

Bound love 661

Chapter 661:

Her voice tinged with sadness and anger, Elyse replied, "Because I've felt it lately. You want to keep me at home, not even allowing me to step outside, let alone compete abroad."

A cruel smile formed on Jayden's lips. His eyes narrowed, exuding a chilling aura.

"Since you've sensed it, there's no need for me to hide it anymore. The world outside is too dangerous, and your health is fragile. You catch a high fever from the slightest cold wind. How can your body endure two months of intense practice followed by an international competition? Every step is pushing my limits."

Disappointed, Elyse responded, "But this is my life! Not yours! You can't control me as you wish. I've worked tirelessly for this competition. I've never considered giving up, and you can't take my dream away because of your own fears!"

Hearing this, Jayden softened his tone and demeanor, half coaxing, half persuading, "I'm not taking your dream away. I just think you don't need to participate in this competition. Your health really isn't good this time, and you know it."

Elyse shook her head, eyes brimming with helplessness and disappointment. "No, these are mere excuses you've fabricated. You'll never allow me to compete again. From the beginning, you've desired my constant presence."

Seeing her stubbornness, Jayden's patience wore thin. He seized her chin, glaring at her with a dark, furious expression. Gritting his teeth, he hissed, "Then you should dutifully remain by my side and abandon thoughts of leaving me."

Jayden was seething with anger, leading to Elyse being confined within the house once more. The tension between Jayden and Elyse was palpable, making the servants tread lightly, their nerves frayed by the fear of inadvertently igniting Jayden's fury.

This stifling atmosphere left Elyse feeling increasingly restless. She retreated to the solitude of the garden, enveloped in a dark blanket that cloaked her entirely except for her face.

Driscoll observed from a respectful distance. He had remained close to Elyse during these tumultuous days, becoming finely attuned to her emotional shifts. He was acutely aware of her distress, yet found himself powerless to amend the circumstances. Jayden's stubborn nature was immovable, and Driscoll's efforts at persuasion had proved futile.

Elyse, cocooned in her blanket, hugged her knees to her chest and lifted her eyes to the dreary sky, lost in thoughts of how Pearce might extricate her from Jayden's grip. She remained there for a full hour, and both Driscoll and Elyse felt the weariness set in, especially since she was still recovering.

Driscoll approached her gently and suggested, "Mrs. Owen, let's return indoors. You've been exposed to the chilly wind for an hour now. Staying out longer could harm your health."

Jarred from her reverie, Elyse collected her emotions before nodding in agreement. "Alright, let's go back inside."

Upon their return indoors, Elyse received an unexpected call from Gavin. "Irving was struck while on his motorcycle. He's now in the hospital. Would you like to visit him?"

Elyse was taken aback and inquired urgently, "Is he alright? How severe are his injuries?"

Gavin's reply came nonchalantly. "Don't worry; he's alive. He just rolled around a bit on the ground but thankfully didn't damage his hands."

This news made Elyse's heart race. A roll on the ground seemed hardly trivial. After ending the call, she swiftly told Driscoll, "I must go to the hospital. Irving has been in an accident, and I need to see him."

Driscoll paused, mindful of Jayden's explicit directive. "I must make a call to Mr. Owen first."

Elyse felt a strong urge to argue, but she recalled that all the servants were employed by Jayden. She chose not to complicate their lives.

Biting back her frustration, she conceded. "Go ahead and make the call."

Observing that Elyse was holding back her anger, Driscoll wasted no time. He promptly pulled out his phone and stepped aside to make the call.

Chapter 662:

Moments later, Driscoll came back beaming. "He agreed, but he insists that you be accompanied by bodyguards."

With a reluctant nod, Elyse agreed. "Fine, do as he says."

Consequently, Elyse found herself at the hospital, encircled by four bodyguards. She positioned herself between her escorts, her expression stoic as she faced forward. The inquisitive looks from those around her made her feel even more helpless, yet she was in no position to decline.

As she waited for the elevator, Elyse's eyes inadvertently caught sight of a figure resembling Pearce at the far end of the hallway. Could it be Pearce? Driven by a sudden intuition, she declared, "I need to go to the restroom."

The chief bodyguard responded, "Alright, we'll take you there."

Significantly, the restroom lay in the direction Pearce had gone.

Elyse walked at a measured pace, saw Pearce enter the restroom, and stifled her excitement, cautious not to alert the bodyguards. She stepped into the restroom with composure and encountered an unfamiliar woman standing there.

"My name is Keely Sanchez. I'm one of Mr. Benson's assistants. He sent me to escort you back to Cambape," Keely said, offering her hand with a warm smile.

Elyse shook Keely's hand and looked at her with concern. "How are you planning to get me out of here? There are four bodyguards waiting outside."

Keely guided Elyse to stand beneath the restroom window, then rolled up her sleeves and, with some effort, lifted Elyse up. "Please climb out through this window. Don't worry, Mr. Benson's plan is foolproof; it won't fail."

Elyse, lying by the window, attempted to climb out, but her inexperience caused her to lose her balance and tumble toward the floor. Just as she braced for impact, strong arms caught her.

Startled, Elyse opened her eyes to find Gavin holding her.

"Gavin, why are you here?" Elyse asked in disbelief.

Gavin gave a helpless, indulgent smile. "A man claiming to be your cousin instructed me to wait here for you."

He gently set Elyse down on the floor. Elyse felt overwhelmed and slightly disoriented.

Noticing her distress, Gavin offered reassurance. "Don't worry. Relationships are personal matters. As an outsider, I'm not privy to all the details, and I won't pass judgment. But if you need assistance, I'm here to help."

Elyse's eyes reddened. "Thank you, Gavin."

Gavin gently stroked her hair. "You don't need to think too much. If maintaining a relationship becomes impossible, it might be best for both of you to part ways. If either of you finds the right person afterward, it will prove the decision was correct."

Elyse grasped his meaning and inquired, "Are you concerned for me or afraid Jayden will give up on me?"

Leaning closer, Gavin teased, "I know you're anxious Jayden might give up on you. You fear losing your Mr. Right after separating from him."

Elyse pouted, tears nearly spilling over. “Do I love him that much? Why would I fear he’d give up on me?”

Her words amused Gavin, making him laugh heartily. “You can go now. Someone will meet you at the hospital’s backdoor,” he instructed.

Suppressing her emotions, Elyse asked with a note of grievance, “What about you? Won’t you come with me?”

Gavin declined. “I can’t. Irving had an accident. I need to check on him now.”

Elyse stared at him in disbelief. “Was he seriously hurt?”

Chapter 663:

Gavin said with a sigh, “No, but he has to stay in the hospital for a few days.”

He gently nudged Elyse and urged, “Stop asking questions. Hurry. Go! You need to take this step bravely to know if your decision is right.”

Elyse glanced back at him hesitantly. Clenching her jaw, she continued forward.

Gavin watched her retreating form, shaking his head. He muttered, “You both are too immature.”

After some distance, Elyse suddenly quickened her pace, breaking into a trot. Wiping tears from her cheeks, she hurried to the hospital’s backdoor. She caught her breath at the entrance and noticed a black car parked nearby.

She approached it swiftly. A man stepped out, saying respectfully, “I’m Mr. Benson’s assistant, Glenn Carter. I’m here to take you away.”

Elyse nodded. As she lifted her leg to enter the car, she hesitated again.

Seeing this, Glenn urged, “We must leave before Jayden Owen discovers us. If we’re late, he won’t let you go.” Elyse’s eyes brimmed with reluctance and lingering affection, yet she conceded that Gavin was right; it was necessary to part ways when their relationship could no longer endure.

She trusted that if Jayden’s love was genuine, he would wait for her. However, if he opted to be with someone else, she would...

With a wistful smile, Elyse shook her head and settled into the car. Once she was seated, she firmly commanded, “Drive.”

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Meanwhile, at Bayzee Group,

Jayden sat in his chair, idly twirling a pen between his fingers as he regarded an unexpected visitor—Pearce.

Pearce retrieved a file and slammed it onto the desk before Jayden. Though Pearce wore a smile, it failed to reach his eyes.

Jayden glanced at the file and inquired nonchalantly, “What’s this?”

With a smirk, Pearce responded, “You’ll understand once you read it.”

Jayden picked up the document and examined it closely. The title read **“Divorce Agreement”**.

Pointing to the document, Pearce clarified, “There are two copies. Elyse has requested not to keep one. Both are signed by her. Kindly add your signature.”

Jayden erupted in fury, his expression turning menacing. Through gritted teeth, he snarled, “Don’t get too comfortable. Do you think I can’t do anything to you?”

Pearce shrugged. "I don't care what you do. It just proves you have the capability to challenge the Benson family. But please sign the agreement first. I must take her away."

Jayden's Adam's apple bobbed as he struggled to contain his rage. His icy eyes, however, conveyed the full extent of his fury. He retorted, "She's my wife. Where do you plan to take her?"

Pearce's lips curled in disdain. "I despise it when you act like this. You treat Elyse as your possession, manipulating her. Don't you realize how terrible you are?"

Jayden sneered, "When have I ever manipulated her?"

The veins on Pearce's neck bulged. "You confined her at home, preventing her from going out. You stopped her from participating in the violin competition. That was manipulation."

Jayden countered, "I acted for her benefit. She was too fragile, and numerous potential dangers surrounded her. Why can't you understand how much I care about her?"

Chapter 664:

Pearce sneered, "Spare me! You acted out of self-righteousness. Even if she was fragile and faced many dangers, that doesn't justify imprisoning her. You did it just to satisfy your twisted desires."

Jayden's knuckles shone white as his grip tightened on the chair arms. Fury simmered beneath the surface, threatening to erupt.

He crumpled the divorce agreement and flung it at Pearce's feet. "Divorce? Absolutely not. Elyse will never leave me," he spat, his voice laced with venom.

Pearce, his gaze steady, saw the unhinged glint in Jayden's eyes. "Do you understand the consequences? Antagonizing the entire Benson family could be a costly mistake."

Jayden scoffed, disdain dripping from his sneer. "What if I say I don't care? Elyse belongs to me. Nothing can change that."

His chilling arrogance weighed heavily on Pearce, creating an invisible pressure. Jayden was clearly delusional. Pearce scowled, his eyes dropping to the discarded agreement. The weight of getting Jayden's signature suddenly felt crushing.

Jayden dismissed Pearce's presence entirely.

Pearce, desperate to reclaim Elyse, was almost manic in his determination. "Get out! Or I'll have security escort you out."

The threat hung heavy in the air. Forcing Jayden wouldn't work; he wouldn't budge. Glancing at his watch secretly, Pearce reckoned Elyse should be departing from Watscar at this point. Relief flooded through him.

A sly smile played on his lips. "Mr. Owen, a word of advice. If you're sick in the mind, get professional help pronto. Procrastinating on treatment could lead to lasting repercussions."

Jayden raised an eyebrow. "Wouldn't that fulfill your little wish?"

"Indeed," Pearce replied, opting not to prolong the argument. He turned and headed for the door.

Three minutes after Pearce's departure, Jayden received a panicked call from his bodyguard. Elyse had vanished. A lockdown of the hospital failed to produce any sign of her. It seemed someone had aided her escape.

The news sent a jolt of rage through Jayden. But then, a chilling laugh escaped his lips.

"So eager to be rid of me, Elyse?" His voice dropped to a low murmur.

It was laced with a profound loneliness that sent a pang through him.

With a barked order, Jayden mobilized his entire security force, unleashing a city-wide manhunt for Elyse.

Pearce, anticipating this reaction, had chosen a remote, winding road out of Watscar.

Elyse gazed out the car window, taking in the vast expanse of sky. The fresh air filled her lungs, yet a strange emptiness gnawed at her. Despite finally attaining the freedom she had once so fervently desired, she now couldn't help but miss him.

The weight of a harsh truth settled upon her. She loved Jayden. More than she ever dared to admit, even to herself.

A wave of pain washed over her as she clutched her chest, eyes squeezed shut against the sting of tears.

"Why would I miss him?" The wind whipped past, carrying away her whispered sigh, a testament to the depth of her unspoken love.

Chapter 665:

A month later, at Bayzee Group.

Peyton sauntered in, a bag of beers and barbecued skewers in hand.

Jayden sat before the floor-to-ceiling window, the darkness outside contrasting with the bright light in his office. The neighboring office building was dim, only Jayden's office illuminated.

Peyton sighed, shaking his head. He rapped his knuckles on the desk. "Enough workaholic! You've practically secured all the resources in Watscar. Did you hear? The Owen Group even joined forces with your rivals to block your takeover."

Jayden remained focused on his screen. "I'm aware. But the Owen Group is a sinking ship. Their glory days are over. They'll never regain their former power."

"Right. Right. Your company is the best," Peyton quipped sarcastically, waving the bag. "How about a midnight feast with your favorite pal?"

Finally, Jayden glanced up, his gaze landing on the beers. A flicker of something akin to emotion crossed his face.

“Alright, one round. Just one.”

Jayden wrapped up his work, hung up his jacket, and relaxed onto the sofa.

Peyton popped open a bottle of beer and handed it to Jayden. “You’re truly impressive. In just one month, you’ve managed to expand Bayzee Group’s reach by another 20%. Can you imagine how many people wish they were in your shoes?”

Jayden took a sip of his beer, his face unreadable.

Noticing Jayden’s lack of response, Peyton pressed on, “Honestly, it’s been a whole month. Don’t you think it’s time for a break? I can’t fathom why you’re driving yourself so hard.”

Jayden downed half the bottle, the warmth spreading through his body. He loosened his tie and opened the top button of his shirt. “I’m aiming to bring down the Owens as quickly as I can.”

Peyton responded with a light laugh. “Enzo should be too wrapped up in corporate affairs to worry about sending assassins after you.”

Jayden gave a wry smile. “Actually, I’ve survived two assassination attempts this month alone. Enzo is certainly desperate to get rid of me.”

“A desperate man will take desperate measures,” Peyton remarked as he placed the empty bottle on the table, grabbed another, and took several hearty swigs. “Why doesn’t he just retire and enjoy his remaining days instead of causing such trouble?”

“Who can say?” Jayden mused, his eyes lingering on his beer bottle. Perhaps it was the alcohol, or maybe the lack of sleep, but his mind was buzzing.

Peyton watched Jayden carefully, debating whether to ask the burning question on his mind. His curiosity was almost too much to bear.

Seeing Peyton's hesitance, Jayden encouraged him. "Go ahead and ask. Even if it irks me, I won't send security after you."

"Well, if you insist." Peyton looked at Jayden with a playful glint in his eye. "Is it true you divorced Elyse?"

Jayden responded nonchalantly with a nod. "She wanted the divorce. How could I deny her that? I had to grant her wish."

Peyton looked puzzled. "She requested a divorce? You could have resisted, attempted to win her back. You just conceded without any attempt to reconcile?"

Jayden responded, "I did make an effort to keep her, but in the end, I couldn't prevent her from leaving."

After a moment of silence, Peyton spoke up, his face a mix of emotions. "What you're telling me doesn't align with what I've heard. I was told you confined her to the house and wouldn't let her compete in that violin competition."

Chapter 666:

Jayden's expression grew stern. "I did it for her protection. You're aware that Enzo keeps a close watch on both of us. What if she got hurt outside my care?"

Peyton considered Jayden's point; it made sense. Enzo's reputation for brutality was well-known, and there were whispers that some within the Owen clan disagreed with his leadership.

With this in mind, Peyton inquired further, "Have you discussed these issues with Elyse?"

Jayden replied disdainfully, "What's the use? She doesn't grasp these things. She's safer at home, focusing on her violin."

Now Peyton understood the reasons behind Elyse's decision to leave.

He couldn't resist commenting, "Don't you think that's a bit paternalistic, believing it's all for Elyse's good?"

Jayden scoffed. "Am I not doing just that?"

Peyton shot back, "Are you genuinely trying to protect Elyse from harm, or are you simply keeping her close enough to maintain control?"

Jayden raised an eyebrow, questioning, "Is there a difference?"

"There's a significant difference!" Peyton replied, picking up a kebab and taking a bite. "It lies between liking someone and loving them. Do you understand the distinction between 'like' and 'love'?"

Jayden continued to drink, opting not to respond.

Peyton chose not to delve deeper. He believed some lessons had to be felt and experienced personally to be understood. Perhaps Elyse had realized this and that's why she had chosen to leave.

Looking at Jayden, Peyton asked, "After Elyse left, did you search for her?"

Jayden was silent for a moment before he reluctantly responded, "Yes, I did."

"Where is she now?" Peyton inquired, his tone filled with confusion.

"I don't know. I couldn't find her," Jayden confessed. "I tracked her as far as abroad, but there the trail went cold." As he thought about this, his mood soured and his voice took on an irritable tone.

After Peyton heard this, he laughed heartily. “Maybe that clue from abroad was misleading. Weren’t you the one who said Pearce helped Elyse make her escape? Pearce Cambape. Elyse could very well be in Cambape.”

After downing two more bottles, Jayden felt somewhat empty inside. He picked up his kebab and contemplated. “Perhaps, but at this point, it hardly matters if I can’t locate her. She’s bound to attend that international competition. Once she appears, there’s no way she’ll slip away from me again.”

A smirk flickered across Peyton’s lips, tempered by concern. He knew with Jayden’s current mindset, Elyse would likely flee at their next meeting. When would Jayden grasp the true essence of love?

Munching on the food, Peyton suggested, “Thinking like that shows you still care about Elyse. When you meet her, you need to apologize genuinely. Don’t cause her more pain.”

Jayden sneered at the thought. “Apologize? For what? I’ve done nothing wrong. Elyse is the one who owes me an apology. She was the one pushing for a divorce, not me.”

“It’s because she believes your relationship is beyond repair,” Peyton explained, his tone laced with resignation.

“I’ve never noticed any issues between us. She’s just overreacting, becoming too sensitive and convoluted. If she comes crawling back later, I might just hesitate to take her back,” Jayden countered with a dismissive wave, brushing off Peyton’s advice.

Peyton stared at him, baffled. What made Jayden so overly confident? It might just be Jayden who ended up with regrets.

Chapter 667:

As a true friend, Peyton felt compelled to offer a stern reminder. He frowned and said earnestly, “Don’t dig your heels in. Take some time to reflect and offer an apology. Simplify things. If you truly drive Elyse away, you might be the one in tears.”

Jayden scoffed. “Cry? Me? That’s never happened in my life.”

Peyton chuckled with a mix of annoyance and pity. “Alright, but if you end up crying, don’t blame me for not warning you.”

“Buzz off!” Jayden retorted, delivering a playful kick to Peyton, who promptly returned the gesture.

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An hour later, Jayden’s driver arrived to pick them up.

First, Jayden had Peyton dropped off at his home before continuing to his own residence.

Back at home, Driscoll took Jayden’s briefcase to place it in the study. “Mr. Owen, have you had dinner? Would you like something to eat?”

Feeling the effects of the alcohol, Jayden responded, weary and ready to retire, “No, I’ll just shower and head to bed.”

Acknowledging his reply, Driscoll nodded and stepped aside to let Jayden pass.

Jayden returned to the bedroom and flicked on the light. The room looked just as it always had. The dressing table was lined with half-used cosmetics, neatly arranged. The wardrobe overflowed with neatly folded women’s clothes, dominating the space. Most of his shirts and suits were relegated to the adjacent room.

The double bed still bore two pillows. The indentation on the inner pillow was subtle, hinting at a sleeper who rested deeply, hardly moving through the night, leaving just a single impression.

Everything in the room remained unchanged, yet Elyse was no longer there.

Gazing around the bedroom, Jayden felt a suffocating wave of emotion. He rushed into the bathroom as though trying to flee his feelings.

But the bathroom only amplified his memories. The shower gel with its distinct scent of green grapes, along with the other feminine products, confronted him with the harsh reality.

Jayden showered quickly and returned to bed, pulling the covers over himself. The alcohol seemed to ease his path to sleep tonight. As he neared sleep, he instinctively reached out, only to grasp at empty air where there should have been the warm, soft form of another.

He awoke abruptly. He paused, even forgetting to breathe for a moment.

He looked to the side. Elyse was not there.

A profound, inexplicable sorrow engulfed him. His nose tingled painfully, and he bit his finger fiercely to stifle any sound that might betray his distress.

“Why did you ask for a divorce? What did I do wrong? Couldn’t you have just told me?”

Jayden clenched his jaw, struggling to hold back tears. But the tears came anyway, quickly soaking a large section of the pillow.

Jayden had never confessed to anyone that Elyse’s departure haunted his nights, leaving him sleepless.

He busied himself relentlessly to limit his idle moments because thoughts of Elyse would inevitably overpower him. He couldn’t fend them off, nor did he want to be consumed by the memories.

Chapter 668:

Yet, the harder he tried to block her from his mind, the more persistently memories of Elyse invaded his thoughts. He didn’t see Elyse, but her presence lingered everywhere.

At the Bensons' residence in Cambape, Elyse stepped out of the car and found herself taken aback by the lavishness of the estate. However, she quickly regained her composure.

Staying close to Jayden had exposed her to many luxuries, enriching her knowledge and broadening her perspective.

Out of nowhere, Elyse caught herself thinking of Jayden once more, which clouded her expression.

Since leaving Watscar, Elyse had been living in Cambape. Pearce owned several villas. He had also brought Cody and Gavin to Cambape, where the two would live with Elyse and facilitate her immersion in intensive violin practice, compensating for the time she had lost due to Jayden's distractions.

During the past month, Elyse dedicated herself to mastering the violin. Her skills advanced swiftly, and Cody's approval brought her immense relief.

Now, with some downtime, Elyse planned to tackle another significant issue. She was set to meet the Bensons.

A month prior, Pearce had suggested introducing Elyse to his family. However, Felicia Benson, Pearce's grandmother, had been reluctant to meet her, prompting Pearce to advocate persistently for a month until Felicia finally agreed to the meeting.

Today, Elyse was there for the meeting.

For Elyse's introduction, Pearce had invited an extensive list of the Benson family's relatives.

The gathering today included many connected to the Benson family, with the guest count reaching into the dozens. The anticipation alone made Elyse feel tense as she approached the Bensons' estate.

Upon noticing Elyse's hesitation after she exited the car, Pearce looked at her, puzzled, and asked, "What's wrong? Why aren't you going in?"

Elyse paused, then stated her concerns, “Pearce, this whole arrangement feels overly extravagant. I’m merely coming home, yet so many people are here. It’s making me a little anxious.”

Pearce wrapped his arm around Elyse’s shoulder and said with confidence, “What’s there to worry about? I’m here with you. Even if something goes wrong, no one will dare to mock you.”

He continued with a serious tone, “Anyone who mocks you is challenging me.”

These words made Elyse even more hesitant to go inside.

Nevertheless, Pearce pulled her along with him.

Once inside the estate, Pearce guided Elyse through several twists and turns until they reached a large garden filled with people. The attendees looked at Elyse with curiosity.

Despite feeling the urge to flee, Elyse kept her composure and appeared indifferent to the stares.

“You are Rickey’s daughter, right? What’s your name?” A middle-aged man approached her and initiated a conversation.

With a smile, Elyse responded, “My name is Elyse Lloyd. I use my mother’s last name.”

After the man asked a few additional questions, the conversation grew awkward, and they found themselves standing silently, unsure of what to say next.

Following the middle-aged man’s lead, more people approached Elyse, driven by curiosity.

Elyse answered their questions gently, ensuring her responses were flawless. She left a positive impression on everyone. That was until a man inquired, "What do you do now? I heard you're involved in the arts. Do you paint?"

Elyse shook her head. "I don't paint, but I play the violin, and I play it quite well. If you're interested, I could perform for you later."

Chapter 669:

After she spoke, Elyse noticed weird looks on the faces of those around her, particularly from the man who had asked the question, who now seemed unsure of what to say.

Confused, Elyse asked, "What's the matter? Is there a problem?"

That man, with a complicated look, questioned, "Pearce brought you back. Didn't he tell you?"

Bewildered, Elyse responded, "Tell me what?"

"Your grandma, Felicia, despises violins the most. She has banned anyone in the estate from playing or even listening to violins. In the Benson household, violin is practically a taboo word."

Elyse was taken aback. She was completely unaware of this, and Pearce had never brought it up.

With this revelation, she scanned the crowd for Pearce. Seeing him engaged in conversation with others, she made her way toward him to inquire about the situation.

Before she could get to him, however, Felicia made her entrance.

Felicia moved confidently to the center of the garden, leaning on a cane with a young girl supporting her on the other side.

Amid the assembly, Elyse watched her grandmother with curiosity.

Felicia's hair was silver, marked by deep wrinkles on her forehead and around her eyes. For the event, she chose a dark red silk blouse, and her hair was done with care, tightly wound at the back of her head.

Despite her gentle smile, Felicia exuded a strong sense of authority.

Elyse found herself thinking of Enzo, sensing that both Felicia and Enzo were imposing figures.

Elyse quietly observed Felicia, who was also discreetly sizing her up.

Upon seeing Elyse for the first time, Felicia was convinced she was Rickey's daughter. The resemblance was uncanny. For a moment, Felicia felt as though she were looking at her own son. However, a closer inspection revealed that Elyse only bore a passing resemblance.

The room remained silent. Elyse was the focal point of today's gathering, and without a word from Felicia, no one dared to speak.

Pearce approached Elyse, took her hand, and led her to Felicia, introducing her warmly. "Grandma, this is Elyse, Uncle Rickey's daughter. Isn't she beautiful?"

Felicia ignored Pearce's words. Instead, she looked past Elyse and addressed everyone. "It's rare for us to gather together. Everyone, feel free to relax. Don't mind me."

After she spoke, Felicia took the hand of the girl next to her and headed over to the resting area.

Feeling snubbed, Elyse tugged at Pearce's hand, smiling wryly. "You still haven't told me about my father's relationship with Grandma. Did they not get along with each other?"

Pearce sighed and replied, "It's not that they didn't get along. Their relationship was quite good before the... thing happened."

“What thing?” Elyse asked, blinking in curiosity.

Pearce recalled, “When Uncle Rickey reached the age for marriage, Grandma arranged a well-suited match from a notable family for him. However, he declined. He revealed that he had been in a relationship with your mom for nearly two years and didn’t wish to marry someone he didn’t love.”

Elyse nodded and replied, “And then?”

“Grandma obviously got furious and told him to break up with your mom. He refused and left home. Furious, she cut ties with him. They haven’t seen each other since,” Pearce explained.

Chapter 670:

Elyse smiled bitterly. “My father is dead. Even if they wanted to reconcile, they couldn’t.”

“That’s true. Fate can be cruel,” Pearce responded. “A month ago, I informed Grandma about Uncle Rickey’s death. She had only one thing to say.”

Elyse’s curiosity was piqued. “What did she say?”

“She said your father deserved to die, and it was right that he met his end out there,” Pearce admitted, glancing sheepishly at Elyse, clearly embarrassed.

Elyse’s expression remained stoic as she redirected her gaze towards Felicia in the resting area.

For some reason, she felt as if Felicia had been watching her.

Elyse pondered for a moment before speaking. “She forbade anyone in the family from playing the violin because my dad left home, right?”

Pearce nodded. “You guessed it.”

“My dad was a renowned violinist. It would be odd if I didn’t figure that out,” Elyse replied helplessly.

Suddenly, she felt an overwhelming urge to play the violin in front of Felicia. Without thinking, she blurted out, “Do you think she would get angry if I told her I want to play the violin for her?”

Pearce immediately became anxious. “Don’t do that. You’ll be kicked out.”

Elyse muttered to herself, “Even so, I want to play a piece for her.”

Before Pearce could say anything further, Elyse calmly made her way toward Felicia. He nervously whispered, “Don’t go. It took a lot of effort to bring you back home. Don’t mess it up.”

Ignoring his plea, Elyse confidently approached Felicia and knelt slightly, bringing her eyes level with Felicia’s.

Felicia regarded Elyse with a cold, detached expression, as if she were a stranger. “What are you doing here?” she asked emotionlessly.

“I want to talk to you,” Elyse said, smiling.

“I don’t know you, and I have nothing to say to you. Just leave,” Felicia ordered, her tone unceremonious. For Felicia, allowing Elyse into the house was already a considerable concession. She had no intention of mending her strained relationship with Rickey.

Elyse remained silent for a few moments before softly expressing her wish. “Grandma, I came here with a wish to fulfill.”

Felicia didn’t respond verbally, but her gaze seemed to ask, “What does your wish have to do with me?”

Elyse continued, "I want to play a piece for you on the violin. Will you give me a chance?"

At the mention of the violin, Felicia's demeanor instantly changed. Her previously calm expression turned ferocious as she shouted, "Who told you to play the violin? Don't even dare! Get out of my house! I don't want to see you at all."

Elyse, taken aback by Felicia's reaction, quickly stood up, looking a bit lost.

Pearce immediately stepped in, trying to calm the situation. "Grandma, I'm sorry. Please calm down. Elyse didn't mean to upset you."

"Didn't mean to? As if!" mocked the girl standing beside Felicia.

"Thea, why have you come here? Get lost!" Pearce's voice dripped with obvious disgust as he glared at the girl.

Thea Benson rolled her eyes indifferently. "Yes, I'm unimportant. I'll stay away from you. But an insignificant person like me won't anger Grandma."