

Bound love 351

Chapter 351:

Lanny frowned, feeling cornered. “It’s not that we refuse your request, but after you bulldozed my villa, it’s really difficult to find two small urns of ashes in all that rubble.”

Jayden poured himself a glass of water, calmly took a sip, and then asked, “So you’re blaming me?”

Lanny’s expression shifted quickly, and he offered an awkward smile. “Of course not. It’s my fault for not securing the ashes properly.”

Elyse remained expressionless, deep in thought. As Glenda and Lanny became restless, Elyse spoke up. “I want photos of my parents.”

Lanny looked embarrassed. “I only have photos of your mom, not your dad.”

With a frosty demeanor, Elyse demanded, “Why?”

Lanny sighed and explained, “Didn’t I tell you that your mom hated your dad? That’s why I have no photos of them together.”

“Then give me the photos of my mother,” Elyse stated without showing any emotion.

Lanny nodded and began to walk away, but after a few steps, he turned back and gave Elyse an awkward smile. “Elyse, after knowing we’re not your real parents, are you still willing to consider us as your parents?”

Elyse stared at them for a long moment before responding slowly. “I only have one set of parents. They are dead.”

Lanny’s expression darkened slightly, but he maintained his smile and offered thoughtfully, “I understand. From now on, you can call me uncle. We haven’t treated you well, and we don’t deserve to be called your mom and dad.” After his final words, he hurried out of the ward. Before he left, he cast a lingering glance at the unconscious Dorothy, his eyes briefly flashing with malice.

Glenda was a step behind Lanny. As she exited the ward and caught up to him, she overheard him muttering curses under his breath. “What an ingrate. I raised her, yet she disregards our past kinship.”

Glenda pursed her lips in disapproval. “You’ve never treated her well. It’s only natural she doesn’t recognize you as her father.”

Lanny shot her a sharp look. “If she disowns us, we’ll lose any connection to the Owen family, and our resources might dwindle.”

Glenda bit her lip, troubled. “Then what can we do? The maternity test is done. It’s all because of that damned Dorothy. Despite being so tortured, she’s still alive.”

Lanny’s expression darkened, a hint of viciousness creeping into his demeanor.

Sure, here’s the revised text:

“But why did you say Elyse’s father was a nobody? I remember him being quite powerful. He had a good relationship with Jasmine, and Jasmine loved him deeply, didn’t she?” Glenda voiced the doubts weighing on her heart.

“Are you an idiot?” Lanny snapped, his teeth clenched in frustration. “That man was not ordinary. He managed to gather the funds so quickly. He must hold a prestigious status.”

Taken aback, Glenda replied, “I didn’t think too much about it. Not ordinary people have his kind of aura and resources.”

Lanny scoffed, “The reason I maligned him was to keep Elyse from seeking out her father’s relatives.”

Glenda still didn’t understand. “What harm was there in Elyse finding her real family?”

Lanny scoffed again, “Now Elyse has married into the wealthy Owen family. Can you handle it if her father’s relatives turn out to be famous and influential, and she climbs the social ladder again?”

Glenda was taken aback. She couldn't accept it. Now that Elyse was married to Jayden and leading a luxurious life, she regretted their actions. If Elyse's father was indeed a prominent figure, Elyse would be far from ordinary—she could be a woman of influence. Glenda gritted her teeth. She couldn't stomach this reality. She wanted Elyse to remain as downtrodden as they were.

Glenda's frustration was soon replaced by worry. "Jayden asked us to find the ashes. It's been so long, and we still don't know where they are. We need to look for them," Lanny replied. "If we don't find them, we can't report back to Jayden. He might bankrupt us directly. He was primarily concerned with his company."

Back in the ward, Elyse had slumped into her chair, her head bowed in silence. Jayden brought her a glass of hot water and asked with concern, "Are you all right?"

Elyse nodded. "I'm fine. Just a little disappointed."

"What are you disappointed about?" Jayden inquired.

Elyse's fingertips were cold as she rubbed the glass, savoring the warmth. "I was a bit happy learning that Glenda wasn't my mother because I thought I could meet my biological mother. I wanted to talk to her about my hardships and have her hug and kiss me so I wouldn't hold any grudges about her not raising me."

After a pause, she smiled bitterly. "But since she is dead, those hopes will stay just that—hope. I have no parents left."

Chapter 352:

Worried about Elyse, Jayden decided to take her home. Elyse was exhausted. After washing up, she fell asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow. Jayden stared at her sleeping face for a while before finally leaving the room and heading to the study. Driscoll brought him a glass of milk and set it down on the desk.

Frowning, he asked with concern, "They are indeed not Mrs. Owens' parents?"

“They are not,” Jayden sighed heavily. He had always suspected that Lanny and Glenda weren’t Elyse’s biological parents, but confirming it was still a harsh reality to accept.

“Sir, can I ask you something?” Driscoll pursed his lips grimly.

Jayden raised his eyebrows. “What is it?”

“The maternity test proved that Elyse isn’t Glenda’s child. Does this mean that the old lady was telling the truth?”

Jayden nodded in confirmation. Driscoll’s expression darkened. “But didn’t she also say that Glenda’s a murderer? Is it possible that this is also true?”

Jayden’s eyes widened as he realized the gravity of the situation. He sat up straight and mused, “It’s possible. The doctor mentioned that the reason why she was so weak now was because she had been tortured for so long.” Jayden frowned, his eyes flashing as he theorized, “What if Lanny and Glenda were her tormentors?”

Driscoll shook his head with uncertainty. “I don’t know. I was just wondering why she claimed that Glenda’s a murderer. Did Glenda actually kill someone? Or did she just say that because Glenda had been torturing her?”

Jayden drummed the tabletop with his fingers. The more he thought about it, the more unsettled he felt. Suddenly, he recalled the strange, almost murderous look in Lanny’s eyes as he walked away from the ward. Did he want to kill that old lady? But why? Did she know something she shouldn’t? What was Lanny trying to hide?

A million questions swirled in Jayden’s brain, but he couldn’t figure out the answers. All of a sudden, his phone rang, snapping him out of his reverie. Coincidentally, it was Tobin calling to report on his investigation.

“Sir, I’ve looked into Janet Lawrence’s background and I found something.”

Jayden was stunned. “Go on.”

At this moment, Tobin was standing at the door of the police station with a document in his hand. “Among the tens of thousands of women named Janet Lawrence, I’ve found one person who matched the information you gave me, but she’s been reported missing, and it was Lanny Lloyd who reported it.”

Astonishment flashed through Jayden’s eyes. “Interesting,” he muttered under his breath.

Tobin was confused. “What do you mean?”

“Proceed with the investigation and find out who Janet’s family is, if you can. By the way, don’t forget to investigate Rickey Owen too.”

“You know who he is?” Tobin asked in surprise.

“Turns out he’s Elyse’s father, a good-for-nothing punk who’s been dead for over 20 years. You should be able to find his file without a hitch.”

Tobin nodded. However, it was only when he put his phone down that it suddenly dawned on him just how strange Jayden’s words were. Wasn’t Lanny Elyse’s father? Tobin ran his fingers through his hair in distress. Did Jayden simply have a slip of the tongue? And would Jayden kill him just to hide this little secret?

At a loss, Tobin patted his cheeks and forced himself to calm down. After all, there was no point in fretting about such uncertainties. With that, he turned around and went back inside the police station.

Knowing that Elyse longed to know more about her parents, Jayden decided to investigate and find out as much as he could. However, an hour later, Tobin called back with bad news.

“Sir, I’m sorry to inform you that there’s no record of a Rickey Owen in the death records. Additionally, I couldn’t find any marriage certificate under the name Jazmine Lloyd.”

Jayden frowned. “You didn’t find anything?”

“I did find out that Jazmine’s dead, but she wasn’t registered as married when she died.”

Jayden played with the pen in his hand and murmured, “Things are getting really interesting.”

Tobin squatted on the steps in front of the police station eating a hot dog. He said while chewing, “At present, our only clue is Janet Lawrence. I’ll continue to investigate.”

“Okay.” After hanging up the phone, Jayden stared into space and fell into deep thought. Finally, he picked up the phone again and dialed a number.

Meanwhile, in the bedroom, Elyse was fast asleep, but her sleep was troubled. She found herself ensnared in a bizarre dream. She dreamt that she was paralyzed in bed, unable to move. When she finally managed to pry her eyes open, she could only see the white ceiling above. A beeping sound kept echoing in her ears, and she knew that it was coming from a medical instrument. She didn’t know why, but she couldn’t move, speak, or feel anything. But she did know one thing: she was drowning in fear.

Chapter 353:

As Elyse pondered how to escape from this nightmare, she suddenly heard footsteps approaching. She intended to call for help, but before she could, a man was already by her bed. The details of his face were blurry, yet it was clear he was a man. He stared at her with a helpless look in his eyes, and just as curiosity struck her, he suddenly reached out and removed her oxygen mask. Only when her breathing became labored did she realize his intentions were lethal. She thrashed on the bed, desperately trying to reclaim her breathing mask. The man stood beside her, lost in thought. After a moment, he raised his hands and began to strangle her.

“Don’t kill me,” she managed to utter, her voice sounding foreign to her own ears. The man’s face remained indistinct, but his intentions were clear—he harbored no guilt and seemed determined. Elyse struggled to speak through the constriction. “Why?” The man offered no reply. As consciousness began to slip away, Elyse sensed a disturbing excitement in him. Why was he so happy to kill her? Elyse couldn’t understand, but the visceral sensation of being strangled felt disturbingly real, as if she had truly experienced death. As she closed her eyes, darkness enveloped her, and she felt herself plummeting. Panic surged within her. Where was she falling? To hell? What had she done wrong?

“Elyse, Elyse.” A voice called out, jolting her from the abyss. The voice was familiar. Suddenly, Elyse snapped open her eyes, gasping for breath. Jayden was holding her hand, offering reassurance. “It’s okay. It’s just a nightmare.”

It took a while for Elyse to regain her bearings. She turned and saw Jayden's worried expression, with Driscoll and the maids standing behind him. Confused, she asked, "What's wrong with me?"

"You were having a nightmare," Jayden explained. "You were talking in your sleep, pleading with someone not to kill you."

"Did I say that?" Elyse asked, still bewildered.

Driscoll nodded, his tone laced with concern. "Yes. We were all worried. We couldn't wake you up, and you seemed even more frightened when we tried to touch you."

"I had a nightmare. I dreamed I was lying in bed and someone was trying to kill me," Elyse said, looking worn, her hand pressed against her forehead.

"Do you still want to keep sleeping?" Jayden asked.

Elyse shook her head. "No, I want to get up."

"Okay then," Jayden said. He turned to Driscoll. "Cook some food."

Driscoll acknowledged the instruction and left the room with the maids. Jayden wanted to stay with Elyse for a while, but sensing her need for solitude, he reluctantly left the room. Downstairs, Driscoll approached him. "Miss Bates just called. She asked if you would be home this afternoon. She has something important to tell you."

"What's it about?" Jayden inquired.

"She said it's very important for you. You'll miss out if you don't see her," Driscoll replied.

Jayden responded without emotion, "Let her come then. I'll hear what she has to say."

In her room, after freshening up, Elyse went downstairs for breakfast. After eating, she grabbed her purse. "I want to go out for a walk."

“I’ll go with you,” Jayden offered.

“No, I just want to walk downtown alone. You don’t need to come with me. Just attend to your own matters.” Seeing Jayden’s concern, Elyse chuckled. “You think I’m going to be devastated and commit suicide? I’m fine. I just need a break and want some fresh air.”

Jayden then pulled out a black card from his wallet and presented it to her. “I want you to spend five million today. That’s your task.”

“And what if I spend more?” Elyse asked.

“This card is yours,” Jayden said, raising his eyebrows.

Elyse pocketed the card, slung her purse, and headed out. Watching her leave, Driscoll gave Jayden a thumbs up. “Sir, well done. Shopping is the greatest joy for many. She will surely enjoy it.”

Jayden rubbed his chin, a hint of pride in his voice. “Just a card can make her so happy. My wife is really special.”

Chapter 354:

Upon leaving her home and arriving at the shopping mall, Elyse serendipitously discovered a cozy café and decided to settle in. She treated herself to a caramel latte, savoring each sip with deliberate slowness. In the midst of her thoughts, a familiar voice broke through, startling Elyse.

“Hello, Ms. Lloyd. Mind if I join you?”

Elyse, taken aback, looked up to see Pearce standing before her. “What a coincidence to run into you,” she exclaimed, a hint of surprise in her voice.

“Yeah, what a coincidence,” Pearce echoed with a smile, seating himself gracefully opposite Elyse. He then beckoned the waiter for an iced Americano before turning to Elyse with a quizzical gaze. “What have you been up to lately? I visited Celestial Sounds Symphony in hopes of seeing you, only to learn that you had departed.”

Elyse nodded somberly. “I was dismissed. There’s no recourse at this point,” she replied with a smile tinged with resignation.

“Why did they dismiss you?” Pearce inquired, his curiosity genuine.

Hearing this, Elyse began to pour out all the grievances she had been harboring. When Tracy and Morgan visited her last time, she had opted for silence, perhaps to protect them from undue concern.

Elyse’s words ignited a storm within Pearce, his hand crashing down on the table with frustration. “Such shameless individuals! Envious of your talent, they resort to any means to push you out.”

A bitter smile graced Elyse’s lips as she spoke. “My musical background isn’t strong. It’s only natural for them to seek my removal.”

As the waiter set down Pearce’s iced Americano, he took a sip before turning his attention to Elyse. “What prompted you to miss going back to the orchestra back then?”

Elyse’s demeanor faltered briefly before she mustered a strained smile. “Just personal reasons,” she replied with a hint of ambiguity.

Pearce’s tone softened. “If you see me as a friend, please be honest with me. I’ve reached out before but received no response. I’ve been deeply concerned about you.”

Unaware of the events that unfolded during that period, Pearce had made efforts to connect with Elyse. Despite his attempts, even dispatching someone to investigate, they unearthed nothing as if the truth had been deliberately obscured.

After grappling with her inner turmoil for a time, Elyse finally relented with a heavy sigh. “I’m sorry. I can’t share it with you.”

Pearce masked a twinge of disappointment behind a façade of understanding. “That’s alright,” he responded, concealing his true feelings beneath a veneer of acceptance.

“Thank you for your understanding,” Elyse murmured, her fingers tracing the rim of her cup, lost in the labyrinth of her thoughts.

Pearce observed the somber aura surrounding Elyse, but the reason behind it eluded him. Proceeding cautiously, he inquired, “What are your plans now?”

Elyse’s conflicted expression shifted as she looked up, her decision seemingly made on a whim. “I want to go somewhere,” she declared, her voice carrying a hint of determination.

Pearce, sensing Elyse’s need for company, offered, “Where would you like to go? I’m available right now and I can drive you wherever you need to be.”

After a brief pause filled with uncertainty, Elyse finally spoke up. “Could you take me to the cemeteries?”

Pearce was caught off guard by Elyse’s request and couldn’t help but ask directly, “Why do you want to go to the cemeteries? Are you thinking about purchasing a plot?”

Elyse fell into silence once more, her hesitation lingering in the air.

Pearce respected Elyse’s silence and offered his support. Standing up, he gently suggested, “There are several beautiful cemeteries. I’ll take you there.”

“Thank you,” Elyse expressed gratefully, meeting Pearce’s gaze.

Pearce chuckled softly, his warmth evident. “It’s my pleasure. I always enjoy your company.”

Elyse, taken aback by Pearce’s intimate words, responded with dignified seriousness. “Mr. Benson, I’m married. I kindly ask you to avoid such ambiguous expressions.”

“Sorry. Your marital status slipped my mind,” Pearce confessed with a touch of humor, lightly tapping his nose. He genuinely experienced an unexplainable sense of connection with Elyse, finding solace and familiarity in her company. “I’ll exercise greater caution going forward,” Pearce promised earnestly.

With those words hanging in the air, Elyse followed Pearce to the car. True to his promise, Pearce drove Elyse to a chosen cemetery, navigating winding roads until they reached a secluded burial ground nestled on a hill. Situated within the city's development zone, the cemetery was still in its nascent stages, marked by ongoing construction and the constant flow of trucks transporting materials along the nearby road.

As they ascended the hill and stepped into the cemetery, Elyse's gaze swept across the landscape, absorbing the solemn beauty of the surroundings. Eventually, she came to a stop on the verdant lawn, her eyes scanning the area thoughtfully.

Pearce trailed behind Elyse, his steps measured and his curiosity ignited by her choice of cemetery. Could it be for herself?

Unable to contain his curiosity any longer, Pearce asked, "Are you suffering from a terminal illness? Are you choosing a cemetery for yourself?"

Elyse was shocked by Pearce's assumption. "Of course not. Please don't jump to conclusions."

Pearce's puzzlement deepened. "Then may I ask for whom are you choosing a cemetery?"

"For my parents," Elyse replied slowly.

Chapter 355:

Hearing Elyse's explanation, Pearce was even more taken aback. "Both your parents have incurable diseases at the same time? That's incredibly tough."

Elyse's eyes revealed a swirl of emotions. "You got the wrong idea. I'm doing this for my real parents."

Pearce was surprised. "Your biological parents? I thought your current parents were your biological ones."

"I'd rather not talk about it," Elyse responded with a deep sigh, her eyes wandering to the trees around her as her mood darkened.

Standing next to her, Pearce felt uneasy too. Despite his sharp mind, he couldn't grasp why Elyse's biological and current parents weren't the same. Then he wondered, could it be that Elyse's biological parents were the people he had been searching for? After all, Elyse looked remarkably like the person he was trying to find.

Pearce thought about how to ask about Elyse's biological parents, but before he could organize his thoughts, Elyse said she wanted to leave.

Pearce nodded. In the car, Pearce held the steering wheel and casually asked, "I've been with you all day. Can you tell me about your biological parents?"

Elyse felt a wave of sleepiness. Rousing slightly at his question, she smiled and asked, "Are you really that interested in my biological parents?"

Pearce joked, "Absolutely. You're so beautiful. Your parents must be equally amazing."

A hint of sadness passed over Elyse's face. "I can't give you a clear answer either because I've never met them. I'm curious about how they look too," she confessed.

Pearce continued, "You mean you've never seen them before?"

Elyse sighed. "I only learned yesterday that my biological parents are different people. But I'll get to see my mother's photos tomorrow." Elyse murmured softly, closing her eyes. "I can finally see her. I miss her so much."

"What did you say?" Pearce hadn't heard her. He asked again but got no reply. Looking over, he noticed Elyse had fallen asleep. Leaning against the seat with her head on the door frame, Elyse looked troubled. Pearce sighed and decided not to probe further.

When they reached downtown, Pearce gently woke Elyse. In a daze, Elyse opened her eyes and saw they were in the parking lot. After a moment of confusion, she gathered herself and said to Pearce, "Thank you for the ride back."

Pearce pulled out his cigarettes, lit one, and inhaled deeply. Leaning back, he looked at Elyse with a playful expression, which made her uneasy. Unsure of his gaze, she shifted uncomfortably and asked, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"You're in a bit of trouble," Pearce announced.

Elyse was confused. "Trouble? What kind of trouble?"

Pearce grinned and said, "Your phone rang while you were asleep. At a red light, I answered it. The caller ID said 'Silly Billy.'"

Elyse's face went pale as she asked in a shaky voice, "What did you tell him?"

Pearce shrugged. "Not much. I just told him it wasn't a good time for you to talk because you were sleeping. I promised him I'd let you know about the call once we returned to downtown so you could return his call."

Elyse felt a wave of anxiety. "And what did he say?"

Pearce cleared his throat and imitated the subdued voice. "He just said 'okay.'"

Elyse was surprised. "That's it?"

"Yes," Pearce responded, his voice laced with amusement. "You should call him and clear things up. I don't get involved with married women."

Feeling a rush of urgency, Elyse took out her phone and made the call.

After Elyse left, Jayden retreated to his study to concentrate on his work. An hour later, Driscoll came in with the news that Corrie had arrived.

Jayden, slightly irritated, asked, "Didn't she say she would come this afternoon? Why is she here now?"

Driscoll looked slightly uncomfortable as he replied, “She said she had to come early because of an urgent issue.”

Jayden instructed briskly, “Let her in.”

Corrie entered and followed Driscoll to the small garden. Jayden was in his wheelchair, busy typing on his mobile phone. After Driscoll led Corrie in, he left.

Corrie looked at Jayden and softly said, “How are your legs now?”

Chapter 356:

Without looking up to meet Corrie’s gaze, Jayden spoke in a detached tone. “My wife has been massaging my legs, and I go to the hospital for regular checkups. You don’t need to worry.”

Corrie, wearing a knowing smile, glanced at his legs and quipped, “Your legs seem fine to me, but you’re pretending you can’t walk. Isn’t it uncomfortable sitting for so long?”

Jayden’s fingers hovered over his phone as he typed. He slowly lifted his head, fixing his eyes on her. “What did you say? I didn’t catch that.”

Thinking Jayden hadn’t heard her, Corrie decided to tease. She cupped her hands like a makeshift horn and shouted, “I know you’ve been faking. Isn’t it uncomfortable sitting for so long?”

Corrie then gave him a sly look. “Does Elyse know about your condition?”

Jayden looked at her with a mix of skepticism and coldness. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I can’t walk,” he said flatly.

Corrie shot back, “You’re lying. I’ve seen you walking around the hospital myself. You look perfectly normal.”

Jayden’s response was steady. “You’re mistaken. I can’t stand at all.”

Corrie frowned, certain she couldn't be wrong. She approached him, trying to pull up his trouser legs for a closer look. She wanted to see if his leg muscles had withered as one would expect after a year without walking. But as Corrie leaned in, Jayden lunged forward, gripping her neck tightly.

"I thought you were shrewd, but it turns out you're just a fool," he said, his voice cold and merciless. His expression was emotionless, yet the bulged veins in his arms betrayed his anger. Jayden meant to kill her, and he was ready to do it without hesitation.

With each strained breath, Corrie fought for air, feeling the searing discomfort of oxygen deprivation. She now understood Jayden's determination to kill her without hesitation. "Please don't kill me," she managed to croak, her words faint as she fought to breathe.

Jayden didn't ease his grip. Tears streamed down Corrie's face as she struggled for breath, her eyes wide with terror, realizing she could die at any moment. Driscoll, who had come to deliver black tea, saw the confrontation and hurried over. "Mr. Owen, you can't do this," he exclaimed urgently.

Jayden's voice was cold and menacing as he replied, "You think you can stop me?"

Driscoll persisted. "If your wife finds out you've hurt someone, she'll despise you."

Jayden's body shook violently, and his grip loosened. In that moment, Corrie gasped for air, drawing a deep breath. Jayden glanced at her kneeling at his feet and roughly grabbed her by the hair before flinging her aside. Too weak to fight back, Corrie crumpled to the floor, her breaths coming in shallow, uneven gasps.

Jayden took the black tea from Driscoll, sipped it, and asked, "Did you see anything, Driscoll?"

With a respectful tone, Driscoll replied, "No, I didn't see anything." After refilling Jayden's cup, he turned and left without sparing Corrie a second glance.

After Driscoll departed, Jayden looked at the hand that had gripped her neck and said, "Corrie, I'll let you go this time, but don't try any more tricks." Pausing briefly, he added in a somber tone, "Otherwise, I'll take away everything you own."

Corrie trembled, trying to stand as she replied in a shaky voice, "I understand."

Seeing the fear on her face, Jayden gave a faint smile and said, "Come have a cup of tea." To Corrie, his invitation felt like a devil's call. She refused, firmly grabbing her purse and preparing to leave despite her unease. Unbothered by the rejection, Jayden hadn't meant the invitation seriously. But he hadn't expected her to catch him walking and expose his secret so easily.

Jayden raised the teacup to his lips and took a sip. "I'll have to be more careful, or Elyse will find out and lose her temper."

Meanwhile, Corrie, still in shock, sat in her car outside the villa. As she gathered herself, the realization struck: Jayden had truly meant to kill her, confirming her suspicions. Jayden could indeed walk. He had been faking all along.

Chapter 357:

After the shocking revelation, Corrie slammed her hand against the steering wheel in frustration. "Jayden, why did you lie to me?"

Jayden, who had escaped unscathed from the car accident, had spread false information about being disabled for the rest of his life, leading Corrie to mistakenly believe she had to flee overseas for an entire year. Corrie couldn't help but feel that if Jayden hadn't deceived her, she wouldn't have left in the first place. She would have stayed by his side throughout the year. Initially, Corrie had given up on Jayden, which now fueled his anger and thoughts of harming her after she had merely discovered his secret. The image of Jayden gripping her neck and looking at her with cold, malicious stares sent a shiver down her spine.

"He's still a madman; nothing has changed," she muttered to herself, taking a deep breath before finally deciding to leave.

Upon learning that Corrie had discovered his secret, Jayden immediately instructed Tobin to take action. He needed to threaten Corrie to ensure she wouldn't dare expose his secret. Using Corrie's parents as leverage seemed like a strategic move.

With a plan in mind, Jayden retreated to his study to resume his work. As the afternoon rolled in, he suddenly realized that he hadn't received any spending records from Elyse on his phone. Hadn't Elyse mentioned spending five million dollars? Why hadn't she spent a single penny? Jayden picked up his phone and, after contemplating for a moment, dialed Elyse's number. The phone rang for a while before she finally answered.

Once the call connected, Jayden demanded, “Where are you?”

A man’s voice came from the other end of the line. “She’s asleep. I’ll bring her to the parking lot and have her call you back.”

Taken aback, Jayden realized he hadn’t heard this voice before. He inquired, “Who are you?”

The man chuckled and abruptly hung up, leaving Jayden bewildered. A whirlwind of emotions swirled inside Jayden, eventually culminating in a fit of rage that led him to smash the computer in front of him. Startled by the noise, Driscoll knocked on the door. “Mr. Owen, are you alright? What’s happening?”

Without a moment’s hesitation, Jayden stormed out of the study, his voice cold as he uttered, “Find out what Elyse did after she left today and who she met.”

Driscoll was perplexed. “What’s going on?”

“There was a man with her,” Jayden spat through gritted teeth. Conflicted, Driscoll’s eyes betrayed a mixture of emotions.

Anger flooded Jayden’s emotions, and he couldn’t stop thinking about killing somebody. “She didn’t tell me that there was a man with her. While with the man, she even dozed off. And she even allowed the man to take her calls. What does Elyse think of me?”

Driscoll scratched his chin and pondered for a while. Was Jayden being jealous? Driscoll had never witnessed Jayden being jealous before, and he felt grateful to Elyse for revealing this side of him. Clearing his throat, Driscoll suggested, “Mr. Owen, perhaps it would be better to directly ask her about this instead of resorting to an investigation. It would be faster and easier to resolve any misunderstandings.”

“Misunderstandings? Allowing another man to use her phone—is that a misunderstanding?” Jayden retorted angrily.

Perplexed, Driscoll failed to comprehend why Jayden was so furious. After all, it was a trivial matter to help Elyse answer a phone call. Puzzled, he asked, “Why are you so enraged? Is her phone any different?”

Jayden fell silent for a moment before responding even more bitterly. “That’s the phone I bought for her. It’s meant solely for her use. No one else should use it.”

Driscoll pursed his lips, choosing to remain silent. In that instant, Jayden’s reaction reminded Driscoll of a childhood party held at the Owen residence. Jayden had gifted a toy to his friend, who thoughtlessly shared it with everyone, not treasuring it as Jayden had hoped. The sight had reduced Jayden to tears, and he had severed ties with that friend ever since. Reminiscing, Driscoll let out a sigh. It seemed that after all these years, Jayden hadn’t truly matured.

“Prepare the car. I’m going to find her,” Jayden said restlessly, slipping on his coat as he prepared to depart.

Sensing the urgency, Driscoll intervened. “Certainly, we’ll get the car ready. However, you don’t know her exact location, do you? Why don’t you wait for her to provide the address before heading out?”

Jayden, stopped in his tracks by Driscoll, reluctantly sank into the sofa. The passing servants tiptoed past, fearing his reprimand if they made too much noise. Half an hour later, Jayden crossed his arms and closed his eyes, feigning sleep. He appeared calm, but the restless tapping of his feet betrayed his inner turmoil. Why hadn’t she called yet? Was she enjoying herself with that man?

The phone on the table vibrated, instantly snapping Jayden out of his pretense. With a somber smile, he answered the call. Perhaps sensing Jayden’s foul mood, Elyse stumbled over her words and struggled to form a coherent sentence.

With a grim smile, Jayden inquired, “Where on earth are you?”

Elyse provided him with an address.

“Stay there. I’m coming to you,” Jayden growled, his teeth clenched. “And I expect you to introduce me to this man. I’ll treat him to a meal.”

Chapter 358:

Hearing Jayden's words, a wave of worry washed over Elyse. Pearce, appearing unfazed, asked casually, "What's wrong? Are you expecting some punishment when you get home?"

With a heavy heart, Elyse sighed and replied, "He wants to invite you to a meal."

Pearce took a drag of his cigarette, his face partially obscured by the smoke as he raised his eyebrows in surprise. "He wants to invite me to a meal?" he repeated.

Elyse nodded, feeling a strong need to convince Pearce not to accept. "Jayden sounded mad on the phone. If Pearce had gone, he could have been in trouble with Jayden," she hesitated, searching for the right words, "Maybe you should..."

Pearce finished his cigarette with one last puff and stamped it in the ashtray. He grinned and interjected, "Sure, I haven't had lunch yet. Can I pick the restaurant?"

Elyse was caught off guard. She hadn't expected Pearce to accept so quickly. Her mouth fell open, and she was momentarily lost for words. Finally, with some reluctance, she agreed. She silently hoped that Jayden wouldn't be too hostile towards Pearce.

After ending the call, Jayden quickly headed to the shopping mall where Elyse was waiting. Standing at the restaurant's entrance, Elyse scanned the arriving crowd for Jayden. When she saw him, she rushed over, her eyes flickering with anxiety. "Are you still upset?"

Jayden gave her a cool look and continued maneuvering his wheelchair into the restaurant. It hit Elyse that she was the reason for Jayden's irritation. Nervously, she trailed after him, but in her hurry, she almost collided with Jayden's wheelchair. Jayden stabilized the wheelchair just in time, then turned his attention to Elyse.

Rubbing her sore leg, which had bumped against the wheelchair, Elyse felt guilty and embarrassed. "Can't you even walk properly?" Jayden asked. Avoiding Jayden's stern look, Elyse murmured, "I'm sorry." Jayden snorted and steered the wheelchair toward the reserved table, with Elyse reluctantly following along.

Once they reached the table inside a private room, Jayden fixed his eyes on Pearce. Pearce put down his phone and greeted him with a smile. Jayden approached Pearce with a forced smile and said, "Hello, I'm Elyse's husband. Thank you for driving my wife back."

Pearce shook hands with Jayden, smiling back. “No problem.”

Jayden let go of Pearce’s hand and studied his face for a moment before asking, “Have we met before? You look familiar.”

Pearce touched his face and replied with a grin, “I’m not sure. Maybe I just have one of those faces.”

Elyse, who had been quiet until this point, interjected, “On the day of my first performance as the concertmaster, Pearce gave me a bouquet of flowers. Don’t you remember?”

Jayden thought for a moment, eyeing Pearce carefully. Then he said in a significant tone, “As a fan, you’ve managed to become friends with your idol. Good for you.”

Pearce pretended not to understand Jayden’s insinuation. He just shrugged and responded, “I’m a good guy. Befriending an idol is part of the fun.”

The smile on Jayden’s face became more strained. “Are you both hungry? I sure am. Let’s order,” Elyse suggested with a smile, positioning herself between the two men.

Pearce agreed, saying, “Definitely. We’ve been out and about all morning and visited several places. I’m really hungry.” He purposefully raised an eyebrow at Jayden and said, “Can I just order anything without worrying about the cost?”

Jayden took a quick look at the watch on Pearce’s wrist. There were only three watches in the world made with 381 colored diamonds, and Pearce had one of them. Then Jayden glanced at Elyse, who was oblivious and looking at the menu. Did she really think Pearce was just a keen admirer hoping for her friendship?

“Sure,” Jayden responded shortly.

Pearce was pleased and told Elyse, “Go ahead and order whatever you like, even if it’s expensive.”

Feeling reassured that Jayden wasn’t angry, Elyse ordered food with Pearce. Jayden wasn’t worried about the cost of the meal; instead, he poured himself a glass of red wine and watched them as they chose their dishes.

Suddenly, a strange thought crossed his mind. Elyse and Pearce shared a slight resemblance. Both had eyes that curled like crescent moons, which was especially noticeable. Jayden found himself thinking of the saying, “Husband and wife start to look alike.” Suddenly, Jayden’s expression grew grim again. Being married, he and Elyse supposedly shared some resemblance. Instead, she resembled this man far too much.

Chapter 359:

After leaving Jayden’s house, Corrie went to the hospital to pick up Brook, who had just been discharged. Brook wore his suit and tie and refused to have lunch with her.

“What else do you have to do? We agreed to have lunch together yesterday,” Corrie said, her smile fading.

“I haven’t been to the office for days and have a lot of work to do,” Brook retorted, looking unhappy. “I’m not like you who just goes shopping and has afternoon tea every day.”

Corrie’s face darkened momentarily before she quickly concealed her emotions. She still needed to marry Brook to get what she wanted. Brook was about to leave when he saw Corrie standing still.

“Fine. You can come to the office with me, and I’ll have lunch with you near my office. After that, you can go home by yourself,” he said irritably.

Corrie suppressed her anger and forced a smile as she followed Brook to the car. In the car, Brook ignored Corrie as he angrily called his subordinate.

“What on earth did Debora do?” he snapped. “Why did my grandpa favor her so much? She took on multiple projects in just a few days.”

Corrie rested her chin on one hand and pretended to look at the scenery outside the window, but in fact, she was focused on Brook’s conversation.

“You don’t know? If you don’t know, then go and ask,” Brook barked into the phone. “How dare you tell me you know nothing! Do you want to get fired?”

Corrie's curiosity was piqued. Since she'd been with Brook for quite some time, she had learned a bit about the Owen Group. Although Debora seemed capable, she hadn't succeeded in any major projects since joining the company. She didn't perform as well as Brook, who had accomplished a lot.

However, Enzo now valued her highly. If she hadn't achieved success with the company's projects, then she must have gained Enzo's attention in other ways. Corrie became more curious about what Debora had done to earn such recognition.

Just then, Brook hung up the phone. "It's said that Debora had a meal with Grandpa a few days ago. She must have told him something," he muttered. He then turned to Corrie and asked, "What do you think Debora said to my grandpa?"

"It must have been something that really intrigued him and directly addressed his needs," Corrie responded after pondering for a moment. "Otherwise, he wouldn't have entrusted her with so many projects."

Brook agreed with a nod. "Debora is so lucky. She's gotten so many projects just by saying the right things. I'm different. I've earned every project through hard work."

Corrie pretended to be impressed by Brook. She offered her praises to please him before falling silent. A moment later, she clenched her clothes hem, and a surge of excitement washed over her. Why hadn't she thought to approach Enzo herself before?

There was no way Enzo knew that Jayden was faking his disability. Once he found out, Corrie could leverage that information to ask for resources as a reward. With some luck, she might even persuade Enzo to help her and her parents seize control of the Bates Group.

She planned everything meticulously and decided to disclose Jayden's deception to Enzo that very evening. Suddenly, she received a message. She was so startled that she screamed upon seeing it.

"Why are you so loud? I was thinking about work and just figured something out, but you interrupted me," Brook said, tilting his head. He looked visibly annoyed.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to," Corrie quickly apologized, turning her back to him to quietly check the message.

In the first photo, a man pointed a dagger at her father who was playing golf. In the second picture, her mother was lying in a beauty salon with a facial mask on, unaware that someone was pointing a knife at her neck.

Corrie knew it was a threat. But who could it be? Corrie became restless. Suddenly, a face appeared in her mind. It was Jayden. He was threatening her with her parents' lives. Corrie bit her lip, shocked by Jayden's shamelessness.

She glanced back at the message, which said, "Watch your mouth or they will become the victims of your mistake." Corrie's eyes burned with anger. Jayden was despicable. She had thought he was a good person, but he had just shown his true colors.

"Hey, get out of the car. What are you waiting for?" Brook's loud voice snapped Corrie back to reality.

Chapter 360:

Corrie was feeling grumpy. Brook pushed her to act, but she couldn't hide her sour expression and scowled at him. Brook's expression was even grimmer than Corrie's. Without hesitation, he shoved her and expressed dissatisfaction, saying, "Why that look? If you don't want to be here, just leave. Don't act like I've mistreated you. Your family has benefited a lot from me."

Corrie stumbled back against the door frame, wincing in pain. She suppressed her pain and anger, quickly regaining her composure, and said, "It's my fault. Please don't be angry."

"I don't get why Jayden picked you as his girlfriend back then. You're always plotting something. No wonder he prefers Elyse now," he chuckled and got out of the car, abandoning any pretense of chivalry, leaving Corrie behind as he hurried to a restaurant.

A malicious look crossed Corrie's eyes. How could Brook compare her to Elyse? Elyse was considered insignificant. She herself, however, was destined to become president someday. Yet, at this moment, she still relied on Brook's support for her family. She couldn't afford to break ties with him just yet. After composing herself, she opened the door and hastened after him.

She accidentally ran into Debora while following Brook. Now tasked with significant responsibilities by Enzo, Debora was pleased to see anyone. Spotting Brook, she greeted him with a

smile and concern. “Brook, so good to have you out of the hospital. I’m sorry I went too far last time. Please accept my apology.”

Debora gave an obviously insincere apology. She even thought it was good that she had pushed Brook downstairs, making him unable to come to the company for days. She feigned stretching and added, “Brook, I’ve been swamped lately. I have a meeting with the department manager after lunch, so I can’t stay and chat. Enjoy your meal with my future sister-in-law.”

Debora glanced at Corrie with a mix of disdain and mockery. They moved in the same social circles. Debora was well aware of the distasteful things Corrie had done. She understood that Brook was trying to cement his status through his connection with Corrie’s family. But in the Owen Group, the true power and influence lay with Enzo. And anyone Enzo admired would become the future leader of the Owen Group. Debora inwardly scoffed. Brook might seem polished and clever, but he was never particularly astute. Enzo wouldn’t value such indirect strategies, such as alliances formed through marriage. His main interest was in individual merit.

Corrie was irritated by Debora’s stare. To her, each member of the Owen family seemed to outdo the others in terms of eccentricity. After Debora walked away, Corrie asked Brook, “Is your grandpa really okay with entrusting the company’s business to someone like Debora?”

Brook replied impatiently, “He doesn’t care whether the successor is male or female. He only cares about their ability to run the company and keep the family business successful.”

After a moment of silence, he gave Corrie a disapproving look. “Why are you an outsider asking so many questions? Finish your lunch and go. Don’t linger around me. I need to focus all my energy on my work.”

Corrie got angry and clenched her fists. She knew that Brook didn’t like her, his disdainful gaze making no secret of it. Determined, she decided to find a way to dodge Jayden’s spies and meet with Enzo.

Pearce wrapped up his meal and had to leave due to a phone call. After Elyse and Pearce exchanged farewells, she turned and caught Jayden’s moody gaze. She smiled awkwardly and suggested, “Let’s go home too.”

“Okay. Let’s go home, and I’ll settle things with you,” Jayden said as he controlled his wheelchair and moved to the elevator. Elyse hurried to keep pace with him. Inside the cramped elevator, the atmosphere grew tense.

“Do you know who that man is?” Jayden suddenly asked.

Elyse was taken aback. “He’s my friend and a university professor.”

Jayden stated calmly, “The watch he wears is worth as much as an island.”

Elyse was stunned. After regaining her composure, she asked incredulously, “Is a university professor that rich?”

“Foolish. Being a university professor is just one of his roles,” Jayden looked at Elyse intently and said, “I’m genuinely concerned that one day someone might take advantage of you if I’m not watching out for you.”