

Bound love 1181

Chapter 1181:

Amanda blocked their path, her face marked by suspicion. “Hey! Who gave you permission to enter his room? Did he approve? You can’t just walk in there.”

Peyton, exasperated with Amanda’s unreasonable behavior, countered sharply, “Elyse and Jayden are legally married. Who are you to stop her? Remember, you’re just a mercenary. You have no right to meddle in their personal affairs.”

After his rebuttal, Peyton ushered Elyse toward the base. Once inside the room, Elyse pointed out to Peyton, “We were legally married. You need to be more precise with your words.”

Peyton heard the exchange and appeared as though words were on the tip of his tongue, but after a pause, he closed his mouth, silence settling over him like a calm before a storm.

Elyse caught the flicker of unease in his expression, her eyes narrowing with suspicion. “What is it? Are you hiding something from me again?” she asked, her tone edged with accusation.

“No! Absolutely not!” Peyton’s voice rose defensively. “You have to trust me!”

Elyse raised an eyebrow, scrutinizing him closely, the weight of doubt lingering in the air. After a tense moment, she reluctantly sighed. His eyes, unwavering and sincere, seemed to melt her resolve.

“Alright,” she muttered, crossing her arms. “But just this once. If I catch you in a lie later...” She drew her hand across her neck in a slicing gesture, leaving the threat unsaid but painfully clear.

Peyton’s shoulders slumped slightly, and with a weak smile, he lowered his head in a display of submission. “You have nothing to worry about. I’d betray Jayden before I’d betray you,” he promised.

With a small nod, Elyse let out a breath. “Fine,” she relented, finally loosening her grip on the tension.

Peyton made a move to stand, eager to change the subject, but Elyse's voice cut through the air before he could step away. "Wait. Don't leave just yet."

Peyton hesitated, eyeing her cautiously. "What is it?" he asked, his voice tinged with wariness.

Elyse's voice was cool, yet simmering with curiosity. "What's going on with Amanda? You haven't explained that to me yet."

The question hung heavily between them. Amanda's obvious hostility had gnawed at Elyse's mind—was it jealousy, fueled by her connection to Jayden, that made Amanda lash out with insults? Elyse's thoughts swirled. Peyton faltered, his expression tightening.

Elyse was unimpressed, her patience wearing thin. "Seriously? You won't even give me a straight answer about this? Where's all that loyalty you just boasted about? Did it vanish into thin air?"

Peyton rubbed the back of his head awkwardly. "I thought it'd be better if Jayden explained everything about her himself."

Elyse scoffed, her irritation bubbling over. "Better? Don't kid yourself. If I ask him, he'd just brush it off or dodge the question. You really expect him to explain anything about her?"

Peyton chewed on his lip, then sighed in resignation. "Alright, alright. I'll fill you in."

He walked over to the window, peering down with an air of unease. Amanda was standing below, her gaze fixed upward, sharp as a blade. She wasn't hiding her presence—nor her hostility.

Elyse stepped up beside him, her eyes following his. The moment Amanda's gaze locked onto Elyse, her expression shifted, a twisted smile forming, defiant and dripping with disdain.

Peyton clicked his tongue, shaking his head. "She doesn't even try to mask it," he muttered, then turned back to Elyse. "On the battlefield, Amanda got too full of herself and tried to finish a mission solo. She failed and exposed Jayden's position, along with the rest of the team."

Chapter 1182:

Elyse blinked, momentarily stunned. “Sounds just like her,” she said dryly. “What happened after that?”

Peyton replied, “Jayden went in alone, rescued her, and took out the enemy while he was at it.”

Elyse couldn’t help but let out a short, sarcastic laugh. “So it’s the classic scene everyone loves: after being saved, she instantly falls for him. Am I right?”

Peyton chuckled. “Close, but she didn’t fall for him because of the rescue. She fell for him while he was yelling at her afterward. Apparently, Jayden looked ‘especially cool’ while scolding her.”

Elyse stared at him, incredulous. “Is she out of her mind?”

Peyton’s laughter rang through the room, hearty and amused. “Who knows? Maybe she’s convinced Jayden’s the world’s most charming man. But yeah, everyone knows she’s into him, and they all know Jayden has zero interest.”

Elyse smirked, shaking her head. “In some strange way, that makes her a bit of a legend, doesn’t it?”

“Oh, she’s famous around here,” Peyton replied, grinning. “People even have bets going about when Jayden will finally fall in love with her.”

With that, Peyton flopped onto the bed, completely at ease. “Jayden’s a magnet for trouble; it’s like chaos follows him wherever he goes.”

Elyse chuckled. “And how do you know that?”

Peyton shot her a look. “Because he’s dragged me into plenty of it! The guy’s a disaster magnet.” Then, as if a lightbulb went off, he sat up, suddenly serious. “Don’t forget, he was raised by Enzo. Jayden’s a workaholic—great at what he does, but the rest? He’s hopeless. You must’ve noticed.”

Elyse nodded. “Yeah, outside of his job, he’s a bit clueless.”

Peyton continued, his voice tinged with urgency. “For him, if money can solve it, it’s not an issue. But when it comes to feelings, he’s clueless. When it comes to you, he becomes a total wreck. You have no idea how ridiculous he got after you left. If we weren’t so close, I would’ve shared all his embarrassing moments online for everyone to see.”

Elyse raised an eyebrow, intrigued. “Really? What did he—”

Just as Peyton opened his mouth to respond, the door swung open with a thud.

There, standing in the doorway, was a disheveled Jayden, his brow furrowed in annoyance. “Who are you planning to expose online?” he asked, his voice sharp.

Peyton froze, his eyes darting between Elyse and Jayden before clamping his mouth shut, suddenly sheepish. “N-no one,” he stammered awkwardly. “You must’ve misheard.”

Jayden’s gaze flickered briefly to Elyse before narrowing at Peyton. “What are you still doing here? Get out. Now!”

Peyton exited swiftly, but not without waving goodbye to Elyse.

As the door shut behind him, Jayden turned to Elyse, who had remained quiet. “Why did you come over?”

Elyse, raising an eyebrow, countered, “Who told you I was here?”

“Garret and Edward both mentioned it,” Jayden answered, rubbing his eyes tiredly as he slumped into a chair opposite her.

“Don’t just lie down in those filthy clothes. Take them off and go shower,” Elyse commanded, her nose wrinkling at the sight of his dust-covered attire.

Jayden frowned, feeling slighted. “So, you’re repulsed by me now?”

Elyse didn't hesitate. She pulled him to his feet and began peeling off his dirty clothes. "You're covered in dirt. Why shouldn't I mention it? Get undressed, take a shower, and don't even talk to me until you're clean," she insisted.

"This is my room, my bed. You don't get to boss me around," Jayden retorted, his defiance flaring.

Elyse stopped and gave him a look. "Fine, then. Maybe I'll see if Peyton has space for me. Even his floor would be an upgrade at this point."

Jayden's resistance waned, and he allowed Elyse to remove his dusty coat.

Chapter 1183:

Underneath, his black undershirt was even grimmer, emitting a rank odor.

Jayden braced himself for her disgust, but surprisingly, she just continued helping him undress without any sign of displeasure.

She pointed at his pants next. "These need to go too. They're a mess. I'll find the laundry room and get them cleaned," she declared, undeterred by his mess.

Feeling suddenly self-conscious, Jayden crossed his arms over his chest. "Didn't you plan to be with Edward? Why are you fussing over me? I don't need your help," he protested, his tone a mix of embarrassment and annoyance.

Elyse's anger flared. After hearing about the brawl between Jayden and Edward that left both men bruised and battered, she was beyond frustrated.

Even worse, Jayden had tried to keep the details from her.

Far from satisfied, Elyse punched Jayden and followed it with another strike. "You dare bring that up? Edward already spilled everything. I know all about your antics, so drop the act. I gave you a chance back then, and you clammed up. Don't blame me for going out with Edward."

Jayden was rendered speechless.

“What about me? Am I wrong?” Elyse retorted sharply. “And another thing—I got the death glare from a woman here as if I’d wronged her entire family. What’s that about?”

Jayden faltered, his voice a strained whisper after a tense pause. “Just ignore her. Keep your distance.”

Elyse scoffed, her laughter tinged with bitterness. “Still keeping secrets, huh? Her name’s Amanda, right? You played the hero, and now she’s infatuated. She hates me because I’m your ex. Would it kill you to just explain?”

Jayden remained silent, his demeanor sheepish and evasive.

Fed up with his silence, Elyse slapped him again and commanded, “If you’re not going to talk, at least go shower.”

Jayden resignedly picked up his clean clothes and retreated to the bathroom.

Still seething, Elyse took out her frustration on his dirty clothes before storming out of the room.

As she exited, she nearly collided with Amanda, who had been listening in.

She grabbed Amanda’s arm, her eyebrow arching provocatively. “A mercenary caught eavesdropping? I thought you didn’t stoop to such levels.”

Caught off guard, Amanda bristled but stubbornly refused to acknowledge she had been eavesdropping or to see any common ground with Elyse.

“I wasn’t eavesdropping!” Amanda asserted with defiance.

Elyse let out a soft chuckle. “Oh? Then what exactly were you doing lurking around here?”

Amanda faltered, momentarily at a loss for words.

Gathering her composure, she shot back, “Just because you’re close to Jayden doesn’t mean your intentions are pure. How do I know you’re not a spy sent to harm him?”

Raising an eyebrow, Elyse replied with a hint of amusement, “Accusations flying thick and fast, huh? Trying to sway public opinion against me now?” Leaning in closer, her voice lowered. “Garret counts me as a friend. By accusing me of espionage, are you suggesting Garret is complicit in betrayal?”

Amanda clenched her teeth, her frustration evident. “You can’t possibly be friends with Garret. I don’t buy it. Prove it.”

Elyse’s laughter was light and mocking. “You demand proof of my friendship with Garret, yet you baselessly label me a spy. Perhaps you should present some evidence of your accusations first.”

Amanda sneered, her tone cold. “I’m a mercenary. It’s my job to be wary. I have every right to suspect you.”

With a sly smile, Elyse countered, “Interesting. As a mercenary, it seems you ignore protocols and make your own rules. That makes me wonder if you’re the one planning to defect and sell information to our enemies.”

Chapter 1184:

Elyse glanced at Amanda, who seemed to have run out of words, and burst into laughter. “What’s the matter? You’re not usually this quiet, are you?”

Amanda retorted with defiance, “I’m a mercenary. Maybe words aren’t my strong suit, but my shooting skills are top-notch. You might be eloquent, but that’s pretty much all you have.”

At this, Elyse just laughed. “Why is being a mercenary so important to you? Is that identity really that crucial, or is it all you have to show for yourself?”

Finding herself at a loss for words, and with no one else in sight, Amanda chose to be playful.

She swung her hand out, aiming a swift blow at Elyse.

Elyse didn't move but met Amanda's gaze directly. Feeling initially confident, Amanda was somehow unnerved by Elyse's assertive stance.

"Why aren't you moving out of the way?" Amanda yelled, freezing mid-swing.

With a calm smile, Elyse responded, "You should realize, if you hit me, you'll be thrown out of here immediately. And your so-called mercenary pride? That might disappear as well."

Amanda felt a surge of shame, her face flushing red as she fought to keep her composure.

Observing Amanda's troubled look, Elyse felt a sense of triumph.

She brushed her hair back and grinned. "You should go now. I don't have the time to talk."

Amanda eyed the clothes Elyse held, quickly recognizing they belonged to Jayden. The plans she'd once abandoned suddenly sparked to life again.

With an intense tone, she said, "Those belong to Jayden. Hand them over to me now."

Elyse gave her a piercing look. "Just because you demand them, I should hand them over? If you need something from Jayden, go ask him directly. Why should I just give them to you?"

Amanda, unable to outwit Elyse with words, made a grab for the clothes.

Elyse, however, swiftly avoided her attempt.

She then ignored Amanda and proceeded downstairs. Reaching the ground floor, she saw a mercenary delivering a message and inquired, "Could you tell me where the laundry room is?"

The mercenary, clearly taken by Elyse, eagerly pointed out the way, stuttering slightly, "Straight ahead, then a right. It's right there."

Grateful, Elyse smiled at the mercenary, expressed her thanks, and followed his directions.

Amanda, persistent as ever, trailed behind Elyse. Elyse remained indifferent. If Amanda chose to follow, so be it.

When they arrived at the laundry room, Elyse noticed two workers bent over, inspecting the washing machines. Curiously, she asked, “So, what’s the problem here?”

One worker looked up and explained, “The washing machine’s broken. There’s too much dirt in everyone’s clothes, clogging the crucial parts.”

Elyse understood the situation. “It requires fixing, then. How long will that take?”

“Two or three hours, maybe. I wouldn’t try washing anything today if I were you. Better wait till tomorrow.” Having said this, the worker turned back to his repairs, paying no further attention to Elyse.

Amanda appeared unsurprised by the news. Extending her hand, she said, “Hand over the clothes. I’ve got some in there too, and I can have Jayden move up in line.”

Seeing the heaps of unwashed clothes scattered around, Elyse felt her urge to clean grow stronger.

Without acknowledging Amanda, she picked up the clothes and exited the laundry room.

Chapter 1185:

Confused, Amanda called out, “Where are you taking those? I just said I could help Jayden cut in line. Didn’t you hear me?”

Elyse gave Amanda a cold look. “I prefer not to mix his clothes with yours.”

Amanda was stunned, not anticipating such a blunt retort.

Elyse shot her another cold look. “I see you as filthy. If Jayden’s clothes get mixed with yours, I’ll be done with him.”

Amanda stood frozen, slowly processing that Elyse was actually judging her cleanliness.

Seething with anger, she wished she could rip Elyse to shreds.

Deciding against further interaction, Elyse grabbed the clothes and left.

Recalling a stream she had noticed earlier, Elyse decided to wash Jayden's clothes there herself.

As Elyse walked away, Amanda's gaze turned cold, watching her go.

Elyse headed directly to a nearby stream.

The surrounding wilderness was untamed and raw. She carefully picked her way across stones cloaked in moss, her attention fixed on the ground as she neared the water.

Trailing her by about ten meters, Amanda moved stealthily.

Finding a cozy spot along the stream, Elyse began washing Jayden's clothes, engrossed in her task and completely unaware of Amanda's silent approach.

Amanda, knife in hand, had managed to sneak up right behind Elyse without a sound. The knife's intent was lethal.

Going outside alone to wash clothes was a gamble in these parts, where dangers lurked around every corner and even the bravest mercenaries thought twice. Undeterred, Elyse boldly stepped out by herself, challenging the risks without hesitation.

To Amanda, this moment seemed like destiny lending a hand. Once Elyse was out of the picture, she believed Jayden would turn his affections towards her, leaving his memories of Elyse behind.

As Amanda was poised to strike, Elyse suddenly drew a gun, expertly aiming it backwards under her arm at Amanda.

Startled, Amanda stumbled back, her eyes wide at the unexpected turn. She blurted out, accusingly, “Where did you get that? You must have stolen it, right?”

Elyse dropped the dirty clothes and rose to her feet, flashing a taunting smile at Amanda. “Stolen? You never tire of throwing baseless accusations my way. What’s in it for you? Trying to drive a wedge between Jayden and me? Hoping to catch his eye yourself?”

With the gun still in hand, Elyse swept her gaze around. “Feel free to report me for the supposed theft. But consider how Jayden will react, given that he’s the very one who gifted me this gun.”

Amanda’s face twisted into a sneer. “So you claim that gun came from Jayden and expect me to just swallow that? You, a feeble woman—do you even possess the skill to fire that weapon?”

In a lightning move, Elyse raised the gun, aimed directly at Amanda’s face, and fired. The shot rang out so quickly Amanda scarcely had time to blink.

Behind Amanda, a man crumpled to the ground.

In an instant, Amanda whirled, her instincts flaring. The man’s telltale mercenary outfit and equipment gave him away as an enemy.

Her face warped with vexation. She had just mocked Elyse’s capability with a gun, only to be shown up in dramatic fashion. This reversal was more insulting than any outright defeat.

Elyse cocked her head to the side, eyeing the rage on Amanda’s face. She posed a question, her curiosity genuine. “I’ve been meaning to ask—how did someone like you, who flouts orders, struts around with arrogance, and seems oblivious to danger, even end up as a mercenary?”

The shadow across Amanda’s face deepened. “Are you questioning my qualifications as a mercenary?”

Chapter 1186:

Continuing unabated, Elyse said, “You were on the brink of attacking me just now, weren’t you? Your reflection in the water gave you away—knife in hand and a lethal glare. It’s fortunate that I can read situations like these instantly.”

Amanda's eyebrow quirked up. "And what if I was? I was indeed plotting your end. What's your move? Your words carry no weight."

As Amanda's last taunt settled, Elyse effortlessly raised her gun, locking her aim squarely on her.

A crack appeared in Amanda's composed facade as she cried out, "What are you playing at? Are you really prepared to pull that trigger? Do you truly have the courage?"

Elyse responded with unwavering calm, "The presence of enemy mercenaries indicates we're on the outskirts of Jayden's territory, where laws of the land rarely apply. You wouldn't have dared to threaten me under normal circumstances. Thus, disposing of you here might just solve a few of my problems quite neatly."

Amanda hadn't seen it coming—Elyse's unexpected cleverness. Her face drained of color, and she was momentarily at a loss for words.

Elyse's finger gave a twitch on the trigger, convincing Amanda that a shot was imminent. In her terror, Amanda whirled to flee, but her foot caught on a slick patch of moss, sending her sprawling to the ground.

Amanda lay sprawled out, completely motionless. With a furrow of her brow, Elyse stowed her gun and strode over to Amanda, only to discover she had accidentally knocked herself unconscious. Exasperated, she gave Amanda's leg a nudge with her boot.

"Really? A mercenary who knocks herself out by falling? If all mercenaries were like you, they might as well hang up their hats and get a real job."

Elyse's intent had only been to instill fear, not to cause actual harm. She pulled out the flare that Jayden had provided and sent it arcing into the heavens. Before long, Jayden and his team materialized.

Confronted with a dead adversary, an unconscious Amanda, and Elyse casually rinsing out some clothes, Jayden's face curled in confusion. "Can someone explain what unfolded here?"

"Amanda lost her nerve, took a spill, and blacked out," Elyse remarked with a calm tone.

She handed the gun back to Jayden, a casual gesture. “I had to use one of your bullets—sorry about that.”

Jayden took the gun, casting a glance at the dead man nearby, and inquired, “Was this your doing?”

Elyse nodded, her voice tinged with unexpected pride. “Surprisingly, my aim was true. Louise would have been proud—I nailed him with just one bullet.”

Jayden raised an eyebrow, a hint of disbelief flickering in his gaze. “Louise taught you all that?”

Elyse wrung out the clothes, standing up with casual defiance. “Of course. She claims I have a knack for it, and if I ever get tired of the violin, I might just take it up as a career.”

Jayden was briefly at a loss for words. Finally, he managed to say, “You’re good at the violin. Let others handle this sort of thing.”

Elyse threw a glance at Amanda, who was being half-carried away by her companions.

“Looks like Amanda might’ve hit her head.”

Jayden turned to watch Amanda and shrugged. “If she’s hurt, all the better. Makes it easier to get her out of here.”

Elyse didn’t buy his thin excuse for a second. If he could’ve gotten rid of Amanda, he would have done it long ago—why was she still lingering around?

Chapter 1187:

Growing annoyed at the thought, she tossed a bundle of clothes toward him. “Here. I washed them. They’ll have to do.”

Jayden regarded her with an amused smirk. “Didn’t think you’d be so thoughtful, even washing my clothes.”

“Thoughtful? No chance. I just can’t stand filth in my space. Don’t get any ideas. We’re not about to make nice over something as trivial as laundry. Understood?” She glared, her eyes narrowed, then turned back toward the base, her stride steady and sure.

Jayden caught up with her, concern creeping into his tone. “You just shot someone. Are you alright? First kills can be hard, gnawing at your conscience.”

Elyse shrugged, mulling it over. “Before I fired, that mercenary had his gun aimed straight at me—maybe at Amanda, who knows. Either way, my life was on the line. So…” She paused, letting the silence hang. “If someone’s trying to kill me, I won’t hesitate to strike back. Isn’t that how you operate in combat?”

“Exactly,” Jayden replied, pride softening his gaze. “And you handled it well.” He reached over, ruffling her hair gently.

Elyse scoffed and shook him off, feigning indifference. She ignored him entirely as they continued.

Meanwhile, Amanda was taken to the field medic, who confirmed she’d indeed knocked herself out. She’d be out cold for a few hours, lying ignored on a makeshift bed.

With the chaos momentarily subsiding, Elyse and Jayden returned to their room.

Jayden shut the door and moved close to her, closing the gap a bit too quickly. Elyse bristled and backed away. “Keep your distance. You’ve dodged every question I’ve asked.”

Jayden sighed. “I’m not sure I even know where to begin.”

Elyse’s frown deepened. “That’s just an excuse. You’re avoiding me.” With a weary yawn, she waved him off. “I don’t want to argue all night. I’m tired and need sleep. You can take the floor.”

After she settled in bed, Jayden watched her a moment and muttered, “This is my room. My bed.”

Elyse shot up, immediately indignant. “I’ll see if Peyton has space in his room.”

“Go, and I’ll make you regret it,” Jayden snapped, his tone hard as steel.

Elyse glared, her defiance unwavering. His bravado melted under her gaze.

She lay back down, pulled the covers over herself, and shut him out, drifting off almost instantly.

Jayden lingered at the edge of the bed, watching her until her breathing softened.

He closed the curtains, ignored her silent warning, and slipped into bed beside her.

Forget the invisible boundary or the cold floor. Tonight, he needed to be next to her. Her warmth, her presence—she was the only remedy for his worn-out nerves, the only peace he knew.

Soon, Jayden too fell into a deep, undisturbed sleep.

Their breathing aligned, a quiet rhythm filling the room. Elyse, half-conscious, felt a tug at her blanket and tried to pull it back, only to be drawn into his embrace.

For two people so fiercely guarded, sleep was the only moment they could truly let their walls fall, lying close with no pretense, no battles, only the quiet simplicity of shared warmth.

Meanwhile, Peyton, having heard about Elyse’s earlier brush with danger, made his way over, only to find the door locked.

A smirk played on his lips. Jayden had actually locked the door. It could only mean...

Peyton chuckled to himself, entertained by the thought. Perfect. They were holed up in there, just the two of them—no one else to interfere. If they wanted to reignite their passion, that was their business, as long as they left him out of it.

Chapter 1188:

Shaking his head with a wry grin, Peyton turned and headed back downstairs, his expression composed and calm.

After all, with Elyse safely out of reach, he might as well pay a visit to the other leading lady of tonight's misadventure. He'd heard Amanda had not only failed in her mission but managed to knock herself out in the process.

Now that was worth a laugh, and Peyton wasn't about to miss the comedy.

Upon Peyton's arrival at the ward, he noticed several patients asleep alongside Amanda.

Performing his medical responsibilities, he checked each patient. He verified that all exhibited external injuries before approaching Amanda.

Amanda was stretched out on the bed, her eyes sealed shut.

Peyton retrieved her medical chart from beside her bed and read through it. The chart indicated a blow to the back of her head.

Carefully, Peyton probed the pronounced bump on Amanda's head, confirming its substantial size. With a hint of humor, he remarked, "Wow! That was quite a blow. Impossible to miss."

Releasing the bump, Peyton quipped, "So much for your haughtiness, eh? Looking down on battlefield doctors who brave one war zone after another."

Amanda remained unaware as Peyton whispered mocking words right beside her, completely unnoticed.

After hurling a few more insults at Amanda, Peyton walked away to seek entertainment elsewhere, paying her no mind.

By nine o'clock that evening, Amanda groggily awoke.

Attempting to sit up, she was halted by a sharp pain in her head. Bracing herself against the bed, she managed to rise.

Observing her surroundings, she realized she was in the base's medical ward. She reached back and felt a significant bump.

"Ouch! That's a serious bump."

Amanda winced at the sharp pang of pain.

Just then, a man sporting a buzz cut entered. Noticing Amanda was conscious, he quickly approached and inquired, "Amanda, you're finally awake. How do you feel?"

Amanda voiced her discomfort. "It hurts a lot. There's a huge lump on my head. I'm scared to even move." Suddenly recalling, she questioned, "Where's Jayden? And Elyse, where could she be? Hardy, do you know? Tell me!"

Hardy Meyer, rubbing his prickly short hair, replied, "I heard they both returned to their room and haven't left since, not even for dinner. By the way, are you hungry? I kept some rations for you. I can fetch them if you want."

"I'm not in the mood to eat." Amanda felt her heart sink upon hearing that.

How could Jayden stay in a room with Elyse? Wasn't he aware of her feelings? How could he be so inconsiderate of her emotions?

With this thought, Amanda experienced a heartache and, with a pained look, expressed, "Hardy, you just don't get it. Seeing the person you care about with someone else is excruciating. It's painful even to breathe."

Hardy looked troubled. "But Jayden never said he had feelings for you, did he? He's always pushed you away, right? Maybe it's time to look elsewhere. I think Elyse is even prettier."

Amanda's expression darkened instantly.

Staring angrily at Hardy, Amanda retorted, "You think Elyse is better than me and more appropriate for Jayden? Are you really my friend? How can you say that to me?"

Hardy exhaled deeply. “But it’s the reality. Everyone believes you’re not suited for Jayden. With Elyse around, they see her as a better fit for him.”

Chapter 1189:

Amanda pressed, “Why? How can everyone think that?”

Hardy seemed perplexed and struggled to find the words. After a pause, he offered, “Because Elyse is considered more beautiful than you.”

Amanda felt as though she was being strangled by her own words, nearly suffering an emotional breakdown from the distress.

Doubtful, she countered, “What makes her more beautiful than me? Are you blind?”

“No, it’s just the plain truth. Everyone can see who’s more appealing,” said Hardy.

Amanda was tempted to continue scolding Hardy, but a suspicion halted her. Carefully, she queried, “Don’t tell me you’ve developed feelings for Elyse.”

With a frown, Hardy answered, “I’m not attracted to her. I just think she is more attractive than you. Plus, you’re being overly aggressive towards her. She just arrived today. Why are you behaving like this?”

“Enough!” Amanda interjected, irritated. “And you claim you don’t like Elyse? It seems like you do, defending her the way you are.”

Realizing his words were futile, Hardy sighed. “If that’s your belief, there’s nothing I can do to change it. I just wanted to caution you not to cross any lines. We’re here to fight, not to pursue romantic interests.”

Raising her eyebrow, Amanda responded, “Jayden is very charming, and it’s natural that I was attracted to him immediately. Plus, I’m not allowing it to interfere with my duties, so could you please stop lecturing me?”

Hardy appeared visibly shocked, his eyes wide as he blurted out, “Didn’t you just get yourself in trouble not too long ago? How can you even have the nerve to bring that up? If Jayden hadn’t intervened, you’d be dead right now, with no chance to stand here and talk to me.”

Annoyed, Amanda fired back, “How could you say that about me? I just made a miscalculation about my rival-in-love, that’s all. Besides, I’m here, aren’t I? And since Jayden saved me, I want to repay him.”

Hardy scoffed dismissively, “Repay him? More like taking advantage of his kindness. Jayden has turned you down so many times, yet you keep insisting. Frankly, it’s embarrassing to even show up around him because of you.”

Amanda didn’t have any true mercenary experience. Hardy had only brought her along because Jayden’s payment was generous. Earning for two sounded better than working alone.

But Hardy hadn’t expected Amanda to be so reckless. She charged into combat without paying attention to the commander’s instructions, almost getting everyone killed. He decided he wouldn’t bring her again. What if she got him killed?

Amanda, seeming distracted, suddenly asked, “Hardy, are you interested in Elyse?”

Hardy frowned and replied, “No. I just think she is a better person than you.”

Gritting her teeth, Amanda said, “If you don’t have a crush on her, then why would you say that? You must have a thing for her.”

Hardy rolled his eyes, wondering how he hadn’t noticed Amanda’s paranoia before.

Amanda grinned slyly and suggested, “Why don’t I help you get closer to that woman? You could get to know each other better, and she might understand how you feel.”

A seasoned mercenary, Hardy was usually calm, but today Amanda was pushing him to his limit.

Clenching his fists, he snapped, “I told you I’m not interested in her. And if you’re plotting something or have any ulterior motives, then consider our friendship over.”

With that, he turned away, taking the meal he'd brought with him. In his view, Amanda had too much time and too little responsibility, dreaming up these absurd ideas.

As he walked off, Amanda scowled and muttered, "Why are you so angry? I was just trying to help. It's as if you think I'm against you."

In her mind, Hardy was interested in Elyse, and as his friend, she wanted to help him pursue love.

Chapter 1190:

The next morning, Jayden went to the cafeteria to grab breakfast.

Amanda was there early, waiting. But when she saw Jayden carrying two breakfast trays, she felt a rush of irritation.

Approaching him with a bright smile, she said, "Jayden, getting breakfast too? What a coincidence! Want to eat together?"

Jayden's expression darkened at the sight of her. "Nah, I'm taking this back to my room."

Unbothered, Amanda persisted, "Is that other tray for Elyse? Why do you have to bring her breakfast? Can't she come here herself?"

Jayden gave her a cold look. "Who are you to judge her?" And with that, he turned and left without another word.

Amanda stood there, stunned by his response.

"Imagine being shameless enough to hang around after the actual girlfriend shows up. Some people just lack any self-respect."

Hearing someone sneering behind her, Amanda turned to see a few men sitting nearby, watching her with mocking expressions.

She recognized them—they'd been on her last mission. Apparently, they still held a grudge. How narrow-minded could they be? It wasn't like anyone actually died because of her!

Amanda walked over, her gaze icy. "What was that? 'Actual girlfriend'? Did Jayden say it himself? Has he ever confirmed that? If not, then you're just here making baseless assumptions. If you're all so eager to gossip, maybe you should quit your job."

Fuming, the men stood up and surrounded her, their faces tense with anger.

Amanda, ever arrogant, didn't flinch, even when faced with confrontation.

She crossed her arms and sneered, "I'll say it again. If you don't understand, maybe you don't need ears at all."

As soon as she finished speaking, one of the men threw a punch. Only then did Amanda feel a pang of fear.

But the blow never reached her—Hardy had stepped in, blocking the attack.

Hardy pulled Amanda aside, his gaze steely as he addressed the other men. "Do me a favor. Let her go—just this once."

The one who had thrown the punch sneered, "Who is she to you? Why are you so protective of her? Don't you see how clueless she is?"

Hardy glanced back at Amanda, letting out a weary sigh. "I know. But I owe her one favor. I can't just stand by and ignore her."

Someone nearby piped up, "Forget it. Let's cut Hardy some slack. But mark my words, Hardy—teach her a lesson. If she crosses us again, she's fair game."

"Appreciate it. Drinks are on me next time." Hardy nodded, showing a flicker of gratitude.

Once they'd left, Hardy turned to Amanda, his expression darkening like a storm about to break.

He scowled, “Do you have to stir up trouble everywhere you go? Are you only content once someone’s finally had enough of you?”

Amanda shot back, her voice defiant, “They started it! I’m the one who got hurt here.”

Hardy let out a dry, sarcastic laugh. “Oh, I saw. Chasing after Jayden like that. They mocked you because of that little stunt. If you hadn’t done it, they wouldn’t have had a reason.”

Amanda’s face tightened. “Whose side are you on, anyway? Or have you forgotten your promise to my brother to look out for me?”

Raising an eyebrow, Hardy’s tone took on a pointed edge. “A promise to look out for you isn’t a contract to be your lifelong babysitter.”

Annoyance flickered across Amanda’s face. “Supporting me isn’t babysitting! You’re the one turning this into an insult.”