

Bound love 221

Chapter 221:

Stunned, Elyse stared at Jayden. Did he know she truly cared for him?

Tess was embarrassed by Jayden's words. Her eyes narrowed as she gave him a brittle look. She could tell Elyse's impact on him was beginning to get stronger, but it was of no benefit to the Owen family. Though Tess was silent, she was lost in thought, seeking a scheme to deal with Elyse.

Jayden pretended not to notice her demeanor. He opted to demonstrate some respect considering that it was Bryce's birthday that day. He handed Bryce's birthday gift to him, saying, "Happy birthday."

Bryce stopped crying as soon as he received the gift and happily tore the package open. There was a car key. For the very first time, he looked at Jayden warmly. "Thank you, Jayden. I really like the gift." He was so happy that he couldn't wait to go try out his new car after dinner. "Not bad, at least you care about Bryce," Tess said.

Elyse looked at the trio as they enjoyed that momentary family time. She didn't want to interrupt them. Just then, her stomach grumbled. She was famished. She quietly pressed her stomach as she took a bite from an apple.

Jayden glanced at her, turned, and asked, "Can we have food now?"

"Not so soon. Someone is yet to make the company complete," Tess said.

Confused, Jayden asked, "Are we expecting someone else? Isn't Dad in the neighboring city and can't make it in time for dinner?"

His question made Tess feel guilty. She stuttered, "It's not your father. She will be here soon."

"Oh, I guess you were referring to me. I was stuck in traffic. I'm sorry I arrived late." An alluring voice preceded a presence.

Elyse turned around curiously. A stylish woman with very long hair walked in with a gift in her hand. “Come, Corrie, let me take a good look at you. I haven’t set my eyes on you for a year. You look more beautiful,” Tess immediately switched to a calm and soft voice when she saw Corrie.

Corrie happily threw herself into Tess’s open arms. “It’s been so long. I missed you while I was abroad.”

Tess patted her back gently. “I’ve missed you too. But you never called me after you left.”

“Forgive me, I was too occupied there coupled with the time difference, which made it difficult to call,” Tess was elated to talk to Corrie.

Elyse seemed to tremble slightly at that moment. The woman was Corrie Bates, Jayden had gone to see her the night before the previous day. From Elyse’s response, Jayden sensed that she must have thought of what happened two days ago. He squeezed her hand gently to comfort her.

After Corrie had greeted Tess, she noticed Elyse. She looked at her from head to toe, pretending not to know her. “Who is our guest? Is she here for Bryce’s birthday?”

Tess was silent, not willing to introduce her since she never accepted Elyse to be her daughter-in-law in the first place.

Elyse wanted to introduce herself but was interrupted by Jayden’s touch. He held her hand, to Corrie’s surprise. “Meet my wife, Elyse Lloyd. Treat her with the respect she deserves.”

Elyse’s heart softened at his words. She looked up at him, and at that point, was willing to forgive him for what he did a few days ago.

Corrie knew she was his wife, but hearing Jayden say it himself was the last thing she had expected. “Was it really necessary to marry this young? Don’t you wish to reign over the Owen Group?” Corrie asked jokingly as she sat close to Tess.

Jayden raised his glass to Bryce. “I’m not the only child. Bryce here is available; he can deal with the family business instead.”

Bryce paused from unwrapping the birthday gift Corrie had given him. He said in a rude manner, “You’re incapacitated to want the Owen Group’s power. You are not a worthy competition.”

Jayden nodded as he said, “You’re right. I am not willing to compete with you. You are the hope of our parents.”

Bryce was complacent. He felt he had secured a permanent position in the company since he had always had a good time there.

“Ms. Lloyd, do you really love Jayden?” Corrie directed her question to Elyse as she poured herself a glass of water.

Chapter 223:

Corrie turned sideways with an enigmatic smile playing on her lips. “Do you know why Tess is so fond of me?”

After washing her hands, Elyse turned off the tap and dried her hands with a tissue. “Couldn’t care less. Not my business.”

Corrie’s laugh was almost musical. “It’s because I used to date Jayden. We were together for almost two years.”

Elyse’s heart skipped a beat at the bombshell revelation. Corrie’s words echoed in her mind like a broken record.

Lost in her memories, Corrie continued. “It was a whirlwind, really. Jayden and I were both being pushed towards arranged marriages by our families. We had a mutual friend who suggested we pretend to be in love to escape the arrangements.”

With a wistful sigh, she added, “And we played our parts for nearly two years.”

Jealousy burned in Elyse’s chest, but she masked it with a cool facade. “Two years is a long time. Why didn’t you two just tie the knot?”

Corrie clenched her fists, frustration coursing through her. “Why didn’t they tie the knot? Oh, that’s right—because Jayden had a life-altering car accident. Who in their right mind would willingly marry a disabled man? Especially one as cold-hearted as Jayden. Being with him was like being trapped in an icebox, devoid of any warmth or affection.”

As for Corrie, she hailed from a powerful family, one where competition ran in the family’s blood. Since childhood, she’d been taught to fight tooth and nail for what she desired.

“Entering into a faux romance with Jayden wasn’t just about escaping her family’s matchmaking schemes. It was also about leveraging his status to elevate her own.”

Little did she know, fate had other plans in store when Jayden’s accident changed everything.

“In a bid to evade the Owen family’s matchmaking pressures and cut her connection with Jayden, Corrie swiftly made the decision to pursue studies abroad. ‘I had to pursue my studies,’ Corrie explained, her voice tinged with regret. ‘I wanted to finish my education and then tie the knot with Jayden, but he ended up marrying you.’”

Elyse remained composed, her features betraying no hint of emotion. After a pregnant pause, she mustered a strained smile. “Well, you certainly picked an opportune moment to jet off abroad, coinciding perfectly with Jayden’s unfortunate accident.”

Corrie merely shrugged, devoid of any remorse. “Such is fate, isn’t it? Sometimes we’re just destined to miss each other by a hair’s breadth.”

With a curt nod, Elyse attempted to leave, but Corrie halted her with a disingenuous smile.

“Do take care of Jayden for me, won’t you? He’s not the easiest person to deal with. Patience is key.”

Elyse’s brows furrowed in irritation. “My relationship with Jayden is none of your concern.”

It was abundantly clear to Elyse that Corrie harbored ulterior motives.

As Elyse reentered the room, Jayden was awaiting her. Taking her seat, Elyse settled back into her chair, her presence seemingly unnoticed until Corrie also made her way back.

However, Corrie's face betrayed her inner turmoil, her eyes rimmed with redness, evidence of recent tears shed.

Sensing her distress, Tess wasted no time in springing to action, tossing aside her fork with a clatter. "Did someone upset you?" Tess demanded, her tone protective and fierce. "Come here, my dear. Let me hug away all your problems."

Without hesitation, Corrie darted towards Tess, seeking solace in her embrace. Nestling into Tess's comforting hold, Corrie unleashed a torrent of tears.

Observing the scene, Tess's ire turned towards Elyse, her accusatory gaze piercing. "What have you done to Corrie? Have you mistreated her in any way?" she interrogated, her voice laced with indignation.

With an icy glare, Elyse leveled a cold retort at Corrie. "Accusations require proof. You can't simply accuse me without evidence. When did you become a cop?"

Tess bristled at Elyse's defiance, her teeth clenched as she shot back, "How dare you speak to me like that! You must have said something to Corrie."

Elyse remained composed, her demeanor unwavering. "Where's your evidence? What grounds do you have to accuse me? Did I physically harm her? Did I verbally abuse her? Show me proof," Elyse said calmly.

Tess faltered, unable to respond as Elyse's logic left her at a loss for words.

Meanwhile, Corrie, having wiped her tears, gathered her resolve. "I apologize. I wasn't crying because of Ms. Lloyd, but because..."

She glanced tentatively at Jayden before turning away, unable to meet his gaze.

Jayden raised an eyebrow. "Me? Did I upset you?"

Tess's expression shifted, her tone softening as she comforted Corrie. "Don't be upset, my dear. If you have any grievances, tell me. I'll talk to them for you. If they've wronged you, I'll demand an apology."

Corrie sniffled, hesitating before admitting, "I just feel that now that they are married, I'll never have the chance to care for Jayden. I still owe him, and I fear I'll never be able to repay him."

Chapter 224:

Upon hearing this, Tess's heart softened. She placed her hand on Corrie's back, comforting her. "Don't cry, Corrie. You're a good girl, and you care for Jayden. I see that. Even though you and Jayden have feelings for each other, someone else is in the picture. There's nothing we can do."

Jayden's mood darkened upon hearing this. "Mom, please watch what you say," his tone was icy.

A chill swept through Tess, erasing her arrogance. She asserted stubbornly, "It's true. You and Corrie would have made a great couple, but you married that woman. You're driving me crazy."

Corrie responded softly, trying to calm Tess. "Please don't bring that up. I knew I lost my chance with Jayden when I moved abroad last year." She wiped away a tear and continued with a hurt voice. "It's hard for me. I wasn't there for Jayden when he needed me most."

As she spoke, her tears flowed even more. "My parents didn't tell me anything about Jayden's condition while I was abroad. I assumed he was living well."

Listening to Corrie, Tess's eyes slowly filled with tears. She calmly wiped her tears. She knew she was in the right; she harbored no regrets about leaving Jayden. Yet she harbored a slight sense of guilt for having relocated overseas immediately after Jayden's accident.

"Corrie, I'm really sorry. If anyone misinterprets this, could you vouch for me? It's been hard enough losing Jayden," Tess nodded. Corrie was like a daughter to her, and she would defend her no matter what. "Don't worry. I'll always support you."

Pretending to be touched, Corrie hugged her tightly and said, "I know. You're even better than my mom."

Embracing Corrie, Tess expressed earnestly, "It would have been wonderful if you had married Jayden." Corrie didn't respond. She had achieved her objective, and this scene was meant for others to see. If questioned, she planned to claim she had apologized and sought reconciliation with Jayden, but he had refused her. Even if it made her seem desperate, it was preferable to being labeled heartless.

Meanwhile, Bryce sat there eating his birthday cake, filled with confusion. Today was supposed to be his celebration, yet why did it seem like he was invisible?

Chapter 225:

As Elyse and Jayden exited the room, Elyse looked visibly distressed. Though she remained silent, Jayden could tell she was upset. They walked to the hotel entrance where their driver was waiting. The car pulled up, and Elyse got in first, followed by Jayden. Once inside, the driver set up the partition between them. After a moment of silence, Jayden glanced at Elyse and reached out to hold her hand, but she pulled away sharply. Jayden retracted his hand, expressionless, and asked, "Are you upset again?"

Elyse, gazing out the window, didn't respond to him. Jayden said with a sense of resignation, "There's no reason to be upset. I have no feelings for Corrie whatsoever."

Elyse, rubbing her eyebrows with frustration, replied, "Jayden, haven't we moved past this? You keep saying that." She looked at Jayden and scoffed, "Sure, you have no feelings for her. What about before? If you truly had no feelings for her, how did you end up with her for two years? Isn't two years long enough to develop feelings?"

Jayden frowned and said, "Who told you that, Corrie?"

"It doesn't matter who told me. What I need to know is if I truly am your wife in your heart and why you won't share things with me. Don't I deserve that?"

Tears welled up in Elyse's eyes as she voiced her grievance. Jayden was taken aback. Tears began streaming down her cheeks. He instinctively reached out to wipe away her tears, but she couldn't stop crying. Jayden couldn't understand why she felt so aggrieved or why she was asking these questions, but one thing was clear to him: he hated seeing her cry; it pained him deeply. After a moment of thought, he sighed deeply and said, "I was with Corrie only for her family's resources. I even had a friend make up a story to facilitate this. It took Corrie's family a year to finalize their

decision on their business partner, and unfortunately, it wasn't me. That's when I ended things with Corrie."

Elyse, clenching her teeth, asked doubtfully, "Then why did Corrie say that she was with you for nearly two years?"

"Because she has been appearing at various social events, pretending to be my girlfriend," Jayden explained with a slight smile. "She gained more advantages than you could imagine from that role."

Elyse's attitude softened. "Then why did you rush to see her immediately after she called you the night before last? You even kept it a secret from me. Are you hiding anything else?"

Hearing this, Jayden started to feel a headache brewing. "Why did he have to justify so much to a woman?" Just as he was about to lose his temper, he noticed the determined yet hurt look in Elyse's eyes. Her eyes were red, reminding him of the rabbit he once cared for. She looked so pure and innocent, utterly adorable. Rubbing his forehead, he felt compelled to clarify, "I didn't want to make you overthink things. I thought if you knew about my ex-girlfriend, you'd get upset. Besides, I never expected you to meet her. What was the point of bringing her up?"

Hearing Jayden's words, Elyse responded with dissatisfaction, "You kept these things from me because you don't trust me. You don't really see me as your wife."

Jayden replied somewhat exasperated, "Where did you get that idea? I've treated you so well. Don't push your luck."

Elyse laughed with anger. "How could he say that? Since you've realized Corrie's true nature, why did you meet with her? Shouldn't you be avoiding her?"

She noticed Jayden had been dodging this question. Indeed, after she asked, Jayden fell into an awkward silence. After a pause, Elyse, feeling a lump in her throat, asked, "Tell me. Do you feel guilty?"

After a lengthy silence, Jayden responded blankly, "No. There are things I can't tell you. But I promise I have no feelings for her."

Biting her lip, Elyse fixed her gaze on Jayden. With no other option, Jayden reached out to gently wipe away her tears, saying in a serious tone, "Don't cry. It makes me sad."

Chapter 226:

Jayden grappled with how to comfort her. Driscoll's advice on kisses as a remedy for a weeping woman lingered in his mind. Doubt clouded Jayden's thoughts. How could kisses assuage anger? Nevertheless, at that moment, he resolved to attempt it. He couldn't imagine a more effective way to soothe the enraged Elyse at present.

Meeting Elyse's confused gaze, Jayden kissed her cheek tenderly. The kisses followed one after the other. Initially resistant, Elyse pushed against Jayden's chest, attempting to repel him. But for Jayden, her resistance was nothing. Perhaps her defiance irked Jayden, so he responded by biting her tongue. As the kiss intensified, affectionate murmurs filled the air. Jayden met Elyse's gaze, seeing desire reflected back at him. "Don't touch me," she exclaimed, resisting as Jayden grasped her hand.

Despite her protest, Jayden's hand found its way beneath her blouse. Elyse, in his embrace, continued to resist, prompting Jayden to lower his head. He couldn't help but notice the angry expression on her face, stirring a peculiar emotion within him. He longed to witness more of her expressions. "Are you still angry with me?" Jayden whispered gently, nibbling her earlobe, causing Elyse to tremble. Elyse attempted to retreat, but Jayden gently pulled her closer. Blushing, she countered, "I'm not angry."

Jayden gazed at her in silence. Her eyes brimmed with sadness, yet she insisted she wasn't upset. Jayden regretted asking; she would not tell the truth right now. Cradling her tenderly, Jayden marveled at her softness.

Upon arriving home, the driver exited the car and dismissed the servants, granting the two ample time and space. Half an hour later, Jayden opened the car door. Elyse, clad in disheveled attire with tousled hair, rested against him. Her complexion seemed flushed and unnatural, her body trembling faintly. Jayden shielded her and stepped out of the car, feeling satisfied. As he emerged from the vehicle, the wheelchair trembled, and Jayden sensed her convulsions. With a compassionate expression, he raised his chin and peered at her. "Are you frightened?" he inquired softly.

Elyse's voice rasped as she averted her gaze, her demeanor subdued. Jayden reached for her hand, noting her resemblance to a pet rabbit he once had. Jayden carried Elyse toward the villa, noting Driscoll and a group of servants at the entrance. Their calm expressions held no trace of surprise. "Arrange for some food to be made and sent to my room," Jayden instructed Driscoll. With a nod, Driscoll led the servants to the kitchen.

“Elyse, your voice is hoarse,” Jayden questioned. “It’s late. Do you really want to eat?”

“Your stomach was growling when we made out. I’d rather not hear it again,” Jayden’s response was blunt.

Biting her lip, Elyse punched him on the chest. “No more of that. I just want to sleep,” Elyse declared, her irritation evident.

Reflecting on his behavior, Elyse couldn’t help but compare Jayden to a persistent canine, always biting when resisted, intensifying the pursuit. His bite marks adorned her body.

Jayden tenderly guided the woman in his arms, pressed the elevator button, and led her into his room. Elyse had expected Jayden to give her space once inside, but she was taken aback when he directed her straight to the bathroom.

“What are you doing?” She nervously clung to the door frame.

Jayden gently freed her fingers from the frame, one by one. “Didn’t you mention needing a shower after our activities? I’ll assist you.”

“No.” With a flushed face, Elyse struggled to break free from Jayden’s embrace. However, he swiftly tore off her blouse buttons, scattering them across the floor.

“Stop it,” Elyse covered herself protectively.

Surveying the marks he had left on her, Jayden felt a surge of satisfaction. Jayden reached for the showerhead, turning on the water.

Trembling, Elyse looked at Jayden in disbelief, lost for words.

“Babe, remove your pants. I’ll help you clean up.”

Chapter 227:

Jayden had been intimate with Elyse on multiple occasions, leaving behind physical reminders of their encounters. On the second day, Elyse's menstrual cycle began. Feeling relieved, she quietly asked Jayden to give her space over the next few days. To her surprise, he respected her request, showing more consideration than usual.

Elyse was puzzled by Jayden's changed behavior until she noticed Driscoll constantly talking to Jayden, who seemed visibly frustrated. Understanding the influence behind his transformation, Elyse couldn't help but laugh.

A week passed, and the Celestial Sounds Symphony was on the verge of starting their tour. Many members were new to such large-scale events, creating a palpably tense atmosphere, which Elyse also felt. She isolated herself in a corner of the rehearsal room, practicing solo.

Vicky, strutting in with high heels and arms crossed, approached Elyse with an air of arrogance. Elyse looked up into Vicky's mocking gaze and asked calmly, "What do you want?"

"You've never performed on a big stage before, have you? Make sure you don't drag me down during the tour. I don't need any blemishes on my record," Vicky retorted with a smug smile, standing tall.

Despite Vicky's arrogance, Elyse responded coolly, "You should focus on your own performance instead of worrying about mine." She glanced at Vicky's attire and asked, "Aren't you cold in that dress? It's autumn."

Vicky snorted and replied disdainfully, "Don't compare me to you. I'll change into my stage dress later."

Not wanting to prolong the conversation, Elyse dismissed Vicky with an icy demeanor. Delighted by Elyse's apparent irritation, Vicky hummed a tune and strutted away.

As Elyse packed her things before leaving, her phone rang. It was Mabel. Casually, Elyse answered, "What is it? What do you need?"

Elyse, which room are you in right now? I'll come inside to see you," Mabel replied cheerfully, sounding every bit the caring sister.

Puzzled, Elyse asked, "Why are you around?"

“I’ve missed you, Elyse. I noticed a lounge here. I’ll wait for you,” Mabel explained, without waiting for a response, she quickly ended the call.

Elyse’s eyebrows knitted together; something felt off. She grabbed her purse and headed towards the lounge with a sense of foreboding. Mabel was perched in a corner of the lounge and walked over to Elyse as she entered. Removing her sunglasses, she pointed to the empty seat across from her and smiled warmly. “Elyse, it’s been a while. Please sit down. I got this coffee for you.”

Elyse’s eyebrows arched as she sat, surveying Mabel. The last time they had met was because of Theo, and later Elyse heard from Glenda that Theo had sent Mabel home. Since then, Elyse hadn’t given much thought to Mabel, not considering their relationship close enough to share a casual coffee. Eyeing the coffee suspiciously, she doubted Mabel’s intentions were purely altruistic. Elyse decided to cut to the chase, opting not to touch the coffee. “What do you want to talk about?” she asked directly.

Mabel flipped her bangs and adopted a softer tone. “Elyse, do you have to be so formal with me?”

Elyse’s expression darkened with impatience. “What is it that you’re trying to say?”

Mabel responded with earnestness, her large eyes conveying sincerity. “I know we haven’t been close, but we are still sisters, aren’t we? Can’t you put aside your judgments and just talk to me openly?”

Despite Mabel’s seemingly genuine plea, Elyse felt more certain that Mabel was up to no good. Deciding to play along, Elyse softened her tone artificially and mirrored Mabel’s sentiment. “It’s good to hear you say that. You’ve really matured.”

At this, a flicker of cunning appeared in Mabel’s eyes, and her cheerful facade briefly slipped. With a tone of sorrow, she said, “Elyse, I’ve made mistakes in the past. I didn’t take my career seriously. Now I find myself shut out from the entertainment industry.”

Feigning surprise, Elyse probed, “Really? But the scandal from before seems forgotten. Why can’t you return to the entertainment industry?”

Mabel shook her head, her expression full of distress. “I don’t know. I feel so trapped. If I can’t make a comeback as a singer, what am I supposed to do?” With these words, she squeezed out a tear and grasped Elyse’s hand with feigned despair. “Elyse, I need your help so desperately.”

Chapter 228:

Elyse gazed at Mabel with a gentle expression and said, “Please don’t cry. What can I do to help you?” Mabel sobbed, pleading, “Elyse, could you provide me with a few more compositions of yours? If I don’t release new music, I’ll fade from the entertainment scene, and the company will abandon me.” Tears filled her eyes as she looked at Elyse. “With just a few compositions from you, I can revive my career.”

Elyse was about to respond when a wave of disappointment washed over her. Slowly retracting her hand, she asked in a cold tone, “Did you come to me just to request compositions from me?”

Unaware of Elyse’s change in demeanor, Mabel replied with anguish, “I’m in such a desperate situation. Won’t you help me?”

Forcing a smile, Elyse replied with a hint of coldness, “Am I the cause of your misfortune? You didn’t earn your way into the entertainment industry; you stole my works and passed them off as your own to get the chance. Now that your career is crumbling, you expect me to rescue you with my works. Why should I assist you? Just because we’re sisters?”

Mabel clenched her teeth, her gaze dripping with malice. Accustomed to her usual arrogance and dominance, Mabel found it challenging to conceal her emotions.

The malice in Mabel’s eyes pierced Elyse’s heart. This was her younger sister, someone she had cared for since childhood. How could her sister look at her with such hostility? Elyse’s demeanor grew even colder. “I’ve warned you before not to covet what isn’t yours.”

With a serious expression, Mabel retorted, “Elyse, I’m your sister. I’m in distress, yet you refuse to help me. Do you even consider me your sister?”

Hearing Mabel’s words, Elyse’s anger ignited. Had her care and kindness towards Mabel in the past been in vain? She shouldn’t have been so generous to her.

“You struggled with your studies in school, and it was me who assisted you every day. I stood up for you when you were bullied. I’ve helped you countless times. Yet you seem to have forgotten all of that, haven’t you?” Elyse’s voice was tinged with disappointment.

Mabel angrily pushed the coffee in front of her off the table. “If you’ve helped me so many times, then why won’t you help me now? You don’t see me as your sister. You’ve been weary of me for a long time,” she demanded fiercely.

Elyse felt utterly disappointed in Mabel. She rubbed her temples wearily, feeling the weight of painful memories from the past bearing down on her like a relentless punishment. “Did you say I don’t treat you like my sister? I don’t believe you see me as your sister. It’s more like you treat me as your servant. You freely take whatever you need from me, assuming I’ll always provide whatever you desire,” Elyse ruthlessly exposed Mabel’s true intentions. How could a sister behave in such a manner?

They seemed to be more like enemies than siblings. A bitter, self-deprecating smile crept onto Elyse’s lips. She chuckled inwardly at herself for ever entertaining the notion that Mabel could be a supportive sister, especially after her disappointments with Lanny and Glenda. Elyse recognized her own naivety once again.

“Please leave now. I won’t give you any of my works. Just forget about it,” Elyse stated flatly.

Mabel was taken aback by her firmness. “But you’re my sister. Why won’t you help me? I just need a few compositions. I don’t want anything else. Why won’t you help me?” Mabel’s voice quivered with desperation.

Just like in the past when she was displeased, Mabel threw a tantrum and demanded until she got her way. But Mabel misjudged the situation. Elyse was not like Glenda; she did not succumb to Mabel’s tactics.

With a steely gaze, Elyse pointed towards the exit of the lounge. “Leave immediately. I won’t repeat it.”

“Give me your compositions, Elyse Lloyd! Give them to me!” Mabel slammed her fists on the table and then lunged for Elyse’s phone.

Elyse reacted swiftly, anticipating Mabel's actions. She dodged to the side, keeping her phone out of Mabel's reach. Mabel's attempt to grab Elyse's phone was thwarted when Elyse swiftly dodged again, causing Mabel to slip and fall into the spilled coffee.

"Ahh!" Mabel cried out in pain as she noticed her hand covered in blood from the broken glass.

Elyse couldn't bear to see Mabel in pain and extended her hand to help her up. "Go home immediately."

"You're not even willing to offer assistance while I'm in such misery," Mabel, her eyes reddened, confronted Elyse, displaying her bleeding hand in front of her.

Elyse glanced at Mabel's bleeding hand and uttered in a detached tone, "You've done this to yourself. It's not my responsibility."

Chapter 229:

After saying that coldly, Elyse left without a backward glance. Mabel watched Elyse's departing figure and cried out in frustration, a helpless release of her anger.

Elyse, unfazed, heard Mabel's curses fading behind her. Disappointment in her family had been growing for some time. She exited the building and spotted Jayden in his wheelchair, casually smoking a cigarette and flicking his fingers in her direction. To Elyse, his gesture seemed akin to summoning a pet. She hurried over, puzzled, and asked, "Why are you here to pick me up?"

Jayden lifted his eyes, took her hand, and gave it a squeeze. "We received an anonymous package at home today; it's addressed to you."

Elyse's confusion deepened. "A package for me? What's inside?"

"A ruby necklace," Jayden replied, pausing before adding with a hint of jealousy, "The card said it was a late birthday gift."

Elyse was taken aback. "A birthday gift?" She recalled that her birthday had indeed passed a few days ago, but the rigorous rehearsal and upcoming national tour had made her forget.

Jayden, seeing her stunned expression, felt no anger. "Get in the car," he instructed softly, then added, "It's my fault. I should have been more thoughtful than a stranger."

Once in the car, she responded calmly, "We've never discussed these things. It's understandable that you didn't know about my birthday."

As she spoke, her mood dampened. Their relationship had begun abruptly; unlike other couples, they had not experienced a romantic phase before marrying. Many moments had slipped by unnoticed for them. They had never allowed each other to see their vulnerabilities.

"Like an untouched path stretching before them, they had miles to tread and depths to explore," Jayden declared firmly. "I'm going to organize a birthday party for you soon. I want to tell everyone you are my wife."

Elyse was lost in thought. After a moment, she regained her focus and responded softly, "Let's hold off for a few days. The first stop of the tour is the day after tomorrow, and I don't want any distractions."

Jayden frowned, pondered for a moment, then reluctantly agreed, "Alright, I'll make it up to you after that."

Elyse remained silent, gazing out of the window. Jayden felt a surge of irritation as he observed her quiet demeanor. They hadn't argued recently, yet he sensed that Elyse was unhappy. They seemed less connected than before.

After they got home, Elyse noticed the package on the table. Inside lay a ruby necklace adorned with diamonds in the form of a petal. She picked it up, inspected it for a long time, then inquired, "Have you discovered who sent it?"

"No," Jayden leaned in and replied. "Whoever it was concealed their identity deliberately. Any idea who it might be?"

Elyse shook her head. "I'm at a loss. I can't think of anyone who would send me a ruby necklace."

Jayden rubbed his chin. “The sender has hidden their name intentionally. It seems they don’t want you to know who they are. Could it have been Theo?”

Elyse quickly dismissed the idea. “Theo? He would never send something so expensive.”

“Was it not Theo?” Jayden still doubted it. His instincts suggested Theo was the sender. Yet he chose to trust Elyse’s judgment. “Forget it. It’s supposed to be a birthday gift. Just accept it.”

After some thought, Elyse carefully placed the necklace in the box. “Okay, I’ll take your advice and let it be.”

Jayden moved to the sofa, intending to discuss the party details with Elyse. However, she went upstairs with the jewelry box, oblivious to his intentions.

Feeling utterly disregarded, Jayden clenched his teeth in frustration. “She’s been quite haughty lately. How dare she ignore me like this?”

Driscoll, who had observed the entire interaction, offered reassuringly. “Sir, don’t be upset. I believe she simply didn’t notice you. She was fixated on the necklace.”

He continued, “Whoever sent the gift obviously knows her well and understands her tastes.”

Jayden grew even more irate. “It’s simple to give her something she likes. I can easily choose a gift she’d appreciate too.”

With a smile, Driscoll remarked, “Since you love her so deeply, you’ll surely find the perfect gift for her.”

Chapter 230:

As soon as Driscoll finished speaking, he noticed the uneasy expression on Jayden’s face. Curiosity piqued, Driscoll wondered what Jayden was thinking. “Don’t tell me you don’t know what she likes,” Driscoll reassured himself that Jayden must be aware of Elyse’s preferences. Yet he couldn’t shake the feeling that Jayden might not. After all, Jayden had never been one to show concern for others, sometimes not even for himself.

Jayden's expression darkened as he contemplated. It dawned on him that he didn't actually know Elyse's likes or dislikes. He couldn't recall her favorite foods, drinks, or even the color of her preferred dress. He was clueless about her hobbies and interests. It struck him that all he understood were her vulnerabilities and how to exploit them in bed. Beyond that, he knew nothing about her.

Driscoll likely sensed what was transpiring and sighed inwardly. He had harbored concerns about their relationship since their marriage. Despite their frequent quarrels and quick reconciliations, Driscoll had assumed they would gradually grow to understand each other better. He hadn't anticipated they would still be at square one when it came to knowing each other intimately.

Driscoll couldn't hold back any longer. "As her husband, you should know everything about her."

Unhappily, Jayden retorted, "Why do you assume I don't know? I learned everything about her past after marrying her."

Jayden's simplistic reasoning enlightened Driscoll to his lack of understanding. Patiently, Driscoll explained, "Knowing her isn't just about knowing her history. Do you know how she felt after her college entrance exam? Can you tell if she was nervous or excited when she first started college? Her emotions can't be found on paper."

Frowning, Jayden dismissed it. "It doesn't matter."

Driscoll persisted earnestly, "It's crucial. Only then can you truly understand her."

Jayden remained silent, refusing to acknowledge Driscoll's advice. He believed he knew Elyse better than anyone else. In his mind, he could provide Elyse with a life of luxury and protect her from harm. Her occasional melancholy was simply a woman's disposition, a result of his indulgence and her arrogance. Jayden concluded that Driscoll didn't comprehend Elyse as well as he did.

Meanwhile, in the room, Elyse sneezed unexpectedly. She rubbed her nose and glanced at herself in the mirror. After admiring her reflection for a moment, she removed the ruby necklace with a smile. Indeed, ruby complemented her perfectly, enhancing her beauty.

But her hand clutching the ruby necklace hesitated. Doubt flickered in her eyes. Who could have given it to her? And who knew she had a fondness for rubies?

After stowing the necklace away, she grabbed her phone and messaged Tracy. Tracy, her closest friend, was aware of her affinity for rubies. After a brief wait, Tracy called her directly.

“Honey, I didn’t give you a ruby. I sent you money as your birthday present this year. Didn’t you check your bank account? I transferred some funds to you.”

Upon hearing this, Elyse hurriedly accessed her bank account. Seeing a substantial sum deposited, she was at a loss for words. “Did you transfer your entire salary to me?”

Tracy boasted, “Almost. I’m doing quite well in the entertainment industry. Once this TV show wraps up, I’ll move on to the next one.”

Seated in her chair, Elyse hugged her knees tightly. “Congratulations. I’ll be counting on you to support me, the future star.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll pamper you and make you stunning,” Tracy assured her.

After their conversation, Tracy inquired curiously, “But why haven’t you asked Theo about the necklace? What if it was from him?”

A hint of uncertainty crept into Elyse’s smile. “Why would I ask him? Do you really think he’s the one who gave it to me?”

Tracy speculated, “What if it was him? Despite his flaws, he was your boyfriend for three years. He must know about your love for rubies, right?”

Elyse shook her head. “He doesn’t. He doesn’t even know my favorite drink. How could he know about my affinity for rubies?”

Tracy was taken aback, unsure of how to respond. After a moment’s hesitation, she admitted, “Then I’m stumped. I have no clue who could have sent it.”

“It doesn’t matter. I just wanted to check with you,” After ending the call, Elyse found Theo’s number on the blacklist. After a moment of contemplation, she dialed Theo’s number. If indeed it was from him, she had no intention of keeping the necklace.