

## Bound love 541

Chapter 541:

“Have you lost your mind?” Corrie exclaimed in disbelief. “Louis is dead. Why on earth should I kneel and beg for his forgiveness?”

She continued, her voice rising with anger, “And let’s not forget, Louis died trying to save you. You think I’m unaware? He was right there in the car during your accident. He died because of you!”

Her accusations sent Jayden over the edge. In a fit of fury, he grabbed her and forcefully pressed her head against Louis’ tombstone. “Apologize now, or I’ll leave you here all night.”

“What’s wrong with you?” Corrie retorted, her voice laced with defiance. “Why should I apologize? This is your fault, not mine. Don’t you dare try to pin all of this on me!” Corrie instantly regretted having called Jayden for help, blaming her own impulsive decision.

As she left Enzo’s residence, Enzo had contacted her with a disturbing request. He wanted her to do something drastic, something that would cause Elyse to miscarry.

Corrie was puzzled. Why had Enzo shifted his target from Jayden to Jayden’s unborn child? Despite her reservations, she knew she had to follow through with his orders.

She had already discovered that Elyse was hospitalized with complications related to her pregnancy.

Driven by her mission, Corrie planned to agitate Elyse enough to endanger the pregnancy, fulfilling Enzo’s grim task.

But she hadn’t anticipated Jayden’s madness. His erratic behavior had escalated to the point of dragging her to the cemetery.

“Let me go!” Corrie’s voice pierced the air, laced with fear and defiance. “You psycho! I’ll freaking kill you!” She thrashed against Jayden’s grip, her hands and feet fighting for freedom.

Annoyance flickered across Jayden’s face as he shoved her away with a forceful kick.

Despite wearing an expensive dress, Corrie opted to crawl away on the ground. After putting some distance between herself and Jayden, she got to her feet and observed him with caution.

Jayden didn’t even bother to look at her. He crouched down and reached out to touch Louis’ tombstone.

Louis’ name and portrait adorned it, the young man’s smile frozen in time.

Despite the darkness obscuring Louis’ features in the photo, Jayden reached out his fingers, tracing the lines of Louis’ face.

Bitterness welled up inside him as he lingered there.

The anniversary of Louis’s passing had slipped by unnoticed by Jayden, a fact that now weighed heavily on him. He hadn’t joined Peyton and other friends to pay their respects, unable to confront the pain of losing Louis.

Tonight, however, circumstances had led him here, to this solitary visit to Louis’s grave.

Gazing at the tombstone, Jayden muttered, “This is the woman you cared about. I’ve brought her here. She played a role in your demise. And you know I’ll never let her go.”

With those words, Jayden stood, shot a sneering glance at Corrie in the distance, and turned to leave, heading towards the cemetery’s entrance.

Watching him walk away, Corrie breathed a sigh of relief. But suddenly, fear gripped her.

She gathered her dress and dashed after Jayden. Seeing him climb into his car without waiting, panic set in.

Corrie ran after him, calling out, “Jayden Owen! Wait for me! Don’t leave without me!”

But Jayden ignored her. He had promised to pick her up only to make her visit Louis, not to drive her home.

Corrie had already sided with Enzo, and Jayden wouldn’t treat his “ex-girlfriend” in the same manner anymore.

“Jayden! Jayden!” Corrie sprinted after the car so fervently that she lost her high heels. She pursued him desperately, but Jayden’s car soon disappeared around the corner.

Corrie felt a chill in her heart.

She glanced around nervously. The cemetery was so eerie in the darkness of night that she couldn’t bear to stay another moment.

Pulling out her phone, she attempted to call another friend for help, only to realize that her Facebook post had already informed everyone she had been seen getting into a man’s car.

Calling for help again would mean that by morning, everyone would be talking about how she ended up abandoned in the cemetery.

Undeterred, she continued scrolling through her contacts, hoping to find someone who could come to her rescue.

Meanwhile, Jayden hurried back to the hospital.

Upon entering the ward, he caught Peyton giving him a knowing wink. He spared a quick glance at Elyse, who was deep in sleep, before stepping out with Peyton.

As they reached the stairwell, Peyton confronted him with anger. “What were you thinking? How could you have picked up Corrie Bates so late? Don’t you think it’s inappropriate? Aren’t you concerned about Elyse and your unborn child?”

Jayden furrowed his brow, “Look, I needed to get even with Corrie. It’s not what you’re thinking.”

“Does it even matter what I think?” Peyton exploded. “You avoided explaining yourself and left Elyse behind again. Didn’t you promise to treat her better?”

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Jayden furrowed his brow. “I was only out for a few hours. You’re being too serious, no need to lay into me so harshly.”

Peyton was seething. He had stayed up waiting for Jayden, who never seemed to appreciate his efforts. He had said those words to Jayden because he hoped that Jayden and Elyse would get along better.

But now, Jayden was accusing him of being too serious and overly harsh.

Frustrated, Peyton blurted out, “Why can’t you see my point? Sometimes I just want to crack open your head and see what’s inside.”

Jayden responded firmly, “I had my reasons for meeting Corrie Bates. Don’t worry, nothing’s going on. I don’t even like her.”

Peyton rolled his eyes. “Whether you like her or not isn’t the issue. It’s about you and Elyse.”

He wanted to explain further, but the stern look on Jayden’s face stopped him. It hit him then—he could never change Jayden’s mind.

Jayden had always despised Enzo’s way of thinking, yet he had been raised by Enzo. As a result, his own thought processes and actions bore a resemblance to Enzo’s.

Struck by this realization, Peyton found himself at a loss for words.

Jayden had adhered to this mindset for nearly 30 years. Peyton doubted a few words would alter his perspective.

Perhaps Jayden didn't recognize his errors but felt he was addressing something critical. Peyton realized the root of the issue and pondered how to best explain it to Jayden.

He paused, collecting his thoughts, then suggested, "Tomorrow, when Elyse wakes up, tell her everything that happened after you met Corrie Bates."

Jayden's brow furrowed in confusion. "Do I really have to?"

"It's essential," Peyton insisted, his voice firm. "If you don't, you might lose her forever." Peyton's voice grew louder, trying to emphasize his point.

Despite his doubts, Jayden reluctantly nodded, though he wasn't fully convinced of the need for such a disclosure.

Relieved but exhausted, Peyton wiped the sweat from his brow. In his eyes, Jayden was undeniably a clueless fool.

The following morning, as Elyse gradually came to life against her pillow, Jayden, hearing her stir, sat up in another bed.

Catching a glimpse of him, Elyse was unsure of when Jayden had returned. Deciding it was better not to pry, she resolved to keep out of his affairs.

Jayden had yet to grasp the severity of the situation. Once he was clearheaded, he remembered Peyton's warning and paused to think. He then began to unfold the events of the previous night after encountering Corrie.

As he finished recounting the story, he looked at Elyse uncertainly and asked, "Were you upset, Elyse?"

With a gentle smile, Elyse responded, “Upset? Not at all, Jayden.”

Jayden noticed her radiant smile and felt something was off, but he dismissed the thought that she could be angry, given how brightly she was smiling at him.

In the past, an angry Elyse would have given him the cold shoulder, but now she not only engaged in conversation but also smiled warmly. It didn’t seem like she was upset at all.

He mused that Elyse had grown more mature since her pregnancy.

Unaware of Jayden’s thoughts, Elyse closed her eyes to rest, her mind heavy with doubts about their marriage. She believed their relationship had stalled—neither exceptionally good nor particularly bad.

She reassured herself that their marriage was far better than many, deciding to be content and not let external factors affect her or her unborn child.

When they later rose for the day, Driscoll arrived punctually with breakfast. He immediately sensed Elyse’s somber mood. As Elyse ate, he escorted Jayden out of the ward and whispered, “Sir, have you upset your wife?”

Jayden’s face tightened with a frown. “No, I didn’t.”

Driscoll remained skeptical.

Though he considered Jayden a good man, he couldn’t overlook his slowness in matters of the heart.

Driscoll countered, “Impossible. She seemed quite upset. What happened between you two after I left last night?”

His probing seemed to strike a nerve. Jayden fixed a stern gaze on Driscoll and snapped, “I told you, nothing happened. Don’t you trust me?”

Realizing he had pushed too far, Driscoll bowed his head, prepared to face any reprimand Jayden deemed fit.

Yet, Jayden did nothing more. Masking his concern with indifference, he turned and walked away.

Still, he couldn't shake the nagging thought—was Elyse really angry? Had he inadvertently upset her again?

Meanwhile, in her hospital ward, Elyse was midway through a meal when her phone rang. It was Mabel.

Elyse swiped to answer, and Mabel's haughty tone filled the air.

"Elyse Lloyd, I'm offering you a chance. Find my father a defense attorney, and I'll overlook everything you've done in the past."

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Elyse nibbled on blueberries and then asked, her voice taking on a sharp, cold edge. "Excuse me? Who do you think you are? Your father caused a fatal car crash, and now you want me to find you a defense lawyer? Have you lost it?"

Mabel responded with a dismissive shrug, "I looked into the accident. The victim was an elderly woman, already on death's door after numerous medical interventions. She was languishing in the hospital, waiting to die.

My father merely hastened her end, freeing her from her misery. If anything, she should be grateful, not have him imprisoned."

Despite being braced for Mabel's absurd justifications, Elyse's anger flared uncontrollably.

"Lanny Lloyd is a monster. Are you aspiring to be one too? How can you be so cruel?"

Noticing Elyse's rising fury, Mabel's excitement peaked, her tone turning haughty.

"Oh, so you don't want to help find a lawyer for my father.

You just want to see him behind bars, right? Well, I hate to disappoint you, but that's not going to happen."

Elyse scoffed, "A life for a life. Are you planning to break him out of jail?"

"Stay out of it!" Mabel snapped back, her voice harsh. "Just so you know, your plans will fail. I'll walk my dad out of there legally, and we'll go home together."

With a frown, Elyse asked, "What do you plan to do?"

Mabel replied with a hint of smugness, "You'll see. Just remember, I'm not going to let you win."

"Oh, what a drag!" Elyse's expression darkened as she ended their conversation.

She had never planned to compete against Mabel, especially not in this so-called "battle" where Dorothy's life was involved.

The call from Mabel left Elyse feeling disgusted and ruined her appetite. She set down her spoon and leaned back against the cushion, resolving to discuss it with Morgan later.

Before she could call Morgan, however, the police station called to inform her that Lanny had been declared not guilty and released.

Confused, Elyse pressed, "Why was Lanny Lloyd released? He was the one who hit the old lady in the car accident, and there was clear evidence, right?"

The police explained, "His family submitted a medical report proving he has a mental illness. Additionally, someone posted his bail. Therefore, he was found not guilty, and his case has been postponed."



“A mental illness?” Elyse confirmed it in disbelief before she finally hung up the phone.

Remembering Mabel’s haughty call from earlier that morning, Elyse couldn’t help but snort dismissively. “No surprise there. She was too bold. Clearly, she had been ready for anything.”

Inside the car, Lanny sat deeply appreciative of the lawyer who had secured his release. “Mr. Blakely, you’re practically a miracle worker to me now. Thank you for your help. I’m at your service,” he declared with earnest gratitude.

Harley Blakely, the lawyer, simply smiled and swirled the wine in his goblet, choosing not to respond.

Feeling embarrassed, Mabel pulled at the hem of Lanny’s shirt and murmured, “Dad, there’s no need to debase yourself. He’s just a friend of a friend. You don’t owe him anything.”

“Quiet! You don’t understand a thing.” Lanny was involved in a fatal car accident that took Dorothy’s life. Ordinarily, a medical report claiming mental instability wouldn’t be enough to free him so easily.

Yet, he was out of detention within a day. Clearly, Harley had used more than just the report to arrange his release.

Lanny was certain Harley had employed additional networks and resources to secure his release.

While Lanny often felt like a failure, he had a keen eye for influential figures and knew how to align himself with them.

From just one look, he knew there was something special about Harley and made the decision to stick by him. “Mr. Blakely, you’ve kept me out of prison. How can I thank you enough? Just say the word. I’m at your service.”

Over a sip of wine, Harley inquired, “You’ll meet any demand?”

Lanny, beaming eagerly, responded as soon as he understood Harley had a specific request in mind. “Absolutely! Whatever you need, consider it done.”

Harley gave Mabel a significant look.

Mabel looked puzzled.

Quick to catch on, Lanny narrowed his eyes and proposed cautiously, “If that’s what you need, Mr. Blakely, perhaps we might think bigger.”

With a casual tone, Harley asked, “What are you suggesting?”

Lanny asked with uncertainty, “Is there a chance we could talk about a million dollars?”

Finding the suggestion amusing, Harley laughed and replied, “Just one million? One million for three days. I’ll bring her back to you in three days.”

“Deal!” Lanny agreed without hesitation.

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Lanny nodded, casting a significant glance at Mabel.

The intense stares from the two men sent shivers down Mabel’s spine, igniting a foreboding feeling in her heart. Yet, she chose to trust Lanny. He was, after all, her father.

She couldn’t believe that her own father would harm her. Mabel tried to convince herself, squashing the rising panic within her.

But ten minutes later, Harley abruptly pulled the car over to the roadside, and Lanny immediately got out.

Mabel moved to follow him, but Lanny sharply rebuked, "Have you lost your senses? Get back inside. Otherwise, you're not coming back home."

After shouting, he slammed the car door shut, cutting off her chance to respond.

Staring after him in shock, Mabel's voice trembled as she said, "Dad, I'm your flesh and blood. How can you treat me like this? You've completely lost it!"

Lanny retorted, "Don't you realize my company is on the verge of bankruptcy? All you do is spend money without contributing anything, just like your mother. I need money to survive. Can't you understand that?"

"I don't get it. You've actually sold me to someone for a million dollars."

Mabel tried to open the door, but Harley yanked her back.

Desperately, she screamed through the window at Lanny, "Dad! Help me! I'm your daughter, your own flesh and blood!"

Lanny was well aware that Mabel was his biological daughter, yet he was desperately short on cash. Without money, he couldn't sustain his life.

In the past, his connection with Jayden helped him scrape by. But after his fallout with Elyse, Jayden cut him off completely.

Now, Harley was offering him a substantial sum. How could Lanny pass up such an opportunity?

He convinced himself it was a good trade, even if it meant giving up Mabel.

After all, in just three days, he could earn a million dollars, an astonishing feat.

Lanny stood by the roadside, his phone buzzing with a notification from his bank. A transfer of one million dollars had been completed. He shook his head and murmured to himself, "Mabel, you just don't get it. I'm doing this for our future too."

He suspected that Harley could decide to marry Mabel once he saw the benefits over the next three days.

This would also fulfill Glenda's dream of finding a good husband for Mabel.

Elyse ended the call and didn't talk to Jayden. Instead, she went to meet Morgan.

Morgan, knowing Elyse was pregnant, had forbidden her from coming close to the funeral home. So, they met at a café near the hospital.

Upon her arrival, Morgan eyed Elyse's belly with concern and said, "You should be in the hospital, stabilizing your condition. I could have come to your ward. Why insist on meeting here?"

Elyse took a sip of her milk and answered, "I needed some fresh air, and I feel much better now. Besides, I'm checking out tomorrow to go home. I don't have to stay in the hospital the whole time."

After a moment, she set down her milk and continued, "Did you see my message? Lanny Lloyd is still free. I can't stand it."

Morgan considered this and suggested, "You should talk to Jayden about this. He's well-connected. Lanny Lloyd couldn't have a mental illness. Jayden can uncover the truth."

After a brief pause, Elyse said, "I'll tell him later. He's gone to the company and is busy right now."

Morgan looked enlightened and asked directly, "Elyse, are you trying to find out more details about the murder of your father?"

Elyse, biting her bottom lip, nodded with difficulty.

Morgan had brought it up once before. For weeks, Elyse had been consumed with wanting to know the details.

Morgan, however, hadn't brought it up again, and Elyse couldn't bear the wait any longer.

Today, with Lanny being acquitted and released, her desire for answers had only intensified.

She had to ask Morgan for the details.

Morgan, with a wry smile, responded in a concerned tone, "I'd rather not talk about it now. You're pregnant, and I worry it might be too much for you and lead to complications. That's why I've kept quiet."

Elyse replied anxiously, "I understand you're looking out for me, Morgan, but I need to know how my father died. I want to seek justice for him."

Morgan looked at her intently. "Elyse, the truth is harsh. Are you sure you're prepared to face it?"

Elyse nodded gravely. "Yes, I've decided."

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Elyse knew the truth was harsh, but as her parents' child, how could she escape it and live her life in blissful ignorance?

Morgan looked at Elyse and saw the resolve in her eyes, realizing she had overanalyzed and kept Elyse in suspense for too long.

She picked up the coffee cup on the table, took a small sip, and mulled over where to begin. Finally, she asked, "Did you know your father could play the violin?"

Elyse nodded and replied, “My instructor, Mr. Cody Tucker, mentioned that my father was a brilliant violinist with an extraordinary gift!”

Morgan said, “Cody Tucker? Oh, right, you became his apprentice. How could I have forgotten him?” .

Hearing Cody’s name, Morgan patted her forehead as memories came rushing back, realizing she had completely overlooked him.

“Your father and Cody were more than just fellow students; they shared a deep bond.

Whenever I went to the music hall to find your father, they were often immersed in discussions about music,” Morgan said, her mind drifting momentarily to those days.

After a brief pause, she looked up and smiled at Elyse, a smile tinged with sorrow. “But your father was disowned by his family for marrying your mother. Later, to support the family, he set aside his musical dreams and started his own company to make ends meet.”

Elyse was taken aback. “Did my dad really give up on music?”

“Not entirely,” Morgan said, her voice softening. “I asked your dad about it, and he casually mentioned...” Morgan sniffled, her eyes welling up.

“He said he never truly abandoned music. Once he could ensure a stable life for the family, he intended to pursue his dream again. He always had that dream.”

With tears brimming, Morgan continued, “He managed to establish the company. Although it didn’t reach the pinnacle, it provided stability. I watched your parents’ life improve.”

She paused, taking a deep breath before saying, “Tragically, just before you were born, they had a car accident. You were brought into the world prematurely and placed in an incubator.”

Elyse had no inkling of such an event surrounding her birth. She only knew she was often sickly as a child, more fragile than other kids.

Yet, Lanny and Glenda never truly cared for her, often denying her food and refusing to seek medical treatment when she fell ill.

To survive, Elyse often had to cater to Mabel's whims to secure medicine and food. Over time, Mabel started treating Elyse like her maid and bossing her around.

Morgan gazed at the silent Elyse and murmured, "Despite the car accident, your parents were not dead back then."

Elyse slowly lifted her head, her eyes filled with shock and bewilderment.

"In the instant of the crash, your father shielded your mother. After you were born, your mother was frail but still alive.

Morgan reminisced. "Your father was in critical condition, slipping into a coma, but the doctors believed he could gradually recover with treatment. It wasn't a lost cause."

Elyse's eyes widened, her mouth agape in disbelief. "So my parents survived?!"

"Absolutely! How could they perish so easily? There was always a glimmer of hope!"

Morgan angrily pounded the table, her eyes blazing with resentment.

"But Lanny, your wretched uncle, a useless good-for-nothing, got your aunt-in-law pregnant and couldn't support his family, accumulating mountains of debt."

Morgan paused, her eyes flashing with hatred.

"Somehow, he learned about your parents' accident and concocted a diabolical plan. He went to the hospital, removed your father's oxygen mask, strangled your mother, took over your father's company, and embezzled the enormous insurance payout your dad had secured for you."

Elyse trembled all over. “Lanny murdered my parents for money?”

Morgan nodded grimly. “Yes, the small company Lanny runs now was originally your father’s. Do you know why he took you in instead of abandoning you in an orphanage? Because the compensation money could only be claimed when you turned eighteen.”

Elyse drifted into a memory. “When I turned eighteen, Lanny bought a new car. At that time, the company was already struggling, and no one knew where he got the money for a new car.”

Morgan sneered. “I was your father’s right-hand person in the company. If he were still managing it, how could it remain a small enterprise after twenty years? It was due to Lanny’s incompetence and squandering that the company remained a small one.”

After revealing everything, Morgan gripped Elyse’s hand tightly. “Don’t let Lanny Lloyd get away with it. He’s a monster. I witnessed him murder with my own eyes!”

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Elyse nodded thoughtfully. “So, you’ve been hiding from Lanny for over twenty years because you saw him commit a murder?”

Morgan clenched her jaw. “I possess evidence of his crime. He’s been trying to destroy it all these years.”

Elyse was quiet. After a significant pause, she raised her head and said softly, “He was cleared of all charges. His obsession with killing you hasn’t faded, so he’ll attempt it again.”

Morgan sneered, “Kill me? Perfect, I want to kill him too, for my revenge.”

Elyse understood Morgan’s deep-seated hatred. Lanny had not only murdered her parents but also Morgan’s mother. Even Elyse wouldn’t let Lanny off the hook.



After pondering for a moment, Elyse inquired, “Do you still have the evidence that links Lanny to my parents’ murder?”

“I’m not sure. It’s been so many years. I’m not certain if it still exists.” Discussing this made Morgan feel slightly somber.

Elyse’s eyes reflected a hint of disappointment, but then a thought struck her, and she asked curiously, “By the way, how did you lose your memory back then?”

Morgan appeared helpless. “Back then, Lanny tried to kill me, and I ended up at the riverbank. To escape, I jumped into the river. Unfortunately, it had just rained, and the current was rapid. I struck my head on a log and blacked out.”

Elyse was taken aback and said, “You blacked out in the river?”

“Yes, I was adrift on some driftwood for a few days before someone found and rescued me. Since I had lost my memory and couldn’t locate my family, the person who rescued me married me and secured me a new identity.”

As she reflected on this, Morgan’s expression became distant.

She considered it to be her destiny.

Thinking back on the past twenty years, it all seemed like a dream, shaped by fate, which had brought her back to this point.

Morgan smiled bitterly and said, “It’s as if a story was paused, and now, twenty years later, it’s playing again.”

Elyse paused to consider, then smiled. “Maybe the heavens thought you were too vulnerable back then to confront Lanny, who had the upper hand. Now, you’re back to settle things.”

Morgan nodded thoughtfully. “You’re right. I need to find that evidence and ensure Lanny is imprisoned as soon as possible.”

After saying this, Morgan stood, grabbed her coffee, and downed it in one gulp.

Before she departed, she affectionately patted Elyse's head and smiled. "Head home early. Don't make me worry."

Elyse wanted to accompany Morgan to the funeral home but remembered she was pregnant and had to stay put.

For the first time, Elyse felt her pregnancy was a hindrance, restricting her movements.

As Elyse exited the café and approached the elevator to the parking lot, she encountered Jayden, who was coming up in the elevator.

They locked eyes and both asked at the same time, "What are you doing here?"

Elyse was taken aback, then she frowned slightly. "I was meeting with Morgan. And you? Why are you here?"

Jayden was about to say, "It's my own business," but he recalled Peyton's counsel. After a brief pause, he shared, "My mom asked me to come here. She said she needed to talk about something."

After speaking, Jayden looked at Elyse's impassive face and cautiously invited, "Do you want to join me?"

Elyse had planned to leave. She wasn't interested in their family affairs, but since Jayden extended the invitation, she felt compelled to accept.

After contemplating, Elyse nodded and decided to accompany Jayden to meet Tess.

Tess had chosen a tea house in the mall for their meeting. As they approached the door to the private room, Jayden positioned Elyse behind him and explained, observing her puzzled look, "Today's meeting is centered around me. I don't want you to be in any danger."

Elyse stood back, letting Jayden lead.

Once he was sure Elyse was safe, Jayden opened the door to the private room. Immediately, he was met with Tess' angry stare, and a cup came flying toward his stomach.

The cup broke into fragments on the polished marble floor.

"You dare to fake being disabled! You even dare to deceive me. How could you do this to your mom?" Tess pointed directly at Jayden's nose, scolding him relentlessly.

Elyse, feeling anxious, gently pulled on Jayden's sleeve.

Jayden squeezed Elyse's hand in response, his face still calm and detached.

He said plainly, "It's straightforward. You didn't raise me. In truth, it was Grandpa Enzo who did, not you."

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It never crossed Tess' mind that Jayden would utter something so preposterous. Fury surged through her, and she pounded the table, her voice rising in a storm of reprimand. "How can you say I didn't raise you? I carried you for nine long months and labored to bring you into this world. I made so many efforts!"

Jayden's lips curled into a mocking smile. "I've always told you to read more, or you'll only expose your ignorance and foolishness."

"You ungrateful son!" Tess was so enraged she clutched her chest, feeling a sharp pain inside.

"Come in." With a face like thunder, Andrew pointed to an empty seat. "Sit down and let's talk."

Jayden didn't hesitate. He had come here today precisely to discuss this matter with his parents. Turning around, Jayden effortlessly lifted Elyse with one hand, his steps crunching over shattered glass without a care. He set her gently on a chair before seating himself.

Andrew's eyelids twitched at Jayden's movements. "I didn't realize you two were so close," he said, a note of calculation in his voice.

Jayden's expression remained impassive. Ignoring the implied question, he went straight to the point. "What did you want to discuss when you summoned me here?"

Andrew tapped the table, the sound sharp. "Go apologize to your grandpa, and beg him not to disown you!"

"That's right," Tess chimed in, "You need to prove your loyalty and speak up for yourself so he reinstates you as the heir."

"Exactly," Andrew continued. "Once he agrees, we'll forgive you. When you return to the Owen Group, Bryce won't have to compete anymore. He can stay home, and we'll find him a suitable match."

Tess nodded enthusiastically. "Now that you're no longer disabled but a normal person, I'll put those snobs in their place. We should host a banquet to flaunt it."

Andrew agreed, "Absolutely. We should assert our standing."

Elyse quietly sipped her water, listening to Andrew and Tess's domineering plans. It was clear they were used to calling the shots, dismissing Jayden as insignificant.

Jayden glanced at Elyse, offering her some fresh fruit from the table.

Leaning back in his chair, he spoke with a lazy defiance. "Who told you that Grandpa Enzo kicked me out of the Owen clan? I was the one who chose to sever ties."

Andrew's eyes widened in disbelief. He struggled to contain his anger. "What did you say? You severed the relationship voluntarily? Do you even understand what you're saying?"

Jayden nodded, his voice steady. "Of course, I understand."

Andrew was so furious that he slammed the table and bellowed, "How dare you cut your ties with your own clan? How could I have brought a wuss like you into this world?"

Tess retorted with indignation, "How dare you speak like that! Come with us to see your Grandpa Enzo and apologize to him."

As they spoke, they both rose to their feet, intent on dragging Jayden to apologize to Enzo.

The more Elyse listened, the more she felt that Andrew and Tess were treating Jayden like a criminal.

"Enough!" Jayden suddenly shouted.

Andrew and Tess froze, staring at Jayden in shock.

Jayden's eyes were cold, and the light in them slowly dimmed, as if something was dying within him.

After a heavy silence, Jayden suddenly asked, "Have you ever wondered why I pretended to be crippled?"

Andrew sneered. "What other reason could there be? You thought you were powerful enough to turn against your family, didn't you?!"

Tess's brow furrowed. "I'm not blaming you, but why pretend to be disabled when you're perfectly fine? Do you know what your father and I have endured the past year? Do you know how many people have laughed at us? And now it turns out you're all right. Do you realize how deeply you've disappointed us?"

Staring at his parents, Jayden felt a profound sorrow. So, this was his family, no different from the rest of the Owen clan!

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Elyse couldn't contain her frustration any longer. Though she was still mad at Jayden for not trusting her, seeing Andrew and Tess treat Jayden so callously made her even more furious.

"Jayden pretended to be disabled for a year, and all you think is that he was shirking family responsibilities? Have you ever cared about him as his parents?"

Tess absolutely abhorred Elyse. She deemed Elyse unworthy of being her daughter-in-law due to her modest family background.

She initially had set her sights on Corrie as her ideal daughter-in-law, but Corrie's involvement with Brook dashed Tess' hopes, leaving her resentful and irritated.

"We are having a conversation with our son. What right does an outsider like you have to interfere?" she spat out. Unable to contain her contempt, Tess snatched a cup from the table and hurled it without a second thought.

Jayden reacted swiftly, standing protectively in front of Elyse as the cup narrowly missed them, shattering on the floor.

Jayden looked at the broken pieces scattered at their feet and cast a withering glance at Tess, who was panting heavily. He sneered, saying, "You have a penchant for throwing things, don't you? Well, throw whatever you like. We're not sticking around for it."

As they made to leave, Tess' sharp voice cut through the air, commanding, "Who said you could leave? Jayden, come back this instant, or forget about ever calling me your mother again."

Tess seemed convinced that Jayden wouldn't dare defy her.

She believed nobody would ever want to lose their parents, and even the indifferent Jayden was no exception.

She stood with a sort of smug satisfaction, waiting for him to come crawling back.

But Tess and Andrew had underestimated Jayden. He had long ceased yearning for their affection.

Jayden calmly said, "There's no need. By cutting ties with the Owen clan, I am also cutting ties with you. I'd much rather be an orphan."

His words hung heavy in the air, leaving Andrew and Tess dumbfounded. He then grabbed Elyse's hand and turned to quickly leave the room.

In a fit of rage, Andrew lashed out, slapping Jayden right across his face.

Though Jayden could have easily dodged the blow, he chose not to.

Elyse gasped in shock, quickly checking his face.

The sight of Jayden's reddened cheek only fueled her anger.

"How could you hit Jayden? He's still recovering from his injuries. Why would you do such a thing?" Elyse's voice quivered with fury.

Seeing Andrew advance toward Elyse, Jayden immediately pulled her into his arms.

"You can take your anger out on me, but lay a hand on my wife, and you'll regret it. She's carrying my child. Touch her, and you'll answer to me," he warned, his tone icy.

Andrew recoiled, his features contorted with a mixture of shock and hostility. "She's pregnant? You would allow someone like her, who lacks any semblance of refinement, to bear your child?"

Jayden's expression hardened. "She's the only one I want to have my child."

With a venomous glare at Elyse's belly, Andrew stormed back into the private room. Jayden took Elyse's hand and led her away as fast as her feet would let him.

Elyse trailed behind him with her thoughts all jumbled up, but her heart softened again, seeing the handprint on his face.

As they descended in the elevator and reached the parking lot, Elyse couldn't suppress her curiosity. "Will cutting ties with the Owen clan have such a big impact? Your parents seemed furious."

Jayden scoffed, his tone tinged with bitterness. "Of course, they're furious. Every Owen cares only about his own interests. Disassociating from them threatens their status and wealth. Naturally, they're rattled."

Elyse nodded, unsure of what to say.

"But if they think I'll give in, apologize, and return to their fold, they're sorely mistaken," he added.

Puzzled, Elyse asked, "And why is that?"

A cryptic smile played upon Jayden's lips, his gaze inscrutable. "Because by now, the entire Owen clan must know I'm no longer one of them. A traitor like me isn't welcome back."

Elyse struggled to understand the Owen clan's standing. All this just because Jayden did not want to follow Enzo's wishes and had his own ideas instead?

Enzo was truly unreasonable.

——Jayden was right. News of Jayden's estrangement from the Owen clan spread like wildfire.



Even employees within the Owen Group had received the message, refusing to engage in any business cooperation with Jayden.

Debora was stunned when she received the news. She quickly rushed to Brook's office in disbelief, and upon finding Brook calmly working at his desk, her astonishment only deepened. "Haven't you heard? Jayden has been kicked out of our clan!" she exclaimed.

Chapter 549:

Brook responded with a nonchalant "yes" and absentmindedly added, "And not only that, I heard he had been pretending to be disabled; his legs are actually fine."

"What? Pretending to be disabled? Why would he do that?" Debora exclaimed, then eyed Brook suspiciously. "How do you know this?"

Brook answered coolly, "I was at Grandpa's gathering yesterday. That's where I heard it."

"Why were you allowed to go?" Debora demanded indignantly.

That gathering wasn't just any event; typically, only select members of the Owen clan, like Jayden, who was once seen as the prospective family head, could attend.

Debora could understand why Jayden had been invited in the past. His excellence before that car accident was undeniable, but why was Brook there?

Debora's irritation was palpable, though it seemed to have no effect on Brook.

Brook, showing no interest in justifying his attendance to Debora, set down the document he was holding, looked at her, and posed a question, "Now that Jayden is effectively out of the race, are you still aiming higher?"

Confused by his implication, Debora retorted, "What are you suggesting? That while advising me to step back, you plan to climb up yourself?"

Brook scoffed dismissively, “I wouldn’t be so foolish.”

He stood, adding, “I’m merely pointing out that with Jayden gone, the successor’s spot is truly up for grabs. If you’re serious about vying for it, you’ll need to curry favor with Grandpa.”

Debora considered his words and sensed an inconsistency. “Aren’t you interested in the position?”

She vividly recalled how Brook had always been like a loyal servant to their grandpa, never acting without his direction.

“Me? I’ve been feeling a bit worn out lately. I’ll take a short break before I get back in the game,” Brook said, though his tone carried little conviction.

“Alright, it’s time for you to go. I have a lunch meeting soon,” Brook said, ushering Debora out of the office before heading to the garage himself.

Once in his car, Brook dialed Jayden’s number.

Jayden, who was getting ready to take Elyse out to dinner, was caught off guard by the call and quickly asked, “Why are you calling?”

Brook lightened the mood with a joke. “Can’t I, as your cousin, invite you out for a meal?”

Jayden, puzzled, responded, “You do know I’ve been ousted from the Owen clan, right?”

“I’m aware,” Brook acknowledged. “Let’s meet up. It’s on me.”

Jayden looked over at Elyse and queried, “Do you want to join Brook for dinner?”

Elyse returned the question, “You don’t mind if I come along?”

After a moment's consideration, Jayden replied, "A little, but it's fine by me."

With a roll of her eyes, Elyse declared, "Then I'm definitely going."

Jayden chuckled, then relayed the restaurant details to Brook. The trio made their way to the restaurant.

Upon their arrival, Brook observed Jayden attentively helping Elyse out of the car. Once they were seated, Brook paused thoughtfully before asking, "Elyse, are you pregnant? How far along are you?"

Elyse, surprised by Brook's straightforward approach—the first of its kind she'd witnessed—answered, "Two months. There's no bump yet, but the morning sickness has been tough."

Understanding her condition, Brook took special care in ordering dishes that would be gentle on her stomach.

While waiting for their meal, Jayden took the initiative to ask, "What's the occasion for this meal?"

"To celebrate your departure from the inheritance lineup. Shouldn't I buy you dinner?" Brook shifted his attention from Elyse, picked up the teapot from the table, and poured himself a cup of tea.

He added nonchalantly, "With you out of the picture, things are quite pleasant for me."

Jayden, unfazed by the comment, responded, "In that case, you definitely owe me a meal."

As Brook nibbled on some appetizer, he probed, "Why did you pretend to be crippled? Don't tell me it was to clear the path for me. I don't need your sympathy."

Elyse, listening in, was taken aback. Brook was the only Owen to directly question Jayden about his ruse. Even Jayden's own parents hadn't inquired, yet Brook, who had always shown the least regard for Jayden, was the one to ask.

Jayden raised an eyebrow and replied, "Knowing too much isn't always beneficial."

Undeterred and continuing to snack on the appetizer, Brook challenged, "I don't mind it. You're no longer tied to the Owen clan; what do you have to lose by telling me?"

Jayden leaned back, fixing his gaze on Brook. After a moment of contemplation, he revealed, "There's nothing extraordinary about it. Pretending to be crippled was a strategy to appear vulnerable and draw out hidden adversaries."

Chapter 550:

Jayden shrugged casually before replying, "I've been playing weak for a year now, yet the culprit hasn't shown up again."

Brook nodded and asked, "So, you've decided to drop the act? Is the culprit making a comeback after a year?"

Jayden replied nonchalantly, "Sort of."

"Any idea who's behind it?" Brook inquired, lifting his teacup for a sip.

Jayden fell silent for a moment, reaching for the water glass on the table and taking a sip.

Elyse glanced at him. She had learned about his reason for pretending to be disabled, but she didn't really know why the culprit would try to hurt Jayden. Jayden's silence dissuaded her from broaching the subject.

"Someone familiar?" Brook inferred from Jayden's silence.

After a brief pause, he ventured further, "Perhaps a rival?"

Jayden's brows furrowed, his tone curt as he countered, "Why the sudden interest? Remember, you're still tied to the Owens, unlike me."

Brook nodded and said, "True, you've severed ties, but the message I received was not to establish any cooperation with you, not to cut off all ties."

Jayden sneered at him. "Knowing won't serve you any purpose."

Purpose? Brook mulled over Jayden's words, a thought gradually taking shape in his mind. Could it be what he suspected?

"It was Grandpa Enzo," Jayden stated flatly, his gaze unwavering as he locked eyes with Brook. "He operated covertly and knew me better than anyone. I spent a year trying to figure out who it was. Only recently, after another attack, did I start piecing together the clues."

After a tense silence, Brook admonished in a hushed tone, "Don't speak so recklessly. Do you even know what you're talking about?"

Elyse stole a glance at Jayden, who remained tight-lipped. After a moment's reflection, she spoke softly, "It's true. We were attacked by him a few days ago. I almost had a miscarriage, and Jayden was injured."

Brook fixed Jayden with a scrutinizing stare, then hesitated before posing the question, "Are you certain it's him?"

Jayden maintained his silence, knowing that it was futile to explain further. Those who wanted to believe him would do so without any persuasion.

Observing Jayden's silence, Elyse interjected, "It's weird that you're showing your concern for Jayden. If it were in the past, you'd be gloating, but today, you seem much calmer."

Brook glanced at Elyse before responding, "Because I've got some problems of my own that need solving."

“Is it because of Corrie?” Jayden asked abruptly.

Brook was surprised as he nodded in acknowledgment. “How did you know?”

“She sold my secret to Grandpa. How could I not know?” Jayden’s tone was laced with a bitter edge.

The revelation seemed to strike a nerve with Brook, and he unleashed a tirade about Corrie’s recent arrogance. Jayden hadn’t expected him to unload on them like this. Even as the meal was served, Brook showed no signs of stopping.

Exchanging a wordless glance, Jayden and Elyse opted to remain silent, focusing on their food while lending an ear to Brook’s grievances.

After a long rant, Brook confided, “I’m tempted to rebel.”

Elyse felt a chill run down her spine at Brook’s statement.

For someone who had always sucked up to Enzo, his newfound rebellious spirit was nothing short of shocking.

Jayden, too, was taken aback by this sudden confession. Disregarding their shocked faces, Brook pressed on, “Being forced into a marriage with someone like Corrie, I’d rather cut all ties with the Owens and be done with it.”

Elyse, incredulous, voiced her disbelief. “You’re seriously considering cutting ties with the Owen clan over this?”

Brook collected himself, adopting a stern tone. “Don’t jump to conclusions. I’m merely contemplating it. I wouldn’t jeopardize my future for such a reason.”

“That’s a relief to hear. I was worried you were impulsively following Jayden’s lead.” Elyse’s words carried both concern and a hint of skepticism.

The thought of him cutting ties with the Owen clan alongside Jayden only added to their concerns.

Brook seemed on the verge of saying something but held his tongue.

Raising his glass, he suggested, "Let's focus on the present. A toast to Jayden's newfound freedom. Thank God you're no longer in my way."

Jayden chuckled softly, swiftly pouring himself a generous serving of wine. "You really think I'd sit around patiently waiting?"