

Bound love 471

Chapter 471:

Jayden's gaze was filled with impatience. "Why are we talking about Pearce when you're doubting my love for you? Haven't I proved my love enough? What more do I need to do to make you believe in my feelings?" he questioned, frustration evident in his voice. Was love supposed to be about showing aggression?

Elyse rubbed her neck, the memory of his violence still fresh in her mind. After a tense silence, Jayden's impatience visibly grew. Elyse finally responded in a quiet voice, "He's just a friend. There was a misunderstanding yesterday; he just came over to clear things up today."

"Really? Is that the whole truth?" Jayden pressed further.

Elyse lifted her head, her eyes brimming with tears. "Yes, that's exactly what happened. You can choose to believe it or not. I'm telling you the truth. If you can't trust me, then that's on you," she asserted.

"Elyse, don't lie to me. If you do, I won't be so forgiving," Jayden warned, his eyes intense, a troubling spark flickering within them.

At his words, Elyse's temper flared. "You accuse me of lying while you're not truthful yourself. Have you ever thought about how it affects me when you lie?" she snapped back.

Jayden gave a cold laugh, eyeing her defiant stance. "And if I were lying, what could you possibly do? What power do you think you have over me?"

Elyse's eyes widened in shock. Jayden had actually said that. Tears streamed down her face as she confronted him, "Do you even realize what you're saying? How do you see me? Have you ever truly acted as my husband or shown me any respect?"

Jayden scowled, puzzled by Elyse's challenging demeanor today. She seemed to misunderstand everything and continued to push him.

His voice tinged with irritation, he replied, “How can you question how I treat you as my wife? We’ve been together for...”

Elyse sat on the floor, tears silently streaming down her face. She placed a hand on her abdomen and muttered sadly, “Baby, I’m such a loser, aren’t I? Whether it was Theo or Jayden, my love was always genuine. But why is it always so disappointing? Baby, I yearn to be cherished, to experience real love, yet it seems no one loves with the depth I do.”

Elyse’s tears became soft sobs, which faded to quiet whimpers. Her tears streamed endlessly. She didn’t even care about her own tears anymore.

Downstairs, Driscoll was about to call Elyse to dinner when Jayden stopped him. Jayden glanced at the book in his hand. “Don’t call her to dinner tonight. Let her be hungry and think things over.”

Driscoll was taken aback. “Sir, are you serious? What has she done to deserve this?”

“What did she do? She angered me,” Jayden said with a sneer. “Don’t worry. Missing one meal won’t kill her.”

Chapter 472:

Driscoll just stood there with a helpless look on his face. He couldn’t even begin to imagine what could have happened between Jayden and Elyse to cause such a terrible fallout.

“Sir,” he spoke up in a bid to ease some of the tension, “I’m sure there’s a perfectly reasonable explanation for all this. Please listen to what Elyse has to say. Stubbornness isn’t always a good thing.”

“Are you trying to dictate my actions now?” Jayden snapped.

He glared at Driscoll for a brief moment before heading in the direction of his study. Driscoll let out a long sigh. As things stood, it might be much harder for the couple to reconcile this time around. "Should I have dinner served?" he called out in a hurry.

"Dinner? I'm too furious to eat!" With that, Jayden disappeared into his study and slammed the door in his wake.

Once inside, he got up from his wheelchair and strode to the French doors. He pounded his fist against the sill and grunted in frustration. Blinking at his clenched fist, he slowly opened it in a daze. He stared at his open palm, then held it up in the air as if he was reaching for something. This was the very same hand he had used to strangle Elyse.

Jayden's face twisted at the memory. He pressed his lips into a thin line as a wave of tangled emotions washed over him. He hadn't wanted to hurt her, but he had lost control of himself. He had been too angry, too scared... of what, even Jayden himself didn't know. He clutched at his aching chest and heaved.

After calming down, he padded over to the sofa and plopped down with a heavy sigh. Pain and sorrow marred his handsome face.

Meanwhile, Driscoll, the ever-vigilant butler, went upstairs to bring Elyse's dinner right on the dot. Elyse was slumped on the floor like a lifeless doll, quiet and unmoving. It was the knocking on her bedroom door that pulled her back to her senses, and even then, she was a little dazed as she stood and went to open the door.

Greeted by Elyse's tear-stained face, Driscoll couldn't help but feel a pang of emotion. "Are you all right? I brought you some food."

Elyse gave him a faint, almost mocking smile. "Didn't he forbid me from eating? You're disobeying his orders."

Driscoll huffed and patted her hand before walking in to set the tray on the table. "Don't worry about it. I know him well. Despite his tough exterior, he is rather softhearted. He would never let you go hungry, he couldn't bear it."

Elyse sat at the table and watched as Driscoll set up the meal. Her movements were sluggish, and her eyes were still slightly glassy. "Why do you say that Jayden is softhearted?"

Just as the butler opened his mouth to answer, he suddenly noticed the red marks around Elyse's neck. "Did he lay a hand on you?" he blurted out in shock. "Did he do that to you?"

Elyse quickly covered her neck, her face turning pink in a mix of lingering fear and embarrassment. She tried to deny it, but her throat was still hurting, and all that came out was a series of violent coughs. Driscoll hurriedly poured her a glass of water. "Here, drink this to soothe your throat."

Thankfully, Elyse felt much better after a few sips. Driscoll sighed. He had lost count of the number of times he had sighed in the past hour. "Forgive me for saying this. I can never excuse his actions against you just now, but I have to say that he isn't solely to blame for his behavior."

Puzzled, Elyse looked up at him with a frown.

"As you know," Driscoll continued, "He is the firstborn, and his parents have always had high expectations of him ever since he was a child. He never got the chance to experience his childhood like most normal kids did. He never got to fully express himself, as his thoughts and ideas were always weighed down by his responsibilities. In time, he turned into the emotionless robot he is notoriously known as. And with the Owen family mantra asserting that profit is above all, well, everything molded him into the man that he is today."

Driscoll gave her a sad, resigned smile. "I know for a fact that he is not the heartless man that the public paints him to be. But I am merely a butler. There is only so much I can do to pull him out of his shell. You, on the other hand, are different. Everyone can see just how special you are to him. It's such a shame that he couldn't recognize love for what it is."

"What do you mean by that?" Elyse asked in confusion.

"He has been deprived of love and affection for most of his life, so he doesn't know how to navigate his feelings properly. An ordinary person would openly embrace love and joy, especially when it's within their reach. But he was raised in the language of power and greed. It is all he has ever known. So when he wants something, he seizes it like a beast would its prey."

Driscoll finished setting up the dishes and handed Elyse her cutlery. “I am not asking you to forgive him. That is your prerogative. I just hoped that you would have some room to understand him and where he is coming from before making a decision you might regret.”

Elyse chuckled under her breath. “Thanks, I actually thought you would ask that I forgive him.”

“Feelings can go both ways between two people. I’m afraid he never really understood this. To him, everything he wants belongs to him, and must therefore be locked up within his walls, always safe and present.”

As if to lighten the mood, Driscoll smiled sheepishly and shrugged. “It’s pretty childish of him, don’t you think?”

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Elyse tucked into her meal with gusto, shoveling bites down with an urgency that surprised even her. She didn’t care whether Jayden was still like a child or not. The tiny tenant within her most definitely was.

Driscoll, mistaking her ravenous appetite for starvation, fretted, “There’s plenty more. Please, pace yourself.”

Elyse fought down the nausea churning in her stomach, forcing another bite down. A sudden clarity washed over her. Jayden’s opinion was relevant, of course, but it wasn’t the deciding factor. This child, this little miracle blossoming inside her—she wanted it.

Driscoll hesitated. “How will you face Mr. Owen?”

Elyse kept her gaze firmly on her plate. “It depends on his intentions, I suppose. If he wants to be with me, then we will be.”

“And your intentions?” Driscoll pressed gently.

Her hand stopped. Finally, she met his gaze, confusion clouding her features. “Do my intentions matter? Didn’t you say Jayden controls everything? If you want to know if we have a future, shouldn’t you be asking him?”

A flicker of unease crossed Driscoll’s face.

Undeterred, Elyse declared, “I want fruit. A whole plate of it, and make it snappy.” A rebellious glint sparked in her eyes. Just because Jayden said she couldn’t eat, didn’t mean she wouldn’t. She intended to eat, and eat a lot!

“Certainly.” Driscoll nodded and hurried out to fulfill her request. Elyse continued eating, but a wave of weakness washed over her. She slumped back in her chair, staring listlessly at the ceiling as she chewed.

Meanwhile, Driscoll reached Jayden’s study and knocked.

“Come in,” came Jayden’s muffled voice. He looked up from his computer screen as Driscoll entered. “What is it? Refusing her food again?”

Driscoll blinked, startled. How had Jayden known he was bringing food to Elyse? As if reading his mind, Jayden scoffed. “If I told you not to provide her dinner, would you actually obey?”

Driscoll felt a surge of helplessness. “Sir,” he ventured carefully, “if you don’t truly want to harm her, why restrict her food in the first place?”

Jayden’s jaw clenched. “She made a mistake,” he muttered, the image of Elyse wrapped in Pearce’s arms flashing through his mind, a fresh wave of anger washing over him. He’d hoped she’d stay away from that man, yet here she was, the very next day, cavorting with him again. Did she even care about him, her own husband? Did she remember his warnings?

Fury bubbled up inside him. “Does she even care about me?” he roared, slamming his fist on the desk.

Driscoll chose his words with care. “Perhaps there’s a misunderstanding. She isn’t that type of person. We’ve all witnessed how much she cares for you.”

Jayden glared at him. “You’re still defending her? She hurt me, and I’m not allowed to be angry?”

Knowing better than to argue, Driscoll held his tongue. Just as he was about to leave, Jayden’s voice stopped him.

“Wait. Give her whatever she wants. You think I’d actually starve her?” His stubborn expression betrayed his words.

Driscoll bowed slightly. “Of course.” With that, he exited the study, already picturing a plate piled high with juicy cherries, Elyse’s favorite.

Ten minutes later, the fruit arrived. Elyse picked at it, her voice barely a whisper when she spoke, “You mentioned Jayden’s parents didn’t care for him. Why is Bryce so loved?”

Driscoll, caught off guard, offered a bittersweet smile. “In families with two children, the firstborn often shoulders the burden of expectations and becomes a pawn in inheritance battles. The younger one, naturally, becomes the recipient of all the affection, free to live a carefree life.”

Elyse frowned thoughtfully. “So that explains Tess’s bias?”

Driscoll nodded. “Precisely. Especially since Jayden displayed exceptional intelligence at a young age, he became their golden ticket to success. Bryce, on the other hand, was free to bask in their love.”

Elyse frowned. “But then Jayden’s leg injuries took away his inheritance rights.”

Driscoll shrugged. “The firstborn failed, so they shifted their hopes to the younger one.”

Elyse rubbed her temples, a wave of sadness washing over her. “The Owens seem cold and ruthless. Everyone seems consumed by their own agendas.”

Driscoll spoke softly. "When wealth reaches a certain point, love becomes a luxury and money becomes the driving force. That's the tragedy of the opulent."

Chapter 474:

Elyse drifted off to sleep, her heart heavy from her conversation with Driscoll.

In the dead of night, the bedroom door creaked open, and a silent silhouette, Jayden in black pajamas, padded barefoot to her bedside. Moonlight bathed Elyse's face in a soft glow as Jayden stood vigil, a lonely guardian in the darkness. He reached out, his fingers tracing the faint marks on her neck, a silent question lingering in the air.

"Did I scare you?"

His voice was a mere whisper, unanswered by the sleeping Elyse. With a sigh, Jayden slipped beneath the covers, careful not to disturb her. There was a distance between them now. It wasn't the comforting closeness of nights past, but at least she was there. He closed his eyes, the weight of unspoken emotions settling on him as sleep finally claimed him.

Across town, at the Royal Hotel, a different scene played out. Brook thrust deeply into Jennie on the plush bed, their movements fueled by raw passion. Jennie's moans filled the air, a siren song that sent Brook's blood surging. He was determined to leave this enchanting woman breathless. Her moans became urgent, urging him on.

Suddenly, the door splintered open with a crash, shattering the mood. Startled, Brook stumbled back, Jennie clinging to him in a flurry of shock. Brook tossed a blanket over them, his anger flaring at the interruption.

"Well, well, well," Corrie drawled, a smirk playing on her lips. "Seems I've interrupted something delightful."

Brook's eyes narrowed. "Corrie, what the hell do you think you're doing?"

Jennie, sensing an opportunity, purred, "Hey there, shouldn't you knock before barging in? Brook and I were rather busy." She leaned in, planting a kiss on his cheek.

Corrie rolled her eyes, her amusement barely contained. “Spare me the theatrics, Jennie. I may not be a lady, but I’m certainly not a fool.”

Her gaze shifted to Brook, her voice laced with steel. “Get dressed. We’re leaving. Now.”

“Why should he? He promised to spend the night.” Jennie bristled.

Brook’s jaw clenched. “Corrie, can’t you be sensible? Why upset Jennie?” He threw her a pointed look. “And for your information, I’m not your husband yet.”

Corrie crossed her arms, looking at him coldly, clearly not taking his warning seriously.

Brook, seeing this, angrily threatened, “Are you out of your mind? Do my words mean nothing to you? Does the Bates family not want assistance from the Owen family anymore?”

Corrie, unfazed, crossed her arms. “Threats, Brook? How very becoming.”

“Old tactics can be effective,” he countered, his jaw clenched. “Apologize to Jennie, or my family’s support for yours dries up.”

Corrie’s smile was devoid of warmth. “Fine. Cut it off. My family doesn’t need your charity anymore.”

Brook’s face contorted in disbelief. “What do you mean?”

A sly smile spread across Corrie’s face. “Let’s just say my family has secured a direct line to the Owen resources. No middleman necessary.”

Her smile widened into a malicious grin. “You no longer have leverage, Brook.”

A harsh laugh escaped her lips before she turned her icy gaze on Jennie. “Now, let’s deal with this arrogant slut.”

Before Corrie could unleash her fury, Brook instinctively stepped in, shielding Jennie, and taking the brunt of her attack. He had taken numerous slaps for Jennie.

The next morning, Brook, nursing bruised cheeks and a throbbing head, called in sick. Elyse woke up to an empty bed. A flicker of emotion crossed her face before it was quickly replaced by a mask of indifference. He didn't want to share a bed? Fine. They wouldn't share one again.

Chapter 475:

Elyse had breakfast and then headed to the music studio, where she found Pearce waiting at the entrance. Seeing Pearce, Elyse's first instinct was to turn around, not wanting to upset Jayden again. But then she remembered Pearce was her cousin. Why should she avoid him?

Pearce noticed Elyse standing in a daze and called out to her, waving her over. After a moment's hesitation, Elyse walked over and asked, "Pearce, are you waiting for me?"

"What else would I be doing here?" Pearce responded, displaying the food he had brought and smiling brightly. "I had the chef prepare a nutritious meal for you. This will be good for you to have after your practice."

Elyse was surprised by his thoughtfulness and gratefully accepted it. "Thank you."

"I saw online that pregnant ladies crave things a lot and get hungry easily, but they can't just munch on anything. I wanted to check in and make sure you've got some good stuff to snack on. It's the least I could do for my favorite cousin!"

Elyse felt an unexpected wave of emotion. It was the first time a family member had shown her any concern. In the past, Lanny and Glenda only cared about Mabel, making her feel invisible at home. Now, she was finally feeling the warmth of family love.

"I'll be there to watch your performance tomorrow," Pearce said, patting Elyse's head. "I need to get to work now, so I can't stay with you longer." He waved and left.

After watching Pearce leave, Elyse entered the studio. Shortly after, Fiona arrived with her violin case. With a gossipy grin, Fiona walked over to Elyse and nudged her arm. “Who was that guy? You two looked quite close. I even saw him patting your head.”

Elyse blinked and said seriously, “He’s my cousin. It’s not a big deal for him to do that.”

Fiona made a teasing noise, a sly smile spreading across her face. “Your cousin, really? Not your lover?”

Elyse chuckled, shaking her head. “He really is my cousin. You’re reading too much into it.”

Fiona shrugged, waving her hand dismissively. “Alright, alright. My mistake. Let’s get to practice. The grand final is tomorrow, and I’m beyond nervous.”

Elyse nodded, feeling the weight of the upcoming final. The pressure had been almost unbearable these past few days, making her more anxious as days passed. They practiced until the afternoon when Gavin sent them home, insisting they rest. “A few more hours of practice won’t make a difference now,” he had said.

When Elyse arrived home, she hadn’t even had time to greet Driscoll before she heard Jayden’s enraged voice echoing from the study, “What does he mean? He’s warned me twice already and still dares to threaten me a third time?”

Intrigued, Elyse moved closer to the study, catching Driscoll’s voice in response.

“Please calm down. Maybe your grandpa wants you to return to the Owen Group. Why don’t you talk it over with him?”

Enzo? What had he done to infuriate Jayden so? Elyse listened intently as Jayden’s fury seeped through his words. “We’re beyond reconciliation. Can’t you see? He orchestrated that whole incident. I just haven’t found the evidence yet. He’s got me figured out too well. It’s been over a year, and I’m still empty-handed.”

There was a pause before Driscoll spoke again. “There’s little we can do. After all, you were brought up by him. It’s only natural for him to know you too well.”

As Jayden's anger seemed to subside, Elyse discreetly left the vicinity of the study and made her way to the dining room. The maid, who was tidying up, was surprised to see Elyse home early.

"You're back sooner than usual."

"Yes, the final is tomorrow, so I came home to rest early," Elyse explained with a nod. "I'm feeling a bit peckish. Could you prepare some fruit for me? Berries would be nice."

The maid's lips twitched, knowing well that the fruits Elyse desired were always out of season. Nevertheless, she replied respectfully, "Of course. I'll prepare them right away."

After giving the instructions, Elyse strolled out of the dining room and bumped into Driscoll, who was coming out from the study. She put on a composed facade and casually inquired, "Driscoll, you seem troubled. Is everything alright?"

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"You're back early. Allow me to prepare your afternoon tea," Driscoll deliberately avoided Elyse's question and started to retreat towards the kitchen.

"The maid's already preparing some food for me. You don't have to worry about it," Elyse informed him calmly.

Hearing this, Driscoll stopped in his tracks, flashed her an awkward smile, and asked stiffly, "Then how else may I help you? You seem to have something on your mind."

Elyse didn't want to beat around the bush. "I just heard some angry noises in the study. What happened?"

Driscoll averted his eyes embarrassedly and was unable to say anything for a long time. Finally, he furtively murmured, "It's not appropriate for me to talk about this with you. It'd be best if you talked to Mr. Owen instead."

With that, Driscoll excused himself and left quickly. He was afraid that if he stayed a second longer, Elyse would interrogate him.

Because she wasn't able to get any useful information out of Driscoll, Elyse couldn't help but glance pensively in the direction of the study.

Indeed, why not ask Jayden directly? But the two had just had a fierce quarrel. Would Jayden be willing to talk?

After hesitating for a long time, Elyse finally decided to bite the bullet and look for answers from her husband. While they did just have a big fight, they were still a couple at the end of the day. If anything bad happened to Jayden, she'd feel terribly guilty.

This line of thinking was what eventually convinced Elyse to knock on the door of the study. "Come in," came a deep voice from within the room.

Jayden glanced up from his computer and was a little surprised when he saw her, but the emotion lasted only for a moment. The next second, his expression was as indifferent and unreadable as usual.

"What's going on? Is something bothering you?" she said, walking up to Jayden's desk. "We're a couple, Jayden. I'm willing to share your burdens with you."

Jayden frowned slightly. "Did Driscoll say something to you?"

"No, I can just tell that something's wrong," Elyse said in frustration. "Jayden, I'm your wife. Please, you have to trust me. If there's something bothering you, just tell me. We'll face it together, okay?"

As long as Jayden was willing to tell her what he was going through right now, she could forgive him for what he did. She subconsciously clenched her fists as she looked at Jayden, feeling both nervous and expectant, hoping that he'd open up to her.

However, things went contrary to her wishes.

When Jayden heard her heartfelt words, his first reaction was to question her. Annoyance flickering across his sharp eyes, he snapped, “Why do you have so much time on your hands? Stop prying into my affairs. You’re going to take part in the final tomorrow, right? Can you just focus on the competition and mind your own business? Jesus!”

Elyse felt her blood run cold, her eyes staring blankly at the man in front of her. This was the last outcome she wanted. To add insult to injury, Jayden’s scowl widened.

“Elyse, do you know how annoying you’ve been lately? And don’t forget about that matter between you and Pearce; I haven’t gotten even with you yet. Well, here’s an idea—why don’t you mind your own business?”

All the color drained from Elyse’s face. “Wh-what did you mean?” she stammered.

Jayden opened his mouth to respond when an email notification pinged on his computer. His heart sank. He clicked on the email. He knew the sender—it was from Enzo’s old butler.

The old butler had previously sent Jayden two emails for his grandpa, demanding that Jayden return to the Owen Group and fuse the Bayzee Group with it. Jayden had simply ignored the first two emails, but this third email was different.

The threat in this email inexplicably set Jayden on edge. What did the old butler mean by saying that if Jayden didn’t agree to his demands, he’d destroy what Jayden held most dear? Even Jayden himself didn’t know what that was.

He wasn’t afraid of what his grandpa might do to him, but he did fear what he might do to the people around him.

Seeing that Jayden was distracted by something on his computer, Elyse bit her lip and asked in a low voice, “Jayden, have you forgotten that I’m your wife? What do you really think of me? All the love we shared between us—was it all fake?”

Jayden was already pissed by the email, so Elyse’s questioning only served to add fuel to the flame.

“I used to think you were my wife,” he snapped impatiently, “but now, I don’t know anymore. I’ll let you know if your status changes.”

Elyse fell silent, feeling as though Jayden had taken a knife and stabbed it into her heart a million times over. She wanted to ask Jayden if he meant what he said. Did he still love her? But she didn’t dare to utter the words. She was afraid that if she did, his answer would kill her.

Chapter 477:

Elyse could no longer bear to stay in the study and swiftly exited.

Jayden, feeling irritable, realized he had again allowed his emotions to best him, directing his frustration at Elyse. Yet, he was powerless to stop it. His grandpa’s threat instilled a deep, unexplainable fear in him. Did his grandpa suspect something?

While seated, Jayden pulled a cigar from the drawer and placed it between his lips. Living with Enzo since childhood, Jayden knew Enzo had a keen eye for deceit, seeing through even the smallest deceptions. He bit the cigar, lit it, inhaled deeply, and slowly let the smoke escape.

An hour had passed, and with it, his agitation had dissolved. With a heavy sigh, he stifled his lingering fears and wheeled himself back to the bedroom. Elyse was nowhere to be found.

His face shadowed with concern, he descended the stairs to the living room and queried Driscoll, “Where is Elyse?”

Driscoll, puzzled, responded, “I just left the kitchen and didn’t see her.”

At that moment, the maid, who was doing the cleaning, murmured, “I saw that she left the study and headed outside. I think she’s left.”

“Where did she go?” Jayden pressed.

“I saw her leaving in tears,” the maid whispered.

Driscoll, turning to Jayden, inquired, “Sir, have you spoken harshly to her again?”

Jayden, his face flushed with emotion, was at a loss for words. He had been harsh with Elyse, but wasn’t she also at fault? Why did she persist in prying into his affairs?

Jayden was exasperated by Elyse’s childish antics. He was used to her fleeing home repeatedly, but this time seemed different. Driscoll, feeling helpless, added, “This appears to be the first time she has actually fled. Usually, she just takes a walk when upset, but this time, I fear she may not return.”

With no solution at hand, Driscoll could only offer a consoling word. “Sir, you must find her. She has a competition tomorrow.”

Jayden’s expression grew stormier, questioning Driscoll’s accusatory tone. Had Elyse not also erred initially? Prompted by Driscoll, Jayden set out to find Elyse, unaware that during his absence, the fourth email from Enzo had arrived, waiting on his computer.

The email read, “My dear boy, your actions have greatly disappointed me. As the heir I hold dear, you’ve squandered many opportunities I’ve given you. A disobedient child must face consequences. This time, your punishment will begin with what you cherish most. I hope you can endure until the one you love vanishes from this world.”

Jayden was oblivious to the email, his thoughts once again consumed by Elyse. He lamented the troubles she brought him, although his actions displayed unmistakable worry and concern. Restless and unsure of his next steps, Jayden felt lost without any sign of Elyse.

It was only when the bodyguard informed him that Elyse was at Shaun’s villa that Jayden, with a grave expression, made his way there. Upon seeing Elyse’s distracted demeanor, Shaun anticipated Jayden’s rushed arrival. After leisurely finishing his tasks, Shaun approached Jayden with a coffee in hand.

Shaun remarked playfully, “What goes around comes around. Mr. Owen, is today your day to fetch your wife?”

With a hardened expression, Jayden coldly demanded, “Open the door. I’m here to pick up my wife.”

Shaun arched an eyebrow, saying, “I’m sorry, but I spoke with your wife before you arrived. She was just done crying and didn’t seem eager to see you. Would you prefer to leave?”

Jayden’s lips tightened, his eyes alight with determination. “Shaun, Elyse is my wife. It’s only natural that she goes back home with me.”

“Huh? Why fetch her if you’ve mistreated her?” Shaun prodded further, teasing, “You’ve upset her to the point she fled. Why are you angry with me? Shouldn’t you be pleading for her to return?”

Chapter 478:

Jayden could no longer tolerate the situation. He gestured sharply with his hand, signaling to his bodyguards who immediately prepared to storm the door, their actions aggressive and decisive.

Shaun’s smile grew broader as his eyes flashed a warning chill. “Are you planning to storm into my home just like that?” he asked through clenched teeth.

“I simply wish to bring my wife back home,” Jayden retorted, his voice tinged with irritation. “You’re in my way.”

Shaun tightened his fists and retorted, “So, you’re ignoring my warnings and attempting to forcefully enter? Or do you believe I’m quite accommodating?” Jayden replied with a sneer.

Attempting to calm himself, Shaun took a deep breath, then, with a sudden change in demeanor, he stepped aside, gesturing for Jayden to enter. Suspicious, Jayden queried sharply, “What are you scheming?”

“No schemes,” Shaun responded, his tone laced with disdain. “Consider this an invitation.” His polite words contrasted with the clear suspicion in his voice.

He looked at Jayden with a mix of disdain and pity. "If Elyse chooses not to see you, it's out of my hands."

Biting back curses, Jayden managed to hold his tongue. Shaun, noticing Jayden's frustration, felt a surge of satisfaction. "Mr. Owen, you've upset your wife, yet it seems you're oblivious to certain facts."

"What are you referring to?" Jayden asked, his brow furrowed in confusion.

Realization dawned on Shaun that Elyse had kept the pregnancy from Jayden for days. It appeared the couple wasn't as content and affectionate as he had observed. Reflecting on this, Shaun's animosity towards Jayden diminished somewhat, giving way to a sense of pity. Why hold a grudge against a man unaware of his wife's pregnancy? He concluded that pity, rather than anger, was the appropriate response for such an oblivious fellow.

Once again, he gestured invitingly. "Please, come in. My invitation is genuine."

Still wary, Jayden scrutinized Shaun, puzzled by his change in attitude but eager to find Elyse. He stepped into Shaun's villa and made his way to the living room, only to find no sign of Elyse. Instead, Tracy stood there, clad in a purple silk dress. She stood expressionless, her hands hanging loosely by her sides as she watched him.

He glanced briefly at her, then, not seeing Elyse, turned to Tracy and demanded, "Where is Elyse? Have her come out. I'll take her home."

"Elyse doesn't want to go home with you. You should leave," Tracy replied softly.

Jayden frowned. "Is she still angry? Tell her I know I was wrong. Ask her to come out and back home with me."

Tracy regarded him with calm eyes. "I don't think you understand what you did wrong. Please leave now. I won't call Elyse for you."

Impatiently, Jayden retorted, "Elyse is my wife. What do you mean by stopping me? Don't you want us to reconcile?"

Shaun stepped beside Tracy, protective and stern. "Since when have we become barriers in your relationship? Did we upset Elyse? Mr. Owen, be reasonable."

Rubbing his forehead, Jayden snapped, "Shaun, if you don't bring Elyse to me, I will take matters into my own hands."

"Enough!" Elyse shouted from the second-floor landing.

All eyes turned upward. She stood by the stair railing, her eyes red and swollen, her hair disheveled, with traces of tears still visible on her cheeks. Seeing her distress, Tracy immediately expressed concern.

"Elyse, are you okay? Go back to your room, and we can handle this."

Elyse shook her head at Tracy, then fixed her gaze on Jayden, who remained silent. She thought of the past days, wondering how things had reached this point. Tears began to flow again as she spoke in a trembling voice.

"Go back. I'm staying here today. I won't go home."

Jayden responded firmly, "No, you are my wife. You have to come home with me."

A bitter smile crossed Elyse's face. "Do you see me as your wife, or as a tool for your use? Jayden, I'm not a puppet under your command. I have my own thoughts. If you truly regarded me as your wife, how could you disregard my feelings?"

Jayden was perplexed. "When did I treat you like a puppet? I love you so much. Can't you see that?"

Chapter 479:

Elyse's eyes reflected a deep sadness as she seemed to understand Jayden's unspoken words. She fixed her gaze on him, the dozen meters between them feeling like miles. The air was thick with unspoken truths.

With a tightness in her throat, Elyse whispered, "See? I was right—you don't understand. You've overlooked my love; how could you possibly see my suffering?"

Jayden strained to hear her faint words. Seeing her lips move, he asked, perplexed, "What? I didn't quite catch that."

"I said you can go back now. I need some time alone; I'll return when I'm ready," Elyse replied, her eyes reluctantly breaking away from his as she turned to leave, her solitary figure a stark contrast to the emptiness around her.

Jayden's frustration surged, his voice rising. "Elyse, if you walk away now, don't bother coming back!"

His shout reverberated through the quiet, the second floor suddenly feeling deserted, as if Elyse had never been there.

Though Tracy had once received Jayden's help, she found herself torn but couldn't stay silent any longer. His words had crossed a line.

"Do you really need to be so harsh?" Tracy exclaimed. "Elyse is a person; she has feelings. Can't you see how much your words hurt her?"

As Jayden's face darkened, Tracy shook her head, disappointed. "When will you ever learn?" Without another word, she ascended the stairs to find Elyse.

Meanwhile, Jayden stood still, his heart racing as he felt control slipping away. The walls he'd built around himself were not just cracking—they were collapsing, and he was powerless to repair them.

Shaun watched the drama unfold with a sly grin, taunting Jayden. "Mr. Owen, you really are pitiful. Your own wife asked you to leave. Looks like you two won't be resolving things anytime soon." His tone was mocking, pushing Jayden's buttons with glee.

Jayden clenched his jaw tightly and took several deep breaths, attempting to quell his rising anger. At last, he turned and made to leave.

Shaun, caught off guard by Jayden's decisive exit, called out, "You're just going to leave your wife like this?"

Jayden paused, his silence heavy. Finally, he replied, "She's still upset. I'll return to pick her up once she's calmed down."

Shaun stroked his chin, a skeptical look crossing his face. "Playing the good guy now, are you? What about all that you just said?"

Upstairs in the guest room, Tracy reached Elyse's door, knocked softly, and pushed it open. The room was enveloped in darkness. Tracy stepped inside and shut the door behind her, reaching for the light switch, but Elyse stopped her.

"Stop. I just want to stay in the dark for a while." Elyse's voice broke with a sob.

"Okay, the light stays off. Don't worry," Tracy assured her, navigating through the dark until she found Elyse. She took Elyse's hand and sat down beside her, wrapping an arm around her shoulders as Elyse continued to cry.

Feeling Elyse's sorrow, Tracy spoke softly. "I thought Jayden wouldn't hurt you like this, but he's clearly upset you."

Elyse shook her head slowly. "It's not exactly hurt. It's just... being with him is so draining."

"What exactly is making you feel so drained?" Tracy asked, her curiosity tinged with concern.

Elyse's voice trembled with sadness. "I can't reach him. He's built a fortress around his heart. He stays inside, not willing to come out, and I can't find a way in. I've tried knocking, tried to communicate, but he just ignores it, sealing himself away."

Tears choked her voice as she continued, "I've tried everything to reach him, but nothing changes. I've always felt so shut out."

Tracy, stunned by the depth of Elyse's pain, gently touched her head, offering comfort. "Maybe Jayden doesn't know how to open up."

"Sometimes I feel deeply loved by him; he takes such good care of me. But other times, it feels like he doesn't love me at all, like his care is just a habit," Elyse cried, despair clouding her eyes. "He never considers sharing the harder parts of life with me."

Tracy fell silent, realizing that the issues between Elyse and Jayden were deep and personal, not something easily intervened in.

"What can I say? My own relationship is a mess too. It seems I can't offer much help," Tracy admitted ruefully.

In the enveloping darkness, Elyse's voice was soft yet resolute. "I just want to be closer to him, for our hearts to be nearer. If our hearts can't connect, then no matter how many times we're together, it doesn't feel like true love."

Chapter 480:

Elyse cried for a long while. When she felt sleepy, the door of the room opened again. Shaun entered, turned on the light, and said flatly, "Stop crying. Go downstairs for dinner."

Both Elyse and Tracy covered their eyes. They had been in darkness for too long and found the dazzling light uncomfortable.

Tracy was the first to open her eyes. She stood up angrily, rushed to the door where Shaun was, and punched him in the chest. "Why did you turn on the light suddenly?"

Shaun winced in pain, grabbed her fist with a stern look, and held her tightly.

"Let me go!" she demanded, hitting him repeatedly.

Elyse covered her face and said in a hoarse tone, "I have no appetite. You guys can have dinner without me."

Tracy was about to persuade her when Shaun interrupted, "No way. You must eat something. I've asked the chef to prepare nutritious dishes specially for pregnant women."

"He's right, Elyse. You really should eat," Tracy added. Then, she paused, realization dawning on her. She turned to Shaun in astonishment. "Specially for pregnant women? Who is pregnant?" she asked in a panic.

Shaun pointed at Elyse, who remained silent, and replied, "Who else could it be? Of course, it's your friend."

"Oh my! You're pregnant? Why didn't you tell me?" Tracy shook off Shaun's hand and ran to Elyse, asking worriedly, "How long have you been pregnant? Does Jayden know?"

Shaun responded, "If Jayden knew she was pregnant, he wouldn't let her stay at my place. He would definitely take her away, even if he had to demolish my house."

Elyse, realizing Tracy was worried, slowly held Tracy's hand. Her face was pale, but she managed a weak smile. "Don't worry. My baby is only two months old and still small. I'm not ready to tell Jayden yet," she said softly.

Tracy, sensing Elyse's mood, asked, "Why don't you tell him? Are you considering an abortion?"

Elyse caressed her belly with a gentle expression. "At first, I considered abortion," she confessed. "But now, I've decided against it. Even if Jayden doesn't want the baby, I'll keep it."

Tracy's surprise was evident. "He doesn't want the baby?"

Elyse nodded. "He's told me he doesn't like children."

Tracy turned to Shaun, her expression one of utter disbelief. Shaun, catching her look of confusion, sighed deeply. "You still need to tell Jayden about the pregnancy," he advised. "If he still rejects the idea of having a child, you might think about divorce. But he deserves to know the truth."

Elyse bit her lip, uncertain of how to respond.

After a moment's thought, Shaun added, "He's the father, after all. He should know, right?"

Tracy supported Shaun's viewpoint. She reassured Elyse, "Despite your issues with Jayden and your disappointment, you can't keep this a secret. It'll become obvious as your pregnancy progresses."

Elyse looked up, her eyes flickering with realization. "You're right."

Relieved by Elyse's acceptance, Tracy encouraged her, "Let's go have dinner, for the baby's sake. Besides, you have a competition tomorrow. You need to eat to keep your spirits up."

After a brief silence, Elyse rose and followed Tracy downstairs. Shaun watched Elyse's retreating figure, debating whether to call Jayden to inform him. He worried about the potential emotional toll on Elyse if she miscarried while under his roof. After pondering the situation, he decided to keep the pregnancy a secret, considering his and Tracy's recently improved relationship.

"Let it be," he muttered to himself. "She's Tracy's best friend. I should look after her."

After leaving Shaun's house, Jayden dialed Clive to meet for drinks. He arrived at a nightclub's designated room and waited. Thirty minutes later, Clive appeared, accompanied by Peyton, who was in a wheelchair.

Upon seeing Peyton, Jayden's brow furrowed in displeasure. "What are you doing here?"

“I’m here to keep you company!” Peyton retorted, pulling out a coke from his pocket.
“You drink your alcohol, and I’ll have my coke.”

Clive settled onto the sofa, explaining, “I was visiting Peyton in the hospital when you called. He overheard our plans and insisted on joining us.”