

Bound love 1131

Chapter 1131:

Jayden responded coolly, "I understand completely. Don't worry."

Elyse, observing Jayden's playful manipulation of Edward, felt a twinge of sympathy for the oblivious man. However, she decided it was best not to interfere and let the scene unfold naturally.

Elyse was seated on a wooden chair when Linda pointed towards Ken, busy at the grill, and said, "My husband's grilling skills are something else. You have to try his meat later."

Elyse nodded in agreement. "I can smell it from here," she said, patting her rumbling stomach.

Next to Elyse, Edward felt overlooked, almost as if she didn't notice his presence. Seeking attention, he moved closer and said, "My grilling isn't too bad either. Want to try some?"

Elyse grimaced slightly and gestured toward Jayden and Ken. "They're already handling the grill. I don't need your help right now."

Edward looked visibly disappointed and asked with a hint of sadness, "But didn't you promise to grill for me? Are we still doing that?"

Elyse reassured him with a nod. "Of course. I won't let you down."

She then stood up, joined Jayden at the grill, chose some marbled cuts of meat, and started grilling with skill.

Unable to contain his pride, Edward walked over to where Jayden was and said, "Look! Elyse is grilling for me. Do you ever get this kind of treatment?"

Jayden glanced at Elyse's grilling efforts, then looked back and asked sternly, "I've never seen her cook before. Are you sure it's safe to eat?"

“Why not? Or are you implying she can’t cook? That’s quite an insult,” Edward retorted, twisting Jayden’s words before turning to complain to Elyse, “Did you hear him? He’s got no faith in your cooking.”

Elyse, ignoring their bickering, continued with her grilling.

Linda, observing from her seat while enjoying some fruit, watched the three intently. The dynamics among them were delicate. She had it figured out—a classic love triangle.

Edward fancied Elyse, who seemed to prefer Jayden. Such love triangles were always fascinating, whether in dramas or real life.

After a bit, Linda mused that Edward, caught between Jayden and Elyse, almost resembled their child. She couldn’t resist commenting, “Edward, you don’t need to be the go-between. You’re acting quite childishly, you know?”

Edward looked up, confused, not grasping Linda’s hint.

Chapter 1132:

Catching his perplexed look, Linda smiled warmly. Why did he seem so endearing?

Edward, noticing Linda’s peculiar gaze, leaned towards Elyse and whispered, “Is it just me, or is Linda looking at me strangely?”

Elyse looked up briefly. “Strange how?”

Edward touched his face. “She’s looking at me like I’m clueless, yet I clearly look intelligent.”

Elyse gazed at him, her expression filled with bewilderment.

After slicing the steak with scissors to ensure it was well-cooked, Elyse used tongs to place it on a clean white ceramic plate and handed it to Edward.

“Here you go, try this,” Elyse said.

Edward eagerly accepted the plate, grabbed a fork, and immediately tasted a piece of the steak. His face contorted briefly, but noticing Elyse's gaze, he quickly composed himself.

As Elyse was cleaning up the grilling tools, she glanced over and casually inquired, "How's the taste? Is it to your liking?"

Pressing his lips tightly together, Edward smiled and slowly nodded.

"Great, then it's all yours," Elyse said with satisfaction as she removed her apron, draped it over the chair, and sat down next to Linda.

Once Elyse had moved away, Jayden whispered, "I saw her adding a lot of salt. I tried to warn you, but you didn't listen."

Edward almost drooled from the intense saltiness. He managed a strained expression. "How much salt did she use? It's excessively salty."

Jayden said, "She's not very experienced with cooking, so she doesn't really know how much salt is too much. She thinks if the meat's cooked, it's good enough."

Overwhelmed by the saltiness, Edward struggled to speak, his initial enthusiasm for the steak now turning sour. How was he supposed to discreetly dispose of it?

Noticing Edward's struggle, Jayden smiled and said, "Here's an idea. Why not rinse the steak to wash off some of the salt? Then you could still enjoy it."

Edward frowned. "What a terrible suggestion! You expect me to wash the meat in front of Elyse? What are you trying to do?"

Jayden's grin widened. "Just ensuring you don't get off too easily in front of Elyse."

Edward clenched his teeth in frustration. Jayden was truly making things difficult for him.

As they talked, Jayden and Ken both completed their grilling nearly simultaneously and began serving their dishes.

Linda, now faced with a challenge, said, “You two finished at the same time. How am I supposed to decide who did better?”

Chapter 1133:

Elyse said, “It’s challenging to declare a winner when the meat was served all at once.”

Edward, carrying his inedible grilled meat and wearing a confused look, inquired, “What’s this about winners and losers? Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

Jayden proposed, “If we can’t decide on a winner, why don’t we both take first place?”

Ken concurred. “Exactly. Let’s just agree we both came out on top.”

Linda’s eyes sparkled with mischief. “Does that mean I should hand out a prize?”

Ken, his cheeks tinting with a hint of red but maintaining his composure, nodded. “Yes, how about a kiss on the cheek?”

Bashfully, Linda stood up and, in the presence of everyone, delivered a quick peck on Ken’s cheek. Their smiles radiated happiness.

Yet for Elyse, the mood was not as light. She had been certain Ken would triumph, especially after Linda boasted of his grilling prowess.

The unexpected tie with Jayden threw her for a loop. Since Linda was Ken’s wife, she naturally presented him with the prize. However, it was not fitting for her to extend the same to Jayden. This left Elyse with the responsibility.

Uncertain, Elyse pondered if she should follow Linda’s example and also kiss Jayden on the cheek. She faced a dilemma.

Linda, observing Elyse's hesitation, mistakenly thought it was due to shyness and encouraged her. "It's okay. Be brave!"

Elyse hung her head lower. Her relationship with Jayden was complex, making it difficult for her to step forward.

Meanwhile, Edward, having finally grasped the rules of the game, expressed his discontent. "Wait, you didn't explain this rule about a reward for finishing the grilling first. You've all sidelined me. My grilled meat smells wonderful too!"

As Edward grumbled and called for a redo, Jayden stepped towards Elyse.

With her eyes wide and locked on him, Jayden gently lifted her chin, leaned down, and pressed a kiss to her cheek.

Elyse inhaled sharply, immobilized.

Linda and Ken, observing the unfolding scene, beamed with joy. They had shared a similar moment.

On the other hand, Edward's heart broke into pieces.

Before Elyse could react, Jayden had already stepped away. In a nonchalant yet bold tone, he declared, "I've collected my reward. The effort with my grilled meat wasn't wasted."

Chapter 1134:

Edward, enraged, protested, "No, no! Elyse was supposed to kiss you, not the other way around. Do you even understand the rules?"

Jayden replied with confidence, "It doesn't matter who kisses whom. As long as I've received my prize."

"You jerk! I'm going to fight you!" shouted Edward. The notion of Jayden kissing Elyse in front of him was intolerable. No one could expect him to stand by quietly.

Elyse, feeling the place where Jayden's lips had touched her cheek, accidentally met his gaze. Quickly, she diverted her eyes, avoiding his dominating and possessive look.

Linda clapped her hands with enthusiasm. "Okay, everyone, let's settle down and dig into some delicious grilled meat."

She then linked arms with Elyse, and both eagerly sat down to eat.

Edward, his anger still simmering, walked off to the side. He drew in deep breaths, calming his nerves. Firmly, he resolved to reclaim his pride and secure a victory next time.

Just as Jayden had started to enjoy his meal, his phone vibrated. Excusing himself, he stepped away from the group to answer the call.

Garret was on the other end. "He has boarded the plane and is now on his way," Garret reported. He chuckled, adding, "Things are unfolding just as you hoped."

With calm assurance, Jayden responded, "Now that our actor is set, the plot can advance. Keep an eye on the developments. I'll make my move once he lands."

Garret queried, "How are things between you and Elyse? Edward's there too, right? Is he stirring things up in a good way, or just throwing obstacles in your path?"

Jayden looked back at Edward, who was sulking, and said candidly, "It's a mix of both. His disruptions are unparalleled. At times, I feel worn out just observing him."

Garret laughed heartily. "That's Edward for you. I actually find his quirks rather entertaining. He truly is a one-of-a-kind talent."

As Jayden continued his chat with Garret, Elyse remained seated at the table, her eyes inadvertently following Jayden as he moved away. This was the first time she had seen Jayden take a call in days, which made her wonder if the call brought unsettling news.

Caught up in her thoughts, she didn't notice Edward approach until he was close. In a low, reflective tone, he asked, "What are you thinking about, watching Jayden like that?"

Elyse flinched as Edward's piercing gaze met hers. An inexplicable wave of guilt washed over her, causing her to avert her eyes hastily.

"You're always conjuring up stories. Keep spewing nonsense, and I'll stop talking to you altogether," she snapped, her voice tinged with defensiveness.

Chapter 1135:

Edward's face contorted with hurt. "I saw it with my own eyes," he insisted. "You were staring at Jayden's back. When will you ever look at mine like that?"

"I wasn't!" Elyse exclaimed, her cheeks flushing with a mix of embarrassment and anger.

Before Edward could press further, Elyse's eyes narrowed as she noticed something amiss. "What happened to the meat I grilled for you?" she questioned. "I didn't see you eat it."

"Uh... I just remembered I need to change seats." With a sheepish grin, Edward scrambled to his feet and darted to sit next to Ken.

Elyse's gaze followed him, narrowing as she tried to make sense of his guilty expression. But before she could dwell on it, Jayden sauntered over, effectively cutting off her line of sight.

Plopping down beside her, Jayden leaned in and said, "You should eat more. You're getting way too thin. It's hardly fun to hug anymore."

Elyse's lips pursed into a pout. "What are you even talking about? I don't know where you're getting these ideas. Keep spreading lies, and you'll find yourself on my blacklist too."

Jayden arched a brow, a mischievous glint in his eyes. "Oh, yeah? Go ahead, ignore me. Let's see how that works out."

Elyse fell silent, returning her attention to the grilled meat before her.

The afternoon saw Elyse enjoying herself at the ranch. As evening descended, Linda prepared a simple pasta dinner. Afterward, Elyse, Jayden, and Edward finally made their way back to the hotel.

While Elyse showered, Jayden and Edward huddled together in the hotel room, their voices low and conspiratorial.

“Still planning to visit that old man’s house tonight?” Edward inquired.

Jayden’s eyebrow arched. “Are you still fixated on stealing the violin?”

“He has backed out so many times,” Edward said, pausing briefly. “I doubt tomorrow’s meeting will go smoothly either. So I’m thinking, why don’t we just cut to the chase and—”

Jayden lapsed into contemplative silence.

“You’re not chickening out, are you?” Edward asked, exasperation coloring his tone.

“I think there might still be a chance tomorrow,” Jayden mused. “Elyse has been remarkably calm about this. Perhaps it’s all part of her strategy.”

Edward’s frustration mounted. “So, essentially, you just don’t want to steal it?”

Jayden’s eyebrow rose once more. “I believe Elyse can acquire the violin on her own,” he stated.

Chapter 1136:

Then, his tone shifting, he asked, “Don’t you trust her?”

Edward jabbed a finger at Jayden, his hair practically bristling with irritation. It was Jayden who had initially proposed the plan, and now he was twisting the situation to make himself appear as the villain. What a cunning man!

As Edward opened his mouth to retort, Elyse emerged from the bathroom, toweling her damp hair.

Her curious gaze flicked between them. “Since when did you two become so chummy that you’re having private chats?”

Edward’s mouth twitched. “There’s no way I’d ever get close to him. You’re the only one I want to be near.”

Jayden, in contrast, sneered. “Delusional. You won’t get close to her either. Go play by yourself.”

“Hey!” Elyse interjected calmly. “If you two want to argue, do it outside. I’m drying my hair and going to bed.”

She strode between them, entering her bedroom and slamming the door with a resounding bang. Her demeanor made it clear she had no interest in their squabbles.

Once she had gone, Jayden turned to Edward, his patience wearing thin. “What will it take for you to give up on Elyse?”

Edward sneered, crossing his arms in defiance. “Why should I be the one to give up? Why not you? You’ve already divorced her and left her hurting. What gives you the right to think you deserve another chance?”

A tense silence hung between them, neither willing to budge. Jayden’s gaze slid to the window, his voice cold. “So that’s it. Neither of us is stepping down. Fine, then. Let’s settle this the old-fashioned way. We’ll duel it out. Loser walks away—for good.”

Edward’s eyes gleamed with fierce determination. “Fine by me. But don’t come crying when you lose and start sticking to Elyse like a leech.”

Jayden snorted, his disdain evident. “That sounds more like something you’d do.”

Teeth clenched in frustration, Edward felt the strong urge to knock Jayden down. Jayden’s arrogance grated on his nerves, especially given that Elyse had made it abundantly clear that she was done with him.

If not for her, Edward would have landed a punch by now.

The two men left the hotel and found an empty spot nearby. Under the faint glow of a streetlight, they faced each other, tension thick in the air.

Jayden gave a slight smirk. “One rule—no hitting the face.”

Chapter 1137:

Edward scoffed. “What, afraid of ruining that pretty-boy look?”

Jayden’s reply was measured. “If my face gets injured, Elyse will worry and blame herself, thinking it’s her fault.”

Edward’s retort died on his lips, leaving him momentarily speechless.

At dawn, Elyse stirred awake and stepped out of her room. As she meandered past the grand bed, her eyes drifted to Jayden, cocooned in blankets. An inexplicable force pulled her toward him.

What began as a simple glance at his sleeping face soon shifted as her attention locked onto the red-tinged marks on his bare shoulder. Her senses sharpened as she crouched closer, finding more bruises along his arms.

Frowning, she carefully peeled back the covers. Jayden’s eyes shot open, a mixture of shock and caution flashing across his face as his grip on the sheets tightened.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Jayden asked, his voice filled with suspicion.

“Where did these marks come from? What were you doing last night?” she demanded.

Jayden’s expression hardened as he replied flatly, “Nothing. I didn’t do anything.”

“Then explain the bruises,” Elyse pressed further.

His response was firm. “You’re imagining things.”

She reached out, pressing a bruise lightly. Jayden winced, pain flickering across his face, but he stayed silent, his eyes defiant as they met hers.

Elyse let out a cold laugh. “So, you’re not going to tell me the truth? What am I to you, Jayden?”

He avoided her gaze, pulling the covers tighter around himself without uttering another word.

Disappointment weighed heavily on Elyse’s chest as she realized this was just another instance of Jayden dodging her questions. She stood up with a resigned sigh and went to freshen up.

When her footsteps faded, Jayden exhaled in relief. Pain surged through him as he shifted, and when he looked down, he saw the bruises decorating his torso—remnants of Edward’s attack.

Lost in thought, Jayden was startled when Elyse returned from the bathroom. She glanced at him, still bundled up, before casually approaching.

“I’m heading to Anthony’s. Do you want to come?”

Jayden hesitated for a moment, then muttered, “I’ll catch up later. Still feeling a little out of it.”

Elyse shrugged. “Alright, I’ll let you rest.”

A faint smirk tugged at her lips, noticing how tired Jayden appeared. She suspected he had been up to something the night before.

Chapter 1138:

After changing, Elyse headed to Edward’s room and knocked. It felt like an eternity before he responded.

His voice, lacking its usual energy, drifted through the door. “What do you want?”

Something about Edward's tone made Elyse suspicious, and she narrowed her eyes. "I'm going to Anthony's. Are you coming?"

"Later. I'm barely—" Edward muttered faintly.

"Okay, take it easy," she replied, concern furrowing her brow.

With both Jayden and Edward acting strangely, she decided to confront them later since she didn't have time to dwell on it now.

With this in mind, she left the hotel and caught a taxi to Anthony's place.

Arriving at his house, Elyse noticed Anthony setting out warm bread on a table in the yard.

Curiosity sparked in her, and she asked, "What's all this?"

Anthony grinned. "My dad insisted I do this. He said he overstepped last time and wanted to make it up to you with breakfast."

Elyse was caught off guard.

Just then, the door to the cabin creaked open, and Elyse saw George stepping out. Wearing reading glasses and with silver hair framing his face, he held a violin case in one hand and a wooden box in the other. His gaze, which had once been distant, now softened as it landed on Elyse.

She greeted him, "Morning."

George's eyes lingered on her longer than she expected, prompting Anthony to step in. "Dad, you're staring a bit much."

George quickly averted his eyes, a fleeting sadness crossing his face as he muttered, "My apologies."

"No worries," Elyse said dismissively, not catching the sadness that flickered in his expression.

George's tone was neutral as he invited, "Let's all sit and eat together."

Once seated, Anthony poured Elyse a warm cup of milk. "I was surprised when my dad suggested having you over for breakfast," he admitted.

Quietly, George swiftly prepared a sandwich for Elyse, handing it to her with a hint of regret in his voice as he said, "Please accept my apologies."

Taken aback, Elyse nodded slowly and accepted it.

"Please, give it a try," George urged. "I hope it suits your taste."

Elyse took a small bite, her eyes widening slightly as she chewed. "Did you make the sauce yourself? Using cherry tomatoes?" she asked in surprise.

Chapter 1139:

George's face shifted in an instant as though a storm cloud had passed over him.

He carefully set his fork down, inhaling deeply, trying to keep his emotions from spilling over. When he finally looked up, his eyes were rimmed with the telltale signs of held-back tears.

Anthony noticed the subtle shift right away. He leaned in, eyebrows knitted in both concern and curiosity. "Dad, what's going on with you? You've been all sentimental lately—it's not like you."

He handed George a couple of tissues, his thoughts spinning, wondering if age was creeping up on his father, making him softer than before.

George ignored Anthony's question, taking a moment before turning toward Elyse. "I didn't expect you to have a sensitive palate, just like he does."

Elyse blinked, genuinely puzzled.

George took a slow sip of his warm milk, his tone deceptively light as he asked, “What’s your father’s name?”

Anthony jumped in, his voice soft but firm. “Dad, that’s a little forward, don’t you think? You can’t just ask for someone’s parent’s name like that.”

“It’s fine,” Elyse said gently, turning her attention to George. Her voice was steady as she answered, “His name is Rickey Benson.”

George seemed to freeze, the weight of Elyse’s words hitting him like a punch. For a moment, he was utterly still before he managed to whisper, “Did you know who I was from the start?”

Elyse shook her head softly. “No, I only found out yesterday. Linda from the ranch mentioned your name, and that’s when it clicked—you’re the friend my father wrote about in his diary.” A warm smile played across her lips. “Mr. Hill, it’s an honor to finally meet you.”

George’s mouth hung slightly open, his eyes shimmering with unshed tears. “I can’t believe it; you’re his daughter.”

Anthony, who had been listening with growing confusion, frowned. “Dad, what’s going on? Do I know her dad?”

George glanced at his son. “You do know him. Rickey Benson is my friend. We all call him Benson.”

Anthony’s jaw dropped, disbelief coloring his features. “Wait... you’re Benson’s daughter? Wow, what a crazy coincidence!”

Elyse chuckled at Anthony’s over-the-top expression. She raised her hands as if in surrender, a playful smile tugging at her lips. “Don’t look at me! I only pieced it together yesterday.”

She paused, gathering her thoughts before adding, “To jog your dad’s memory about my dad, I played ‘Valse Sentimentale’ on purpose. Luckily, those memories hadn’t faded, and it gave me the chance to perform the ‘Violin Concerto in E Minor.’”

Chapter 1140:

George's voice was laced with emotion as he asked, "How did you know about the 'Violin Concerto in E Minor'? Did your dad tell you?"

Elyse's expression shifted, becoming more solemn. "I found his diary," she said softly. "He wrote about you, Mr. Hill. He mentioned that the next time he saw you, he'd play that piece. It was a promise you two shared."

A deep sadness settled over George's features. "He really held onto that promise."

In the midst of this, Anthony, oblivious to the gravity of the moment, took a big bite of his sandwich and blurted out, "Why didn't he keep that promise himself? Why pass the baton to you? What's he up to these days?"

Elyse fell silent, her gaze distant and clouded. It was the question she feared most.

The silence was heavy, and George's heart sank, the truth he had been avoiding finally coming into focus. Even Anthony, normally slow on the uptake, sensed the shift as both Elyse and George remained quiet.

After an awkward pause, Anthony, hesitant but trying, asked, "Does... does your dad know you're here with us?"

Elyse shook her head, a bittersweet smile playing on her lips. "He probably has no idea."

Always the optimist, Anthony replied brightly, "Then tell him! My dad's been waiting for him to come around. He was like a brother to him."

Elyse's smile faltered, and her voice, tinged with sorrow, cut through the air like a soft sigh. "He can't come anymore."

Anthony opened his mouth to ask why, but George, his voice gentle and heavy with understanding, beat him to it. The weight of her grief was unmistakable.

George leaned back in his chair, his eyes drifting upward toward the sky. Silent tears began to roll down his weathered cheeks, each drop a quiet acknowledgment of the loss that had been too long in coming to light.

After a long, heavy silence, George finally managed to speak, his voice barely audible. “How did he die?”

Anthony, now fully understanding the gravity of the conversation, echoed quietly, “Yeah, what happened?”

Elyse took a deep breath, her voice steady but laced with pain. “He got into a car accident, and while he was critically injured, someone—someone took advantage of that and killed him.”

Anthony’s fist slammed down on the table, rattling the plates as he burst out in frustration. “That’s sick! What kind of monster does that? Who did it? I swear, I’ll get justice for him!”

Elyse’s gaze turned steely, her voice resolute. “That person is already in prison. I made sure justice was done.”