

Bound love 311

Chapter 311:

Feeling unjustly accused, Elyse's heart bristled with indignation. She shrugged off Tess's hand. "When did I betray Jayden? Please don't make unfounded accusations."

"Unfounded accusations? Stop denying it," Tess snapped, her frustration evident as she retrieved her phone from her bag. With a quick motion, she dimmed the screen and presented it to Elyse. "Take a look for yourself. Didn't you have an affair? You were seen embracing another man. Do you truly believe the Owen family is oblivious to such matters?"

As Elyse studied the photos, a myriad of retorts danced on her tongue, but she swallowed them back. Instead, she met Jayden's gaze. "Haven't all these images been deleted from the internet?"

"They've been dealt with, but a few slipped through the cracks and someone managed to save them," Jayden glanced towards Tess, questioning. "Who sent these photos to you?"

In the grip of her anger, Tess bellowed, "It doesn't matter who sent them. What matters is that Elyse betrayed you. You need to divorce her or you'll have to forget me being your mother."

With a sense of smug satisfaction, Tess crossed her arms and fixed Elyse with a challenging stare, convinced Jayden would act as she desired. After all, no man could tolerate being cheated on. Yet, Jayden didn't react as Tess anticipated. Instead, he calmly instructed Tess to leave. "You've said your piece. It's time for you to go."

Tess was taken aback by Jayden's dismissal. "You're kicking me out? I came here to support you. How dare you push me away? Are you trying to disown me?"

Jayden's response was nonchalant. "Did you ever consider me your son?"

Tess's expression darkened at the unexpected retort from her son. But Jayden had no desire to engage further. "If I were to divorce Elyse, who would you suggest I marry?"

Seated on the sofa, Tess accepted the tea offered by Driscoll, took a sip, and spoke deliberately. “Naturally, someone who can be of assistance to you. I believe Corrie is a suitable candidate. If you were to part ways with Elyse, Corrie would make a fine choice.”

At the mention of Corrie, Elyse was bewildered. Did Tess genuinely not know or was she pretending not to know that Corrie was now seeing Brook? Elyse’s confusion deepened as she turned to Jayden, silently seeking clarification. Had Corrie and Brook parted ways after just a few days together?

Jayden’s interest piqued as he inquired, “Did Corrie persuade you to come to me?”

Tess, rolling her eyes at Jayden’s assumption, replied, “She didn’t persuade me. I decided to come.” With a flick of her fingers, Tess enlarged a photo on her phone, her tone turning intense. “Let me ask you, don’t you intend to divorce Elyse now that you’ve discovered she is like this?”

Jayden shook his head firmly. “No.”

Tess’s frustration evident in her demeanor, abruptly rose from her seat, a stream of curses escaping her lips. “Having a son like you is beyond humiliating. You’re forsaking a wonderful woman like Corrie. If you persist with Elyse, a fickle woman who will likely betray you again, don’t expect me to support you.”

Though Jayden didn’t mind being scolded by Tess, he couldn’t tolerate her berating Elyse. His casual façade dropped, replaced by a cold demeanor. “Driscoll, escort our guest out.”

Driscoll promptly approached Tess, gesturing for her to leave. Tess couldn’t fathom the notion that Jayden would actually insist on her departure. “Are you serious? I’m your mother!”

“How dare you contradict me? You, the seductress, must have manipulated him. I must teach you a lesson.” Enraged, Tess raised her purse, poised to strike Elyse in her fury.

Elyse, with her legs injured, found herself unable to evade in time as Tess’s purse collided with her face. Tess still harbored intentions of striking Elyse once more. Unable to witness such hostility any longer, Jayden tenderly cradled Elyse in his arms, his voice soothing as he intervened. “Elyse’s past rumors have been quelled. Moreover, Corrie is now dating Brook. It’s time to cease these impulsive actions lest you incur the wrath of Brook and his family.”

Tess, caught off guard, drew in a sharp breath, her agitation gradually subsiding as she processed Jayden's words. "Corrie is seeing Brook?"

After a moment of bewildered contemplation, Tess's countenance underwent a shift. Hastily grabbing her purse, she departed in haste, leaving behind a charged atmosphere.

Internally chastising Tess's recklessness, Jayden turned his attention back to Elyse, his touch gentle as he reassured her. "Let me tend to your face and ensure you're not injured."

Elyse, still nursing her wounded pride, shook her head in reluctance. "I'm fine," she replied, her voice tinged with stubbornness.

Jayden sensed that Elyse's mood would be less than sunny today, evident from the shadows that lingered over her disposition. However, if Elyse was in a gloomy state, his own mood would undoubtedly mirror hers.

Chapter 312:

In the ward, Mabel slowly opened her eyes, feeling disoriented to find Glenda asleep with her head at the edge of the bed. She murmured, confused, "Mom, what's wrong with me? Why am I in the hospital?"

The sound of her voice woke Glenda, who, realizing Mabel was awake, lit up with relief and excitement. She quickly pressed the call button to summon the doctor, then grasped Mabel's hand tightly. "Oh sweetheart, please don't scare me like that again. You're all I have. What would I do if I lost my only child?"

"But isn't Elyse your daughter too?" Mabel asked, still puzzled.

Caught off guard, Glenda gave an awkward laugh. "Oh, I just got carried away there."

Mabel shrugged off the comment and attempted to rise, only to find her right leg unresponsive. Looking down in alarm, she exclaimed, "Mom, what's happened to my leg? Is it gone?"

Glenda quickly reassured her. "No, no, it's still there. You just broke it when you jumped from the window."

Memories of the incident started to come back to Mabel. “What about Elyse? What did she say? Did Jayden lift the ban? Can I return to my singing career?”

Glenda was at a loss for words, knowing Jayden had not rescinded the ban and that Mabel had to grovel to Elyse. After a moment’s hesitation, she said gently, “Darling, I think it might be time to consider a different path. It seems your singing career might be over. People aren’t forgiving.”

Mabel looked at her mother, her eyes wide with disbelief and hurt. She couldn’t fathom why her mother would suggest she give up on her dreams. “You always had my back, but now things have changed,” Mabel cried out, overwhelmed to the point of feeling dizzy as the room seemed to spin around her.

Trembling with fear, she exclaimed, “Mom, am I going to die? I’m so dizzy.”

Glenda explained calmly, “You hit your head back then. It’s a moderate concussion. Try to stay calm and not get worked up, or you’ll feel dizzy again.”

Confined to her bed, a wave of sadness washed over Mabel. She had lost her career and now lay injured. “It all started because of Elyse, who showed no remorse whatsoever,” Mabel felt extremely unfair. Why was she the only one who was so miserable?

As the medical team entered the ward with their advanced equipment, Glenda moved aside to send a message to Lanny, assuring him of Mabel’s well-being. Meanwhile, she couldn’t help but curse Elyse for her ingratitude. Mabel was in this state, yet Elyse hadn’t even bothered to visit.

Right after sending the message, Mabel, feeling somewhat better after her checkup, demanded, “Mom, where’s my phone? I need it now.”

Glenda quickly handed over the phone to Mabel. Mabel turned it on, hoping to check if her fans were still following her, but her agent’s message instantly soured her mood. Aylin demanded compensation for breached contracts, claiming Mabel owed a staggering eighty million dollars.

Mabel scoffed in disbelief. She hadn’t even made that much money yet. Despite her frustration, she knew she couldn’t afford to fall out with Aylin, whom she might need in the future.

After a moment's thought, Mabel turned to her mother, hesitating before asking, "Mom, do we even have eighty million?"

The mere mention of such an amount made Glenda wary. "Why do you ask? Planning on buying something big?"

Avoiding her mother's gaze, Mabel casually inquired, "Just wondering. Dad's always been eager to please Jayden. I'm sure he's given him a hefty sum, right?"

Glenda shook her head and replied, "I wouldn't know about his company's profits. You'd have to ask him about that."

Mabel bit her lip in frustration. "But how could Dad just hand over money? He's always been more concerned about accumulating it than anything else."

Glenda, noticing Mabel's fixation on the topic, grew concerned. "Why this sudden interest in money? Is something wrong? Do you need money?"

Remembering how Lanny had treated Glenda, Mabel quickly reassured her. "No, I'm just curious about our family's finances, that's all."

Chapter 313:

Following Elyse's online revelation of the evidence, the subsequent day brought with it the long-awaited investigation results from the Celestial Sounds Symphony, alongside the welcome notification of her imminent return to rehearsal the following day.

In a sudden shift, Elyse found her recent gloom dissipating entirely. With renewed vigor, she descended the stairs and addressed Driscoll with a smile, saying, "I'll be heading to rehearsal tomorrow."

Driscoll's face lit up with genuine warmth. "That's wonderful. Shall we mark the occasion with a cake?"

"Yes, please. And I want hot cocoa too," Elyse replied eagerly. In moments of joy, she had a penchant for indulging in sweet treats.

With a nod and a smile, Driscoll promptly disappeared into the kitchen to arrange the celebratory refreshments.

Seated comfortably on the sofa, Elyse took a moment to share the positive news with Jayden via message. However, receiving no immediate response, she reasoned that he might be preoccupied with other matters.

With efficiency, the cook swiftly prepared the treats, and before long, Elyse found herself presented with a delectable spread of desserts accompanied by a steaming mug of hot cocoa.

Elyse savored the treats at her own pace before her tranquility was interrupted by a call from Darren. "Congratulations on clearing your name," Darren's laughter filled echoed through the phone, prompting curiosity from Elyse. "You seemed to be in a good mood."

"I just heard a funny thing," Darren proceeded to share the source of his amusement. "Freddy claimed he was willing to sacrifice himself to steal the surveillance video, believing Rebekah possessed a copy. However, upon encountering her, his aversion to her proved stronger, and he promptly fled the scene."

Elyse's surprise was palpable. "Why didn't Freddy inform me of his plan?"

Darren reassured her in a casual tone. "I'm not sure why he kept it from you, but rest assured, he's alright. Just a bit fragile lately, emotionally bruised from recent events."

Elyse joined in the laughter before inquiring further, "Has the outcome of Rebekah's punishment been revealed?"

Darren's tone shifted to a more serious note as he conveyed, "She is facing termination. Her actions have crossed several lines."

Upon learning of Rebekah's dismissal, a complex array of emotions washed over Elyse, leaving her with a mixture of feelings. Reflecting on her memories, Elyse remarked, "I recall Rebekah's capabilities. We both joined the orchestra simultaneously, and her performance back then left a lasting impression on me."

With a serious tone, Darren explained, “Our orchestra boasts an abundance of talent. While Rebekah’s initial performance may have dazzled, it was but a fleeting moment. In a community filled with exceptional individuals, she was destined to blend into the ordinary sooner or later.”

Elyse sighed inwardly, uncertain of how to respond. Opting to shift the conversation, she steered it in a different direction.

After Elyse conversed with Darren, her phone rang, signaling an incoming call from Cody. A realization dawned upon her: it was the seventh day since their last meeting. Elyse answered the call with a hint of nervousness in her voice, “Mr. Tucker, I completely forgot it’s our appointed day today. Have you been waiting for long?”

Cody’s response was reassuring, devoid of blame, as he expressed concern, “Don’t be nervous. I understand the situation with the online events lately. Take this time to rest. We’ll reschedule for next time.”

Elyse felt deeply touched by Cody’s understanding and patience. His caring demeanor reminded her of a compassionate instructor, providing support and guidance when needed the most.

Cody continued, “Furthermore, I listened to the instrumental version of those songs. You possess remarkable talent as a composer. Therefore, I advise you to ensure you register the copyright for your original compositions. It’s important not to overlook this.”

Elyse was unaware of the possibility of registering music for copyright protection. Grateful for Cody’s reminder, she felt a newfound sense of appreciation for his guidance.

Cody’s teasing tone lightened the conversation, “Your music is truly unique, and your composition skills surpass many others. But let’s not get too carried away with pride, shall we?”

Elyse’s excitement soared at Cody’s recognition. After ending the call, she couldn’t contain her enthusiasm and promptly requested more dessert from Driscoll, her spirits lifted by the encouraging conversation.

Chapter 314:

In the room, Elyse busied herself with preparing gifts for her friends, intending to express her gratitude for their support. Just then, the persistent ringing of her phone shattered the tranquility. Despite her instinctual desire to ignore it, Mabel's relentless calls refused to be dismissed.

"Why are you calling?" Elyse's brow furrowed as she reluctantly answered the phone, her tone betraying a hint of irritation.

Mabel's voice dripped with sarcasm as she spoke, "I jumped from the building because of you. Yet you won't even bother to come see me. How could I be saddled with such a cold-blooded and ruthless sister?"

Setting aside the sheet music she had been holding, Elyse's voice turned cold as she responded, "You jumped off the building because of me? Are you suggesting that I forced you to commit suicide?"

Mabel's disdain twisted her lips, "Wasn't it? Why couldn't you let me use your works? You weren't planning to release them anyway, so why couldn't I?"

"You've really opened my eyes," Elyse's tone dripped with anger.

Mabel uttered in a hushed tone, "If you still regard me as your sister, come to the hospital. I have something important to share with you."

"I won't," Elyse refused firmly without a moment's hesitation.

"Do you truly wish me dead?" Mabel's voice rose, "Now the entire internet is hurling curses at me. Do you wish for my demise? If that's your desire, then I might as well end it all right now."

Exhausted, Elyse massaged her temples. She didn't want to engage with Mabel, but the thought of Mabel resorting to suicide again made her relent. Reluctantly, she compromised, "What is it that you want to discuss?"

"Come to the hospital first. I'll explain when you get here," Mabel responded before abruptly ending the call.

With a somber expression, Elyse grabbed her coat and left the room. Observing Elyse's somber demeanor and her intention to leave, Driscoll voiced his concern gently, "Considering your recent recovery from your knee injuries, perhaps it would be best if you stayed in."

"I'll be fine. I need to visit my sister at the hospital. I won't be gone for long," Elyse assured, waving away Driscoll's concerns.

This time, Driscoll remained silent and instructed the driver to prepare the car. Upon arriving at the hospital, Elyse followed the directions provided by Mabel and found herself at the back entrance of the hospital. With no one else in sight, Elyse furrowed her brows and questioned, "What did you want to discuss?"

Meeting her gaze with a solemn expression, Mabel beckoned her closer. Under Elyse's puzzled stare, Mabel offered a smile. "Could you lend me eighty million?"

"Eighty million? Why on earth do you need such a vast sum?" Elyse gasped in disbelief.

"I owe my agency eighty million, and it's all because of you. Your actions led to my ban from the industry, and now I have to pay liquidated damages. It's all your doing," Mabel's voice dripped with accusation.

Elyse seethed with anger. "You're still as obstinate as ever, and you've learned nothing."

Tilting her head, Mabel's smile remained innocent yet cold. "So will you not help me, even with a husband as wealthy as yours?"

Elyse remained silent, her gaze fixed on Mabel.

As Mabel's smile faded, a tumult of emotions danced in her eyes, gradually giving way to desperation. "If Dad discovers my debt, he'll surely end me."

Elyse, her lips tightly pressed together, inquired, "And you believe I should rescue you from this predicament? Dream on, Elyse, you're hardly worthy of being called my sister. Someone like you deserves damnation."

Mabel's voice echoed with primal intensity, her eyes darting around as if addressing an unseen presence. "Don't let her escape."

Who was she talking to? Though alone, Elyse sensed a presence behind her, a hand clamping over her mouth before she could react, stifling any protest to a mere whimper.

With a manic grin, Mabel taunted, "Your game's up, Elyse. But your demise could net me eighty million."

Before she could say more, a sleek black car pulled up, and two men swiftly ushered Elyse inside. The other two went directly to Mabel.

Mabel had assumed they were there to offer her financial assistance. Just as she was about to utter a word, the two individuals seized her arms and forcibly dragged her towards the waiting car, paying no heed to her injured leg. Amidst cries of pain, Mabel pleaded, "Why are you taking me away? Just take Elyse instead!"

Seated in the car, Elyse's limbs bound and her mouth muffled by rags, she could only seethe with the desire to reprimand Mabel for her actions. Elyse was shocked by Mabel's actions, realizing that such foolish and malicious behavior could exist.

Chapter 315:

Despite her mouth being gagged with rags, Mabel refused to yield. In a desperate bid to fight back, she jabbed the man next to her with her shoulder. This provoked a harsh response as he cruelly slapped her.

As the fog of dizziness lifted, the stark reality of her plight became clear to Mabel. She had initially orchestrated a similar fate for Elyse, but now it appeared she might suffer the same. Would she also be sold? This realization plunged Mabel into deep despair, and she broke down in tears.

Elyse, on the other hand, was seething over being involuntarily involved in Mabel's plot. Mabel's cries only intensified her irritation. In a burst of frustration, Elyse bumped Mabel's head hard and barked, "Shut up!"

Mabel, further distressed by Elyse's harsh treatment, couldn't fathom why she was being treated this way. They had been driving for about three hours in the darkness. Worn out by the ordeal, Elyse and Mabel eventually fell asleep, still tied to their seats.

When Elyse woke up, she found they were in a new place. Darkness enveloped them, with only a sliver of moonlight filtering through a window, creating ominous shadows. A distinct stink hung in the air.

Managing to sit up, Elyse noticed her hands were free from the ropes, but a chain still clanked around her ankle, securely fastened to a heavy iron pipe. She tugged at it, confirming it wouldn't budge. As she considered her options for escape, Mabel began to stir, her awakening marked by restless shifting and pained cries.

Unable to hold back her frustration any longer, Elyse snapped at Mabel, "Quiet! Do you want to speed up our demise?"

Feeling attacked, Mabel retorted, accusing Elyse of being unkind and suggesting that their dire situation might have been avoided with more compassion. Elyse scoffed, "I'm stuck here because of you. Think I asked for this?"

Mabel fell silent, unable to muster a comeback. Realizing the gravity of their predicament, Elyse scanned the surroundings for an escape route but found nothing useful. Isolated without their phones, their situation seemed desperate.

Elyse sighed deeply and settled on the cold ground, her eyes hardening as she fixed a stern gaze on Mabel, who was still sobbing. "How did you even get involved with these people? What did you promise them? I need to know everything."

Mabel's tears gradually subsided. At that moment, she sensed a strange energy radiating from Elyse, as though she were confronting someone entirely different from the humble Elyse she was accustomed to. Despite her urge to dismiss it, Mabel found herself unable to meet Elyse's piercing gaze. Hesitantly, she stammered, "I was strapped for cash, so someone recommended I contact a loan shark. But the sum I needed was too large, and they hesitated to lend directly."

Elyse narrowed her eyes, pressing on. "What made them reconsider?"

Mabel replied, "They targeted you. They mentioned your high value on the black market. They promised to loan me eighty million dollars if they could capture you."

Elyse paused, steadying her emotions before replying deliberately, “You know, I think I’m more interested in cutting our sisterly ties than you are.”

Mabel scoffed, “I don’t need a sister as selfish as you. Kaelyn has cared for me more than you ever did. It’s Kaelyn who’s raising money to help me.”

Initially, Elyse didn’t pay much heed to Mabel’s mention of her adviser. After all, dealing with loan sharks wasn’t something she approved of. But then it suddenly dawned on Elyse, prompting her to ask, “Who is Kaelyn?”

“Kaelyn Bennett. She’s practically a sister to me. Whenever I’m in a tight spot, she’s there to help, unlike you, who just embarrass me,” Mabel hissed venomously, her eyes overflowing with bitterness.

Elyse felt a chill creep up her spine. Could Kaelyn Bennett truly be orchestrating this ordeal? She had figured out that the men who kidnapped them weren’t simple loan sharks; they looked uncannily like Jayden’s bodyguards with their imposing physiques. It was clear they were after her. Yet why was Mabel caught up in this mess too? Was Mabel just collateral to manipulate her?

Engulfed by these disturbing ideas, Elyse wrestled with her thoughts.

Mabel, observing Elyse’s quietude, started to suspect that Elyse might have devised a way out, which slightly calmed her nerves. Though Elyse seemed detached, Mabel knew she wouldn’t just abandon her. She was convinced Elyse would also plan her escape.

In the meanwhile, Mabel’s mind buzzed with malevolent schemes. Once they managed to escape, she would find a way to expose Elyse while keeping herself under the radar. If Elyse were caught again, she would undoubtedly face severe consequences. This could be Mabel’s opportunity to slip away.

Chapter 316:

Driscoll kept glancing at the clock as dinner time approached, but there was still no sign of Elyse returning from the hospital. As Jayden arrived home in his wheelchair, he noticed Driscoll standing tensely outside the villa. “What are you doing out here?” he asked.

Uneasily, Driscoll replied, "Mrs. Owen hasn't come back from the hospital yet, and she hasn't called either."

"And where's the driver?" Jayden probed further.

Driscoll shook his head. "I can't get ahold of him. I sent someone to look for him half an hour ago, but no word yet."

Just as Jayden was about to respond, Driscoll's phone rang. Jayden nodded to him to take the call. As Driscoll listened to the other end, his face turned ghostly white. "Th-the driver's dead," he stammered, his voice barely a whisper. "Found him in the hospital parking lot. Mrs. Owen and her sister are gone too. We're checking the security footage now."

Shocked, Jayden surged up from his wheelchair, striding inside the villa. At that moment, a servant came running, panting. "Mr. Owen, Miss Bates is here to see you."

Jayden paused, irritation flashing across his face. "What does she want now?"

Uneasily, the servant replied, "She claims your mother misunderstood her earlier. She's here to make amends."

Jayden took a deep breath, fighting the urge to retaliate against Corrie immediately. "Tell her that I won't pursue her past actions, but let her know she'll regret it if she crosses me again," he instructed.

The servant hurried to the door, barely catching her breath to deliver Jayden's message to Corrie. Driscoll approached softly, whispering, "The car is ready at the back door. It's best to use the back exit." He added a word of caution. "Just a reminder, sir, be careful not to let on that you're able to walk now."

On the brink of departure, Jayden managed to suppress his frustration once more and inquired, "Is there a wheelchair in the car?"

"Yes," Driscoll confirmed.

Resolved, Jayden quickly headed to the back door. Hearing Jayden's remarks at the front entrance made Corrie's heart sink. She was here because Tess had gone to confront Brook at the company. Tess had openly demeaned Brook, declaring he was no match for Jayden and even accused Brook of chasing after a woman Jayden had no interest in.

Brook had welcomed Corrie with the aim to embarrass Jayden but found himself embarrassed by Tess today. In rage, he had called Corrie and harshly criticized her, even threatening to end things with her. If Brook were to break up with her, the collaboration between their families would be called off, a situation Corrie desperately wanted to evade. To win Brook over, Corrie reached out to Jayden, hoping he would mediate on her behalf.

Given Brook's strong pride, Corrie believed that if Jayden spoke up for her, Brook would hesitate to break up with her. For the first time, Corrie regretted giving Tess so much of her attention. She had originally planned to drive a wedge between Tess and Elyse, but now she found herself caught in her own web. In a public declaration, Tess had repeatedly proclaimed Corrie as her ideal daughter-in-law, putting Corrie in a challenging situation.

Corrie got back into her car, planning to go home and think over her next steps. However, by mistake, she ended up driving to the back entrance of the villa instead. Just then, a discreet gray Bentley pulled out of the garage. Feeling Jayden was inside, Corrie impulsively decided to follow the car.

Jayden was entirely focused on finding Elyse, urgently asking his men if they had spotted her on the security footage. But the answer he got was discouraging. "We've only seen her going into the hospital; there's no footage of her leaving." Jayden's brow furrowed deeply as he pondered. Could Elyse have simply vanished from the hospital without leaving any trace?

Arriving at the hospital, he made a beeline for the monitoring room to check the security footage. His expectations were met when his team confirmed there was no footage of Elyse exiting the building. Navigating through the inpatient department, he stumbled upon Glenda and Lanny, who looked visibly distressed about Mabel's sudden disappearance.

"Mr. Owen, please, we need your help. Mabel's broken her leg. She couldn't have gone far, but she's missing," Lanny's voice was desperate as he gripped Jayden's leg tightly.

Wearing a grave expression, Jayden asked, "So you only just found out about Mabel's disappearance. Don't you know Elyse is missing as well?" Confusion spread across Glenda's and Lanny's faces as they exchanged looks. "We had no idea. Was Elyse at the hospital too?"

Impatient and on the verge of leaving, Jayden turned to go but paused. A new thought struck him. "Is Mabel's phone still here at the hospital?" he asked, turning back towards them.

Chapter 317:

Glenda replied softly, "Mabel has several phones. Which one are you looking for?"

Jayden looked at her sharply and replied icily, "I'll need all of them." Glenda's heart skipped a beat at the intensity of Jayden's gaze. She felt an urge to sit down but restrained herself. Obediently, she went to retrieve the phones.

Lanny, quick to grasp the situation, realized Jayden was suspicious of Mabel. He quickly tried to defend her. "Mr. Owen, I assure you, my daughter has nothing to do with this. She's missing too, and she's definitely not involved."

Jayden gave him a knowing smile. "It seems you only think of Mabel. What about Elyse? Doesn't she count as your daughter too?"

Lanny caught his mistake and dramatically slapped his own face, exclaiming, "Of course, Elyse is very much in my thoughts too. She's actually my favorite, Mr. Owen, you have to believe me."

Jayden's suspicions deepened regarding Elyse's relationship with the Lloyd couple. He had always felt that Lanny showed a bit more affection towards Elyse than Glenda did. Perhaps Elyse wasn't Glenda's child but solely Lanny's. It seemed understandable for Lanny to show favoritism towards his younger daughter. But now Jayden noticed that Lanny's behavior toward Elyse was no better than Glenda's. It seemed Lanny usually hid his true feelings better. Now Lanny and Glenda were only concerned about Mabel because she was their biological daughter.

Jayden left without a word and headed straight for the parking lot. The police had cordoned off the area and already moved the body of Elyse's driver, but they remained on the scene to investigate and look for clues. The kidnappers had not contacted the missing girls' family.

Corrie, who had been quietly trailing Jayden, turned and left, having discovered nothing worthwhile.

Later that evening, as Glenda tearfully sat on the sofa, Lanny, visibly irritated, flicked his cigarette ash and snapped, "Stop crying. What good does it do?"

Through her tears, Glenda cried out, "My poor daughter's leg is broken. I have no idea where she is or if she's being hurt."

Lanny scoffed, "Jayden confiscated all of Mabel's phones. You'd better hope they're clean. Otherwise, Jayden is going to lose it."

Glenda, her anger rising at his indifferent expression, retorted, "Don't forget your daughter is still at risk. If Mabel really planned to kidnap Elyse, why would she end up kidnapping herself?"

Lanny took a long drag on his cigarette and said, "I can't say for certain. What I do know is that Jayden suspects Mabel. I just hope she didn't conspire against Elyse. If that's the case, Jayden might try to save both Elyse and Mabel. But if Mabel is involved, the consequences are unimaginable." He glanced over at Glenda and asked, "You understand, right?"

Glenda turned away, unwilling to look at him.

As the clock neared midnight, Glenda's phone rang abruptly. Assuming it was Mabel, she answered quickly. Instead, a man's voice came through. "Your daughters are with me. If you want them back, prepare the money as we agreed."

Glenda replied anxiously, "Okay, okay. Just promise me my daughters will be safe, and I'll pay whatever you ask."

The man seemed pleased with her response. He removed the gag from Mabel's mouth, commanding, "Come on. Talk to your mom."

Mabel burst into tears and cried out, "Mom, help me. My leg is killing me. I think I'm going to die." She had hoped Elyse would find a way to escape. Even if she couldn't flee, perhaps she could contact Jayden. She was taken aback when Elyse tried nothing. Anxiety gnawed at Mabel, yet she held her tongue.

As darkness enveloped the outside world, the two remained confined. It wasn't until then that the kidnappers finally made their move. One of them called Glenda.

The kidnapper, while on the phone with Glenda, smugly caressed Mabel's face before stuffing the rag back into her mouth. He coldly instructed over the phone, "Meet us at Templefail Harbor tomorrow at eight in the evening. Do not involve the police. Only you and your husband are allowed to come for the exchange."

Glenda, without a moment's delay, agreed to the terms.

Pausing for effect, the kidnapper added menacingly, "But remember, we have both your daughters. It'll be interesting to see who you choose to save. One daughter with her leg broken will cost you five million. And the other..." He turned towards Elyse, who sat stoically, and chuckled. "This silent one. She's a mere million if you wish to save her." Before he ended the call, his voice took on a sinister tone. "I'm looking forward to your decision."

Once off the phone, he looked at Elyse with a twisted smile and teased, "I promised you a chance to escape, didn't I? Now it all depends on what your parents decide."

Chapter 318:

Mabel's eyes welled up with tears as she trembled. The man glanced at her and removed the gag from her mouth. "What is it you want to say? Let's hear it," he prompted.

Mabel questioned loudly, "Why is my ransom five million dollars and hers only one million? Isn't Elyse your actual target? Why kidnap me too? Aren't we in the same boat? Why?"

Mabel broke down crying. The man found her tears amusing. He stroked his chin, observing her for a moment. It seemed that Mabel's tears quickly bored the man, and he shifted his attention to the quiet Elyse.

He questioned, "Any ideas why I did this?"

Elyse remained calm and quickly assessed the situation. As Mabel pointed out, these kidnappers specifically targeted her, indicating they wouldn't release her easily. But why did they resort to a ransom scheme? And why were the ransoms set at different amounts?

Though Elyse was puzzled, the man didn't allow her time to think. He removed the gag from her mouth and demanded an answer.

Biting her lip, Elyse hesitated before saying with uncertainty, “Are you planning to release one of us?”

Before the man could respond, Mabel erupted in anger. “You’re wasting your breath. They plan to release you because you’re only worth a million, while I’m valued at five million. Dad loves money so much, he’ll definitely pay to get you back.”

Mabel felt aggrieved. “What did I do to deserve this? Why was I kidnapped too?”

Elyse’s lips quivered slightly. She doubted the man’s intention was to release her.

The man clutched his stomach, laughing for a moment. Then he turned to Elyse and inquired, “So who do you think I intend to release?”

After a brief pause, Elyse replied, “It’s not for me to decide who gets released.”

The man nodded. “That’s correct.” He then snapped his fingers, and Elyse and Mabel were escorted back to where they had been tied up before.

Observing the tearful Mabel, Elyse felt a pang of sadness. She hadn’t been entirely truthful just now. She believed that in the end, her sister Mabel would be the one released. After all, Lanny and Glenda had never truly cared for her.

In her heart, she secretly hoped that Jayden would find out about the kidnappers’ conversation with Glenda on the phone. If she could just stall for time, Jayden would come to her rescue.

As these thoughts circulated in her mind, Elyse gradually composed herself. When she was first kidnapped, she did think of various escape plans but eventually abandoned them. If the kidnappers had wanted to kill her, she wouldn’t have survived this long.

Taking into account what Mabel had mentioned about her own abduction, Elyse concluded that the kidnappers must have a different agenda. She figured she wouldn’t be killed immediately. She needed to observe what the kidnappers would do next. Any rash actions on her part could provoke them.

With this realization, she understood that the kidnappers likely wouldn't make any moves soon, so she decided to conserve her energy. She closed her tired eyes and fell asleep.

On the second night, Lanny and Glenda drove to Templefail Harbor. They had quickly gathered five million dollars as the kidnappers demanded and arrived at the location without informing anyone.

They stopped at a deserted dock, abandoned for many years. It featured a few small bungalows and several run-down warehouses.

Lanny and Glenda had been waiting in the open area for half an hour when suddenly the lights around them flickered on, startling them into screaming.

"You two are quite punctual, and I'm pleased to see you haven't told anyone about this," a man appeared in the distance. He said enthusiastically, "I believe you've been anxiously waiting to see your daughters. Now let's not keep you waiting any longer."

He clapped his hands, and two muscular men appeared, each seizing a girl. Both Elyse and Mabel had a sack over their heads.

While Elyse limped forward, Mabel hopped on one foot, sobbing as she moved. Despite her hoarse voice from crying, she continued to cry.

The man asked the quivering Glenda and Lanny, "So, which of these two girls do you choose?"

Glenda lifted the suitcase and said without hesitation, "We brought five million dollars. We're here to save Mabel."

"Mabel! I'm here to save you, Mom! Help me! My leg hurts!" Mabel screamed hysterically.

In contrast, Elyse remained silent. She just stood there, not making any sound or trouble, seemingly indifferent to the scene unfolding before her.

The man was a little surprised. "Are you certain of your choice? This is a five-million-dollar price, not one million. That's a four million dollar difference."

Without wavering, Glenda exclaimed, “Mabel! I choose Mabel. She’s my daughter. I don’t want the other one.”

Chapter 319:

“Oh, you are so pitiful,” the man gazed at Elyse with a mix of sympathy and concern. Her mother had picked her sister right away, which must hit her hard. Besides, choosing her sister had cost four million more.

The man saw an opportunity for Elyse. He turned to Lanny and asked, “Your wife has made her choice. What about you? Who will you save?”

Lanny’s response was urgent. “Mabel Lloyd. The one you priced at five million.”

With a sigh, the man removed Mabel’s sack and held her in his arms. Mabel, overwhelmed by fear, remained frozen. Tears marred her face, and her hair was a total mess.

Looking pleased, the man instructed, “Hand the case with five million to my man. Once it’s verified, your dear daughter will be returned.”

Upon hearing this, Glenda hastened to pass the case to a tall, slender man dressed in black. The tall man opened the case to count the money swiftly and then snapped it shut. He gave a nod to his boss and disappeared with the money. Content with the transaction, the leading man affectionately patted Mabel’s shoulder and announced, “Congratulations! You’re going home.”

After being freed, Mabel still seemed disoriented. Was she free to go?

The man called out to Mabel and gestured towards Elyse, who stood quietly. “She’s your elder sister. If not for you, we wouldn’t have abducted her. What do you have to say to her?”

Mabel turned to look at Elyse. Elyse held herself upright, her expression hidden under the sack. The silence stretched on until Mabel’s face twisted with bitterness. She spat out each word at Elyse, “I never considered you my sister. Go to hell, Elyse. I’ll live the life you never will.”

With that, Mabel dashed off, flinging her arms around her parents in relief. “Dad! Mom! I was so frightened. Let’s go home.”

Tears had already overcome Glenda, and even Lanny's eyes were damp. The man stroked his chin, unsatisfied with the reunion. After a moment, he removed Elyse's sack.

Elyse's eyes slowly opened, revealing a profound sadness. She watched the family of three embrace, comforting each other, oblivious to her plight. She clenched her teeth, struggling to contain her emotions.

"Look, they're leaving. They don't care about you," the man sensed Elyse's emotions and murmured. "Are you willing to give it another shot for yourself? They didn't have to spend nearly as much on saving you as they did on Mabel."

Elyse bit her lip, trembling. Her sorrow welled up in her eyes, but she stubbornly held back the tears. She wouldn't let them fall.

"They say the squeaky wheel gets the grease. If you don't speak up, how will they know what you want?" the man grinned wickedly, his eyes gleaming with malice.

Elyse couldn't contain her emotions any longer and yelled at the trio walking away, "Mom!"

Tears streaked down her cheeks. She looked at Glenda with hope and fear. She couldn't bear the idea of her mother abandoning her.

Hearing Elyse's cry, Glenda halted and slowly turned back. It was dim; the darkness around them overpowering, even with the light on. Glenda and Elyse stood apart, separated by the gulf of their distance. But Elyse clearly saw the coldness in Glenda's eyes. Glenda was looking at her as if staring at a corpse.

Elyse couldn't accept it. She needed answers. "I'm your daughter, aren't I? Why won't you save me? Why?"

Tears streamed down her face, but Glenda remained silent. She shielded Mabel and quickly left.

The man watched Elyse's tear-streaked face with an almost appreciative gaze, letting her cry until she stopped. He then said gently, "Don't worry. You long for your parents, right? I'll help you find your real parents who truly care for you."

He gestured, and a subordinate approached to escort Elyse away. As she walked off, he gave a chilling smile that sent a shiver down the spines of those who saw.

At two in the morning, Jayden stood in his study, gazing out the window. The moon was hidden by dark clouds, which filled him with unease.

“Boss, I’ve got some clues,” Troy exclaimed, holding four cell phones. He pointed to one and said, “On this phone, Mabel has been chatting with someone overseas. I’ve traced the IP address, and it’s linked to Marsey Island.”

“Marsey Island,” Jayden repeated, his expression clouded with confusion. “How could it be on Marsey Island?”

Chapter 320:

Troy scratched his head. “I always wondered how Mabel could know someone from Marsey Island, then I discovered this.” He pulled out a phone and handed it to Jayden. “A woman named Kaelyn Bennett introduced them to Mabel because Mabel owes her agency eighty million.”

After reading the chat records between Mabel and Kaelyn, Jayden became pensive. As soon as he tied the knot with Elyse, he looked into Kaelyn’s past. She appeared average, yet some parts of her life were mysteriously absent. He had too much on his plate then to delve deeper into it. When he tied the knot with Elyse, he had checked into Kaelyn’s past and knew that she had a mysterious backer. He couldn’t understand why she would keep going against Elyse. After all, Elyse had married him for months, and she had nothing to do with Theo now.

Troy asked with concern, “Boss, is Mrs. Owen safe? It’s been a whole day.” He had been searching for an entire day, yet there was no sign of Elyse.

Jayden instructed, “Get Tobin here. Has there been any word from Lanny?”

Just as Troy was about to call Tobin, Tobin burst into the study looking grave. “Sir, our men reported that Lanny and Glenda drove home. It seems they brought someone with them.”

Jayden narrowed his eyes and demanded, “Who?”

Tobin hesitated. “Judging from that person’s figure, it wasn’t Mrs. Owen, but Mabel.”

Jayden snapped to attention and slammed his fist on the table, cursing. “These two old fools! Also, I had someone check their recent activities. They went to the bank yesterday afternoon, withdrew five million, and then drove to another city.”

Jayden immediately grasped the situation. He stood up with a dark expression and said, “Go ruin their place.”

Troy and Tobin exchanged looks. They believed Lanny and Glenda had really stepped on a landmine this time.

When Glenda and Lanny got home, they locked the door and cautioned Mabel to stay inside. Mabel was terrified. Besides, she still owed eighty million dollars, so she dared not venture outside. After addressing Mabel’s situation, Lanny and Glenda finally sat down to catch their breath.

But soon after, Glenda asked anxiously, “If Jayden finds out we didn’t rescue Elyse, will he retaliate?”

Lanny lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. The nicotine helped clear his mind. He pondered briefly, then speculated, “Not necessarily. Maybe Jayden isn’t that attached to Elyse. Perhaps he’s just been playing the part of a devoted husband. He might simply find someone else.”

“But why do I feel uneasy?” Glenda wasn’t convinced. She was troubled and said somberly, “Don’t you think it was too easy to rescue Mabel? I was expecting more resistance.”

“Let’s get some sleep. We’ll discuss this tomorrow,” Lanny said with a snort.

After that conversation, they were just about to head upstairs when they suddenly heard a loud rumbling noise outside. Lanny went to the window and pulled back the curtain. Right outside, two excavators stood outside their yard.

He exclaimed, “What’s going on?” His voice caught Glenda’s attention, but the sight of the excavators left her stunned.

In disbelief, she asked, “Honey, are those excavators here for our house?” As she finished talking, the excavators headed straight for their house, ready to take down everything in their way.

The well-arranged, beautiful yard was soon turned into ruins. At this disturbance, the household staff, who had been asleep, noticed the commotion and ran outside. Just as they emerged, one of the excavators demolished some parts of the house.

“Mom! How can I sleep with those machines making noise? Get them out of here,” Mabel complained, emerging from the elevator in her pajamas, clearly annoyed.

“Sleep? We need to run!” Realizing the excavators had destroyed the yard and were now close to the house, Lanny panicked and quickly led them out.

He stood before the excavators and pleaded loudly, “I don’t know who you are, but please let us go!”

Their pleas fell on deaf ears. The excavators continued their destruction, reducing half of their home to rubble. Trembling, Mabel uttered, “Dad, our house, our house is gone. Who would do this?”