lanny arrived at the hospital to visit Mabel. He was reluctant to come, frustrated that Mabel had disobeyed his orders by secretly visiting Theo and consequently getting imprisoned by him. He couldn’t fathom how he ended up with such a foolish daughter. Despite his anger, he still made his way to the hospital at Glenda’s pleading.

As he pulled into the parking lot of the Inpatient Department, he noticed a crowd of nurses and bodyguards encircling a woman who had just stepped out of the elevator. Assuming she must belong to a wealthy family, he looked closer and was shocked to recognize her.

It was her. It was the old woman who had escaped from the mental hospital. He had finally tracked her down. Filled with relief, he realized that this woman knew all his secrets. Although he had reasons for not harming her, he had to keep her under his control. After her escape days ago, he had been searching for her everywhere.

Lanny watched as the old woman, well-protected by her bodyguards, seemed unreachable. He hesitated for a long time but couldn’t get close.

Frustrated, he muttered to himself about her unexpected protection. Unable to approach her, Lanny watched helplessly as she was escorted into a car and driven away. Torn with anxiety, he

approached a nurse and casually inquired, “Who is that old woman surrounded by so many bodyguards? Is she from some powerful family?”

The nurse, always ready to share a bit of gossip, glanced at Lanny and responded, “She’s not from a rich family. She has a mental illness. But she’s fortunate to have the care of a wealthy man, so she’s off to a nursing home where she’ll be well looked after.”

As Lanny stood in the parking lot, clenching his fists, a few nurses entered the elevator, discussing among themselves. He pondered who could have possibly rescued the old woman and arranged for her to be cared for in a nursing home. Moments later, as Lanny headed toward the Psychiatry Department to gather more information, his phone rang. It was Glenda.

Annoyed, he answered the call brusquely, “What’s up?”

Hearing that response, Glenda felt her temples throb with anger. “Why do you even ask? Didn’t I tell you to come to the hospital to see Mabel? Where have you been?”

Lanny, reminded of his daughter, replied with a headache looming, “Don’t rush me. I’ll come back after I finish my work.”

Glenda, furious, cursed Lanny under her breath before realizing he had already hung up. In her anger, she smashed her phone.

“Mom, don’t be angry. Maybe Dad really has something important to handle. Please don’t be upset. It makes me sad to see you so stressed and angry,” Mabel said, feigning concern to comfort Glenda.

Glenda felt a warm surge of affection. Her daughter seemed to have finally matured and learned to show concern for her feelings. Unaware of Mabel’s pretense, she felt reassured.

Mabel knew her actions had crossed a line with Lanny. His delay in visiting her after she returned home signaled his anger. If she wanted to keep enjoying her parents’ financial support, she realized she needed to appear sensible and show them she had learned her lesson.

“Your father may sound stubborn, but he’s softhearted,” Glenda advised Mabel, unable to contain her guidance. “Say a few kind words to him later; it might calm him down.”

"I know, Mom. I won't make Dad angry anymore," Mabel responded, her eyes briefly betraying a flicker of calculation.

## Chapter 196:

Lanny made his way to the Psychiatry Department hoping to get some useful information from the doctor but came out empty-handed. Finally getting the whereabouts of that old woman, he found himself in the dark about her current location. With a poker face, he headed to the Inpatient Department.

After he arrived at the ward, Mabel greeted him in a sweet tone. Forced to wear a smile, Lanny walked over to her bed. "How are you feeling now?" He casually picked up the medical report from the bedside table and started to read.

Mabel, seeing him, saw her lifeline. She held him tightly and in a choked voice said, "Dad, I've missed you so much these days. I thought I'd never see you again." Glenda, watching Mabel's performance, pretended to wipe away tears, silently applauding her daughter for her acting skills.

As expected, Lanny was moved. He patted Mabel's back and sighed, "It's all over now. You're home safe." Mabel showered him with affectionate words, and his earlier dissatisfaction melted away.

Once Mabel fell asleep, Lanny took Glenda out of the ward. "What's going on? Why all the mystery?" Glenda asked, puzzled.

"I saw that old woman just now. She's been sent to a nursing home. But I don't know which one," Lanny said urgently. "You need to find out. We have to track her down or everything we've worked for will be ruined."

Glenda, taken aback, asked, "But why didn't you just kill her when you had the chance, instead of locking her up in a psychiatric hospital?"

Lanny, his anger barely contained, lowered his voice. "I wanted to, but there was someone else who knew what happened that year. That person disappeared without a trace. I kept the old woman as bait, hoping that person would return."

Glenda hesitated, then ventured, “But isn’t that person likely dead since we’ve heard nothing at all?”

“No way. I have a feeling that she’s still alive,” Lanny’s eyes flashed with determination. “Regardless, we have to find that old woman.”

Glenda hesitated. Seeing her reluctance, Lanny sneered, “If you don’t act, things will only get worse. And when they do, you and your daughter won’t be living the high life anymore. No more shopping sprees, just a one-way ticket to jail.”

Glenda’s eyes widened at the thought of jail. That was out of the question. She couldn’t end up there, and neither could her daughter. Glenda relented, “Fine, I’ll try my best. But you need to be more involved in this.”

“Of course, I will dig into it,” he said, his sneer evident.

Glenda couldn’t help but complain, “If only you’d sent Elyse away back then. Keeping her with us was a huge mistake and a major liability.”

“There’s no use dwelling on that now,” a ferocious look flashed in Lanny’s eyes. He wouldn’t hesitate to get rid of Elyse if necessary. After all, he wasn’t about to give up his cushy life now.

After a shower, Elyse lay on the bed. When she heard the door open, she quickly closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep. The room was dim, and the only sound was the faint roll of a wheelchair. The closer it got, the faster her heart raced.

“I know you’re not asleep,” Jayden said, amused, as he climbed into bed beside her.

Elyse opened her eyes in surprise. “I was asleep. Why’d you wake me?”

“You can go back to sleep later,” Jayden replied. He pulled her close, and their lips met. His hands roamed, moving up her body. When he reached her breasts, he began to fondle them, coaxing them to firmness.

With every touch, her heart raced, and she could only hold his head and looked at him pitifully. “Jayden, please stop,” Elyse pleaded, her voice small.

But Jayden buried his head in her chest. “Let me enjoy this,” he said hoarsely, his desire evident.

She sensed a change in Jayden lately. He interacted with her more frequently than ever before. With no choice, Elyse let him have his way.

But as he continued, she couldn’t help but wonder how a disabled man like Jayden was taking charge in their intimate moments. Lost in her thoughts, she lowered her head. Jayden noticed and gently lifted her chin. “You’re making a mistake again,” he said, his tone meaningful.

Confused, she met his gaze, noticing his sudden increase in intensity, almost like a raging storm.

Chapter 197:

On the following morning, Elyse woke up feeling stiff and sore all over. Descending the stairs, she noticed Jayden was nowhere to be seen and inquired, “Is Jayden in the study?”

Driscoll shook his head and offered her a glass of water. “He left early this morning. Do you need him for something important?”

Pausing her hand from massaging her waist, Elyse gave an awkward smile and replied, “No, it was just a casual question.” She drank the water quickly and then moved to the dining room for breakfast. After eating, she grabbed her violin case and headed off to the rehearsal room.

Upon arriving, Elyse immediately felt a shift in the atmosphere. The other members seemed to regard her with unusual expressions, which left her puzzled. As she was tuning her violin, an object dropped from the stand beside her. She picked it up, handing it back to its owner, who snatched it quickly and retreated from her.

This strange behavior only deepened Elyse’s confusion. Why were they acting so distant and wary around her? When Freddy walked in, he immediately noticed the tension surrounding Elyse. With a serious demeanor, he approached her and said, “Come out for a moment. I have something to tell you.”

Elyse stood and followed him out of the room. Once outside, Freddy shared his concerns. “You’ve been targeted by Vicky. She sent a message in the group chat of our orchestra last night urging

everyone to isolate you. Vicky is quite influential here, and nobody wants to cross her.” Freddy’s face was etched with worry.

Elyse was at a loss for words, and for a moment, they just looked at each other in silence. Darren approached them, breaking the quiet with a hint of encouragement. “This just shows that Vicky is scared she might not measure up to you.”

Elyse responded with a mixture of resignation and indifference. “I don’t mind as long as it doesn’t interfere with my life.”

Darren’s expression turned scornful. “I used to have respect for Vicky. She’s talented albeit a bit distant, and I thought she wasn’t a bad person. It seems I was mistaken. Let it go. Let’s get back to practice. The tour is what really matters.”

Elyse quickly came to terms with the situation. She didn’t dwell on Vicky’s machinations. What truly mattered to Elyse was her performance and winning the future competitions.

In Abram’s office, Vicky paced restlessly, her phone pressed against her ear. “Even after everyone has isolated Elyse, she seems to be practicing on her own as if nothing is unusual,” someone said on the other end of the line.

In response to the report, a flicker of frustration crossed Vicky’s face. “And what about her friends? Are they distancing themselves from her?” she asked sharply, her tone tinged with impatience.

The informant replied with a hesitant tone, “The opposite, actually. They haven’t heeded your call at all. They’re interacting with her just as they always have.”

With a curt goodbye, Vicky snapped the phone shut and began to chew on her fingernail, her mind racing as she paced back and forth. The previous evening’s request to Abram for the competition video replayed in her mind, a move driven by a sudden nagging doubt about her own superiority. It was the first time she had scrutinized her rival’s performance post-competition, and the realization that dawned was chilling: had Elyse not faltered, the first-place trophy might have been Elyse’s. This single thought muddled Vicky’s confidence, casting long shadows over her celebrated prowess.

Vicky, the violin virtuoso who had never known defeat, felt a crack in her armor. The specter of Elyse, an enigma wrapped in modesty, loomed large, unsettling her. That night, as shadows crept across her walls, Vicky wrestled with a gnawing unease that clung tighter than a second skin. Why wasn’t Elyse anxious or afraid? Did Elyse not see her as a worthy opponent? The thought rankled

Vicky, fueling her determination to undermine Elyse's composure. After all, she refused to feel the pressure alone.

But despite Vicky's efforts to isolate her, Elyse remained unperturbed, much to Vicky's frustration. It seemed that no matter what Vicky did, Elyse remained steadfast in her resolve. Just then, the door to the office swung open, and Darren strode in. Vicky turned to face him, her expression tight with annoyance.

"Mr. Ellsworth isn't here. You can come back later," she said curtly.

"Actually, I'm here for you," Darren replied, his tone tinged with disdain. "But seriously, are you a child? What's with this petty game of isolating Elyse? I don't get it. You've never been this vindictive before, have you?"

Vicky's sneer was sharp as she eyed Darren. "Did Elyse send you? You seem quite concerned about her. Though I've heard she's married. You might be wasting your time."

Darren's face flushed with anger at the insinuation. "I'm just here to talk to you. You didn't even lose the competition, so why this hostility?"

"How could a loser like you understand what drives me?" Vicky shot back, her voice rising.

Darren inhaled deeply, trying to maintain his composure. "We've known each other for years, Vicky. I'm advising you not to push this too far. We're all part of the same orchestra. If you keep this up, you'll lose the respect of our peers."

"I'm the protégé of Mr. Ellsworth. No one will dare disrespect me unless they don't care about their position," Vicky retorted with disdain, dismissing Darren's concerns.

Darren was momentarily speechless by her arrogance. Shaking his head, he finally said, "I've said all I can. The rest is up to you."

Chapter 198:



Elyse focused her mind on her violin, undisturbed by the solitude. Her purpose here was clear: to practice in peace. As she exited the building with her violin case, Kieran caught her eye, his gaze fixed on her.

“Looking for me?” she inquired, pausing and eyeing him warily.

Dressed in sleek black sportswear that lent him a youthful appearance, Kieran nodded and said openly, “There’s something we need to discuss privately.”

“Is it about me divorcing Jayden so your sister can marry him and you can have me?” Elyse chuckled sarcastically. She gave him a once-over and continued mockingly, “If that’s your agenda, save your breath. I’m not entertaining such nonsense.”

With a gesture for patience, Kieran quickly interjected, “No, it’s not about that. There’s something unknown to you about Jayden. Important information you’re unaware of regarding Jayden.”

After a brief staredown, Elyse didn’t walk away but instead headed towards a nearby coffee shop with Kieran following behind, his eyebrows arched playfully.

Once seated in the cafe with her arms folded, Elyse glared at Kieran and demanded, “Well, what is it you need to tell me?”

Kieran, after scanning the menu casually, inquired, “What would you like? It’s on me.”

“We’re not on those terms to share coffee,” Elyse scoffed.

“No drink then,” ordering just for himself, Kieran leaned back, smiling subtly, and queried, “In a rush, are you?”

Holding back her anger, Elyse stated firmly, “Don’t divert the conversation.”

Kieran gave a casual shrug and retorted, “You’ve made my sister miserable, tricking her into becoming a maid. You must be very proud, right?”

“Is that what you dragged me here to say? I’m not interested,” Elyse responded coolly. She had suspected his motive for approaching her was linked to his sister, but she was not inclined to discuss it.

Rising to leave, she was almost at the door when Kieran spoke again, his tone shifting, “Do you really think your marriage to Jayden will be smooth and happy?” he asked, his voice chilling. “You don’t know, do you? Jayden had a girlfriend for two years. They were nearly married.”

At these words, Elyse felt a tremor and sat back down. Kieran’s smile broadened as he observed her reaction. “You think you’re the only one Jayden loves? You’re mistaken. You’re just an interlude. She’s the one he truly wants.”

Just then, the waiter arrived with a cup of coffee, setting it before them. Kieran took the cup, sipped it, and looked at her with a probing gaze. “So, how do you feel now?”

Elyse paused before revealing, “The day I ended things with my ex was the same day I married Jayden.”

Kieran appeared surprised by her calm response. “Doesn’t that worry you?”

The corners of her mouth twitched as she struggled with her feelings. “I value my time with Jayden.”

Amused, Kieran clapped his hands. “Your magnanimity is impressive. Well, I have more news. That woman is coming back. Imagine Jayden’s reaction when she returns.”

Taking a deep breath, Elyse stood, took a bill from her wallet, and placed it on the table. “This coffee is on me. I need to go.”

As she walked away, Kieran watched her leave and then looked at the bill, laughing heartily at the unfolding drama. Twirling the bill between his fingers, he taunted, “You’re not as calm as you thought you’d be.”

As soon as Elyse exited the coffee shop, she made her way to her car and got inside. Sitting there, she stared out the window, her expression vacant and troubled. Noticing her discomfort, the driver expressed his concern.

“Mrs. Owen, is something wrong?”

“I’m fine. Don’t worry about me,” Elyse replied softly, though her mind was swirling with Kieran’s revelations. Jayden had an ex. They dated for two years. They nearly married. A thought struck her—there was a pink scarf in Jayden’s collection room. It surely belonged to a woman. She placed a hand over her chest, finding it slightly difficult to breathe.

Trying to calm herself, she asked the driver, “Is Jayden at home?”

Chapter 199:

The driver spoke honestly, “He left this morning and hasn’t returned yet.” Elyse refrained from further questions. She accessed Jayden’s chat on her phone and, after a brief pause, she sent a message, “Will you be home for dinner tonight?” No reply came from Jayden after some time. She placed her phone down and rested against the seat with a tired sigh.

Upon arriving home, Driscoll approached her with a respectful tone. “Mr. Owen won’t be home for dinner tonight. He advised you not to wait for him.” Elyse just nodded silently, walked into the dining room, and dined by herself.

She blurted out, “What’s been keeping Jayden so busy lately? He’s not even coming home for dinner anymore.” Driscoll found himself in a tough spot, unable to reveal Jayden’s current activities, especially since Elyse was unaware of his feigned disability.

Observing Driscoll’s discomfort, Elyse chose not to pursue further questions. After eating, she returned to her room. There, she picked up her phone again, but Jayden still hadn’t responded. She let out a sigh and gazed out the window in frustration.

Just then, her phone rang. It was Tracy. Trying to remain composed as she pressed the answer button, “I’ve joined a crew to film a show tomorrow. I’m quite nervous. Could you join me at the set?” Tracy asked with a hopeful tone.

Reflecting for a moment on the weekend ahead, Elyse replied, “Okay, I’ll be there to support you.” Tracy then asked cautiously, “Your husband won’t mind if I take you away, will he?”

Elyse paused, taken aback, then recalled Jayden's absence. With a reassuring smile, she answered, "Don't worry. He won't mind. Just send me the location, and I'll see you tomorrow." After ending the call, Elyse messaged Jayden that she would be joining Tracy at the film set tomorrow. Jayden responded quickly this time, "Go ahead."

His brief reply was not what Elyse had hoped for. She yearned for more. Feeling a mix of emptiness and unease, she rose and went to bed, her mind swirling with thoughts. She eventually drifted off to sleep, unaware of when Jayden returned.

Waking early the next morning, Elyse found Jayden asleep beside her, filling the emptiness inside her. She watched him for some time, eventually reaching out to touch him gently and feel his warmth.

Her touch woke Jayden. Recognizing her, he relaxed and asked, "Why are you up so early?"

"I promised Tracy I'd be with her at the set today. She's already applying makeup," Elyse explained.

Jayden, still holding her hand, replied sleepily, "You can head out later."

"No, she's anxious. I need to be there soon," Elyse pulled her hand away and left the bed. As she dressed, Jayden observed her and inquired, "When will you be back? I can come get you."

Elyse hesitated, then asked, "Would it really be convenient for you? Haven't you been preoccupied lately?"

Jayden propped his head with one hand, waiting for her to say more, but she remained silent. He had expected her to ask about his recent activities, but she didn't. With a frown, he offered an explanation, "There's an issue with Clive's project I need to address. It's wrapping up, so I'll be less busy soon."

It was a lie, a convenient excuse. In reality, Clive's project had its problems, but they didn't require Jayden's involvement. He was deeply engaged with the Bayzee Group's investments. Only a select few knew that Jayden was the mastermind behind the Bayzee Group. He kept his role a secret, not even revealing it to Elyse.

Yet she accepted his explanation, whether true or not.

Concerned, she turned to him, “Is everything fine with Clive? Can he handle the problem on his own?”

“It’s challenging for him alone, but I can manage it easily,” Jayden responded, his gaze intense. Elyse felt intimidated by the intensity in Jayden’s eyes. She quickly looked away and continued dressing.

“Have I made you feel neglected lately?” Jayden asked, seemingly reading her thoughts.

Elyse firmly denied feeling upset, “No. We both have our responsibilities.”

“Why then did you go to bed so early last night?” Jayden questioned, a smirk playing on his lips. “I thought you’d be home waiting,” he teased.

Elyse blushed slightly, overwhelmed by the day’s events which had led her to fall asleep from exhaustion at eight o’clock in the evening. Trying to sound casual, she explained, “I was simply too worn out from practicing the violin too vigorously.”

Chapter 200:

Jayden caught sight of Elyse’s guilty expression. He beckoned her over with a curl of his finger and a stern tone, “Come here.” She nervously nibbled on her lip, hesitating to comply. “You don’t want to,” Jayden’s brow furrowed as he spoke.

Elyse reluctantly took small steps forward. But before she could fully reach him, Jayden swiftly pulled her onto the bed. “Oh my,” in the next moment, Jayden’s lips met hers in a passionate kiss.

His touch ignited a fire within her, his hands exploring her with purpose. Gradually, she succumbed to his advances. Jayden noticed her demeanor shift to compliance, allowing him to take liberties. His hand ventured southward, finding its mark between her thighs. Familiar with her sensitive spots, he elicited a moan with only a few skilled movements. Her voice was a delicate melody in his arms.

However, Jayden had no intention of satiating her desires so easily. A mischievous glint sparkled in his eyes as he withdrew his hand, casually wiping it clean before saying, "I nearly forgot, you have plans. Can't have you being late because of me."

Left wanting, Elyse squirmed uncomfortably, her desire unfulfilled. Unable to ignore the yearning within her, she squirmed and said in an aggrieved tone, "I feel uncomfortable."

Jayden leaned in, planting a tender kiss on her forehead. His voice husky, he reassured her, "I understand, but you will have to wait. I'll make it up to you tonight."

Baffled by Jayden's abrupt change in behavior, she struggled to comprehend his motives. After managing to push aside her desires, she made her way downstairs for breakfast. Suddenly, realization struck her like a bolt of lightning. He had been toying with her all along.

Fuming with frustration, she slammed her hand on the table and declared defiantly, "Not a chance. I won't give in to your demands."

Driscoll paused mid-pour, sensing tension in the air. What was going on? Did they quarrel again? After hastily finishing her breakfast, Elyse stormed off to the set, her frustration palpable.

Tracy's debut performance was in a TV show where she played the supporting actress. Though her screen time was limited, she often shared scenes with the protagonist. This made her nervous.

By the time Elyse arrived, Tracy had completed her makeup and was fervently reciting her lines on a small stool. "Tracy, I brought you some coffee," Elyse approached with a steaming cup.

Looking up with a wry smile, Tracy admitted, "I'm a bundle of nerves. We are about to kick off filming, and despite attending acting classes for ten days, I fear I won't measure up." Sitting beside Tracy, Elyse passed her the coffee. "Don't be nervous. It's natural to strive for perfection. That's why you are feeling the pressure."

Tracy took a sip and admitted, "I wish I could shake it off, but it's an old habit of mine that's hard to break."

"Hey, I'll always be here with you," after Elyse consoled Tracy for a bit, Tracy suddenly got the cue to start shooting. Tracy set aside the script and made her way out.

Seated in the chair, Elyse gazed at Tracy, who stood nearby attentively listening to the director's instructions. A sigh escaped Elyse's lips. It hadn't been long since Tracy had adorned herself in a wedding gown. Despite her stunning appearance, she was still abandoned. Thankfully, that chapter was behind her now.

Tracy was stepping into a new promising future.

After waiting patiently all morning for Tracy to wrap up her work, the pair finally headed out to have lunch prepared for the crew. Famished, Tracy wasted no time and took a hearty bite of her food.

Seeing Tracy's voracious appetite, Elyse slid some meat into her lunchbox, saying, "Dig in, Tracy. You still have to shoot this afternoon."

Tracy nodded appreciatively between mouthfuls. "The director keeps praising my performance, saying I improve with every scene. I'm really hitting my stride now. Afternoon filming starts around three or four. If you are in a rush, feel free to head back. No need to wait for me."

Elyse shook her head firmly. "I promised to stay with you for the day. I'm not going anywhere."

Taking another bite, Tracy casually asked, "Won't your husband mind if you stay out late?"

Elyse pondered for a moment, thinking of Jayden's recent hectic schedule. She shook her head and replied, "No, he won't mind. He has been busy with work lately. Staying out a bit longer won't bother him."

Perplexed, Tracy tilted her head and asked, "But isn't he in a wheelchair? What's keeping him so busy? Shouldn't he have plenty of time to spend with you?"

A heavy silence followed before Elyse slowly shook her head. Sensing Elyse's somber mood, Tracy asked carefully, "Did you two have a spat? Haven't you been getting along lately?"

Elyse sighed heavily, her appetite waning. "No, it's not that. It's just... something feels off between us. Maybe we are not as close as people think."