

## Bound love 611

Chapter 611:

After Morgan calmed down, Elyse headed home with the notebook. She walked into the living room, where Jayden was absorbed in a newspaper.

Glancing up, he said, "Mabel's lack of response is unexpected. She still hasn't appeared. It seems she doesn't care much for her parents."

Elyse pondered his observation and responded, "She might ignore Lanny's predicament, but she surely wants to handle Glenda's final arrangements?"

Jayden raised an eyebrow, curious. "Why are you sure she would return to handle Glenda's final arrangements?"

Elyse said, "Remember when you detained Glenda? Mabel dared to break into our house demanding her release. It shows she values her mom deeply."

Jayden fell silent, deep in thought, then said, "Elyse, you've really changed lately. You're more composed and insightful."

Elyse touched her face, musing. "I hadn't noticed. I just act on my convictions."

Jayden gestured to her. "Come here. Let's see if you really have changed."

Elyse's smile faltered slightly. "You should rest more for a quicker recovery. You're out of the hospital but still need to take it easy."

Jayden looked at her sternly and said, "What are you implying? I just want to hold you. It's been days since our last embrace."

Elyse was irritated. "A hug? Aren't you concerned I might aggravate your injury during our embrace? Do you want your wound to heal properly?"

Jayden's expression darkened. "Elyse, just hug me while I'm still asking nicely. Don't make me insist."

Elyse's presence became more commanding as she approached him. It was unusual for Jayden to feel overpowered by her assertive demeanor, causing his resistance to falter.

Elyse walked up to him, lifted his chin, and kissed him unexpectedly as he was caught off guard. Jayden braced for a slap across his face. Instead, she surprised him with a kiss. This unexpected kiss inexplicably lifted his spirits.

Raising her eyebrows, Elyse told him while he was still bewildered, "Stay calm and focus on healing. I'm waiting for you to get better."

With that, she turned and walked away without a backward glance.

Jayden touched his lips, reminiscing about how long it had been since their last kiss, and even longer since they had been intimate.

As he watched her leave, Driscoll observed, convinced of Jayden's deep love for Elyse. He could tell that Jayden was completely captivated by Elyse's allure.

A young maid near Driscoll was moved. "They still love each other so deeply. They'll probably have a baby after he recovers, right?"

Driscoll nodded enthusiastically. "Absolutely. He has always treated her wonderfully. I'm sure they'll have another child soon."

Jayden was oblivious to what his household staff were thinking. After looking away, he focused on his phone. He instructed his team to cremate Glenda's body, planning to use her ashes as a way to draw Mabel out. Based on what they knew about Mabel, they believed she wouldn't ignore Glenda's ashes.

Unbeknownst to them, Mabel had decided to follow Kaelyn's lead. At Kaelyn's direction, she had already returned to Watscar. Mabel was indeed intent on taking care of Glenda's remains. However, the final decision rested with Kaelyn.

## Chapter 612:

Mabel sat in the car, staring out at the funeral home through the window. Frustration was evident in her voice as she said, "My mom passed away less than a day ago, and they've already cremated her? What on earth was Elyse thinking? What a dreadful niece she is!"

Kaelyn, sitting calmly next to Mabel, crossed her arms and said, "Don't let it get to you. Elyse is trying to provoke you, to make sure you show up."

Mabel slammed her hand against the car door in anger. "Using such a low tactic to force my hand! She won't even let my mother have a proper burial!"

Kaelyn took off her sunglasses and fixed her gaze on Mabel. "Exactly. She is taking revenge."

Gritting her teeth, Mabel asked angrily, "What did my parents ever do to her? Why would she hurt them like this?"

Kaelyn couldn't give an answer. She had sent inquiries but received no information. Elyse had kept it under wraps.

Their car had stopped outside the funeral home for a moment. Kaelyn checked the time and said, "We should leave now."

Confused, Mabel questioned, "Didn't you say I could see my mom one last time?"

Kaelyn replied calmly, "Her body has already been cremated. Do you think Elyse will give you the ashes?"

Mabel was inconsolable after hearing that. The thought of her mother's ashes falling into Elyse's hands was unacceptable.

Kaelyn knew what was weighing on Mabel's mind. She gently remarked, "I understand you're upset, but right now, you pose no threat to Elyse. She doesn't take you seriously. What can you do except show your incapacity and reluctance in front of me?"

Mabel, feeling frustrated, covered her face and cried softly, "I'll never measure up to Elyse. I'm such a failure."

Kaelyn comforted her, patting her shoulder softly. "Didn't you agree to come with me to improve yourself? Work hard alongside me, and in time, you'll be strong enough to take your revenge. When you're ready, demand your mother's ashes from her."

Mabel cried a little more after that but finally composed herself. She nodded in agreement and left with Kaelyn.

Meanwhile, Jayden's men had been waiting for three days but had yet to locate Mabel. He informed Elyse of this.

"Looks like you don't know Mabel as well as you thought you did. She didn't even bother to demand her mother's ashes. She's more concerned with protecting herself than honoring her parents."

Elyse's eyes flashed with surprise upon hearing this. "Could it be that Mabel has returned, but your men haven't noticed her?" Elyse speculated.

Jayden spun a pen between his fingers thoughtfully. "You think Mabel has managed to evade my men?"

Elyse remained silent. The idea did seem improbable.

Jayden raised an eyebrow and walked up to her. "Why the sudden silence? Don't want to argue?"

Elyse glared at him playfully and moved away slightly, but he brazenly closed the distance.

Pointing to his abdomen, she said, “Want to recover? Stay still. Don’t you want to heal properly?”

“Who said you could distance yourself from me?” He gently grasped her hand.

“Hmph! You goaded me on purpose,” she retorted.

He reached out and wrapped his arms around her waist. Perhaps it was because she had lost their child that Elyse’s demeanor had shifted.

She was more resolute and assertive than her usual gentle self. Jayden found himself appreciating her newfound strength, and it only made him love her more.

Resting against his shoulder, Elyse felt surprisingly calm. She hadn’t anticipated feeling this serene in his presence.

Did she not love him anymore? She looked up at him. He was as handsome as ever, yet she no longer felt the flutter of butterflies in her stomach that she once did. After gazing at him for a while, Elyse asked quietly, “Will we be together forever?”

Jayden was taken aback but assured her, “Of course, we’ll always be together.”

Then, he narrowed his eyes slightly, teasingly nibbling on her finger. With a mock-serious expression, he asked, “You don’t want to be with me?”

She shook her head. “No, my feelings for you haven’t changed.”

Though her love for him remained steadfast, she couldn’t comprehend why this lingering weariness persisted within her.

Chapter 613:

At a party full of Watscar’s elite, Freda sat elegantly on a leather couch, a glass of red wine in hand. She chatted with a lady her age, but her eyes kept wandering to her right.

“Freda, what are you staring at? Is it Theo?” The lady sitting across from Freda noticed her distraction and smiled. “You and Theo had a history, right? Even though you broke up, there’s no harm in saying hello.”

Freda’s cheeks flushed at her friend’s words. She waved her hand awkwardly. “I don’t think it’s a good idea. We ended things a long time ago. It’d be weird to go up and say hi.”

Her friend sensed her hesitation and urged her, “Come on, it’s just a greeting. What’s the big deal? Go on!”

With a playful push, she sent Freda stumbling forward in her high heels.

Steadying herself, Freda turned back to see her friend giving her an excited wave, urging her to go on. Freda turned back to Theo. She hoped he’d be polite in front of all the banquet attendees.

Taking a deep breath, Freda adjusted her fringe, lifted the hem of her dress slightly, and nervously approached Theo. “Theo, what a pleasant surprise to see you here,” she greeted him.

Theo had been deep in conversation with a friend. A flicker of annoyance crossed his eyes when he saw Freda, but he quickly masked it.

Raising his glass, he clinked it with Freda’s and said calmly, “It has been a while. I didn’t expect to see you here. How have you been?”

Freda was overjoyed to see Theo facing her with such calmness. She thought he wouldn’t dislike her anymore.

“Can I have the first dance with you later?” Freda asked, blushing and trying to appear composed.

“Of course, it’s my honor, Miss Jimenez,” Theo responded without hesitation.

“Great. I’ll come find you later.” With that, Freda turned and went back to her friend.

Once Freda was out of earshot, Theo’s friend asked curiously, “Didn’t you promise another lady your first dance about ten minutes ago? Who do you actually want to dance with?”

Taking a sip of wine, Theo replied calmly, “The one I truly wanted to dance with didn’t show up. As for these two, I couldn’t care less who gets the opportunity.”

Theo’s friend gasped. He knew exactly who Theo meant. He had heard that Elyse, who had suffered a miscarriage, was at home recuperating and wouldn’t be attending any events recently.

After a moment of thought, he asked, “Elyse is married to Jayden and they even had a child. Why are you still hung up on her? And Jayden’s not a cripple, right? How do you plan to win Elyse over?”

“Shut up! Don’t mention it.” The last thing Theo wanted to acknowledge was that Jayden could stand and walk. Jayden’s mobility meant he wasn’t crippled, dashing Theo’s hopes of winning Elyse.

Accepting the truth, Theo realized that all his plans to pursue Elyse were in vain. He didn’t even have the chance to take the first step. His dreams were shattered.

Seeing Theo’s pain, his friend tried to comfort him. “Let it go. You missed your chance with Elyse. Now, she’s living a good life. Why would she abandon everything for you?”

Theo’s heart ached as his friend’s words hit home. Deep down, he realized it was because he hadn’t valued Elyse. There was a time when Elyse showed him sincere love. He had belittled it and carelessly crushed it, deeming it worthless.

But when he lost her, he realized some things were priceless, far beyond money. Love seemed like a fleeting dream, but it was very real.

When Elyse left, Theo realized just how much he needed her. It dawned on him that it wasn’t Elyse who needed to be with him; it was he who desperately needed to be with her.

Despite being surrounded by wealth, Theo felt his heart was barren and desolate. Born into a rich family, he never lacked material things, but without Elyse, he felt like he had nothing.

Theo sighed and admitted, “Elyse used to treat me like a king. She was so good to me that it inflated my ego. I even thought I was the greatest man in the world.”

His friend was baffled. “Where did you get that confidence?”

“Haha, it was from Elyse. I felt like the most awesome man in the world when I was loved by her.” Theo chuckled a few more times, but then his smile faded.

With a heavy heart, he said, “But I was too arrogant. I should have been the happiest man in the world, not the most arrogant.”

Chapter 614:

Upon hearing Theo’s declaration, his friend was taken aback. Then, with a rueful smile, he said, “Buddy, you’ve got it bad.”

Theo managed a small, wistful smile and replied, “You think I haven’t tried to give up? Elyse isn’t just on my mind. She’s in my heart, pulsing through my veins.”

He paused briefly, then added, “I can’t stop thinking about her. I miss her all the time—when I eat, before I sleep. She’s become part of my daily routine. The only respite I get is when I’m buried in my work.”

Theo’s friend was so surprised by Theo’s intensity that he could only grumble in response, “Enough already. You sound like a modern-day Casanova, always talking about love. It’s too much.”

Theo sighed and said, “I wish I could be like you, not tied down, waking up with someone new each day. But that’s not me. I have someone who occupies my thoughts.”



This prompted his friend to lightly punch him in the chest and retort, “Now you’re making me out to be the bad guy to make yourself look good. I haven’t fooled around for a long time. Don’t spread rumors about me. We’ve all had our moments.”

Theo looked at his friend, took a sip of his drink, and teased, “I heard your family’s setting you up on blind dates. Do you think any high-society ladies want a guy with your history? If they dig a little, they’ll find a treasure trove of your escapades.”

His friend clenched his teeth and said, “Mind your own business and stay out of mine. I don’t need your concern.”

Meanwhile, Freda returned to her friend, who immediately asked, “What did you say to Theo?”

Blushing slightly, Freda said, “We chatted briefly. Then I asked him for the first dance, and he said yes.”

Her friend’s eyes lit up as she said, “That’s great, right? He must still care about you. Keep at it, and you’ll catch his eye again.”

“Hope so. I’ll do my best,” Freda responded with a smile.

Then, glancing at her watch, Freda prepared to ask Theo for that dance at the right time.

Ten minutes later, it was time to dance. Freda adjusted her dress and began searching for Theo.

She noticed him standing still and approached him with a smile.

Yet, just as Freda was a short distance from Theo, a girl with short hair emerged from the crowd and stood in Freda’s path.

Before Freda could respond, she saw the girl positioning herself right in front of Theo.

Before Freda could react, the girl confronted Theo, “You promised me the first dance. Let’s go.”

Freda watched, stunned, as Theo tenderly touched the girl’s nose and said affectionately, “I haven’t forgotten. Let’s go dance.”

Then, the girl with short hair linked arms with Theo and they headed to the dance floor, gracefully moving to the music.

Theo’s friend, witnessing the scene, turned away awkwardly after seeing the look of heartbreak on Freda’s face.

Freda was utterly dismayed to see Theo dancing with another woman. She was also puzzled. Hadn’t Theo promised her the first dance? Why was he now dancing with someone else?

She wanted to confront Theo, to ask if there had been some misunderstanding, or if he was simply the type to say yes to any girl who asked him to dance.

These troubling thoughts made Freda’s gaze turn icy and stern as she watched Theo.

As she stepped forward to seek answers from Theo, she unexpectedly collided with someone.

“Freda, what are you doing here?” Gavin exclaimed, surprised.

Chapter 615:

Gavin gave Freda a head-to-toe sweep, then flashed his signature charming smile. “That dress looks fantastic on you.”

Freda hadn’t expected a compliment from Gavin, especially after their last unpleasant encounter. “Thanks, yours too,” she replied politely, eager to move on.

But fate, it seemed, had a cruel sense of humor. Theo and his date were waltzing further and further away, Freda trailing behind them like a lost satellite.

The final notes of the melody faded, and Theo escorted his dance partner off the dance floor, hand in hand. Freda didn't get a chance to squeeze through the crowd to speak with him.

She saw clearly the tenderness in Theo's gaze as it lingered on his dance partner. Every ounce of gentlemanly charm was directed at that girl.

Theo hadn't even glanced at Freda the entire time. Disappointment gnawed at Freda. They'd been a couple, yet here he was, treating her like a stranger. It felt like their shared history meant nothing to him.

Freda stopped abruptly. She didn't have the courage to confront Theo. Dejected, she turned and began walking back, but she was interrupted once more by Gavin.

Gavin was surrounded by several women, their faces flushed, eyes sparkling. They chirped like excited birds, all vying for his attention. It seemed they all wanted to dance with him.

Freda couldn't help but scowl. How could anyone fall for such a man? She believed those women were all clueless, falling for his deceptive gentle facade.

Convinced of Gavin's duplicity, she watched, waiting for him to make his move. But to her surprise, he politely dismissed all the ladies. He didn't agree to dance with any of them. Reluctantly, the women dispersed, despite their unwillingness to accept rejection.

Freda's eyes widened. This wasn't playing out as expected. She quickly reassured herself that this must be part of Gavin's game and speculated he might have another hidden agenda, pretending to be a celibate gentleman.

Lost in her self-constructed narrative, she didn't notice Gavin approaching. He took a slow sip of wine, studying her. He found her face a kaleidoscope of emotions, shifting with each passing second. He couldn't decipher her thoughts, but his gut told him they weren't pleasant.

“What’s on your mind? You look like you’re wrestling with a dilemma,” he said kindly.

Freda jumped, glancing around nervously. Regaining her composure, she sidled up to him, feigning curiosity. “How’d you get in? Did your friend bring you in?”

Gavin was confused. “I came with an invitation,” he explained. “Why do you ask?”

Freda scrutinized him. “But you’re just a violinist. Who gives an invitation to a violinist? Are you sure it was addressed to you?”

Understanding dawned on Gavin. He took another measured sip of his drink. “Miss Jimenez,” he began, “why the prejudice against artists? Or is it just me you have a problem with?”

Freda, caught off guard, stammered, “No, that’s not it! I was just... curious. Can someone like you attend these events?”

Gavin chuckled. “Excuse me for a moment. I’ll be right back.”

Freda, at a loose end, waited patiently to see what he’d do next. A few minutes later, she saw him returning, not towards her, but weaving through the crowd. He reached the center of the dance floor, violin in hand.

The dance floor was less crowded now because the previous song had ended. Gavin stood poised in the center, raising his violin. Freda drifted closer, watching him from the edge.

Was this some kind of self-important performance? A fancy venue already had an orchestra, yet he felt the need to be the center of attention.

Freda wasn’t about to stop Gavin, though. In fact, she rather enjoyed the idea of him making a fool of himself. The resident orchestra was playing a slow waltz, completely different from the piece Gavin envisioned. Out of respect, he decided to wait until their section finished before launching into his own melody.

Chapter 616:

As the beat transitioned to the one he had been waiting for, Gavin promptly played the opening note. The piece was “Tarantella.”

The ultra-fast rhythm slightly stirred the dancers on the dance floor, but the performers of the orchestra were the first to respond, synchronizing seamlessly with Gavin to complete the piece.

The people on the dance floor were stunned for a second. Then, they switched from a slow waltz to more lively dance steps in tune with the music.

Meanwhile, Gavin’s performance captivated everyone. The crowd began to gather at the edge of the dance floor.

Standing there, Freda surveyed the scene and felt a bit surprised. She pondered why Gavin’s music drew such a crowd.

“Gavin looks so handsome playing the violin. I really want to date him. How should I approach such a gentleman?”

“Gavin is far too much of a gentleman. He doesn’t leave us any openings.”

“Just the thought of Gavin marrying someone else fills my heart with jealousy. Who will be that lucky person in the future?”

Freda overheard these remarks from a group of girls. Searching for the source, she turned and saw it was the same group that had earlier badgered Gavin for a dance.

Hearing their words, Freda frowned. Gavin had a knack for showing off. Though just a violinist, he managed to captivate these high-society ladies. Clearly, he was looking to climb the social ladder through women.

After the piece ended, the hall erupted in thunderous applause. Then someone recognized Gavin and shouted, “Mr. Cramer, one more, please.”

Gavin had planned to play only one piece, but the crowd's enthusiasm took him by surprise. He paused to think, signaled to the other musicians, took a deep breath, and played the opening note of "El Choclo."

"I really like this one."

"He plays so beautifully. I feel like dancing too."

This tango was more rousing than the previous piece, drawing even more people onto the dance floor. Freda noticed a woman in a fishtail dress dancing passionately. The woman's energetic moves left an impression on Freda.

Freda watched the dance floor, utterly captivated. As the music ended, the crowd seemed eager to keep dancing. However, Gavin adopted a more reserved stance and left the dance floor with his violin.

Approaching Freda, Gavin asked, "Did you enjoy the joy brought by the music?"

Freda blinked, puzzled. "What do you mean?"

Without elaborating, Gavin said, "I have to put the violin away," and then he headed outside.

"How do you know Gavin? What's your relationship with him? Do you like him?"

Before Freda could gather her thoughts, she found herself encircled by three young ladies bombarding her with questions, which only added to her confusion.

Freda responded, equally puzzled, "Why would you ask me that?"

"Are you Gavin's girlfriend? Otherwise, why do you seem so close to him?" The young ladies pressed on.

At this, Freda sighed. It was clear now; these three admirers of Gavin were here to confront her.

Freda exhaled deeply. “You’re mistaken. My relationship with Gavin Cramer isn’t what you’re imagining. Actually, we’re barely acquaintances, not even friends.”

Upon hearing Freda’s words, the three ladies simultaneously sighed in relief.

“That makes sense. You seem quite ordinary. How could he ever be attracted to you? You lack any temperament whatsoever. When you two stand side by side, I don’t believe you two are compatible in the slightest.”

“Exactly. You don’t seem like you’d appreciate music. You probably don’t understand it, right? How could you ever connect with Gavin on a deep level?”

“Next time, don’t stand so close to Gavin. Being near him only diminishes his presence.”

Freda couldn’t help but laugh out loud in response to those young ladies’ comments. Their words seemed utterly absurd to her.

Freda not only thought this, but she also voiced it. “I don’t think this violinist is worthy of me. Keep your admiration for him to yourselves and leave me out of it. I believe I’m way out of his league.”

The three ladies exchanged looks and smiled disdainfully. “You think Gavin is just a violinist, don’t you? It would be wonderful to us if he were merely a humble violinist. However, his family background is quite impressive.”

Freda was skeptical; she thought the women were fabricating stories. Just as she was about to question them further about Gavin’s background, she noticed them hurrying away.

Turning around, she saw that Gavin had come back.

Chapter 617:

Reflecting on the remarks of the three young ladies, Freda furrowed her brow in bewilderment and asked, "Gavin, what does your family actually do? Are you merely a violinist?"

"I come from a regular family. Don't overthink it," Gavin responded calmly.

He then inquired, "When do you plan to leave?"

"I'm heading out. You needn't worry about me. I have a driver," Freda scoffed.

Gavin kept his expression neutral. He had only asked out of courtesy and didn't intend to drive her home. After Gavin departed, Freda found herself without a goal.

She pondered what else she could do if she stayed. It wasn't until she spotted Theo that she felt a reason to remain.

Freda felt hurt that Theo had not kept his promise to dance the first dance with her earlier. Although she didn't want to approach him again, she found herself walking towards him despite her intentions.

Theo was engaged in a cheerful conversation with a woman, both of them smiling. Upon noticing Freda's approach, Theo's expression briefly turned into a frown, but he quickly composed himself. He leaned down, whispered something to that woman, and then she departed with a smile.

After the woman left, the smile vanished from Theo's face. He looked at Freda sternly and asked, "Why do you keep following me around? You seem to find me wherever I go."

Hearing Theo's harsh words, Freda felt a sharp pain in her heart as if it had been stabbed by a blade. She managed a forced smile and replied, "Can't I come over to talk to you?"

Theo said impatiently, "I really don't see what we have to talk about. You should know better than anyone that I have no feelings for you, none at all. I dislike you intensely. Why do you keep approaching me?"



His harsh words and evident disdain were hurtful. Freda's expression darkened with sadness. She replied, her voice filled with hurt, "I just haven't seen you in a long time and wanted to say hello and catch up."

Theo looked at Freda coldly and demanded, "You don't still think there's a chance for us, do you? Do you still have feelings for me? Freda, I say this one last time—I have no feelings for you. The only person on my mind is Elyse. If Elyse were to come to me, I'd propose in a second. But marrying you is out of the question."

Frozen, Freda's eyes welled up with tears. She still attempted to express her feelings to Theo. She believed her love was just as strong as Elyse's. She was convinced she could offer Theo the same affection and even surpass what Elyse had given him.

However, Theo refused to listen. He was aware of Freda's feelings towards him, but his heart was reserved for Elyse. He understood the challenges of being with Elyse, yet he couldn't let go of her. Theo clung to the love he once received from Elyse, unwilling to accept anyone else's affection.

Perhaps feeling a bit of sympathy for Freda, Theo decided to be kinder and help her understand the situation better, encouraging her to move on.

He remarked, "Freda, you need to let go of your fixation. Our relationship was initially about linking our families through marriage to strengthen existing resources and forge new alliances. When two families can't collaborate for mutual gain, it undermines potential connections."

He paused, then continued, "Do you understand? Our relationship was based on interests from the start. When those interests are no longer served, we part ways. I've always been clear about this, so I have no romantic feelings for you. All I considered was the advantage I would gain by being with you."

Freda was aware that their relationship was fundamentally an exchange of benefits, yet she deluded herself. She convinced herself that Theo might harbor some feelings for her.

However, the more she believed this, the more Theo felt compelled to confront her with the harsh reality to help her face the truth.

Freda faced Theo and asked, “Why are you so composed?”

#### Chapter 618:

Theo raised his glass and clinked it against Freda’s, a cruel smile on his lips. “Because I don’t love you,” he said, his voice dripping with disdain. “All that kindness I showed you? It was nothing more than a charade to secure your family’s cooperation!”

Freda’s eyes welled up with tears at his words, but she forced herself to remain composed. “Then why not keep up the facade? You’ve lost so much money and resources by refusing to marry me. Isn’t that a heavy price to pay?”

Theo’s expression turned colder. “I don’t want Elyse to find out that I’ve been seeing you. The loss from breaking up with you is a price I’m willing to pay.”

Freda opened her mouth to argue, to tell him that his obsession with Elyse was pointless and that a future with her was the best choice. But she found herself at a loss for words, feeling like a fool. Could they be together if Elyse wasn’t in the way? She wasn’t really sure.

Theo’s impatience grew as he saw the tears threatening to spill from Freda’s eyes. The last thing he wanted was a scene. Wouldn’t everyone there see him as a jerk then? “Are we done here?” he snapped. “Can I go now?”

Freda longed to stop him, but his look of disdain pierced her heart. She swallowed her thoughts and said, “Go ahead.”

Theo’s contempt for her was palpable. She had no reason to hold onto him. Trying to make him stay would only make her look more pathetic. Freda stood rooted to the spot for a few minutes, trying to gather her emotions. This event, once vibrant, now seemed utterly meaningless. She just wanted to go home.

Lifting the hem of her dress, she moved slowly through the crowd toward the exit of the hall.

“I didn’t expect to see Gavin here. He’s always so low-key and avoids lively gatherings.”

“Yeah, it was a real surprise. And to hear him play the violin so beautifully…”

Freda subconsciously paused, eavesdropping on a conversation between two people about Gavin.

“But when will he think about marriage? I want to introduce him to my daughter.”

“I’m trying to find out too. I’d love for my niece to have dinner with him.”

Freda couldn’t help but sneer inwardly. What was it about Gavin that made everyone eager to pair him off? He seemed so ordinary, nothing special to her!

After leaving the hall, Freda got into her car and drove home. Once she was back, she went through her nightly routine before lying down on her bed, phone in hand. She dialed Alena’s number.

Alena was in the middle of her skincare ritual. When she picked up the call, she asked casually, “What’s going on, sweetie?”

“Theo has never loved me,” Freda murmured, staring up at the ceiling.

Alena was taken aback. “What happened?”

Freda recounted the events of the banquet to Alena. After listening, Alena was silent for a long moment before she asked, “What are you planning to do next?”

“I don’t know,” Freda admitted. “I don’t have any specific plans, but I’m starting to take over some of my father’s company’s business and projects. I guess I’ll be busy with work.”

Alena thought for a moment and said, “I don’t think you should give up entirely. I’ve always told you that you’ve been too accommodating with Theo. He looks down on you

because of it, treating you like a doormat. You need to stir his possessive instincts before you confront him.”

Freda turned over, contemplating. “You want me to get closer to Gavin to draw Theo’s attention?”

“Exactly!” Alena confirmed. “Aren’t you curious about his family background? This could also be the perfect chance to investigate.”

“Your idea is tempting,” Freda said, rolling on the bed with a sigh. “But I didn’t take the initiative to approach him since our last unpleasant encounter.”

“So what? Are you just going to give up that easily? If there’s even a glimmer of hope, you should seize it.”

Freda licked her lips, realizing Alena had a point. Given her attributes, even if Theo didn’t love her, he wouldn’t entirely disregard her. With renewed determination, Freda sat up and began to regale Alena with tales of Gavin’s display at the banquet.

“Gavin is like a peacock, strutting around and catching the eyes of every girl there. So many people want him to marry their daughters. It’s unbearable,” Freda said.

Alena asked, puzzled, “Why do you despise Gavin so much? Maybe he’s not as bad as you think!”

Chapter 619:

“Impossible!” Freda retorted. “Moreover, even if he’s not bad, how could he possibly compare to Theo?”

Alena halted, a realization unfurling as she recognized the intensity of Freda’s feelings for Theo. It became apparent that Freda was completely swept off her feet.

Treading carefully, Alena ventured, “Could there be a twist? Maybe Gavin’s got qualities that outshine Theo’s.”

“Not a chance. Gavin’s a nobody. He doesn’t even come close to Theo.”

Alena couldn’t suppress a chuckle. “Well, it seems like you really don’t like Gavin. Now I’m curious to meet him myself. I wonder if he’s really as bad as you say.”

“He’s absolutely, unequivocally terrible,” Freda declared, her voice ringing with conviction.

The next morning, Gavin entered the studio with purpose, his violin case in hand. Inside, he discovered Cody sprawled on the couch, nursing a steaming cup of coffee.

Cody, spotting Gavin, asked, “Can I get you a cup too?”

“That’d be great,” Gavin replied as he set down his case and joined Cody at the counter to pour himself a steaming mug.

Just then, the studio door flew open. Gavin instinctively thought it might be Fiona, who had been absent for a few days.

But as he swiveled around, he found himself eye-to-eye with Freda, standing tall and proud in the doorway, her gaze zeroed in on him like a heat-seeking missile.

Cody, too, noticed Freda’s arrival. Unfamiliar with her, he inquired politely, “Pardon me, but who might you be?”

Freda’s face bloomed into a smile as radiant as the morning sun. “You must be Cody Tucker. My father, Kat Jimenez, is a big fan of your work.”

Recognition dawned on Cody’s face as he placed Freda’s father. He nodded eagerly. “Ah, you’re Mr. Jimenez’s daughter! You’ve grown into such a lovely young lady.”

Freda drifted towards Cody, as graceful as a breeze, and linked her arm with his. “When can we expect you to join us for dinner, Mr. Tucker?” she cooed, her voice dripping with sweetness.

“My father has been talking about you constantly, saying how much he misses you.”

Cody’s laughter rippled through the air. “Well, Miss Jimenez,” he responded, “I’ve just come back to the country and am quite busy right now. But once things calm down, I’d love to pay your father a visit.”

A radiant smile lit up Freda’s face. “Oh, that’s wonderful! You promise?”

Gavin had reached his limits. He yanked Freda by the scruff of her neck and hauled her out the door. Freda fought with all her might, but Gavin’s grip was unyielding, compelling her to exit the studio against her will.

Cody cradled his steaming cup of coffee, his brow furrowed in puzzlement. “What’s happening? Do those two know each other well?”

Living lounged back, enjoying the spectacle with a grin of amusement playing on his face. “Who knows, maybe Gavin will have a girlfriend soon.”

Cody rubbed his chin in contemplation. “Life sure has a way of surprising us. Just let it run its course.”

Freda stood in the yard, seething with anger. “What’s gotten into you? Why are you treating me like this?” she demanded.

Gavin’s fury matched hers blow for blow. “Why are you here again? I told you not to come back.”

Freda scoffed and cast her eyes heavenward. “Who appointed you as the boss? Why should I listen to you?”

“This isn’t a coffee shop,” Gavin said firmly. “You can’t just come in whenever you want.”

Freda scoffed, her voice dripping with sarcasm. “I’ll ask Mr. Tucker if I can visit. I’m sure he won’t mind.”

Gavin’s face darkened like a storm cloud. “What’s your plan here?” he growled through clenched teeth.

Freda cocked an eyebrow. “Do you really want to know?”

Gavin nodded, short and sharp.

“My plan,” Freda replied, a Cheshire cat grin spreading across her face, “is you.”

Gavin’s expression twisted into something unreadable as he probed, “What do you want from me?”

“All you need to know is that my purpose revolves around you,” Freda said with a dismissive wave.

Gavin’s eyebrow shot up, his lips curving into an amused smirk. “Don’t tell me you’ve fallen head over heels for me?” He inched closer, his chiseled features mere breaths away from Freda’s.

Freda, taken by surprise, drew back, her voice betraying a hint of fluster. “How dare you suggest such a thing? Don’t be so full of yourself!”

Gavin’s laughter danced through the air, a melody that carried an enchanting allure, stirring a flutter in Freda’s heart. She sensed Gavin’s lingering gaze, his enigmatic smile teasing at his lips, and felt a flush warming her cheeks beneath his penetrating stare.

Chapter 620:

Weary from her violin practice, Elyse sank into a chair in the villa’s garden, cradling a steaming cup of tea. The phone on the table buzzed.

She picked it up to find a message from Irving: "Gavin's future girlfriend!" Attached was a photo of Gavin and Freda standing together, the angle suggesting it had been snapped secretly.

Elyse's curiosity was piqued. "What's going on between them? Are they seeing each other?"

Irving replied almost instantly, "No idea. But relationships are unpredictable. Let's see how things will unfold between them."

Elyse smiled and replied, "Okay."

After sending the message, Elyse leaned back, lost in thought. Just then, Tracy approached, looking downcast and distracted.

Seeing Tracy's troubled expression, Elyse asked gently, "Tracy, what's wrong? Is it about Shaun again?"

Tracy shook her head, her voice quivering. "No, it's not that."

She covered her face and began to sob, her anguish palpable. Elyse, feeling helpless, knelt beside Tracy and asked urgently, "Are you in some sort of trouble? Please, tell me. I'll do whatever I can to help."

But Tracy just shook her head, refusing to speak.

Just then, Driscoll appeared. "Mrs. Owen, Shaun is here again. He says he misses Tracy and wants to see her."

"Let him in. I'll talk to him myself." Elyse stood up and headed toward the living room.

Shortly after, Shaun entered. As soon as he saw Elyse, he asked, "Where's Tracy? Is she around?"



Elyse's anger flared at the mention of Tracy. "What did you do to her? She's a wreck today. Did you hurt her again? Tell me the damn truth!"

Though Shaun bristled at Elyse's accusation, he picked up on the key detail. "Tracy's in a bad mood today? Where is she? I need to see her."

Elyse's voice was sharp with irritation. "How dare you ask? Wasn't it you who upset her?"

Shaun's expression was as cold as ever. "I've been nothing but respectful to her all along. I haven't done anything from her. If she's upset, it sure isn't because of me."

Elyse's lip curled into a sneer. "And what gives you the gall to claim that?"

As the two squared off, Tracy approached, her face as pale as a ghost. She glanced briefly at Shaun before turning to Elyse. "I'm fine. Don't fuss over me."

Then, addressing Shaun, Tracy said, "You wanted to talk to me, right? Let's go to the garden."

Shaun nodded and followed Tracy quickly.

Elyse, now stewing on the sofa, thought Shaun was a real thorn in her side.

Driscoll approached just then. Noticing Elyse's sour mood, he spoke with gentle concern. "Don't let this get to you. You need to take care of yourself."

Elyse's eyes flashed. "Don't you think Shaun's gone too far? If he truly loved Tracy, why did he put her through so much heartache before? Now he's realized his mistakes, but Tracy wants nothing to do with him."

Driscoll sighed. "At my age, I've seen things a bit differently."

Elyse's curiosity was piqued. "How do you see Tracy and Shaun's situation?"

Driscoll smiled softly. "It seems like fate is playing a cruel joke on them, but perhaps it's all part of their journey. You think they should part ways for their good, but sometimes the pain they're enduring now might forge a stronger bond for their future."

Elyse frowned. "But what if they keep hurting each other, tangled in a web of pain, proving time and again they're not meant to be, and eventually split up?"

Driscoll's sigh was deeper this time. "That's fate too. We can only go as far as it allows. Those who wish to stay might find they cannot, and those who want to leave might find it impossible. That's the nature of relationships."

Elyse mulled over Driscoll's words, a new thought taking root in her mind. How far would she and Jayden go?

They were married, seemingly destined to be together forever, but why did she feel an undercurrent of uncertainty? It was like Jayden seemed to love her, but not wholeheartedly.

Elyse fell silent, lost in her thoughts, oblivious to Jayden's return home.

She snapped out of her reverie and looked up at Jayden. Elyse pouted. "Not at all."

Jayden found her expression quite adorable. He explained, "Lowell and Dolores are still in Watsear. I'm not sure why they haven't left, but it seems related to Shaun."

"Perhaps," Jayden nodded, his voice neutral.

Touching her chin, Elyse pondered deeply, increasingly convinced that Lowell and Dolores' presence involved Shaun. She let out a deep sigh. "Dolores and Shaun are truly tough nuts to crack. I can't figure out what they are thinking."

Jayden remarked lightly, "If you understood their thoughts, you wouldn't be sighing like this."

At that moment, Elyse caught a sharp, angry voice. "Get out! I don't want to see you anymore!" It was Tracy's voice, piercing through the calm.

Startled, Elyse set the bouquet on the table, slipped into her shoes, and dashed outside.

Jayden watched the hurried exit with a sigh of resignation, grabbing her coat as he followed.

Outside in the garden, Tracy was visibly upset, hitting Shaun with a frenzy, while he stood there silently, absorbing the blows like a statue.

To any onlooker, it might seem like Shaun was merely enduring a tantrum, but Elyse knew the truth—Shaun was the asshole here.

Elyse intervened, pulling Tracy into a protective embrace. “I’m here now. Calm down, I’ll take care of you.”

She then shot Shaun a piercing look. “What did you say to her?”

Shaun’s lips were a tight line, his eyes lingering on Tracy, who was struggling to breathe.

Elyse stepped between them, shielding Tracy. “What did you say to her? Can’t you see how upset she is? Are you trying to drive her mad?”

At that moment, Jayden arrived, draping the coat over Elyse’s shoulders. He turned to Shaun, his voice firm. “You’d better explain yourself now.”

Shaun glanced at Jayden before addressing Elyse, his tone flat. “I told her to come back to Liverton with me. After all, we’ve been together multiple times. Who else would have her?”

Hearing this, Elyse’s expression darkened. “How could you say such a thing? Don’t you realize how much you’ve hurt her? If you truly want to be with her, how can you act in ways that hurt her?” Elyse’s voice was laden with disbelief.

Tracy placed a calming hand on Elyse's shoulder, her face pale and her voice quiet. "He doesn't understand. People like him can't grasp what love is."

She paused, her eyes settling on Shaun with a mix of sadness and resignation. "He doesn't know love, nor how to love. He follows his instincts, thinking that keeping someone close in that way is enough. He believes that if he feels comfortable, that must be love."

Her gaze lingered on Shaun, her smile tinged with sorrow. "But that's not love. It's just hurt."