

## **Bound love 1401**

Chapter 1401:

He went to Shaun's room, which he had never visited before. After all, Shaun didn't remember him or their past. What was the point of his visiting?

Peering through the glass panel in the door, he spotted Shaun sitting on the bed, fully absorbed in a video game. Shaun's bodyguard sat beside him, equally focused on the screen.

Finally, Lowell knocked on the door. The bodyguard got up, glancing warily toward the door.

"Who is it? It's late! Are you guys trying to check on me every five minutes?" Shaun asked impatiently.

When the door opened, Lowell stepped inside and let his gaze fall on Shaun.

"Shaun, you never used to play video games."

"What?" The comment made Shaun pause, and he turned toward Lowell, frowning. The distraction cost him the game, and his annoyance flared.

"Who the hell are you? Do you realize you just made me lose?" he snapped, glaring.

Lowell ignored the hostility.

"It's me, Lowell Ruiz. You used to treat me like your little brother."

Shaun squinted at him, confused. After a moment, he asked,

"Like a little brother? Why would I do that?"

Lowell gave a faint smile.

“Our families have been close for years. You used to look after me when I was a kid.”

Shaun’s patience was thin.

“Look, just get to the point. I don’t remember you. And I don’t have time for small talk.”

Lowell hesitated before speaking.

“My sister, Dolores... You were childhood sweethearts. She was in a car accident. She’s awake now, and she’s asking for you.”

Shaun’s brows furrowed in confusion.

“Why me? Shouldn’t she be asking for her parents? What makes her think seeing me will fix anything?”

Lowell’s voice softened.

“She cares about you deeply. Seeing you would mean a lot to her.”

Shaun gave a bitter laugh.

“Are you serious? Have you lost your mind?”

Lowell blinked, caught off guard by Shaun’s reaction.

Shaun leaned back, exasperated.

“Let me spell it out for you. I’m married. I will bring my wife home as soon as I leave here.”

Lowell froze.

“Married?” he repeated, stunned.

“Yeah, married. Shouldn’t you already know that? Didn’t I invite you to the wedding?” Shaun asked.

Lowell’s expression wavered, but he quickly nodded, covering his shock.

“Of course... I remember now. I was there.”

Chapter 1402:

“Exactly! So go tell your sister to move on. I never loved her. If I did, why would I marry someone else?”

Lowell’s lips parted, but no words came out. Finally, he managed to ask,

“But your wife...?”

Before he could finish, the bodyguard placed a firm hand on Lowell’s shoulder.

“Sir, don’t,” the bodyguard warned quietly.

Lowell looked at him, sensing the unspoken tension.

Shaun, meanwhile, frowned, clearly annoyed.

“What about my wife? Do you know where she is? Can you get her to visit me? I’ve been stuck here all this time, and she hasn’t even come to see me!”

Lowell’s expression was conflicted. After a moment, he replied softly,

“I don’t have her contact information. You’ll have to ask someone else.”

Shaun slumped against the pillow, his disappointment evident as he fumbled with his phone, clearly done with the conversation.

Despite his efforts falling flat, Lowell wouldn't back down.

"Shaun, would you join me to visit my sister? She's really looking forward to seeing you."

Ignoring Lowell, Shaun stared blankly ahead. Lowell stood quietly, his presence persistent as he waited for a response.

Ten minutes dragged on. The silence grew heavy until Shaun finally cracked, flinging his phone aside in frustration.

"What's with you? Why this obsession with me visiting your sister?"

Lowell, although pained by Shaun's irritation, was driven by a need to fulfill his sister's wishes—a promise he had kept since childhood.

"It's just a quick visit. You see her, and we're out. That's all."

"Fine, a quick visit," Shaun grumbled, his annoyance palpable. He swung his legs off the bed, snatched the coat from the bodyguard, and strode out with brisk pace.

Lowell kept up, leading the way to his sister's hospital ward.

Dolores was a study in patience, lying in her hospital bed, her eyes flickering with the ghost of mobility.

If she had the strength, she would have ventured out to find Shaun herself.

The moment the door creaked open, anticipation lit up her face. Shaun entered, his features carved in stern lines.

Dolores, overcome with joy at the sight of him, tried to speak, her voice stifled by the oxygen mask.

Quick to ease her discomfort, Lowell removed the mask gently.

“Shaun... you’re here. I’ve missed you terribly,” Dolores murmured, her voice trembling as tears gathered in her eyes.

Shaun’s face remained unreadable, his words sharp.

“You look awful.”

“Crying just makes it worse.”

Stunned, Dolores stared at him, her heart sinking.

Lowell quickly stepped in.

Chapter 1403:

“She was in an accident and only woke up today. She’s still healing, Shaun. It’s expected she won’t look her best.”

Hearing those words cut deep, and Dolores, wounded, demanded,

“What do I look like now? Am I that ugly? Give me a mirror!”

Shaun, visibly annoyed by the outburst, rolled his eyes and said to Lowell,

“You told me to just take a look, and I did. I’m out of here.”

Dolores’s heart sank further at Shaun’s indifference.

“Shaun, why are you so cold? Don’t you care about me at all?”

Shaun retorted with a hint of frustration,

“Why should I care? We were just childhood playmates. Just because you have feelings doesn’t mean they’re returned.”

He added firmly,

“Plus, I’m married now. Please, let’s just respect that.”

“We were more than that! We dated back then!” Dolores protested, raising her voice.

“And if that was true, why did it end?” Shaun asked, his patience wearing thin.

Dolores faltered, the words catching in her throat. The truth was harsh; she had been the one to betray him first.

Memories of Shaun’s wedding came flooding back, a wedding she had tried to stop, driven by her inability to let him go.

Silence fell heavily in the room.

Shaun, eager to escape the awkward confrontation, moved toward the door but paused to make one last point clear.

“We should avoid seeing each other. I’m married, and any interaction with you is just going to upset my wife.”

“You’re married?” Dolores whispered, her voice trailing off.

Lowell quickly placed the oxygen mask back on Dolores, cutting off her response.

Ignoring her confused expression, he turned to Shaun.

“Thanks for coming by, Shaun. You should head to your ward now. It’s late, and stop playing games all night.”

“Humph, mind your own business,” Shaun snapped, exiting briskly.

As the door clicked shut, Lowell faced Dolores, his voice soft yet stern.

“He has lost his memory. Confronting him won’t change anything.”

Once he removed the oxygen mask again, Dolores protested immediately,

“But he’s not married! Tracy jumped off a cliff and died. How could he be married?”

“People with amnesia create their own realities from what they hear,” Lowell explained patiently.

“It’s not unusual. And since nobody talks about Tracy’s death, Shaun probably thinks she’s still alive.”

Dolores’s face darkened with realization.

Chapter 1404:

“Am I really losing to someone who isn’t even here anymore?”

Lowell replied,

“If you want to win this, you’ve got to recover sooner. Staying here won’t help you win anything.”

Elyse returned home, quickly washed up, and slipped under her covers, craving the peace of sleep. As she was about to drift off, a notification lit up her phone—a new friend request.

Curious, she accepted it and typed, “Who’s this?”

The screen lit up with a reply.

“Victor Hayes.”

Elyse’s brow furrowed in thought, then she texted,

“Why befriend me?”

Back came Victor’s message, infused with warmth.

“Your grandma figured we ought to keep in touch, even if romance isn’t in the cards. Maybe hang out sometime? When’s good for you?”

Elyse bit her lip, a habit when conflicted, and texted back,

“I’m swamped with work.”

Adding another quick message, she wrote,

“Focus on your own life and just ignore my grandma’s advice.”

She placed her phone next to her pillow and closed her eyes, feeling an odd blend of irritation and amusement.

Her heart was still tangled in the remnants of a past love—wasn’t it too soon to think about someone new?

Her thoughts were interrupted by the buzz of her phone vibrating against the nightstand.

Victor was calling. She picked up, her voice tinged with surprise.

“Hey, something up?”



“There’s a cocktail party tomorrow night. A buddy of mine is hosting—it’s going to be a gathering of music buffs. You in?” Victor’s voice was hopeful.

Elyse hesitated, then asked,

“I play the violin—does your friend play too?”

“Why should musical genres divide us? Imagine a violin weaving through guitar chords. It’s about harmony, right?” Victor’s reply was persuasive.

Elyse almost smiled at that but remembered her schedule.

“I wish I could, but work’s got me tied up tomorrow.”

“Is it so hard to get you out?” Victor chuckled on the other end.

“I’m not usually this forward. Help me out here?”

There was a pause, then Elyse sighed.

“I’m really busy. But thanks for the invite.”

Chapter 1405:

“Tell you what, I’ll swing by after your shift. It’s casual, no fuss. See you then!” Before she could decline again, Victor had hung up. Elyse stared at her phone, dumbfounded. How had she gone from a no to him making plans for her?

Her reverie was broken by three sharp knocks. Jayden walked in without waiting for a reply.

Elyse’s expression soured.

“Why are you here? I asked you not to just walk in. Please, leave.”

Jayden glanced towards the bed, his voice softening.

“I’m feeling really low today. Can I stay here tonight? Just to share the bed.”

Elyse stood her ground.

“Jayden, we’re not there yet. I’m open to sorting things out, but it takes two.”

He didn’t seem to hear her, simply lying down and pulling her gently towards him.

“It’s different when you’re here. I just can’t sleep alone.” In the weeks since they’d been sleeping apart, Jayden had discovered he could only find rest by her side, a confession he hadn’t quite made until now.

After resisting for days, he finally reached his limit and approached her without any pretense.

“Honey, I can’t sleep without you. Please let me stay,” he implored, using a line he borrowed from Peyton, hoping it might touch Elyse’s heart.

Elyse felt a stir of emotion, but it wasn’t enough to change her mind. She pushed him gently but firmly, her tone laced with irritation.

“No way. If I let you stay, you’ll start getting handsy. I’m not up for that.”

Jayden met her eyes, his expression earnest.

“I promise, I won’t do that tonight.”

“And what if you break that promise?” Elyse challenged.

“Please trust me this time,” Jayden responded sincerely.

Elyse paused, considering his plea, and finally nodded her assent. As they lay side by side, Jayden wrapped an arm around Elyse, and both settled into the silence.

Remembering her conversation earlier, Elyse broke the silence.

“If I get off work early tomorrow, Pearce’s friend invited me to a music party. It sounds interesting.”

Jayden mulled over her words, then agreed.

“Okay. If you go, I’ll come and pick you up.”

Elyse murmured a thanks and tried to settle into sleep.

But just as she was about to let sleep take her, the steady rhythm of Jayden’s breathing caught her ear.

Turning to look at him, she saw he was already deep in sleep. She whispered to herself, bemused,

“No wonder he could make that promise so easily. He really was exhausted.”

Chapter 1406:

Elyse woke up and wandered into the living room, where she found Jayden shouting into the phone.

“Why are you calling me? Call your parents!” he yelled, his anger barely contained.

Elyse listened intently to the voice on the other end and recognized it was Shaun.

“You’re perfectly capable of booking your own hotel room!” Jayden’s voice escalated. “Why do you need to move in with us? Are you after my wife or something?”

Elyse was in the middle of a sip of water when she heard this, causing her to choke.

Jayden rubbed his temples in frustration as he listened to Shaun’s response.

“I’m already going out of my way to help you,” he retorted. “Don’t depend on us. We weren’t even close before you lost your memory!”

With that, he hung up.

Elyse dabbed her mouth with a tissue as she looked at Jayden with a confused expression.

“What on earth has gotten into Shaun?” she asked.

“He must have seen Dolores and Lowell at the hospital yesterday. Apparently, it didn’t go well,” Jayden sighed. “He thinks the hospital is full of lunatics and wants to be discharged to escape them.”

“Doesn’t he remember Dolores or Lowell?” Elyse asked, surprised.

“Nope. He even insulted Dolores,” Jayden responded.

“That’s strange,” Elyse murmured, her expression thoughtful.

They chatted briefly, then grabbed breakfast before heading to their respective workplaces.

After reaching the TV station, Elyse unexpectedly encountered Nick. He was also a guest on the show she was participating in.

They stared at each other in stunned silence.

Elyse quickly averted her gaze, attempting to keep her distance.

“What?” Nick scoffed. “Are you afraid to face me?”

“Why would I be?” Elyse retorted, looking annoyed.

“Are you still not going to admit that you played all those dirty tricks at the Swan Cup? How can someone be so shameless?” Nick sneered.

Elyse took a deep breath to maintain her composure. “You say I cheated. Where’s the proof?” she countered confidently. “You claim you were an eyewitness, but I never saw you during the competition.”

“Of course, you didn’t see me. You knocked me out of the competition early,” Nick shot back, his gaze icy.

Elyse frowned. She was about to respond when Nick turned and walked away.

Chloe, observing the exchange, looked concerned. “Do you think he’ll try to smear your name?” she asked Elyse.

Elyse sighed. “I don’t know,” she responded. “He’s accusing me of cheating, but he has no proof. He’s just playing the victim.”

“This is a crucial time for your career,” Chloe said worriedly. “He seems like he’d exaggerate just to gain fame.”

“Hopefully, he won’t,” Elyse replied, though doubt flickered across her face.

Chapter 1407:

As the show commenced, Nick disregarded the other guests and started a melodramatic rant about his perceived unfair treatment at the Swan Cup.

Elyse maintained a composed demeanor, responding with a polite smile instead of engaging.

Nick seized the moment to point at her, suggesting that she was to blame for his early elimination from the competition.

“When you won first place, did you ever consider that some of us who got sabotaged might have been threats to your title?” he accused.

All eyes turned to Elyse.

Although she typically avoided such confrontations, Elyse recognized that dodging the issue could exacerbate it. So, she chose to confront the accusation directly.

“Regardless of the competition, I was destined to be the Swan Cup champion,” she said calmly.

“That’s quite arrogant,” Nick retorted with a sneer.

“It’s not arrogance, Nick, it’s confidence. And I have the skills to back it up,” Elyse responded, meeting his gaze firmly. “If you think you can beat me, why not settle this with a competition on the show?” she suggested in a challenging tone.

Nick clenched his jaw, remaining silent.

Just then, the host intervened to defuse the tension. “While I appreciate the enthusiasm for a friendly competition, it’s not on our agenda for tonight,” he said with a smile. “Let’s take a deep breath and move on to the next segment.”

While the impromptu challenge was tabled, Nick’s popularity soared following the show’s broadcast. Meanwhile, the suspicions and criticisms surrounding Elyse intensified.

In the car, Chloe sighed as she scrolled through her phone. “See? I told you. He just wanted to sling mud, defame you, and boost his image. Classic tactic,” she said, disgruntled.

Elyse sat silently, her eyes closed.

“Look,” Chloe pressed on, her voice tinged with irritation. “People are saying you didn’t deserve to win and that Nick should have been the winner.”

Elyse flashed a reassuring smile and said, “Don’t sweat it. This storm will pass sooner or later.”

Chloe, her fingers drumming an impatient rhythm on her phone screen, finally snapped and shoved it into her bag. “I’m furious! Nick’s treating you like some rung on his ladder to fame!”

Elyse chuckled, a sound as light as the tinkling of wind chimes. “Don’t let it get under your skin. Weren’t you the one who told me this industry is a dog-eat-dog world? Climbing over others is just part of the game.”

“But your talent blows his out of the water! How can those clueless people turn a blind eye and claim he’s better than you?” Chloe’s voice rose, brimming with indignation.

Elyse gave Chloe’s back a gentle pat, like one might soothe a fretful child. “Easy there. Let them talk. If all goes well, I’ll face Nick directly on the show—and I’ll prove my worth through music, not words.”

Chloe took a deep breath, visibly calmer, as Elyse exited the car and strode toward the TV station.

Once fully prepped, Elyse stood backstage, her nerves steady as steel. Celeste, her arms crossed like a barricade, sauntered over and broke the silence. “How long do you think you can cling to that top spot of yours?”

Chapter 1408:

Elyse met her gaze, unflinching and sharp as a blade. “I hate to disappoint you, but I don’t plan on stepping down anytime soon. Once I take the throne, I keep it. If you and your protégé Nick are scheming to drag me down, you’re in for a rude awakening.”

Celeste’s lips curled in a sneer, but her eyes betrayed a flicker of unease. “What did Cody fill your head with? You’re shameless! A blight on the music industry.”

Elyse shrugged, her tone calm yet cutting. “You’re entitled to your opinion, but opinions aren’t facts. Call me what you like; it won’t change who I am.”

She turned away, her voice laced with a subtle challenge. “By the way, let’s hope today’s scoring is fair—unlike last time when you conveniently chose not to cast your vote.”

Celeste let out a derisive laugh, the sound echoing like nails on a chalkboard. “Fair? You think someone like you deserves fairness?”

“Fairness isn’t about me,” Elyse countered smoothly. “It’s about you doing your job without bias. If you can’t manage that, it’s not me who’s the disgrace here.”

For a moment, Celeste seemed at a loss, her scorn momentarily eclipsed by shock. But then she laughed again, this time with an edge of incredulity. “You’ve got your father’s gall, I’ll give you that. Infuriating runs in the family.”

Elyse smirked. “Well, I didn’t get it from nowhere. Like father, like daughter, as they say.”

Celeste’s sneer deepened. “Fine. Then I’ll make sure to highlight every single flaw in your performance.”

“Feel free,” Elyse replied, her calm demeanor striking like a cold slap.

Celeste huffed and stalked off, her frustration palpable. Elyse watched her retreat, unshaken. Celeste’s animosity was as blatant as a billboard, but Elyse refused to let it rattle her. No one would push her around.

Half an hour later, the moment arrived. Elyse stepped onto the stage, her confidence radiating as she exchanged a charged glance with Nick.

The host, ever dramatic, addressed the audience. “Ladies and gentlemen, the tension is so thick you could cut it with a knife! This promises to be a showdown to remember. The rules remain the same as the last round. Who will press the button to select the competition piece?”

Elyse turned to Nick, her tone neutral but firm. “You go ahead.”

Without hesitation, Nick approached the machine and hit the button. The screen spun like a roulette wheel before settling on the chosen piece.

The host announced with gusto, “The selection is ‘The Second Waltz’! Get ready for an electrifying duel!”

Elyse raised an eyebrow at Nick. “Do you want to go first, or shall I?”



“Let’s settle it with rock-paper-scissors,” Nick proposed.

A quick game later, Elyse emerged the winner and stepped forward to perform first.

To Elyse, the piece was no mere waltz; it was a masquerade of emotions, a raucous celebration teetering on the edge of chaos. Beneath its lively surface lay an undercurrent of melancholy, a forewarning of joy’s fleeting nature.

This duality became the heartbeat of her interpretation.

As she played, the audience was swept away by the ebb and flow of her music, except for Celeste, whose hawk-like gaze scanned for flaws. But try as she might, she found nothing to criticize.

The piece Elyse was performing presented a variety of technical challenges that only a truly skilled musician could navigate effectively. When the final note faded, Celeste’s search proved fruitless. Elyse’s performance had been flawless, leaving Celeste simmering with frustration.

Chapter 1409:

Nick’s turn came next.

He stepped up, delivering a performance that was technically strong, yet riddled with flaws that Celeste’s trained ears picked up instantly. Her irritation deepened.

With both performances complete, the moment for scoring arrived. Celeste, her expression as sour as unripe fruit, filled in her scores, her frustration barely concealed.

Celeste’s face was a portrait of inner conflict as she evaluated the two contestants, torn between her personal feelings and Elyse’s undeniable talent.

Despite wanting to give Elyse a lower score, she had to acknowledge her flawless performance and give credit where credit was due. On the other hand, Nick’s mistakes were glaring, and she couldn’t, in good conscience, reward subpar performance.

As she deliberated on whether to abstain from voting, she couldn't shake off the memory of her conversation with Elyse backstage.

Sighing, she realized that Elyse had put her in a tight spot.

After much internal struggle, Celeste finally made her decision and wrote down her scores.

As the tension mounted and the final results hung in the air, Nick couldn't help but ask Elyse, "Do you believe victory is within your grasp?"

With unwavering confidence, Elyse replied, "Of course, I won't lose."

Nick's expression turned stern, his eyes narrowing with a mix of disbelief and disdain. "It's incomprehensible to me how someone who resorts to underhanded tactics to achieve victory can exude such unwavering confidence."

With a gentle smile, Elyse shot back, her words infused with conviction. "I want to make one final statement. I did not cheat. I earned that first-place spot through my hard work and merit alone."

Nick's skepticism was palpable. "I've heard it all before, and yet, you continue to make these empty claims without so much as a shred of evidence to back them up."

Elyse gazed directly at Celeste. "If my mark surpasses yours," she declared, her voice imbued with conviction, "it will be a testament to the unyielding dedication and unbridled talent that has driven me to stand atop that competition."

With a gentle chuckle, Nick's lips curled into a subtle smile, and he fell silent.

The minutes ticked by, and the scores were finally announced.

The host's excitement was palpable as he exclaimed, "This is quite the unexpected turn of events! Do you think you scored as many points as you hoped?"

Elyse shook her head, her expression unreadable. "I couldn't even begin to guess," she replied.

Nick nodded in agreement. “Neither can I. Just get on with it, please.”

The host obliged, his eyes shining with enthusiasm. “Let’s congratulate Elyse on taking first place!” he declared, and the audience erupted into applause.

Elyse’s smile was serene, her clapping measured, while Nick stood frozen, his face a mask of confusion.

Elyse glanced at Celeste, who wore an enigmatic expression. This time, Celeste had judged fairly.

She turned back to the host, her voice clear and calm. “May I have the microphone to say a few words?”

The host handed it over, assuming Elyse wanted to deliver a victory speech.

Chapter 1410:

Elyse addressed the audience with a radiant smile. “I’d like to address a recent misunderstanding,” she began. “It’s been said that I won the Swan Cup through cheating. But that’s not true. I earned my place through every round of competition.”

She turned her gaze to Nick and added, “I took the liberty of having someone look into the incident that befell you. At the onset of the Swan Cup, there was a deplorable display of misconduct during the competition. Tragically, Nick, you were unfairly confined in a lounge and missed your designated match. The individual responsible for these dishonorable actions was swiftly apprehended by law enforcement following the competition and is now serving time in prison. Despite your unwavering belief that I played a part in this deception, let me be clear—it was not me.”

Nick’s calm facade shattered in an instant as he exclaimed, “It must have been you! You’re the one responsible for deliberately obstructing me from my match. Had you not intervened, I wouldn’t have been eliminated in the preliminaries.”

Elyse inquired, “From whom did you hear that it was me?”

Nick's voice trembled on the brink of tears as he spoke, his words a painful confession. "It was a fellow contestant who told me. She found me sobbing in the stairwell, and with compassion in her voice, she shared what she had seen—your manipulative behavior. But despite her bravery, her report fell on deaf ears, as your mentor, Cody Tucker, seemed to deliberately turn a blind eye."

Elyse's brow furrowed in curiosity, and she probed further. "Do you know the identity of that female contestant?"

Nick's eyes narrowed as he sought to recall the details. After a moment of quiet reflection, he shook his head. "I don't know her name, but I do know that she managed to make it through the Comeback Competition and emerged victorious."

Elyse turned to Chloe, who was guarding backstage, and requested her phone. With a swift gesture, she retrieved a photo and presented it to Nick, inquiring softly, "Is this her? Geraldine Lawson? She succeeded in the Comeback Competition."

As Geraldine's photo displayed on Elyse's phone screen, Nick's expression turned resolute, and he shook his head with swift decisiveness. "It's not her."

With Geraldine eliminated, only one contestant remained standing as the ultimate culprit.

Elyse's eyes sparkled as she handed Nick another photograph. "Is this her?"

Nick's eyes landed on Fiona's photo, a warm recollection flashing in his mind. "Yes, it was her," he confirmed. "She was a kind soul, and I recall our encounter vividly."

Tears formed in Nick's eyes as he expressed his thanks. "I was devastated after being disqualified. She was the only one who comforted me, staying by my side until I began to recover."

Nick asked, "What's her name? After I was disqualified, I just wanted to disappear. I wasn't really paying attention to anything else."

A complex array of emotions played across Elyse's face. "You spoke with her for so long and she never mentioned her name?"

Nick shook his head. "No, I was too distraught. It didn't even occur to me."

Elyse looked at him with pity. “Her name is Fiona Evans. She was the architect of the chaos at the competition. She has been arrested.”

Nick stood frozen, processing the information. “You mean the girl who consoled me is the one responsible for my disqualification?”

Elyse gave a solemn nod. “During her interrogation, she admitted to sabotaging other strong competitors to boost her own chances. She was determined to win by any means.”