

## Chapter 49 She Was No Longer The Girl Before

The discussion of her classmates sobered Lizzie up considerably. Moments ago, she had been beside herself and couldn't fathom why she had acted so impulsively. Now, she was regaining her composure, finding herself in an awkward position.

Jayden smoothed his jacket and inspected the red wine stains, realizing the jacket was beyond repair. He gazed at Lizzie's alarmed expression and asked in a flat tone, "How do you plan to resolve this?"

Elyse gently touched the back of Jayden's hand, signaling him not to intervene. She sharply addressed Lizzie, "Lizzie Robinson, did you intend to embarrass me?"

"No! I didn't! I just wanted to have a toast and move past our old quarrels!" Lizzie protested.

She knew she couldn't confess to doing it deliberately. With a sorrowful look, she pleaded, "Elyse, your husband is wealthy. It's only a jacket. Can't you ask him to overlook this, for old times' sake since we were classmates?"

Elyse's irritation flared, and she burst out laughing. "Whether intentional or not, you've ruined my husband's jacket. His wealth isn't just conjured up. Why should he overlook your actions?"

"You are wealthy, yet so petty. Fine. I'll pay for the jacket, whatever the cost," Lizzie retorted, her anger evident.

Elyse sneered, "Can you afford it?"

"My fiancé is wealthy. He makes a million a year. I'll ask him to cover it!"

Lizzie declared, gathering her courage. Even if her fiancé was prepared to pay, it would be a difficult conversation for her. Money was paramount

to him, and she often had to negotiate at length just to get some spending money.

But it was only a jacket. She couldn't imagine it being worth that much, even if it was pricey.

Jayden stroked his chin and remarked, "I'm afraid his wealth may not be enough to cover this jacket."

Lizzie was taken aback. How much could the jacket possibly cost?

Elyse was also stunned. She had seen Lanny's custom suits before. The priciest was around fifty or sixty thousand. If even Lizzie's fiancé couldn't afford it, how expensive were his jacket?

"What will you do, Lizzie? It seems neither you nor your fiancé can afford it."

Lizzie looked into Elyse's eyes, which were ice cold. She suddenly realized that Elyse was no longer the girl she remembered. With a wealthy husband, Elyse's social status had soared.

Would Elyse use her newfound position to crush her in the future? Lizzie sobered up instantly.

Apologizing might her best choice now. If she truly angered Elyse, the latter might convince her husband to sabotage her fiancé's career.

Lizzie wasn't foolish. After a moment of thought, tears streamed down her face as she pleaded, "Elyse, I didn't mean for this to happen. You know my family isn't wealthy. I can't afford to replace your husband's jacket. What should I do? Should I kneel and apologize to you?"

Elyse intervened before Lizzie could act on her words. How could she allow Lizzie to kneel? That would make her and Jayden look like villains for bullying Lizzie.

She glanced at Jayden and said coolly, "A sincere apology will suffice. We don't expect you to compensate us financially."

Seizing the moment, Lizzie, wise in her desperation, bowed deeply to Jayden and Elyse in apology. Jayden, not wanting to exacerbate the situation, nodded in acceptance, and the matter was resolved.

Elyse also nodded. "Alright, you can go join the dinner now. We're good."

Grateful yet disheartened, Lizzie left.

When the others noticed that Elyse and Jayden had settled for an apology, they began to speak up in defense. "Do you really forgive her that easily? Lizzie has always been the first to make things difficult for Elyse whenever she faced trouble."

"Exactly! Lizzie even said that Elyse was a jinx and she was destined for hardship."

"You're too kind. If it were my jacket, I'd at least make her pay for the cleaning."

The crowd murmured their opinions, but Jayden and Elyse remained silent, choosing not to engage further on the matter.

After dinner, sitting in the car, Elyse said to Jayden, "Don't step in for me in the future. If you do, people might say you pick on women, and it's not good for your reputation."

"You only got an apology, and my jacket is ruined," Jayden remarked.

Elyse responded with a hint of embarrassment, "It's true that Lizzie can't afford to compensate for the jacket. I think preserving your good reputation tonight is more important than the jacket."

Jayden chuckled. "You really did think about me."

Holding his hand, Elyse smiled and said, "You stood up for me, and I protect your reputation. We look out for each other. Isn't that wonderful?"

Seeing her cheerful smile, Jayden couldn't help but smile too, touched by her openness and sincerity.

"Should I thank you for defending my reputation then?" he teased.

Caught by Jayden's relaxed demeanor, Elyse felt her heart skip a beat again.