

Bound love 281

Chapter 281:

Kaelyn waited on the phone for a long time but she didn't hear a peep from Mabel. Finally, she broke the silence and asked patiently, "If you won't do it, then there's only one other option – you have to give up your career."

"No way," Mabel suddenly exploded in anger, her chest heaving violently. "Why should I quit? They're the ones who should apologize to me, not the other way around!"

Having received the exact reaction she was hoping for, Kaelyn twirled her hair happily, a complacent smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. Mabel really was such a simple-minded fool, and choosing her for the job was the right choice.

Putting on a sympathetic face, Kaelyn said in a soft tone, "I understand your pain. I'll ask my team to make a statement for you. All you'll have to do is post it."

"Kaelyn, you're the best. I wish you were my sister instead of that bitch Elyse," Mabel was touched. In her eyes, Kaelyn was such a kind soul, helping her out like this, while Elyse was the bad guy for putting her in this predicament in the first place. The mere thought of Elyse made her blood boil.

"I've always treated you like my own sister," Kaelyn said with a smile.

After exchanging a few more words, she hung up the phone. Now she despised Mabel even more. The simpleton really thought she was a good person, little did she know that this was actually a setup. Mabel was such an idiot.

Grinning mischievously, Kaelyn went to work and asked her team to draft a statement for Mabel. When the statement was ready, Mabel skimmed through it roughly and then posted it on her account.

That very same morning, her tweet went viral along with its hashtags:
#WhyMabelsNewAlbumWasWithdrawn #ElyseLloydRuinedASingersCareer.

Busy with rehearsal, Elyse remained blissfully unaware of the conspiracy about her unfolding online. She was just about to wrap up her lunch when Darren came running to her, panting and out of breath.

“What’s wrong, Darren?” Elyse asked with a frown.

Gasping for air, Darren asked breathlessly, “Did you know that you’re trending? A singer claiming to be your sister said that you were so jealous of her talent that you got your husband to pull her album off the web, blacklisting her from the entertainment industry.”

Elyse’s expression darkened. Mabel was at it again. “Bullshit,” she hissed angrily. “She obviously stole those compositions from me. How dare she say that?”

Darren sighed helplessly. “This doesn’t just impact you; it tarnishes the orchestra’s reputation as well. You’ve only just gained fame, and your sister’s actions could ruin it all.”

Elyse froze in panic. “Oh God. Seriously?”

A tinge of pity appeared in Darren’s eyes as he looked at Elyse. Averting his gaze, he said heavily, “Actually, I came here to inform you that you’re wanted in the meeting room. The senior leaders attach great importance to this matter. After all, it’s bad publicity if the new concertmaster has a scandal.”

Elyse’s mind went blank, and it took her a while to come to her senses. “Okay, I’ll head there right now.”

Darren shook his head, not knowing what else to say. He could only escort her to the meeting room.

At the door of the meeting room, Darren stopped in his tracks and said seriously, “This is as far as I go.”

Elyse nodded, offering him a grateful smile, and then walked in.

In the meeting room, besides Merlin, Abram, and several instructors, there were also several people she didn’t know. They were likely the senior leaders Darren was talking about.

When she initially joined the orchestra, her goal was to excel as a violinist and earn recognition from these prominent figures. However, she never anticipated encountering these influential individuals under such circumstances. For the first time, the situation was truly ironic.

Wearing a hostile expression, Abram rested his chin on his hand and demanded, “Do you know why we summoned you here today?”

Elyse nodded gravely.

Abram continued to interrogate her, “Then is it true?”

Taking a deep breath, Elyse clarified, “Mabel is lying. I wrote those three songs of this new album. Actually, even the title track of her debut album was my creation. She has taken credit for all of them.”

Abram said with a sneer, “You mean to say you’re a musical genius that was able to compose four original songs. Humph.”

“Yes, I’m the composer,” Elyse confirmed calmly.

Abram’s expression turned gloomy, and he didn’t say anything more.

This time it was Merlin who spoke, “Since those were your works, why didn’t you post them online?”

At this, Elyse smiled bitterly. “I didn’t think they were good enough.”

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Elyse mused, “Maybe if I were more confident, such mishaps wouldn’t occur.”

“Nonsense!” Abram’s sudden outburst startled Elyse. He gestured emphatically towards her. “With so many members in our orchestra, few have composed original pieces. Yet you’ve penned four on your own. Are you a musical prodigy?”

Caught off guard, Elyse struggled to articulate her creative process. After a moment's hesitation, she replied, "I simply draw inspiration. Melodies come to mind, and I jot them down."

Abram's frustration mounted. Wasn't she essentially admitting to musical genius? A melody effortlessly materialized in her mind and translated into music. Was that genius?

Merlin intervened, raising a calming hand to Abram. "Do you have more original compositions? Beyond the four?"

"I do, but they're yet to be transcribed. They exist solely in my mind," Elyse admitted, shaking her head.

"Don't fret. We have a violin here. Choose a piece and perform it for us," Merlin suggested kindly.

Elyse warmed to Merlin's approach, developing a newfound respect for him and willing to heed his advice. She approached the violin, lifted it, and paused, lost in thought.

Abram observed with his chin propped on one hand and said with a sneer, "No need to feign musical genius. They're a rare breed. Now that you've confessed to lying, we can let you off the hook."

Unperturbed by Abram's taunts, Elyse delved into her mind, finding the melody she sought. As she played, the melancholic notes filled the room. This particular melody had emerged during a heated argument with Jayden, born from the pain of feeling unable to reach his heart.

Unaccustomed to performing her original compositions publicly, she halted after just thirty seconds, feeling exposed. "I only developed the climax and haven't written the rest. I apologize," she admitted, scratching her head in embarrassment.

Merlin's eyes sparkled with excitement. "Is this truly your creation?" he asked eagerly.

Elyse nodded firmly. "There's no reason for me to deceive. Doesn't my performance just now attest to my sincerity?" She believed her ability to play the melody she had crafted was evidence enough of her creative prowess.

Her admission brought satisfaction to Merlin and the others. Having a musical genius among their ranks was a source of pride. However, Abram's demeanor remained icy, his gaze brimming with hostility towards Elyse as he finally spoke up.

"What's your take on this?" Merlin placed a reassuring hand on Abram's shoulder. "What are your thoughts on this issue?"

Abram's gaze was sharp as he relentlessly pressed the crucial point. "You may clear your name in our presence, but can you do the same in front of all the netizens online?"

Elyse was rendered speechless, caught off guard by Abram's probing.

Abram slammed his hand on the table, his tone turning grave. "Do you grasp the gravity of the online comments? They accuse the Celestial Sounds Symphony of shielding a jealous concertmaster who undermined her sister's stellar performance. You've not only tarnished the orchestra's reputation but also embarrassed other members. With the upcoming performances, I fear ticket sales may suffer because of you."

His voice rising with intensity, Abram continued, "Are you prepared to shoulder our losses?"

Elyse felt a surge of fear. She had no desire to jeopardize the orchestra's future; it held too much promise.

Merlin cast a disapproving glance at Abram. While he knew of Abram's disdain for Elyse, the severity of his words surprised even him.

After a moment of contemplation, Merlin spoke. "We understand you're unjustly accused. However, the rumors stem from your actions. Until this matter is resolved, it's best for you to step away from the orchestra. Focus solely on addressing the online allegations."

Elyse's nerves were frayed. "Mr. Reynolds, are you firing me? I can prove my innocence. Please don't terminate my employment."

Merlin chuckled softly. "No, I'm not firing you. Let's discuss the next steps once you've completely resolved the issue."

He valued Elyse's talent and had no intention of parting ways with her. However, they couldn't ignore the impact of the situation on the orchestra's image. Temporarily suspending her involvement was necessary to ensure the smooth continuation of the upcoming tour and to pacify public dissatisfaction.

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Hearing Merlin's words, Elyse breathed a sigh of relief. She cherished playing the violin and desired a broader audience for her music. As one of the top orchestras in the country, Celestial Sounds Symphony provided her with the ideal platform for her performances. It marked the inception of her dream, and the thought of being fired would trouble her deeply. After expressing gratitude to everyone, she gently placed the violin down and exited the meeting room.

Darren eagerly awaited her by the door, his curiosity evident. "What was the outcome?"

With a reassuring pat on her chest, Elyse responded, "They believed me. Once I refute the false accusations online, I'll be reinstated without fear of termination." Darren breathed a sigh of relief, his worries easing.

However, Elyse's bitterness emerged as she remarked, "Yet I must return home now. My work is suspended, and I fear my position as concertmaster may be at risk upon my return. This couldn't have come at a worse time. They're only concerned about their interests," Darren remarked solemnly.

Engaged in conversation, the two of them made their way to the elevator. As the elevator door slid open, Vicky stood before them, blocking their path. Upon noticing Elyse, Vicky strode out of the elevator and deliberately jostled Elyse with her shoulder.

Unaware of Vicky's malicious intent, Elyse was sent sprawling to the floor, clutching her bruised buttocks and wearing a pained expression. Darren swiftly extended a hand to help Elyse up, casting an unhappy glance at Vicky. "What's your problem?"

"She deserves it," Vicky rolled her eyes and spoke scornfully. "If it weren't for her, how could people tarnish the reputation of Celestial Sounds Symphony? Do you even know what the netizens are saying about us? Their words are downright brutal."

Biting her lip, Elyse asserted stubbornly, "I'm innocent. I'm the true composer. Mabel had no right to release an album with my music."

"Save your breath and stop arguing. I don't believe a word of it," Vicky scoffed, adopting a more disdainful expression.

"You just don't like her. You're jealous of her talent. I believe she can prove her innocence," Darren interjected unhappily, shooting a mocking grin at Vicky.

Vicky sneered, "You still have faith in her. You're way too naive."

With that, she purposely bumped into Darren before striding off without a backward glance. Infuriated, Darren was ready to continue the argument with Vicky, but Elyse intervened, shaking her head. "It doesn't matter whether she believes me or not. I just need the support of the netizens."

Darren's expression darkened. "Sometimes I really can't stand her arrogance. She's never liked me. Of course, she's reveling in it now that I'm in trouble," Elyse sighed.

Upon returning to the lounge to retrieve her purse, Grace and a few orchestra members immediately approached, inquiring about the situation. After explaining to them, Elyse bowed her head in apology. "I'm sorry, everyone. This situation is my fault. Even though it was based on falsehoods, it has affected us all. I'll prove my innocence."

"Can you find any evidence?" Rebekah, walking over from the crowd, approached Elyse arrogantly. "You claim Mabel Lloyd stole your works. How can you prove you're the true creator and she's the thief?"

Elyse responded coldly, "If she indeed stole them, there must be evidence."

A smug smile crept onto Rebekah's face. She wasn't worried about Elyse finding evidence, for she possessed proof that Mabel had stolen the sheet music. As long as she kept it concealed, no one would find out. Rebekah narrowed her eyes, gazing at Elyse with mixed emotions.

She envied her.

She envied Elyse's talent. She knew better than anyone else how gifted Elyse was, and her jealousy drove her to sabotage Elyse. Her assistance to Mabel stemmed from her desire to bring Elyse down. Elyse's talent on the violin had eclipsed Rebekah's, and she couldn't bear to see her rise to fame as a songwriter. Rebekah feared she'd never be able to measure up to Elyse.

So she was determined to tear her down.

Narrowing her eyes, Rebekah issued a warning. "If you can't prove your innocence, you'll have to leave Celestial Sounds Symphony."

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Rebekah shrugged with a sense of righteousness and said, "Thanks to your actions, all of us suffer. Our orchestra's reputation is now in doubt among netizens, questioning our taste and competence. Shouldn't you quit?"

Elyse's expression darkened with anger. "I've already stated I can prove my innocence," she spat out.

Rebekah remained unconvinced that Elyse could resolve the issue. Giving Elyse a disdainful once-over, she scoffed, "Good luck with that."

Elyse sensed Rebekah's opposition evident in the provocative glint in her eyes, which only fueled her irritation. Other orchestra members who harbored their own grievances against Elyse joined in demanding answers. "Your actions have consequences for all of us. You owe us a solution or your resignation," they asserted.

Rebekah chimed in with a smug smile, "See? It's not just me. We all agree you should quit."

Elyse glanced at them sternly. "Whether I leave or not is not for you to decide. I said I will prove my innocence, and I will," she declared firmly.

With that, she gathered her belongings and violin, exiting the lounge without another word.

Once Elyse exited, the people in the lounge immediately began speculating about whether Elyse would be dismissed. Rebekah, with her arms folded, hummed a tune happily as she walked out.

Among the crowd, Freddy observed the scene and discreetly followed her.

Meanwhile, Vicky went to Abram's office. After knocking and entering, she greeted cheerfully, "Mr. Ellsworth, have you decided on Elyse's punishment? Will she be removed from the tour?"

Abram, standing by the window, appeared serious. "She must be removed from both the tour and the orchestra. There's no other option."

Surprised, Vicky asked, "But why?"

Abram stared out the window, his expression troubled. "Elyse is a musical genius. Her talent surpasses yours by far."

Vicky was stunned. "What are you saying?"

Abram sighed heavily, turning to face her. "Elyse has had superior musical talent compared to yours for quite some time. Her only shortcoming is her lack of stage experience. If she remains in the orchestra, you won't be able to maintain your position as the best performer."

Vicky was too shocked to respond. Abram's words implied his acknowledgment of Elyse's abilities.

Clasping her fists, Vicky asked, "Do you also believe that Elyse is better than me?"

Abram realized Vicky hadn't got him. He picked up his laptop and played a song for her. "Vicky, what do you think of this song?"

Confused, Vicky replied, "It's just a song. I like it. Is it new?"

Abram clarified, "It's a new song by Mabel Lloyd that was taken down. I found it online. Can you compose something similar after listening to it?"

Vicky shook her head. "I'm afraid I can't. This song was composed by Elyse. She's capable of it," Abram said, pausing the music.

Vicky was astonished. “Mr. Ellsworth, do you believe Elyse can compose such a song? How is that possible? The melody was captivating.”

Abram shrugged helplessly. “I understand your disbelief, but it’s true. She used an unfinished song to demonstrate her abilities.”

After a moment of silence, Abram placed a hand on Vicky’s shoulder and said solemnly, “That’s why I can’t allow her to remain in the orchestra. You are our orchestra’s sole representative in the national contest. Do you now understand?”

Vicky was utterly bewildered. She began to wonder if Abram was removing Elyse because he doubted her ability to compete against Elyse’s.

Feeling humiliated, Vicky clung to the belief that she was far more skilled than Elyse.

Abram gazed at Vicky, his prized apprentice. Despite Elyse’s superior competence, he couldn’t afford to give her any opportunities. His determination was set on ensuring his Vicky stood out above all.

As Vicky left his office, she found solace in the garden. It wasn’t long before Rebekah approached her.

Upon seeing Rebekah, Vicky felt a surge of irritation. She asked sharply, “What brings you here?”

With a smile, Rebekah leaned in. “I’m here to offer my congratulations.”

Perplexed, Vicky asked, “Congratulations for what?”

Rebekah explained, “For soon being the sole talented violinist in the orchestra. Elyse, the troublesome one, will be leaving. You’ll reign supreme.”

Vicky’s gaze sharpened. Remembering that even her instructor had acknowledged Elyse’s competence, Rebekah’s words felt more like a humiliation.

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Rebekah blinked and inquired, "Aren't you relieved now that Elyse is soon out of the picture? With her gone, there's no one to rival you."

Vicky chuckled, her gaze icy. "Elyse is just on temporary leave. Once this blows over, she'll be back."

Elyse was a musical prodigy, and there was no legitimate reason for the orchestra senior leaders to push her out. Vicky understood that if it were easy to remove Elyse, her instructor wouldn't be so troubled.

Suddenly, Rebekah had a realization. "So that's what's been bothering you. Don't worry. Elyse won't be making a comeback."

"Why are you so sure she won't return?" Vicky inquired, puzzled.

Rebekah casually toyed with the expensive bracelet adorning her wrist, worth over a hundred thousand dollars and a cherished possession. As she fiddled with it, Rebekah casually revealed, "Because I possess evidence that Mabel stole her sheet music. Even if Elyse attempts to defend herself, she can't do so without evidence."

Vicky's eyes widened in disbelief.

"You actually have evidence!" Vicky exclaimed, shocked.

Seeing such a rare display of surprise on Vicky's face, Rebekah couldn't help but feel amused. "There's no need to be so astonished. It's really not that big of a deal."

Vicky's eyes betrayed a complex mix of emotions. Logically, she should have felt pleased. After all, if Elyse couldn't prove her innocence without evidence, she would be ousted from Celestial Sounds Symphony. With Elyse out of the picture, no one could challenge her position in the orchestra.

On the other hand, Rebekah's words confirmed that Elyse was indeed a genius. Those melodies were unmistakably Elyse's creations. Vicky had previously harbored doubts about Elyse's ability to compose them, suspecting that someone else had actually written them.

As Vicky stood, a sudden realization struck her, leading her to question Rebekah. “Do you despise Elyse?”

Rebekah’s reply was immediate and resolute. “Yes. Don’t you?”

Vicky scoffed, “Why should I?”

Rebekah regarded Vicky with a pitying smile. “Because Elyse surpasses you in talent. If you don’t oust her, your status as the most gifted violinist will be threatened.”

Vicky’s glare at Rebekah brimmed with rage and indignation. Rebekah couldn’t stifle her laughter. “Why the anger? I’m helping you. Shouldn’t you be grateful?”

Uninterested in further discourse, Vicky brushed past her and hurried away. Rebekah couldn’t help but find Vicky’s reaction amusing. It appeared that even a genius like Vicky could feel threatened when someone more talented emerged. Rebekah admired the sparkle of her bracelet in the sunlight. She murmured to herself, “That troublesome woman will soon be out of the picture. Just endure a little longer.”

Meanwhile, not far off, Freddy covertly observed Rebekah. Feeling a pang of melancholy, Elyse dialed her driver’s number, arranging for a ride home. Sitting by the flower bed, she waited patiently.

Suddenly, a black car pulled up nearby. Two suspicious figures emerged, one of them clutching a camera. Elyse’s heart sank with suspicion, fearing they could be paparazzi here to stalk her.

She quickly donned her mask and feigned absorption in her phone, hoping to avoid their attention. The two paparazzi were unable to gain entry to the orchestra’s building. Spotting Elyse with her violin case, they approached her.

They exchanged glances before inquiring, “Are you affiliated with Celestial Sounds Symphony? Perhaps you are acquainted with Elyse Lloyd?”

Elyse, keeping her head lowered, gestured to her throat, indicating her inability to speak. Believing she was unwell, the paparazzi refrained from further probing and proceeded to resume their surveillance around the building.

Feeling relieved to have evaded them, Elyse exhaled. Yet, her relief was fleeting as she observed another vehicle pulling up nearby, with two additional paparazzi disembarking with cameras in hand.

Witnessing several more black cars arriving, Elyse was startled. Before long, a dozen individuals had gathered at the entrance of the building. Did they all assemble for her?

Upon scrolling Twitter, Elyse stumbled upon an anonymous post alleging that Mabel's sister stood as Jayden's lawful spouse. Furthermore, she was the individual who called off the wedding with Theo Ward previously.

Absorbing this revelation, Elyse sensed herself teetering on the edge of a breakdown. It appeared these paparazzi were truly pursuing her.

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Elyse kept her head down, silently waiting for the driver. After nearly 20 minutes, a car pulled to a stop on the roadside. Elyse immediately stood up and quickly made her way to the vehicle. A paparazzo noticed the car and exclaimed, "Check it out, a Rolls Royce Phantom! That's impressive!" His companion also caught sight of it and said, "Isn't that the woman who got sick? She's loaded, riding in that luxury car!"

The two paparazzi exchanged glances before realizing who it was. Grabbing their cameras, they dashed toward her. "Ms. Lloyd, Ms. Lloyd! Could you wait a moment? We've got a few questions," they called out. Recognizing her as Elyse, they eagerly tried to catch up, but Elyse managed to slip into the car before they could reach her. The driver hit the gas, leaving them behind.

Finally safe, Elyse exhaled deeply and slumped against the seat, looking drained. The driver studied her carefully and asked, "Mrs. Owen, Mr. Owen isn't home right now. Are you okay?"

Elyse nodded. "Yeah, I'm fine."

After arriving home, Elyse got a call from Tracy. Over the phone, Tracy vented, “What’s wrong with your sister? She misled people online to ruin your reputation. And then she shamelessly claims she wrote those songs herself.”

Elyse chuckled helplessly. “She’s always been like that.”

Tracy uttered gravely, “Mabel’s agency has made an announcement insisting she wrote all the songs herself and she only quit because of some powerful person’s threats.” After a brief pause, she added, “It’s ridiculous. That agency has the audacity to make this announcement just because public opinion has shifted in Mabel’s favor. What a damned company.”

Elyse scrolled through the online comments. Everyone’s siding with Mabel. “Have you thought about how to handle this? How can we turn things around and win?” asked Tracy.

Surprised, Elyse answered truthfully, “I don’t know. I don’t have any proof.”

Tracy went quiet for a few moments. “So what now? Do we just admit defeat?” she asked.

“No way. Mabel’s a fraud. She can’t use my music to build her career,” Elyse’s gaze grew firm. “Even if I don’t have proof, she must’ve left something behind that I haven’t discovered yet.”

Tracy found her words reasonable. She wanted to help search for evidence but had to hang up because she had another scene to shoot.

Elyse set her phone down and sat back, lost in thought about how Mabel had managed to steal her music. She thought about it for a long time and guessed that Mabel must have swiped them from her locker. But she still had no clue when it had happened.

Elyse grabbed her phone and was about to call Darren to request his help with accessing the surveillance footage. However, he called her first.

“Elyse, bad news. Check out the latest online,” Darren said urgently.

Stunned, Elyse immediately searched for the video clip Darren mentioned. In the video, Glenda sat in front of the camera quietly shedding tears. “I’m sorry, this should have remained a family matter. I feel bad for my daughter Mabel Lloyd since her album had to be pulled. Mabel has always been

musically gifted, unlike Elyse who is just an average violinist. Elyse was jealous of Mabel's talent and tried to ruin Mabel's career. Elyse, stop being stubborn, apologize to Mabel and the public, and ask your husband to stop suppressing her. I'll forgive you, and you can still be my good girl," Glenda wept as she spoke, touching many viewers' hearts who began cursing Elyse.

With her own mother confirming Mabel's genius, they demanded that Elyse apologize. Mabel's fans became furious, shouting insults at her online.

Elyse was speechless, her eyes wide with disbelief. She mumbled, "Mom sided with Mabel again to go against me. She always stands up for Mabel. Didn't she apologize to me this morning?"

Darren felt for her. "Elyse, don't be upset. We all believe in you."

But Elyse couldn't hear him as tears fell from her cheeks to the light-colored floor. She wrote a tweet with trembling fingers and shared it online.

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Her tweet read, "I'm the authentic creator. All three tracks on Mabel's album are my original compositions. I didn't authorize the artwork for her latest album. Mabel stole and appropriated my melodies."

This declaration garnered attention and reignited fervent online debates. Users delved into analyzing the true composer.

In response, Mabel commented beneath Elyse's tweet, "Elyse, I sense your envy, but I empathize. We're family. There's still time for reconciliation, and I'm open to forgiving you." Subsequently, Mabel messaged Elyse directly, querying, "Elyse, you claim I pilfered your original works. Where's the proof? How will you persuade the public without presenting evidence?"

As Elyse read Mabel's response, she was almost amused by Mabel's audacity. Mabel's continuous emphasis on evidence suggested her awareness of Elyse's inability to provide any. Mabel aimed to push Elyse to her limits.

Silently, Elyse refreshed the comments repeatedly. No one expressed belief in her; netizens sided with Mabel. Without Elyse's voice, Darren expressed concern. "Are you okay? I've seen your statement. I'll assist in finding evidence."

In a daze, Elyse recalled something upon hearing Darren's voice. "Could you also check last week's surveillance footage around my locker? Mabel might have opened my locker."

Darren promptly agreed. "Sure, I'll check it now."

Elyse expressed gratitude to Darren. After ending the call, she revisited Glenda's video. As Elyse wept while watching, her loud sobbing caught Driscoll's attention.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Owen, I'm entering," Driscoll announced, pushing the door open to find Elyse in tears. Hurrying to her side, Driscoll inquired with concern, "Are you alright?"

Elyse shook her head. Despite her acceptance of her mother's lack of affection, each instance of differential treatment reopened a deep wound within her. Unable to contain her tears, Elyse implored, "Why does my mother only favor Mabel? I'm perplexed. In what aspect do I pale in comparison to Mabel?"

Driscoll was at a loss for words, grappling with Elyse's inquiry. He believed Elyse to be a fine young woman, yet he couldn't fathom Glenda and Lanny's indifference toward her. After a moment of silence, Driscoll could offer only reassurance. "Please don't despair. Mr. Owen will assist with this issue."

Overwhelmed by sadness, Elyse collapsed, consumed by her tears.

Driscoll's heart raced as he witnessed Elyse's collapse. Hastily, he reached for his phone, dialing the family doctor's number before instructing the maids to assist Elyse to bed. With trembling fingers, Driscoll finally dialed Jayden's number.

Meanwhile, Jayden lounged in the garden of the nursing home, savoring tea in the company of that elderly woman. Despite her recent uplifted spirits, the old lady remained plagued by memory loss, unable to recall anything.

Seeking answers, Jayden had turned to the old lady, hoping for a revelation to confirm his suspicions. Yet upon his arrival, the woman remained silent, fixated solely on her tea.

After waiting for a while, Jayden's patience diminished, leading him to ask Tobin, "Have you identified any stimuli to which she reacts?"

Tobin responded, "Aside from Mrs. Owen, there have been no discernible reactions or verbal communication."

Could the elderly woman's sole reaction be to Elyse?

Jayden was playing with the cup in his grip, lost in thought when two nursing attendants wheeled an elderly man toward them.

"Did you catch the latest search? It's quite a captivating show. I'm uncertain who the genuine original is," one attendant remarked.

"Undoubtedly Mabel. Her mother's confirmation seals it. Elyse must harbor jealousy towards Mabel. Having a gifted sister like her makes it difficult for Elyse not to feel jealous," the other attendant opined.

"It's truly uncommon for sisters to become adversaries. Hopefully, there's a twist in the drama soon; otherwise, we'll be left with no gossip for days," the first attendant commented.

Listening to the nurses' conversation, Jayden sensed something amiss. He retrieved his phone and tapped on the trending search. He came across Elyse's statement and stumbled upon Glenda's clarification video.

Witnessing Glenda's attempt to discredit Elyse, Jayden's self-loathing surged. He reproached himself for his morning leniency towards Lanny and Glenda, inadvertently fostering their belief that they were immune to consequences for their actions.

Jayden's fury simmered, his mind consumed with thoughts of how to exact retribution upon the couple. Suddenly, Tobin at his side jolted his arm.

In a hushed tone, Tobin prompted Jayden, "Mr. Owen, observe her."

Jayden lifted his gaze, spotting the elderly woman wide-eyed, her cloudy gaze fixed on his phone. The screen displayed Glenda's video.

Jayden squinted, grasped his phone, and swayed it from side to side. The elderly woman's stare mirrored his hand's motion.

Jayden exclaimed, "Are you acquainted with Glenda?"

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The elderly woman remained silent in response to Jayden's question, her focus fixated on the phone. But when she laid eyes on Glenda, her expression transformed into one of shock.

"Glenda! Give back my daughter! Give her back!" Her voice cracked as she snatched the phone from Jayden's grip, tears streaming down her face.

Jayden watched in astonishment as the woman clutched the phone tightly, her gaze piercing Glenda with accusation. Approaching cautiously, Jayden inquired, "Your daughter? I can help you find her. What's her name?"

The woman's eyes flickered with a glimmer of hope at Jayden's offer. "Can you truly help me find her?" she asked tentatively.

Jayden nodded reassuringly. "Absolutely."

After a moment of contemplation, the woman spoke softly, "My daughter's name is Janet Lawrence."

Acknowledging the information, Jayden affirmed, "Alright, I'll help you locate her."

Suddenly, the woman gripped Jayden's hand tightly, her eyes brimming with tears. "Find my daughter and keep her safe. Someone wants to kill her, and I can't let them find her. Otherwise, they'll..." Her voice faltered as she succumbed to another wave of tears, her sorrow evident through the streaming tears.

Jayden waited patiently until the elderly woman had somewhat composed herself before gently probing, "Who wants to harm your daughter?"

With a trembling finger, she pointed at the phone where Glenda's face stared back from the screen. Anguish etched on her features, she seemed reluctant to revisit painful memories. With a heavy heart, she closed her eyes and whispered, "Murderer. She's a murderer. She killed my daughter."

Jayden was left stunned, grappling with the weight of her accusation and uncertain of its validity. Acting swiftly, he took the phone from her trembling grasp, concerned that revisiting the video might agitate her further. He motioned to a nearby nurse who approached and gently guided the elderly woman back to her room to rest.

As she followed the nurse, the elderly woman paused, a sudden curiosity gleaming in her eyes as she turned back to Jayden. "Young man, what's your name?" she inquired, her voice gentle yet filled with urgency.

Jayden was caught off guard by the question—it was the first time she had asked for his name. "Jayden Owen," he replied, slightly taken aback.

"Jayden," the elderly woman repeated softly to herself, a hint of nostalgia coloring her tone. Then, with a wistful smile, she remarked, "It's a good name."

She paused, her gaze fixed on Jayden. "Are you Elyse's husband?" she inquired once more.

"Yes, I am," Jayden affirmed with a nod. Unbeknownst to him, a subtle warmth and affection softened his typically stoic demeanor as he spoke. Observing this transformation, a rare smile graced the elderly woman's face.

"Then you must take good care of her. She's had a challenging life. Don't let her suffer."

Before Jayden could respond, he noticed a remarkable change in the elderly woman's eyes—they were no longer blank but clear. She had regained her sanity.

However, the moment was fleeting. Her eyes darkened once more, and she began to falter, needing the nurse's support to leave.

Tobin, noticing the sudden change, exclaimed in surprise, "She's back to her senses!"

Recalling the doctor's earlier explanation, Jayden retrieved his phone and played the video of Glenda. "The doctor mentioned she might experience a temporary lucid state after a stimulus."

Tobin was taken aback. "But Glenda was the one who triggered her. Does that mean Glenda caused her mental illness?"

"I'm not certain, but we can't rule out the possibility," Jayden replied thoughtfully. As he pondered, he felt his phone vibrating. Retrieving it, he saw it was a call from Driscoll.

Answering with urgency, Driscoll's voice sounded relieved. "Thank goodness, Mr. Owen, you finally answered. Mrs. Owen saw the news online and was so distressed that she fainted. We're at the hospital now."

Jayden's brow furrowed in concern as he asked, "What happened?"

Driscoll swiftly briefed Jayden on the situation and sent him the hospital address.

Without delay, Jayden left the nursing home and hurried to the hospital. Upon arrival, he found Elyse still unconscious in the ward. Peyton, standing by her bedside, was absorbed in his notebook. Upon noticing Jayden's arrival, he voiced his frustration. "Your wife collapsed. Why did it take you so long to get here?"

Ignoring Peyton's accusatory tone, Jayden rose from the wheelchair and approached Elyse with deep concern etched on his features. Observing her pallid complexion, he anxiously inquired, "Is she going to be alright?"

Peyton explained, "She merely fainted. However, the combination of excessive sleeping pills taken yesterday coupled with lack of rest and recent stress overwhelmed her."

Jayden sighed. "I've tried to persuade her to stay home and rest, but she refused."

Peyton nudged Jayden gently and offered advice. "You really need to take better care of her."

Chapter 289:

Elyse woke up in darkness, unable to discern her surroundings. Searching with her eyes, she found nothing. Lost and confused, she felt a pang of sadness as thoughts of Glenda, who favored Mabel over her, filled her mind. “Why doesn’t my mom care for me?” With a heavy heart, Elyse hung her head low, her eyes reflecting her despair.

From the shadows emerged a woman with long hair, clad in white. She approached Elyse with a gentle gaze, her eyes filled with compassion. Drawing near, the woman tenderly embraced Elyse, causing her to tremble. Though Elyse wanted to turn and see who held her, she found herself unable to move, held in the embrace.

“I love no one but you, my dear. You will always be my precious daughter,” the woman whispered. Earlier fear had gripped Elyse’s heart, but the woman’s voice had a calming effect, dispelling her sorrow. Remaining in the embrace, Elyse felt no fatigue, only basking in the warmth she had yearned for since childhood—the embrace of her mother.

Yet curiosity gnawed at her, compelling her to wonder about the woman’s identity. Restlessness grew within Elyse, prompting her to attempt turning around, her mind consumed with questions. Sensing Elyse’s restlessness, the woman released her and gently urged, “It’s time to wake up, my dear.”

With a gentle push, Elyse found herself able to move again. As she took a step forward, the darkness surrounding her began to fade. In an instant, Elyse’s eyes snapped open, finding herself under the white ceiling, feeling dazed.

Jayden’s face lit up with joy as he saw her wake up. Hastening to her side, he grasped her hand, his concern evident. “Are you alright?”

Turning to meet his gaze, Elyse whispered, “Jayden, I dreamt of my mother. She hugged me.”

Raising an eyebrow, Jayden’s eyes softened. “What did you talk to her about when you saw her?”

Elyse pondered for a moment before shaking her head. “We didn’t talk. But her embrace felt just as warm as I had imagined.”

With weariness seeping in, Elyse drifted back into sleep. Jayden gently tucked her into the blanket, his expression a mix of emotions.

Hiding in Mabel's suburban home, Glenda sat with her chin propped on her hand, her gaze fixed anxiously on her phone. Despite the incessant calls from Lanny, she chose not to answer. She knew his intentions and feared Jayden's wrath, knowing she had offended him and potentially faced dire consequences.

However, despite her mounting worries and Lanny's persistent calls, Glenda found herself torn between her daughter's needs and the impending danger posed by Jayden. Mabel's tearful pleas tugged at Glenda's heartstrings, compelling her to set aside her own fears and attend to her daughter's needs. After all, as Mabel's mother, her love for her daughter outweighed her concerns for her own safety.

Even as Lanny's calls continued, Glenda remained steadfast in her decision to prioritize Mabel, although her anxiety only intensified with each missed call. Mabel warmed their meal and set it on the table before she went to Glenda.

As she opened the door, she saw Glenda's pale face. "Mom, please come eat something," Mabel implored gently.

Glenda shook her head, her expression solemn. "I have no appetite," she murmured, waving her hand in refusal.

Mabel entered the room and softly asked her mother, "Are you still worried about Dad getting angry?"

With a heavy heart, Glenda dismissed Mabel's concern. However, the memory of Jayden's piercing gaze from earlier that morning sent a shiver down her spine. "You don't understand how dangerous Jayden Owen can be. Offending him could lead to dire consequences for us," Glenda replied, her voice tinged with fear.

Mabel, undeterred, rolled her eyes in frustration. "Mom, don't forget that Elyse is still a part of our family, no matter how much Jayden despises us. He can't touch us because of her. Elyse isn't heartless."

Glenda opened her mouth to respond but held back, choosing to keep her thoughts to herself for the moment. She chose not to reveal the truth about their past to Mabel, opting instead to maintain the lie that Elyse was still her biological daughter.

Observing Glenda's inert state, Mabel intervened, pulling her up and nudging her towards the door. "Why are you so scared? I've told you they won't harm us. Let's eat. As long as Elyse shows weakness, we'll win."

Mabel's buoyant demeanor contrasted sharply with Glenda's evident distress. Confidence radiated from her as she believed victory was assured. With support from online followers and no evidence from Elyse, Mabel felt certain she would win. Mabel believed that Elyse would suffer damage to her reputation.

Yet she harbored no sympathy towards Elyse, citing Elyse's refusal to share her compositions as justification for her lack of pity. She believed that if Elyse had cooperated earlier and willingly shared her works, the situation wouldn't have become so complicated.

Chapter 290:

In the evening, a gray Bentley slowly pulled into the hospital parking garage. Pearce stepped out of the car carrying a basket of fruit and made his way directly to the Inpatient Department. Standing at the ward's entrance, Pearce peered through the partially open door and spotted Elyse asleep on the bed. He gently pushed the door open, placed the fruit basket on the bedside table, and noticed the worry lines on Elyse's forehead.

Earlier that day, Pearce had felt a sudden pang of heartache without understanding its cause. It wasn't until he read negative comments about Elyse online that he realized she had been hurt. Concerned for her safety, he abandoned his work and caught the earliest flight to be by her side. Even in her sleep, Elyse's face was pale and creased with a frown. Pearce tenderly stroked her brow with his finger, as if trying to ease her troubles.

"Rest peacefully, don't dwell on worries while you sleep," Pearce's voice was gentle, an attempt to soothe her. With his reassurance, she gradually calmed down. Once Elyse regained her composure, Pearce lingered for a moment, gazing at her before he walked out.

Later, as Jayden returned to the ward after taking a call, he noticed a fruit basket on the bedside table. Curious as to its origin, Jayden pondered over who could have sent it while Elyse stirred from her sleep. Seated in his wheelchair, Jayden teased, "So, Sleeping Beauty has finally awoken."

Still in a daze, Elyse blinked blearily at him. "Did someone visit just now? It felt oddly familiar."

Jayden nodded. "Indeed, someone did. They left the fruit basket."

After a moment of reflection, Elyse slowly propped herself up with one hand, her expression tinged with disappointment. "I've been suspended, unable to partake in the national tour. All my hard work feels wasted."

With deliberate care, Jayden retrieved an apple from the basket and began peeling it. "You may be sidelined for now, but remember, I'm here. If you desire that national tour, you can have it."

Elyse chuckled. She knew Jayden had the capacity and financial means to facilitate her performance. If she desired to take the stage, Jayden could certainly make it happen. However, she wasn't ready to give up so easily.

"I refuse to accept defeat without a fight. Even if I can't make it to the national tour, I'm determined to prove myself and expose Mabel's deceit," Elyse asserted.

Jayden cut the apple into small pieces and brought a piece close to her lips. "Alright, I'll help you," he promised.

Elyse stared at Jayden, her heart fluttering at his words. But she reminded herself to remain composed. She couldn't reveal her feelings. Jayden didn't reciprocate her feelings. He only saw her as a suitable wife, nothing more.

"Thank you," Elyse said softly. "It's what I should do. Remember, I'm your husband."

He gently fed her the apple, saying in a commanding yet caring manner, "You need to eat and get the nutrition. You haven't had anything all day."

Although Elyse wasn't particularly hungry, she felt compelled to consume the entire apple under Jayden's insistence. Despite Jayden's persistent attempts to feed her more, she firmly declined.

Jayden had to request Peyton to conduct a checkup on Elyse. Once Peyton confirmed that aside from being weak, Elyse was in good health, she could be discharged from the hospital. Concerned for her well-being, Jayden insisted on keeping Elyse in the hospital for one more night.

Upon hearing Jayden's decision, Elyse acquiesced and opted to remain in the hospital as per his arrangement. That night, Elyse found herself seated on the bed, feeling somewhat disoriented. Having slept extensively during the day, she struggled to drift off again. Refusing to confront the intense scrutiny surrounding her by checking her phone, she felt at a loss, unsure of what to do.

At that moment, Darren called her, his voice weary. "Grace and I reviewed the surveillance footage for that time frame. Strangely, only the footage from the day of our first performance was corrupted. Even the backup recordings vanished. I have a suspicion that Mabel might have been involved in tampering with your locker on that day."

Elyse recalled that day vividly and exclaimed, "Exactly. Security wasn't as tight back then. If Mabel wanted to sneak in, she could have easily done it."

Darren's voice weighed heavily as he replied, "Even if we pinpoint the time, without surveillance footage to substantiate our claims, she could easily deny it and accuse us of fabricating the story."

With determination, Elyse clenched her teeth and said, "You're right. Without solid evidence, we're at a disadvantage."

A strange silence fell between them, thick with unspoken frustration and uncertainty. Darren's tone shifted to one of slight amusement as he said, "Speaking of which, something quite amusing happened today. Rebekah publicly confessed her love to Freddy."