

Bound love 551

Chapter 551:

Jayden set his empty glass on the table, his eyes glinting with derision and scorn. He didn't buy Brook's words. "So, why did you summon us here today? What's your game?" Jayden asked.

Brook arched an eyebrow, feigning innocence as he replied, "Can't I simply invite you to dinner?"

Jayden sneered. "Do you really expect me to buy that?"

Brook shrugged, maintaining his air of nonchalance. "I know you don't trust me, and I'm not about to ask you to forget the past. But tonight, all I wanted was to share a meal."

Elyse, sensing the growing tension, interjected to keep the peace, effectively stopping the confrontation in its tracks. Despite her efforts, Jayden barely touched his food before he made an early exit with Elyse.

Not long after they left, Corrie burst in, her face twisted with malice, her tone sharp as she demanded, "Didn't you slip something into Elyse's drink? Have you forgotten your grandpa's orders? Do I need to spell it out for you?"

Brook, unruffled by her accusation, continued eating calmly. "Who's the fool here, you or me? Drugging Elyse's drink to cause a miscarriage is something that can be traced back to me. I'm not about to let you make me the fall guy!"

Corrie took a deep breath, seething with a hatred for Jayden that burned within her, a desire to see him suffer. Only she knew the torment of waiting alone in that eerie cemetery, hoping someone would come for her. She couldn't let it slide! She was determined to tear down everything Jayden held dear.

Brook glanced up at her, noting the fury that played across her face, and remarked, "Jayden watches over Elyse like a hawk. Finding a chance to act won't be easy."

Corrie scoffed. “No matter how vigilant he is, there will be cracks. They have no idea we’re targeting the unborn child. We’ll find an opening.”

Brook continued eating, remarking offhandedly, “I never pegged you as the obedient type, following my grandpa’s orders so doggedly.”

Corrie turned her gaze toward Brook, a sneer playing on her lips. “Don’t tell me you still have a conscience. Haven’t all the Owen clan members already sold theirs?”

Brook nodded. “You’re right, we indeed have no conscience. But I must say, you resemble a part of the Owen clan more than we do!”

Corrie arched her eyebrows, pride gleaming in her eyes. She didn’t take Brook’s words as an insult but rather as a badge of honor. If every Owen clan member recognized her, she would have the chance to become one of them and bask in their wealth and power. This thought steeled her resolve to complete Enzo’s task.

Brook chose to remain silent. He didn’t share with Corrie that he still clung to a fragment of his conscience. He, too, wanted to win Enzo’s favor. But gaining favor meant causing Elyse to lose her unborn child. For the first time, Brook hesitated, even though he had been determined to act when he saw Elyse today. Seeing the maternal side of Elyse made him waver. He felt a pang of self-doubt.

Corrie crossed her arms, looking at the silent Brook, and urged, “This opportunity was hard-won. Once you complete this, your grandpa will hold you in higher esteem. Isn’t it power you crave within your grasp?”

Brook frowned, irritation flaring. “I don’t need you constantly reminding me how to handle things. Just mind your own business!”

With that, he exited the private dining room, his expression grim.

After departing the private room, Elyse returned to the hospital with Jayden. Although Brook had invited them to dinner, the dishes didn’t appeal to Elyse.

She barely touched her food, enduring her hunger until they got back to the hospital, where she eagerly began eating the food Driscoll had brought.

Jayden was also eating. After a few bites, he asked, "Did you see Morgan today?"

Elyse nodded. "We had some matters to discuss. After our talk, we went our separate ways."

As she finished speaking, Morgan entered the ward, looking distraught.

Startled by Morgan's distress, Elyse asked, "What the heck happened to you?"

With red-rimmed eyes, Morgan shook her head. "It's gone! That little villa has turned to rubble!"

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Jayden, bewildered, asked, "What on earth happened?"

Elyse, with a patient demeanor, recounted the day's events. Once the fog of confusion lifted from Jayden's mind, she anxiously said, "So, you're telling me that the place where you hid the evidence of Lanny's murder is now nothing but a heap of rubble?"

Morgan, tears cascading down her cheeks, nodded. "Lanny has been on my trail for years, desperate to find the evidence I possess.

Back then, when your parents were injured during that car accident, I was juggling the company's stability and their care."

She took a moment to gather her thoughts before continuing, "I feared I might not be able to look after them adequately, so I installed tiny cameras in each of your parents' hospital rooms to keep an eye on their condition round the clock."

Elyse, utterly flabbergasted, exclaimed, "So you have footage of Lanny committing the murder?"

Morgan nodded once more. “Yes, I do. I inadvertently witnessed him killing your father. Since then, he’s been relentless in his attempts to kill me. To elude his grasp, I hid the evidence in one of your parents’ urns.”

Her emotions now poured forth.

“I placed your parents’ urns in their old home, but Lanny and his wife occupied that house. I have no clue where they moved the urns. When I went there this afternoon, the villa was reduced to a pile of debris!”

Elyse and Jayden exchanged a glance, their faces lighting up with realization. “Those urns are at my place!”

Morgan, still grappling with understanding, asked, “What did you say?”

Elyse seized Morgan’s hand, her voice trembling with excitement. “It’s true, the urns are at my house!”

Jayden glanced at the clock and said, “Then let’s go home and get them now. But we need to check if the surveillance evidence is still functional after all these years. I’ll need to find someone who can examine it.”

Elyse nodded in agreement. “You’re right. Even if we know where the footage is, we can’t be sure it still works.”

Learning the urns were with Elyse, a wave of relief washed over Morgan. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

“Thank goodness, the evidence hasn’t vanished,” she said.

Without delay, the trio sped back to Jayden’s villa, heading straight to the room where the urns were kept.

At the door, Jayden opened it, and the three of them walked in together.

Seeing the urns on the table, Morgan's eyes filled with tears once more. She reached out to touch the now-rough surface of the urns.

She remembered how, when she first received them, they were smooth and looked costly. In the span of twenty years, they had weathered so much.

Taking a deep breath, Morgan opened the lid. She reached inside, fumbled around, and then pulled out a USB drive, which she then handed to Jayden.

Jayden took it, his expression solemn, and said earnestly, "I'll handle this."

Morgan nodded and reached into the urn once more, this time her search more thorough. When she pulled her hand out, it was covered in ash.

Brushing off the residue, Morgan handed something to Elyse. "Here is a photo of your parents. It was taken when your mother was newly pregnant, and you were just a couple of months old."

Elyse accepted it with a sense of awe. She had never seen pictures of her parents before. When she asked Lanny for them, he had always refused to give her.

Later, Jayden, unable to tolerate their evasiveness, had their home searched, only to find nothing about her parents.

Jayden theorized that they had destroyed all the photos to keep Elyse from uncovering anything about her parents.

Elyse's eyes filled with tears as she gazed at the photo.

In it, a handsome man stood beside a gentle woman. They were in a photo studio, both radiating happiness, smiling at the camera.

Jazmine's hands rested on her stomach, and Rickey had a protective hand on Jazmine's shoulder.

Tears streamed down Elyse's face as she looked at the photo. After a long moment, she whispered, "This is incredible. I finally see my parents. I am so happy."

Jayden longed to comfort her but found himself at a loss for words, so he simply stayed by her side, gently patting her back.

Morgan sighed deeply. "If your parents were still alive, you would have undoubtedly had a joyful life. They were such good people. It's a tragedy that Lanny took their lives."

Jayden gently placed a reassuring hand on Elyse's shoulder and vowed, "Trust me, I will seek justice for your parents."

Morgan nodded in agreement. "We won't let those monsters get away. They will pay the price they deserve!"

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Elyse's eyes glistened with tears, but her voice rang out with unwavering determination. "I will take matters into my own hands and avenge the tragic loss of my parents!"

Jayden, his heart heavy with concern for Elyse's emotional turmoil, gently ushered her to her room, allowing her to rest while he saw Morgan off.

Clutching the treasured photograph of her parents, the sole tangible remnant of their memory, Elyse slipped it beneath her pillow before closing her eyes.

Despite uncovering the crucial evidence, the past few days had taken a toll on Morgan. Her weary eyes drooped with exhaustion, and the usual vibrancy that graced her appearance had faded.

A car awaited Morgan at the driveway.

Turning to Jayden, Morgan expressed her heartfelt gratitude, “I am in your debt, Jayden. My investigation has revealed that you provided a safe haven for Elyse when she was at her lowest, granting her a sense of dignity in her darkest hour. I really appreciate it.”

Jayden, caught off guard by Morgan’s words, replied, “It is I who should be grateful to Elyse for entrusting me with her care. It was as if destiny had brought us together.”

A bit of a weary smile graced Morgan’s features as she reflected, “Indeed, fate had a hand in these events. Today, Elyse has brought me a newfound peace, reminding me that over two decades ago, I was powerless against the merciless Lanny.

The heavens had paused my journey, allowing me to confront him when I had become stronger.”

She paused, a soft snuffle escaping her. “Recovering my memories has plunged me into a tempestuous sea of guilt, regret, and self-reproach.

Why did my recollections resurface now and not sooner? I kept asking myself this question. It wasn’t until Elyse spoke those words that I could finally find solace and forgive myself.”

Jayden remained silent, keenly aware of the heavy burden that weighed upon Morgan’s heart.

Comforting others was not his strongest suit, yet Elyse had offered Morgan a fresh perspective, unraveling the tangled web of emotions within her.

After a prolonged silence, Jayden spoke. “Elyse is a truly remarkable woman.”

Morgan nodded in agreement, her gesture conveying a world of gratitude. “I couldn’t agree more.” With that, she placed a reassuring hand on Jayden’s shoulder and then slipped into the waiting car.

After seeing Morgan off, Jayden returned to the bedroom to find Elyse already lost in the embrace of slumber.

He approached her cautiously, taking note of the tear tracks that marred her delicate features. Gently, he extended his hand to wipe away the remnants of her sorrow.

Meanwhile, Freda, who had isolated herself in her room for what felt like an eternity, finally made an appearance. She had been on a silent protest fast for days, all because her father had twisted her arm into apologizing to Gavin.

She was convinced her father completely misunderstood her. She had sacrificed everything for her love.

Now, her father had taken it upon himself to single-handedly sever almost all the pending collaborations with the Ward family, leaving only a few that couldn't be canceled for the present.

Freda realized that her relationship with Theo had hit a dead end.

Theo had blocked her on every platform and had sworn to sever all ties with her. The realization struck her like a bolt from the blue, casting her future into a sudden void of despair. But after days of agonizing over it, a plan began to form in her heart.

When Freda descended the stairs, Karl glared at her with barely concealed ill humor. "I thought you were on a hunger strike. Planning to starve yourself to death, were you?"

Freda's face had grown noticeably thinner, making her look fragile, yet her eyes held a defiant spark, showing she had not truly repented.

"I've had enough time to think," Freda said, standing tall before Karl. "I'm done pursuing Theo."

Karl's heart leaped with joy at her words, but he kept his face impassive. "And what else?"

Freda continued, "I'll apologize to Gavin. My selfishness nearly ruined the competition and tarnished our family's reputation."

Her mother's eyes shimmered with emotion as she wiped away tears. "Oh, sweetie, you've finally come around."

Karl nodded in agreement. "That's more like it. Was that man worth all this heartache? You're my daughter, a catch in every sense. Men should be lining up to pursue you! Theo didn't deserve you, thinking he could toy with your affections like that. The nerve of him!"

Karl's wife nudged him, her face marked by silent disapproval. Turning to Freda, she said, with a concerned look in her eyes, "Honey, you must be starving! I'll have the cook whip up something delicious for you right away. You've lost so much weight, and it pains me to see it."

Freda didn't refuse and took a seat at the dining table, waiting patiently for her meal.

She had heard that Gavin would be visiting their home the next day to discuss the music competition with Karl. If all went as expected, Karl would arrange for her to apologize during that meeting.

A flicker of resentment crossed Freda's eyes as she pondered the situation. What was so special about this music competition? In her view, it was just a bunch of amateur musicians scrambling for the spotlight. Why should she have to apologize for this?

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Freda kept her emotions in check as she spoke to her father. "I want to apologize to him in person," she said with a carefully neutral expression, holding her true thoughts close. Karl nodded, his satisfaction evident. "Now that you've realized your mistake, it's time to end this hunger strike. Go eat something," he advised.

Freda nodded obediently and waited for the servants to bring out the dishes. Then, she quickly messaged her friend Alena to inform her about her change of heart. She would no longer pursue Theo, but she was not about to let Gavin and Elyse off the hook.

Alena was relieved to see Freda's message. She quickly replied, "That's the spirit. You'll settle scores with Gavin and Elyse."

Freda's eyebrow arched. She was determined to take revenge on Gavin. His interference had spoiled her chance to manipulate Theo. She had almost succeeded.

The next morning, Freda got up early to carefully select her outfit and apply her makeup. By the time she was ready, she learned that Gavin had already arrived. Karl, who had scheduled a business meeting with Gavin, led him into the study. Freda took her time, settling leisurely on the couch in the living room while enjoying some fruit.

Three hours later, the men emerged from the study.

Karl's eyes briefly met Freda's, still lounging on the couch, before he turned to Gavin. "There was a misunderstanding between you and my daughter last time. She's now eager to speak with you," he said with a cordial tone.

Karl then left the living room with a reassuring pat on Gavin's shoulder. He sensed that Freda might be reluctant to apologize to Gavin in his presence.

As Karl exited, Freda gracefully rose and approached Gavin, her eyes fixed on him.

Gavin looked remarkably younger than at their last meeting. He was dressed in a russet overcoat with a vibrant vermilion sweater peeking out.

Freda thought he possessed a captivating presence despite being a "stupid violinist."

"What do you have to say?" Gavin asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I must apologize," Freda responded with formidable hauteur, holding her head high. "Your vulnerability allowed me to alter the outcome effortlessly, and for that, I am sorry."

Gavin let out a derisive chuckle. His hand reached for his scarf, signaling his intention to leave.

Freda quickly intervened. "You have heard my apology. Do you not have anything to say in return?"

Gavin appeared genuinely perplexed. “What am I expected to say?”

“That you forgive me,” Freda responded firmly.

Gavin shrugged. “First, your apology lacks sincerity, and second, I see no reason to accept it,” he retorted, his gaze piercing as he leaned forward. “I know it’s a sham. Spare me the performance.”

“So, you reject my apology?” Freda’s brow furrowed.

“Why should I accept it?” Gavin countered, straightening up with a hint of amusement in his tone. “As I said, it’s meaningless.”

Freda’s expression darkened as she contemplated her next move. Should she swallow her pride, offer a heartfelt apology, and beg forgiveness?

Before she could decide, Gavin interrupted. “Save yourself the trouble. I’ll tell your father I accepted your apology.” With a gentle nudge, he added, “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have things to attend to.”

Freda was stunned as she watched Gavin walk away. A painful realization dawned on her that he held her in utter contempt.

Shortly after that, Karl returned with a chuckle. “I truly believe you’re sorry,” he said as he approached Freda. “Gavin has assured me you’re a good girl. It seems he doesn’t hold your little slip-up against you.”

Karl sighed and continued with admiration in his voice, “That Gavin, he’s got a heart of gold, doesn’t he? It’s rare to find such a fine young man these days.

” Why was such a man so rare? Wasn’t Theo an even more exceptional young man? Freda’s thoughts raced, her words nearly escaping involuntarily. But she held them back and retreated to her room. Once alone, she hastily dialed Alena’s number.

“What’s going on?” Alena asked, a hint of curiosity in her voice.

“I’ve just come up with the most delicious plan for revenge,” Freda responded, unable to contain her excitement.

Alena’s jaw dropped. “Against Gavin? What are you planning?” she asked.

“I’m going to pretend to fall for him,” Freda explained with a mischievous glint in her eyes. “I’ll get close, uncover all his secrets, and then, at the perfect moment, I’ll destroy him completely.”

“Why would you want to do that?” Alena, intrigued yet concerned, questioned her motives.

“He’s so arrogant and pretentious,” Freda complained. “My father praises him endlessly. Theo is clearly so much better than him, but my father is blind to it! Gavin has ruined any chance I had with Theo!”

Alena pursed her lips as she considered Freda’s plan. “Well, you can try,” she finally said. “But winning Gavin over won’t be easy. I’ve looked into him, and there’s not a hint of scandal about him. You’ll only find articles about his competitions and performances.”

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Freda gave a dismissive wave and said, “You really think he’s a great guy? Don’t be silly, sweetie. He’s just slick enough to keep his dirt off the internet. It’s my duty to unveil his true face to the world.”

Alena remained quiet for a moment and then asked, “What’s your plan?”

Freda leaned back and replied, “I have to figure out how to get close to him. It’s the first step to expose who he really is on the inside.”

“That’s simple,” Alena said. “Just make a move on him.”

Freda instantly countered, “Absolutely not! Theo has my whole heart. How could I even think about pursuing someone else?”

Alena pondered for a moment and then said, “Think about it. Theo’s heart belongs to Elyse, not you. That’s why he keeps turning you down. Imagine if you were to walk out of his life, would he feel any regret once he realizes you’ve moved on?”

“Well...” Freda hesitated, unsure of herself.

Alena pressed on, “And what if you start pursuing Gavin? How do you think Theo will react when he sees you with another man? He’s aware of how much you cared about him. If you shift your focus, maybe then he’ll see what he’s missing.”

After a moment of contemplation, Freda admitted, “Maybe he would just be happy.”

“Come on, you really don’t understand men. Men tend to try to hold onto women they once had. Theo’s indifference comes from your constant presence. He takes you for granted because he knows you’re not going anywhere.”

After a moment of reflection, she firmly stated, “You need to walk away from Theo now and show him you might be out of his life for good.”

“That makes sense,” Freda responded as she mulled over it.

Alena said earnestly, “You have to apply what you’ve learned! You might not have been in love before, but don’t let men see through you and play games with you!”

A spark of resolve flickered in Freda’s eyes as she crafted her plan. She expressed her gratitude to Alena for the dinner invitation. After ending the call, Freda grabbed her coat, ready to step out.

Seeing this, Karl asked curiously, “Where are you off to?”

With a determined voice, Freda announced, “I’m off to meet Gavin.”

“What are you meeting him for?” Karl inquired, his curiosity piqued.

“I want to pursue him!” Freda declared with certainty.

Karl’s face fell into a frown, “Are you serious? He’s a famous violinist. Just stay home and don’t make a fool of yourself.”

Freda’s anger flared at his words.

Her own dad underestimated the man she loved deeply and doubted her worthiness for Gavin. What was so extraordinary about Gavin anyway? She vowed to reveal who Gavin really was. By then, she believed, everyone would see they’d been fooled by his facade.

Ignoring Karl, Freda slipped on her shoes and hurried out the door.

She dialed Gavin’s number. As soon as he answered, she cut straight to the chase. “Where are you?”

Gavin recognized the voice on the other end of the line. After a brief pause, he asked, “Miss Jimenez, what’s the reason for your call?”

Freda concocted a story. “My father suggested I should get to know you better and keep in contact.”

There was a brief silence before Gavin responded, “You might want to ignore your father’s suggestion on this matter.”

Freda replied, firm in her resolve, “No, I’d rather follow his advice. Where are you? I’m on my way.”

With that, Gavin ended the call sharply and blocked Freda’s number.

Undeterred, Freda made a few more attempts to reach him and scoffed, “Playing hard to get? Think I can’t find out where you are?”

Elyse came home from the hospital a day earlier than scheduled.

Today marked the day of Dorothy’s funeral, and Jayden had been out since early morning to assist with the arrangements.

While waiting in the living room, Elyse glanced at the clock, anticipating Jayden would return soon.

However, Lanny showed up unexpectedly before anyone else.

Driscoll was inclined to send Lanny away immediately, but Elyse, curious about his reasons for coming, decided to let him in.

Jayden had already briefed the bodyguards on Lanny’s potentially dangerous character, making them particularly vigilant, especially with Elyse pregnant.

A line of bodyguards stood tensely with their eyes fixed sternly on Lanny, who seemed less confident than usual. He scanned the room with a sly look. One could tell that he had hidden schemes.

Wrapped in a blanket and seated comfortably, Elyse eyed Lanny with a piercing gaze. After a moment, she demanded, “Why have you come here?”

Lanny cleared his throat and said, “Elyse, it’s time to release Glenda. Dorothy has passed, and there’s no justification for keeping Glenda locked up. If you keep on with this, I will charge you with illegal detention!”

Elyse scoffed with a hint of mockery in her voice. “Oh, missing your wife?”

She arched an eyebrow and asked, “Do you truly wish to see Glenda?”

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Lanny responded, “Yes, I do. If she was not imprisoned by you guys, how could I not meet her for days?”

Elyse rolled her eyes at Lanny for his insolence.

With Lanny being the cause of Dorothy’s death, the homicide attempt on Glenda was not under investigation anymore. As a matter of fact, Elyse could now truly release Glenda.

But they were both monsters. How could she let them off the hook?

On seeing the perplexed and wearied face Elyse wore, Lanny changed to a soothing tone. “I’m aware I didn’t treat you well enough, but Glenda has looked after you, hasn’t she? Are you going to compel her to her demise? Are you going to lead us both to our early graves?”

Elyse sneered. “Back then, both of you treated me badly. So don’t play the family card here. It won’t work on me.”

Lanny’s countenance changed immediately. He clenched his fists and wished he could snuff the life out of her.

But he knew better than to act rashly. His desperation was growing, and he had to tread carefully.

“But I would love to set up a meeting for you and Glenda,” Elyse said, approaching the furious Lanny with a shadowy smirk encroaching on her lips.

She was determined to make this encounter as uncomfortable for him as possible.

She turned to Driscoll, “Please bring Glenda here. She must be missing her husband, whom she hasn’t seen for a while, right?”

Without any delay, Driscoll passed the information to the guards using the intercom.

Glenda didn't know what was happening when she was brought over. She assumed it was Mabel who came to see her again, and she was so nervous. How many times did she need to tell Mabel for her to understand?

When Glenda was brought into the room, she caught a glimpse of Lanny.

She didn't know that he had gone behind bars for running someone over with a car. She thought Lanny was here to take her back home.

The thought of this made Glenda tear up. For a moment, she felt she had made the right decision by marrying him and that he still had feelings for her.

Elyse looked at Lanny with a piercing gaze and said, "I let you see her, and I think this is me being considerate enough. If I were inconsiderate, I'd have driven you away."

With tears still welling up in Glenda's eyes, a puzzled look appeared on her face. "What do you mean? Didn't Lanny come to take me home?"

"I want to, but Elyse won't let me. I can't take you home if she does not approve," Lanny said, looking helpless.

Glenda's countenance changed immediately. She was filled with anger and hatred toward Elyse, thinking that Elyse was the obstacle to her freedom.

Elyse found her expression funny. Totally ignoring Lanny's words, she asked him, "Why is Mabel not here? I vividly remember her showing more concern for Glenda than you ever did. Why are you the only person present today?"

Glenda also became interested in Lanny's reply.

When Mabel's name was mentioned, Lanny felt slightly empathetic, but he quickly shrugged off those emotions. He replied, "Mabel is preoccupied today and cannot make it. I'd like to take Glenda home myself."

Elyse smiled and said, "I can't make such a decision on my own. You should ask Jayden. He is the only one who can decide."

Lanny was filled with rage. "Jayden would never release Glenda. He is so deranged that he could lock her up and ensure she never steps foot outside."

"Humph! You don't say. Why am I not conversant with this... me being deranged?" Jayden asked in a calm but lukewarm voice.

He walked into the living room with a cold aura, looking at Lanny with an intense gaze before standing beside Elyse. He said to Lanny with an unyielding voice, "Choose your words carefully, or you'll face the consequence."

"Please forgive me, Mr. Owen. I was merely speaking out of anger. I didn't mean it," Lanny pleaded quickly, realizing he had overstepped.

Jayden looked at Lanny only for a brief moment before turning his gaze toward Glenda. He said, "I can let Glenda go. Dorothy was killed by you, after all, wasn't she?"

As astonished as ever, Glenda asked, "Is it true, Lanny? Did you kill Dorothy?"

Lanny completely understood why Glenda was shocked, so he quickly shouted at her, "Keep quiet! You do not have the right to speak."

After saying that, he flashed an irradiating smile at Jayden and said, "I know you guys were so concerned about Dorothy, and she meant a lot to you, but that was all an accident. I will always reflect on the mistakes I made for the rest of my life."

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Jayden's gaze settled on Lanny, his expression impassive, his silence a veil masking his thoughts.

Lanny struggled to maintain a smile on his face. Despite Jayden's silence, his presence exuded authority, sending shivers down Lanny's spine. It wouldn't have surprised him if Jayden, being the crazy guy he was, threatened his life.

“Leave,” Jayden commanded with a dismissive wave, and the bodyguards surrounding Glenda withdrew.

Caught in a daze of confusion, Glenda remained rooted in place. Was this her freedom?

Lanny echoed her astonishment, his voice trembling. “Are you... letting us go?”

Jayden’s eyebrow lifted slightly. “Unless you prefer to stay.”

“Of course not! Thank you for your mercy!” Lanny exclaimed, reaching out to grasp Glenda’s hand, and together they left hurriedly.

As they stepped into the yard, a cold wind swept through, causing Glenda, who was dressed thinly, to shiver involuntarily.

The sound of a lighter pierced the quiet yard, its small noise amplified by the stillness. Glenda’s attention was drawn to the sound, her eyes catching a tiny red spark flickering in the air.

Someone was smoking in the yard, their face hidden by swirling smoke.

A gust of cold wind briefly dispersed the smoke, and Glenda’s eyes narrowed, fixing on a face that was somewhat familiar.

Morgan, sensing Glenda’s presence, lazily exhaled a cloud of smoke, her lips curling into a smirk. “Well, well, well, Glenda,” she drawled, her voice tinged with taunting amusement. “Fancy seeing you again.”

“It’s... it’s you! You’re back!” Glenda exclaimed, her voice trembling with shock as she pointed a finger at Morgan. Her emotions were all over the place.

Lanny’s eyes burned with hatred as he looked at Morgan. He swore to himself that he would find a way to deal with this woman sooner or later.

Morgan's mood seemed to brighten. "Disappointed to see me, Glenda? Haven't you been longing for my return? Well, your wish has come true. I'm here to grant it."

Glenda's voice rose in anger. "You're like a bad penny! Why couldn't you have just died out there? Why come back now?"

Lanny interrupted sharply, "Don't waste your breath on her. Let's go!" He gripped Glenda's wrist and quickly led her away.

Morgan looked on as Lanny and Glenda hurried away, their departing figures radiating a sense of disarray. A wicked smile danced on her lips. She flicked away her half-smoked cigarette, crushing it under her black leather boot and brushing off any lingering smoke before casually strolling back into the living room.

Grinning with satisfaction, Morgan said, "The looks on Lanny's and Glenda's faces were absolutely priceless. I can't wait to see what they do next."

Elyse blinked, her brow furrowing in confusion. "Do you have something planned for them?"

Morgan's smile turned steely. "Oh, Elyse dear, I've laid a trap for them. They won't escape me," she spoke with chilling resolve, her voice resonating like an omen of doom, her scythe poised to reap Lanny and Glenda's souls.

She was consumed with her thirst for vengeance, and her words left Elyse wisely opting for silence, prepared to watch the drama unfold.

Jayden's gaze drifted to the window as he remarked thoughtfully, "The past few days have been unusually cold. We might see snowfall before the week is out."

Elyse followed his gaze, her eyes resting on the wintry landscape stretching out beyond. "When the first snow falls, winter will truly settle in."

Driscoll approached, his voice tinged with concern. "The guards at the gates reported that Ms. Tracy Bernard arrived at our doorstep in nothing but a thin blouse and bare feet. They've brought her inside to warm her up."

Elyse's eyes widened in shock, her voice laced with alarm, "What? Where is she?"

"Elyse, I'm here..."

Tracy's voice floated into the room as a maid assisted her inside. She shuffled forward, wrapped in a coat given by the maid. Her face bore the telltale signs of exhaustion. Bruises marred her knees, and there were cuts and scrapes all over her legs.

Jayden's keen gaze detected the evidence of violence on Tracy's body. In a composed voice, he instructed, "Driscoll, call a doctor, preferably a female. Take Tracy upstairs to rest and arrange for food."

Acknowledging the sensitivity of the situation, Jayden excused himself. "I'll be in the study if you need me, Elyse."

"Thank you," Elyse replied, her eyes brimming with love and gratitude for the man in front of her.

Jayden gently stroked Elyse's head before turning and heading into the study.

Driscoll departed for the kitchen, leaving the maid to attend to Tracy's needs.

Tracy leaned into the maid's support, her gaze meeting Elyse's. A faint smile touched her lips. "I've become a burden to you guys again."

Elyse shook her head gently, steadying Tracy by the waist, her voice thick with emotion, "No, Tracy. That's not true at all. I'm so grateful you're here."

Tracy managed a faint smile. "That comforts me. In this condition, I couldn't face my parents. They wouldn't be able to bear the shock."

Chapter 558:

Elyse tried to encourage Tracy to lean on her, but Tracy refused, always keeping in mind that Elyse was pregnant. “You’re pregnant and vulnerable right now, how could I lean on you?”

Elyse wrinkled her nose affectionately. “Come on, you’re very light. It’s fine.”

Morgan lowered her gaze and noticed a faint red mark on the inner side of Tracy’s thigh. She frowned and asked, “Are you bleeding?”

Tracy’s face flushed with embarrassment, unsure of how to respond.

“Let’s get you back to the room first. We’ll talk more when the doctor arrives,” Elyse said urgently.

Tracy nodded silently and made her way to the guest room on the second floor.

Morgan decided not to follow them. She felt her presence might stop Tracy from speaking openly, so she remained in the living room, waiting for the doctor.

In the guest room, Tracy sat on the bed while Elyse carefully tucked her in under the covers.

Cradling Tracy in her arms, Elyse spoke softly. “Tracy, can you tell me what happened?”

Tracy sighed bitterly, unsure how to begin.

Elyse vaguely guessed what had happened upon seeing the marks on Tracy’s body—hickies and even bite marks. There were just so many of them.

Taking a quick glance at her injuries, Elyse asked, “Did Shaun do this to you?”

After a moment of silence, Tracy nodded slowly.

Elyse felt a lump form in her throat. She knew she shouldn't have left Tracy at Shaun's house that day. How could that maniac do this to her friend?

"Is he insane? Why would he bite you? There are teeth marks all over your body?" Elyse choked out, tears welling in her eyes.

Tracy managed a small smile and replied softly, "Yes, he's insane."

Elyse pressed on, "But when I saw you two last time, he seemed fine. Why would he treat you like this now?"

After a long pause, Tracy finally said, her voice barely above a whisper, "Dolores approached me. She forced Shaun into a meeting with her two days ago and demanded that he hand me over to her.

I just wanted to reason with Shaun, to ask him to let me go and give up on me. But then he lost control."

Elyse was stunned. She hadn't expected Dolores's visit.

Confusion clouding her expression, Elyse asked, "How did you manage to leave today? What did you say to Shaun to let you go?"

Tracy's smile was weary but relieved. "Dolores came back today with Lowell. She and Shaun went straight to the study to talk, so I asked Lowell to take me away."

Elyse frowned. In her eyes, Lowell was merely an unruly rider. How could he have been willing to help Tracy?

"Did he agree to help you just because you asked?" Elyse inquired, her confusion evident.

Tracy paused for a moment before responding, "I begged him, even got down on my knees and swore I would never return to Watscar."

“You knelt down before him? How dare he demand such a thing!” Elyse exclaimed, her anger rising at the thought.

Tracy managed a bitter smile. She knew it wasn’t just her plea that convinced Lowell to help her. She didn’t want to tell Elyse what she had to do to escape Shaun. Taking her hand, Tracy reassured her, “Please don’t worry about me. I’ll be alright.”

Elyse’s eyes welled up with tears. “You’re bleeding. How could he do this to you?”

“Shaun always treats me like this in bed. He can’t believe I can’t endure it and accuses me of lying. He wouldn’t let me go until I was hurt and bleeding.”

Elyse clenched her fists in anger. “That monster! I had no idea he was this cruel. I won’t let him get away with this when I see him next!”

Tracy shook her head and said, “It’s all over now. I don’t want to stay in Watscar anymore. I’m planning to get better and then go abroad. I’ll come back in a few years.”

Elyse was taken aback. “You’re leaving Watscar? Did Lowell require your leave?”

“Yes, I asked him for help. I had no other choice,” Tracy replied with a bitter smile. “I have to keep my promise.”

Elyse struggled to find words, overwhelmed by Tracy’s decision.

They talked for a while until the family medical team arrived.

The doctor and nurse were both women, which put Tracy at ease during the examination.

An hour later, the doctor said to Elyse, “Tracy has a vaginal tear, likely from having too much sex. She also has whiplash wounds.”

Pausing briefly, the doctor continued, “For now, she needs plenty of rest to recover.”

Elyse nodded solemnly. "Thank you, doctor."

"I've already prescribed the medication and handed it to the butler. I'm leaving now," the doctor said before departing with the nurse.

Elyse made her way to the door of the room and stole a glance at Tracy, who had fallen asleep from exhaustion. Tracy was still frowning as if troubled by a nightmare.

Hurrying over, Elyse gently tried to comfort her. "It's okay, Tracy. I'm here with you. Everything will be alright."

Elyse continued to talk to her for a while. Gradually, Tracy's frown relaxed, and her sleeping face regained a sense of calm.

Chapter 559:

Elyse looked at Tracy's sleeping face for a while when Driscoll knocked at the door. "Mrs. Owen, we have a guest," he announced.

Rising from her chair, Elyse expressed her confusion. "At this hour? Who could it possibly be?"

Without a word, Driscoll shot a glance full of concern toward Tracy.

Elyse followed him downstairs and was surprised to see Shaun lounging on the sofa, with Jayden seated opposite him.

Furious, Elyse marched over in her slippers.

"Unbelievable! How dare you invade my home like this? And sitting on my sofa, no less! Who gave you permission?"

Shaun looked up, met her gaze, and nonchalantly picked up a glass from the table. After taking a sip of the water, he remarked, "Your water is quite refreshing. Could you pour me another?"

Outraged, Elyse snapped, “The nerve! You have no shame!”

Seeing Elyse’s distress, Jayden quickly guided her to sit down next to him, trying to calm her. “He’s here as a guest, Elyse. We can’t just throw him out.”

Elyse retorted, “And why is that?”

Shaun, with a raised eyebrow, explained, “Because you’ve taken my wife. I’m here to bring her back.”

Overwhelmed by anger, Elyse burst out, “Your wife? After all the misery you’ve caused her, you still dare to call her that?”

Shaun said with a sigh, “I know I’ve been harsh. My love for her overwhelmed me. I’m sorry.”

Ignoring the apology, Elyse scoffed. “Just leave. I won’t hand Tracy over to someone who treats her so poorly. She is not a good match for you, and she doesn’t need to endure this.”

Undeterred, Shaun asked, “Then whom do you suggest?”

“Dolores,” Elyse replied firmly. “Your families are compatible, and you have history. She’s a better match for you.”

Acknowledging her point, Shaun responded, “That may be true, but I don’t accept it. Tracy is my chosen wife and the future mother of my children. I insist you return her to me.”

Elyse, finding his words ridiculous, challenged him, “Why on earth should I do that?”

He answered seriously, “She might be carrying my child. Does that change your mind?”

At this, Elyse’s anger flared, and she looked ready to strike.

Jayden restrained a visibly upset Elyse, exhaling a long, weary sigh. Shaun, who typically carried himself with an air of sophistication, was now behaving recklessly. It had caught Jayden off guard to see Shaun this aggressive, completely losing his composure.

With another sigh, Jayden said, "Tracy asked us to look after her. I understand how you feel, but we need to honor her wishes."

After a moment of silence, Shaun responded, "You're right. But where's Tracy? I need to talk to her."

Elyse snapped back, "She's sleeping. Just leave; you're only causing trouble."

"Then I'll need a room for the night," Shaun decided, nodding. "Prepare a guest room for me. I'm staying."

Elyse retorted sharply, "Absolutely not! You need to leave."

Shaun countered firmly, "You should show some respect to your guests. Moreover, if Tracy is carrying my child, it's impossible for me to leave now."

Elyse's frustration with Shaun's unyielding demeanor only grew.

Jayden arched an eyebrow. "Are you really planning to stay here?"

Shaun challenged him, "I've heard you severed ties with the Owens. Surely, your house still has a guest room."

Jayden responded with a sneer, "Very well. Set up a guest room for him."

Elyse glared at Shaun, her disbelief palpable at the thought of this irrational man remaining in their house. How would she even begin to explain this situation to Tracy the next day?

Jayden tried to soothe her worries, “Don’t fret. We have bodyguards, and Shaun won’t make a scene. Let’s just see how things unfold tomorrow.”

Unconvinced, Elyse remarked, “Tracy will not be pleased to find him here.”

“We don’t have much choice,” Jayden explained. “They have a long history together. And if Shaun’s claim holds any truth—if Tracy is indeed pregnant—she might not be able to leave.”

Elyse’s anxiety intensified. “I hope she’s not pregnant. Tracy has plans to leave Watscar.”

Chapter 560:

Elyse folded her arms and bit her lower lip, her resolve unyielding in her plan to oust Shaun.

As she considered this, she shot a stern look at Jayden. “You shouldn’t have let him stay.”

Jayden responded with composure, “Tracy is his woman.”

His words made Elyse frown. Quick to retort, Elyse said, “Tracy doesn’t want to be with him. She doesn’t belong to him.”

“But obviously, she hasn’t managed to leave him. She tried to escape from his house, yet he easily found her,” Jayden pointed out.

He then leaned forward and advised Elyse, “I suggest we let them talk. It would be best if they could part ways amicably.”

After a moment’s thought, Elyse found merit in his suggestion and reluctantly consented.

The following day, Tracy didn't rise until noon. She then strolled into the living room at a leisurely pace.

Upon entering, she noticed a man seated on the sofa, his back to her. Mistaking him for Jayden, she was about to greet him when he turned around, revealing himself and catching Tracy's frightened gaze.

Shaun regarded Tracy with a gentle expression, disregarding her evident fear. He stood and tried to be gentle. "Hello, darling. Are you hungry?"

Seeing Shaun made Tracy tremble with fear, and she quickly cried out, "Don't come near me! Stay away!"

Noticing Tracy's apprehension, pain flickered in Shaun's eyes. He reassured her, "Don't be afraid. I'll stay right here and won't come any closer."

Once Tracy felt assured that Shaun would maintain his distance, she settled somewhat. Still cautious, she inquired, "Where's Elyse?"

"She's out in the garden. She didn't know when you'd be up. Should I call her over?" Shaun's demeanor remained courteous and considerate, yet Tracy recalled how this very gentleman had completely disregarded her feelings in private.

She involuntarily shivered and looked away, avoiding Shaun's gaze. Without another word, Shaun pursed his lips and made his way to the garden.

There, Elyse was taking a slow walk, bundled in a heavy coat. She placed her hand gently on her abdomen, which was not yet visibly rounded.

Driscoll, who was accompanying her, spotted Shaun approaching and promptly alerted her, "Shaun is coming our way."

Turning slowly, Elyse asked, puzzled, "What are you doing here?"

Shaun explained, "Tracy is awake. She's in the living room looking for you." He lingered, making no move to leave.

Elyse ignored him, brushed past, and hurried towards the living room. Driscoll followed her closely, advising cautiously, "Please walk slowly. Be mindful of your steps."

Shaun did not follow; he understood Tracy's desire not to see him and remained in the garden, waiting for her readiness.

Back in the living room, Driscoll assisted Elyse with her heavy coat.

After shedding her coat, Elyse settled beside Tracy, taking her hand with a look of concern. "Are you all right? Did Shaun do anything to upset you?"

"No, he didn't do anything," Tracy responded, her eyes filling with tears. "I'm terribly hungry. My stomach is growling. Could someone please make me some cakes?"

Relieved, Elyse replied, "Absolutely."

She caught Driscoll's eye, who smiled reassuringly and made his way to the kitchen. "They'll be ready in no time. You won't have to wait long," Elyse assured her gently.

Tracy nodded, her gaze drifting anxiously toward the living room door. "Why is Shaun here? Does he intend to take me back?"

Elyse didn't conceal the truth. "He mentioned he wants to talk to you."

Disbelief widened Tracy's eyes. In her view, Shaun had always been a tyrant, never heeding her cries or considering her feelings.

After a pause, she voiced her suspicion. "Is this just a scheme? Is he planning to reveal his true self later?"

"If he tries to deceive you, I'll make sure he can't find you again," Elyse declared firmly.

Tracy frowned, her voice tinged with despair. "Shaun is relentless. No matter where I go, he finds me."

Seeing Tracy's somber expression, Elyse playfully tweaked her nose to lighten the mood. "It seems you know him all too well."

A forced smile crept across Tracy's face. "I once loved him deeply. How could I not understand him?"

Elyse, probing deeper, asked, "Do you truly no longer love him?"