

Bound love 1161

Chapter 1161:

“Come on! I’ve reserved a great spot. You’ll love it!”

Though his mood was lively, the strange feeling Elyse had sensed earlier still lingered, like a shadow on a bright day.

“Edward,” she ventured as they walked, “you’ve seemed… different lately. Or is it just my imagination?”

Edward paused, his quick talking a moment longer to surface. “You’ve always been sharp.”

Concern flickered across her face. “What’s going on with you? Is something wrong?”

Edward glanced at his watch, sidestepping the weight of her question with a light laugh. “Let’s get to the restaurant first. We can talk once we sit down.”

Reluctantly, Elyse nodded, and they walked side by side. A delicate distance between them, like two strings on a violin—close enough to resonate together but never quite touching. Friends, yes. Rivals, perhaps. But lovers? Never.

They reached the rooftop restaurant where the town lay sprawled beneath them. The waiter led them to a table with a view, handing Elyse the menu.

Before she could reach for it, Edward intervened with a smile. “I’ll take care of this.”

The waiter, without hesitation, passed the menu to Edward, who began ordering with an almost uncanny precision—every dish, from the appetizers to the dessert, tailored to Elyse’s tastes.

“How do you know all this?” Elyse asked, surprised, her eyes narrowing slightly.

Edward didn’t even look up as he finished ordering. “Because I made it a point to.”

His words hung in the air, heavy as a cloud before the storm broke. Elyse lowered her head, unsure how to respond, feeling as though she had walked straight into something she couldn't escape.

Noticing her reaction, Edward smiled. "You always do this when you're trying to avoid something—hoping the problem will disappear if you don't see it."

Elyse immediately lifted her head. "I'm just tired," she replied, brushing off his remark. "Resting my head, that's all."

But Edward wasn't fooled. "You've got more of these little habits than you think. I've noticed others too."

Elyse felt her guard rise, like walls being hurriedly built to keep out an unwanted visitor. Did he really think that observing her quirks meant he understood her?

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Just then, the waiter arrived with the appetizer, one of Elyse's favorites.

Her eyes lit up, the moment briefly sweeping away her earlier unease. She reached for it instinctively but hesitated, realizing that Edward hadn't received his food yet. She quietly retracted her hand, not wanting to appear impolite.

Edward noticed, his smile growing softer. "When you see something you love, your whole face lights up. Your joy is written all over your eyes. It's one of the things I admire about you."

Elyse frowned, her confusion deepening. "Edward, what's going on? You've been talking in circles all night. Do you really enjoy studying me this much?"

Edward rubbed the back of his neck, sheepish but unapologetic. "Observing someone I care about doesn't seem like a crime, right?"

Chapter 1162:

But Elyse's unease spoke volumes.

Edward sighed inwardly. Sometimes being clever was more of a curse than a blessing. Elyse was perceptive, too quick to piece things together, often catching the heart of a matter before anyone else even saw the puzzle.

The waiter returned, placing a plate of raw beef salad before Edward.

"You know," Edward said thoughtfully, "when you look at someone you care about, your eyes are just as sincere. They don't hide anything, even if you try."

Edward said, "You may not admit your feelings, but the sparkle in your eyes betrays you."

He looked at Elyse, saying, "It's quite clear when you love someone. Those close to you can tell who you favor, but it appears I'm the only one who really gets you. I've been the only one to notice."

Elyse's face took on a complex expression. "What exactly are you implying?"

For a brief moment, Edward was quiet before he swiftly changed the topic. "Don't you want to know what actually happened between Jayden and me that evening?"

Elyse, taken aback by the abrupt change, expressed her confusion. "Why are you mentioning that now?"

"Jayden and I clashed that night. Care to guess who came out on top?" Edward inquired, his smile broadening as he bit into his beef.

Elyse leaned her chin on her hand, pondering for a moment, but remained stumped.

At that instant, Edward flicked a coin towards Elyse, saying, "Heads for me, tails for him."

Looking at the coin, Elyse was confused. "What does this mean?"

“Since you’re unable to decide, we’ll let the coin make the choice,” Edward replied.

Elyse followed his instruction, tossing the coin into the air, catching it, and then revealing it in her palm. The coin landed on heads.

A trace of surprise appeared on Elyse’s face, though it was brief, and Edward caught it.

“You’re fated to make decisions with a coin toss,” Edward said. “It isn’t the coin that provides the answer, but the moment it lands, revealing what you truly hope for.”

Softly, Edward asked, “Upon seeing the coin land heads, who did you think of?”

Quickly, Elyse wrapped her hand around the coin and handed it back to him.

“That’s absurd. I don’t buy into that sort of thing,” she said.

As she rejected her feelings, Edward smirked. “On that night, Jayden...”

While Elyse was eating her sandwich, the mention of Jayden made her look up.

Her eyes conveyed surprise and a touch of expectation. Watching her, Edward reflected on how effortlessly he could decipher her thoughts. She was easy for him to understand.

Elyse hesitated, then asked, “Why did you guys end up fighting?”

With a light chuckle, Edward responded, “Do men ever truly need a reason to fight?”

“Huh? Don’t you?” Elyse questioned, her expression one of confusion.

Chapter 1163:

Edward replied, “There doesn’t always need to be a significant reason. It can be something trivial, like crossing paths on the way home, finding the person irritating, or both wanting the same thing.

That's just how boys are. Often, logic doesn't enter into it. The one with the stronger punch just ends the dispute."

Elyse pondered his words, then slowly said, "You guys are pretty straightforward, aren't you?"

Edward took a drink of his whiskey and took a deep breath before replying, "That's how boys are when they're young. As they mature, they're more cautious. But sometimes, even grown men throw caution to the wind and fight over a woman." He continued, "Our fight was about you. Specifically. We were fighting to see who could be your boyfriend."

Elyse opened her mouth but was at a loss for words.

"That's right, Jayden and I fought. The condition was that the loser would back off. I lost, so I'm stepping back."

Stunned, Elyse responded with anger in her voice. "Are you insane? I made my rejection clear before. Why did you feel the need to fight him off?"

Edward stroked his chin and replied, "Did you think your rejection would stop me? For someone like me, who prides himself on his achievements, striving for the woman I want comes naturally. Your rejection didn't deter me from pursuing you."

Hearing this, Elyse rolled her eyes in frustration. "You really think too highly of yourself."

"You just don't know how men think," Edward responded. "We're simple creatures. Our minds don't hold much, just a bunch of trivial things."

Elyse felt anger initially, but she soon recognized that Edward no longer chasing her might be for the best.

She gently lifted her glass and took a delicate sip. Just then, Edward, seated opposite her, inquired, "Do you know how to make a man driven by conquest lose interest?"

Startled, Elyse set down her glass and slowly shook her head, saying, "No idea."

Edward replied, "If my rival surprises me, I withdraw because I've been bested. Jayden can offer you the stability I cannot."

Edward's statement made Elyse shift uncomfortably, pulling away from him with unease.

Noticing something off about him today, she voiced her confusion, saying, "Why are you talking in such puzzling riddles about love today?"

Edward's gaze was tender but firm as he looked deeply at her.

"I see you are avoiding your true feelings, Elyse. Don't flee from them. Facing this is a necessary part of life. Even if it leads to unpleasant experiences, you must confront them. It's a lesson you need to learn."

Elyse said hesitantly, "Tonight, you seem like someone I don't know. You're usually not like this."

Edward laughed and responded, "Everyone has many sides. If I seem unfamiliar, it's because you haven't fully known me."

After a pause, Elyse nodded. "You're right. I've only ever seen one aspect of you. I haven't really been a great friend."

Chapter 1164:

Edward smiled warmly. "That's alright. Now's your chance to get to know me better, as a friend, as someone you can trust."

Elyse momentarily stiffened, then unknowingly sighed in relief. Realizing what she had done, she was even more surprised.

Edward chuckled. "I'm guessing you felt relieved when you heard I was stepping back to just be a friend?"

Blushing, Elyse quickly took a bite of her food, trying to cover her embarrassment. "How could I possibly think that?"

“You wear your emotions on your sleeve, so it’s easy for me to read your feelings.”

The waiter began serving the dishes again, and they paused their conversation to quietly savor the food.

As the main course arrived, Edward suddenly said, “Jayden loves you more deeply than either of us thought.”

Elyse glanced up nonchalantly. “You noticed?”

“No, he nearly beat me to a pulp that night.” Edward paused and continued, “Though I nearly did the same to him. We fought intensely, each trying to eliminate the other as a rival.”

Elyse frowned. “You two are out of your minds?” She recalled Jayden’s injuries and couldn’t help but complain.

Edward said, “I don’t recall how long we fought. All I know is that we were both drained, aching all over. Despite the rush of adrenaline, all I wanted by the end was to just lie down and rest.”

After he finished speaking, he fell silent. Elyse couldn’t contain her curiosity and asked, “Then what happened? Did you two end up in a tie?”

Edward gave a rueful smile. “At that moment, I was physically drained. My determination was strong, but my body felt weak. Just as I considered sitting down to rest, Jayden, his eyes red with exhaustion, got to his feet.”

Elyse’s face took on a complex expression.

“Jayden was hardly in better condition than I was. His breathing was so labored that I feared he might need medical attention if he continued. Yet, he not only stood up but approached me, ready to keep fighting.”

As Edward retold this, his expression blended completely with admiration. He continued, “At that moment, as I faced Jayden, it dawned on me that I’m not his equal. While I wanted to rest, he was determined to keep going. He couldn’t bear the thought of stopping because it would mean defeat.”

Edward’s voice was thick with emotion. “In that instant, I knew I had lost to him, to the depth of his love. His love was stronger than mine.”

Elyse was taken aback by the night’s undisclosed revelations. She comforted Edward, saying, “Even though I don’t feel romantically towards you, I don’t believe your love is any less profound or meaningful than anyone else’s. Your love isn’t lacking.”

Edward managed a smile. “I understand. My love might be clumsy, but it’s a treasure to whoever holds it.”

Chapter 1165:

Seeing Edward’s confident smile, Elyse couldn’t help but chuckle. “Exactly. If I didn’t reciprocate your love, that’s on me, not you.”

Edward looked at Elyse with a gaze full of sincerity and warmth. “I won’t trouble you further. Let’s be friends, shall we?”

Elyse looked at Edward, then nodded and smiled. “Alright, we’re good friends then.”

Edward returned the smile, joyfully saying, “Being friends is wonderful. It’s enough for me to protect you as a friend. I’m honored to be considered your friend.”

Elyse responded, Edward let out a hearty laugh. “Well, you should be! After all, I am the esteemed and remarkably talented Edward McCoy!” He lifted his glass. “Shall we toast to friendship?”

Elyse agreed, raised her glass, and they toasted.

After sipping his wine, Edward said, “I’ve always thought that with me pursuing you, you couldn’t tell what was in your own heart.”

Elyse looked surprised. “What do you mean?”

Edward elaborated. “Even though you have feelings for me and turned me down, I kept chasing. You might have been using my pursuit as a way to dodge confronting your own feelings.”

Elyse chuckled awkwardly. “How could I possibly do that?”

Sensing she wouldn’t confess, Edward shifted the conversation. “Did you know? Jayden’s current assignment could be fatal.”

Elyse’s fork clattered onto her plate with a loud clink.

“Are you okay?” Edward inquired with concern.

Elyse quickly retrieved her fork and managed a smile, nodding. “I’m fine, really. Don’t worry about me.”

Edward perceived her true feelings but chose to remain silent.

He continued, “Jayden knows he’s facing a life-or-death risk, which is why he didn’t bring you along. Do you think he’d have let me look after you if he had any other option? He’s been trying so hard to keep me out of the picture. Wouldn’t he cling to any opportunity to keep you safe?”

Elyse took a large sip of her wine then asked, “Who told you he might die?”

Edward replied, “He’s allied with Garret and is aware of some confidential information. Jayden teamed up with Garret to eliminate a certain—”

Edward stroked his chin and added, “Before teaming up with Garret, Jayden and I joined forces to challenge Charlie Hudson.”

“So, is his collaboration with Garret also about taking someone down? Who could it be that requires such extreme measures?” Elyse inquired.

Edward shrugged, unsure. “Maybe Garret knows, but he hasn’t shared that with me. My relationship with Garret isn’t that close.”

“Alright,” Elyse murmured, then seemed to lose herself in thought, her interest in her meal fading.

Noticing her disinterest in food, Edward reminded her, “You need to eat well. I promised Jayden I’d take good care of you and won’t let you skip meals.”

Chapter 1166:

Elyse looked at her steak with no desire to eat, her mind preoccupied with worries about Jayden’s well-being.

“You’re not eating because you’re worried about Jayden, aren’t you? Don’t be too anxious. Even though he’s in a dangerous situation, it’s not critical yet. For all we know, he might be enjoying a steak right now as well.”

Elyse managed a weak smile and, encouraged by Edward, ate all her food.

On their way back to the hotel, Edward said, “Tomorrow, I’ll take you back to Moon Palace. You’ll be safe there.”

Elyse didn’t reply, just walked silently, her gaze fixed on the ground.

Once back at the hotel, Elyse shut the door, took out her phone, and dialed Louise’s number.

Caught off guard by the call, Louise responded with a hint of bitterness, “Hasn’t Edward visited you? Why call me? To brag?”

“Louise, I need a favor,” Elyse said.

Louise’s voice carried a note of confusion. “What kind of help do you need?”

Elyse asked, “If I told you that Garret isn’t dead, would you help me contact him?”

“Garret isn’t dead? Where is he?” Louise asked, visibly startled.

“I’m aware of the internal strife within your royal family, but I have my own agenda. I’m sharing this information in hopes that you’ll help me meet Garret,” Elyse said.

Louise was perplexed. “You’re telling me he’s alive just because you want to see him? Aren’t you worried I might tell Chesney? You know he wants Garret gone more than anyone.”

“You won’t do that,” Elyse said confidently.

Louise understood that Elyse depended on her. Elyse had disclosed Garret’s whereabouts to gain her cooperation, showing that she wasn’t like Chesney—rather a kind and gentle person.

Louise sensed that Elyse truly saw through her.

“What exactly are you planning?” Louise sighed.

“I want to be by Jayden’s side with the help of Garret,” Elyse replied.

Louise recognized the name Jayden—Elyse’s ex-husband. Edward had mentioned him before.

Louise was confused and said, “You’ve gone through all this trouble just to meet Jayden?”

Louise was puzzled. “I thought Edward was with you, right? Why not ask him for help?”

Elyse exhaled deeply. “Because he is now aligned with Jayden. If I tell him I want to meet Jayden, he’ll surely object. He might even confine me.”

Louise expressed disbelief. “How is that possible? He doesn’t seem like that kind of person. A few days ago, Edward and Jayden became friends. Their bond seems quite strong now.”

Elyse’s feelings were mixed. Their newfound friendship had indeed been forged through numerous challenges. They should have a mutual understanding and respect by now.

Chapter 1167:

After a pause, Louise asked curiously, “You don’t have feelings for Edward?”

Elyse responded decisively, “I never had feelings for him. And now, he has stopped pursuing me. He’s chosen to just be a friend.”

“For real?” Louise sounded pleased. “So, you two are really just friends now?”

“It’s true. Why would I lie to you?” Elyse couldn’t help but chuckle.

Louise, ready to spring into action, said, “Alright. I’ll get moving right away. You want to slip past Edward’s watch and make your way to Garret’s base, correct? Leave it to me.”

Elyse expressed her concern. “Are you sure you can help me evade Edward’s men?”

Louise responded with assurance. “Don’t underestimate me. I’m every bit as skilled as Chesney or Garret. I’ve always maintained a low profile and haven’t showcased my abilities to them. Just wait. I won’t disappoint you.”

Elyse touched her nose thoughtfully and inquired, “When should I expect an update? Edward is planning to take me back to Moon Palace tomorrow, you know.”

Louise said, “I’ll help you escape before the first light.”

Elyse paused to consider, then said, “Alright, I’ll wait for your signal.”

After ending the call, Elyse bowed respectfully in the direction Edward had gone. “Sorry, Edward, I know you’re trying to protect me, but I need to find answers on my own. Otherwise, I’ll never understand my own feelings.”

That evening, Elyse indulged in a hot shower, meticulously packed her bags, and patiently awaited Louise's arrival. As the night stretched into the early morning hours, the first signs of dawn appeared. The door to her room silently swung open. She exited without making a sound.

At noon, Edward awoke and went to remind Elyse to pack her bags for their evening departure.

Despite calling out to Elyse several times without a reply, Edward scratched his head in confusion. Normally, Elyse would have responded, but could she still be sleeping?

He pulled out his phone and tried calling Elyse, but her phone was turned off.

Unaware of how critical the situation was, he assumed she was just in a deep sleep. He imagined that she would take off on her own, especially since she didn't know Jayden's location.

To give her more time, Edward returned to his room to let her sleep another hour.

Returning an hour later, Edward found no answer once again. At this point, he sensed something was amiss.

He asked the hotel staff to open her door, and, as he had feared, the room was empty.

Edward touched the bed, checking that it was completely cold. Elyse must have left long ago.

After a quick search of the room, Edward concluded that Elyse had likely slipped out to search for Jayden. He immediately sent his people out to look for her and messaged Jayden, cautioning him that Elyse might suddenly show up.

Unbeknownst to Edward, at that very moment, Elyse was sitting in a helicopter beside Louise, who was holding a walkie-talkie. Feeling the chill of the wind and the helicopter's noise, Elyse turned to Louise and said, "Is it really necessary to be this extravagant just to find Garret?"

Chapter 1168:

Louise responded, "Extravagant? This is pretty standard."

Elyse made a face. “But from what I remember, isn’t Garret’s base surrounded by forests? There’s nowhere for a helicopter to land.”

Louise waved her hand nonchalantly. “Don’t worry. If there’s no landing spot, we can always rappel down with ropes.”

Elyse’s brow furrowed. “Rappel down? You think I’m ready for that?”

Louise gave Elyse’s shoulder a reassuring pat. “You can do anything. Trust yourself!”

With a blend of encouragement and insistence, Louise guided Elyse into a quick descent.

Feeling the wind whip around her, Elyse grew lightheaded, almost losing her balance completely. By the time they touched down, Elyse’s legs were trembling from exhaustion.

Unsteady, she staggered forward, pushed Louise aside, and dashed toward a nearby bush where she began to retch.

Hands on her hips, Louise observed, unimpressed. “You’re really frail, aren’t you?”

After a few heaves, the dizziness eased, and Elyse looked a bit pale. “I need to work on building my stamina.”

Louise raised her hand, motioning for the helicopter to depart.

“Alright. Go find your Jayden, and I’ll catch up with my dear Garret.”

Noticing Louise’s tense expression, Elyse asked, perplexed, “Are you that upset with Garret?”

“It’s complicated. Maybe anger is part of it. My feelings for him are far from simple.”

Louise’s gaze darkened briefly. After a pause, she sighed, “Forget it. Let’s just head inside.”

Elyse agreed, and after a few steps, noticed Garret waiting nearby.

With a helicopter so large, Garret probably saw them arrive; he must have been waiting for some time. When Elyse reached Garret, she greeted him politely.

He looked at her and gave a quiet nod in response. Then his gaze shifted to Louise, whose face showed no warmth.

Louise scoffed, irritated. "I thought you'd vanished in all that chaos, but you're still around."

Opening the car door, Garret said, "Let's get going. We can talk on the way."

Elyse made no objections and turned to Louise.

Louise rolled her eyes, crossed her arms defiantly, and climbed into the car with an air of superiority. Elyse followed her in, and the car began to move. Eagerly, Elyse asked, "Where's Jayden? Why didn't he come?"

Garret shrugged. "Too bad you missed him by just a few hours. He headed to the front earlier to oversee things himself."

A look of shock crossed Elyse's face. "He went to the front?"

Seeing her reaction, Louise quickly intervened. "Don't worry; it's just a minor conflict."

She then turned to Garret, saying, "Reach out to Jayden immediately. Tell him to come back for Elyse."

Chapter 1169:

"Not likely. They're engaged in a conflict over there. He'll respond once there's a pause," Garret replied. Louise's brow furrowed deeply.

As she considered what to do, Elyse spoke up. “If he can’t return, then I’ll go to him.”

Before Garret could argue, Louise quickly objected, saying, “That’s absurd. The crossfire is dangerous; you’d only put yourself in harm’s way.”

Eyes welling up, Elyse looked uncertain.

Garret sighed and said, “Both of you, calm down. I’ll do what I can manage.”

Elyse didn’t know what he had in mind, but realizing she couldn’t help, she resigned herself to follow his lead. For the first time, Elyse felt truly powerless, acutely aware of her limitations and the harshness of the situation.

Returning to the house, she settled into the room she had shared with Jayden before.

Upon entering, she noticed his suitcase was still there. He had gone to a perilous area with just a backpack.

Elyse stood staring at the suitcase, lost in thought. Eventually, weariness overtook her, and she lay down, falling asleep quickly.

When she awoke, it was already dark.

Feeling uncomfortable from the long sleep, Elyse left her room and headed downstairs to make something to eat. Passing by Garret’s study, a loud noise caught her attention.

Frowning, she approached the doorway and heard Louise’s anguished voice.

“Have you lost your mind? How could you do that to me?”

Her voice was filled with pain and frustration, though it had been building for years.

Peeking in, Elyse saw Louise clinging to Garret, her teeth sinking into his shoulder. He neither resisted nor reacted, simply standing there with a blank expression as she bit him.

When Louise finally released him, a trace of blood stained her lips.

Garret's gaze fixed on her bloodied mouth, and, tilting her chin up, he kissed her.

Elyse was rendered speechless.

Garret had kissed Louise, and she had not resisted. They were half-siblings. How could he kiss her like that?

Elyse's mind was in turmoil as she slipped quietly from the study and dashed into the kitchen.

There, she stood in front of the refrigerator, her mind completely overwhelmed. She struggled to grasp and accept what she had just witnessed.

Had she shown an interest in Edward? She had been chasing him persistently. What was her relationship with Garret?

She found herself unable to make sense of these questions. They were too complex for her to understand.

"Why are you in the kitchen? Are you looking for something to eat?" Louise's voice startled Elyse from behind.

Surprised, Elyse turned to see Louise looking somewhat exhausted. For a brief moment, Elyse was at a loss for words. After hesitating, she managed to say, "I felt hungry. I thought I'd prepare some food."

Chapter 1170:

Louise seemed distracted and didn't pick up on how forced Elyse's expression was. She suggested, "Could you make me something too? I would love something warm."

"Sure, I'll make you something as well."

Elyse then opened the refrigerator and gathered the ingredients. As Elyse was cooking, Garret walked in. He noticed the beef simmering on the stove and mentioned, "Cook it well, I'm hungry too."

Elyse turned to face him.

Seeing the added look in her eyes, Garret inquired, "Is something on your mind? Want to talk to me about it?"

Elyse opened her mouth, intending to inquire about his relationship with Louise, but considering their complicated family ties and her precarious position, she chose to act as if she knew nothing.

She gave a smile and asked, "What would you like to eat?"

"Anything that's filling will do," he responded. After his reply, he walked away.

Elyse breathed a deep sigh of relief and resumed her cooking.

An hour later, she placed the dishes on the table and said, "I've made plenty. Make sure you both eat a lot." Garret tasted the soup first.

Noticing this, Elyse inquired, "How is it? How does it taste?"

After swallowing a spoonful of soup, Garret kept a neutral expression and remarked, "How did you manage to make a soup where the beef actually tastes like beef and the tomatoes taste distinctly like tomatoes?"

Confused, Elyse asked, "What do you mean?"

Louise took a sip, immediately spat it out, and said awkwardly, "I'm sorry, I couldn't swallow it. It's just too awful."

Embarrassed, Elyse suggested, "What about the cucumber salad? That should be alright."

Garret commented, "Cucumbers are usually fine raw. If you manage to ruin those, maybe you should stop cooking altogether."

Louise tasted the fried rice and enthusiastically said, "But the clam chowder is delicious. I could have two servings."

Garret tried a bite of the clam chowder and found it quite good. He looked up, his expression complex, and mentioned, "You've been cooking clam chowder for me and Jayden a lot. Is that the only dish you know how to make?"

Feeling a bit defensive, Elyse turned away and responded, "At least I make the effort to cook. If you don't like it, don't complain."

Garret exhaled. "No wonder Jayden insists I don't order out. He told me to make do with what we have. Now I understand why."

Elyse responded with frustration, "I have my strengths. If clam chowder is good, that should be enough."

Garret exhaled deeply once more, picked up the soup, and headed toward the kitchen.