

Bound love 1661

Chapter 1661:

Elyse set her teacup down and gave Anthony a curious glance.

After a slight pause, Anthony scratched the back of his head, looking a little sheepish. “The violin will take a few days to fix... and Cathy’s birthday is coming up soon. I was wondering if you could...”

Elyse, her confusion clear, tilted her head. “What’s your plan for her birthday?”

Jayden quickly put the pieces together and asked, “You want Elyse to play the violin, don’t you?”

Anthony nodded timidly, his gaze lowered. “Yes.”

Elyse, smiling, replied with ease, “You could’ve just asked. It’s no big deal. I’d be happy to help.”

Anthony hesitated for a moment before speaking again. “I was hoping you could play a few more pieces for her. But I’m afraid I don’t have much to offer in return.”

Elyse feigned a look of mock annoyance. “What are you talking about? We’re friends. If playing a few extra pieces would bring you joy, I’d play for hours just to see you two happy.”

Blushing, Anthony stammered, “It’s just... you’re so famous now. It feels odd asking you to do something for free.”

Jayden, ever the problem solver, suggested, “If it really makes you uncomfortable, you could just make her a violin as a token of appreciation.”

Elyse agreed, smiling. “Yes, that sounds perfect.”

Anthony brightened at the suggestion, then shyly added, “I’m actually learning to make violins myself. I’ll give you one that I’ve crafted. I hope you’ll like it.”

Elyse laughed, patting Anthony on the shoulder in a playful yet comforting way. “I’ll cherish it.”

Elyse, Jayden, and Anthony were deep in conversation, their laughter filling the room. When George stepped out, their infectious energy caught him off guard. It was so uplifting that it coaxed a rare smile onto his usually stoic face.

He approached with his usual composed demeanor. “The violin’s repaired,” he said evenly, “but it’ll take about a week.”

Elyse glanced at Jayden. “Would it be okay for us to stay that long?”

“Of course,” Jayden said without hesitation.

George gave a short nod, turning back to Elyse. “Since you’re already here, why don’t we pick up where we left off? I’ll finish the story I was telling you.”

Elyse blinked, caught off guard. “You mean the story about my parents and how they got together, right?”

George nodded and eased into a chair. After a thoughtful pause, he said, “Last time, I didn’t really get into how they actually came together, did I?”

“That’s right.” Elyse leaned forward. “You mentioned how, after my dad left my mom, he went a little wild—living recklessly. But no one really loved his soul.”

“Exactly.” George’s expression grew somber. “He figured that out eventually, and it pushed him into a dark place. That’s when he met a young girl named Rebecca.”

Chapter 1662:

Elyse’s eyes widened. “Rebecca? Wait, isn’t she…”

“Yes, she’s the one who turned your dad’s life upside down,” George said steadily. “Back then, she was innocent, untouched by life’s hardships. Your dad looked after her like a little sister. But eventually, her family found her and took her back. With nothing else to focus on, your dad slipped back into his old ways.”

Elyse’s expression shifted, a storm of emotions flickering across her face. “And then?” she asked quietly.

George sighed. “That’s when things got worse. He spiraled—smoking, drinking, even gambling.”

Her eyes widened in disbelief. “Gambling? Are you serious?” Anger surged through her, and she slammed her hand against the table as she shot to her feet. “How could he even think of that? That’s completely unacceptable!”

Jayden and Anthony both stepped in, their voices calm as they tried to ease her anger.

“It’s all in the past,” Jayden said gently. “You weren’t even born then, so don’t stress about it.”

George chuckled. “You’ve got your mom’s temper, no doubt about it.”

Elyse froze, caught off guard. People always talked about her dad, but her mom? Almost never. Even Lanny and Glenda had struggled to describe Jazmine whenever they spoke of her. It hit Elyse then—no one around her really knew Jazmine.

From the stories she’d heard, she had always been able to picture Rickey—his charm, his recklessness, his undeniable presence. But her mom? She remained a mystery, a blank space Elyse couldn’t quite fill.

George noticed her thoughtful expression. “You don’t know much about your mom, do you?”

Elyse shifted uncomfortably. “Not really. People rarely mention her. It’s always about my dad.”

George nodded thoughtfully. “Your mom couldn’t match your dad in the eyes of the world. He was wealthy, talented, always mingling with famous people from every walk of life. Your mom, though—she came from a simple background.”

Elyse paused, absorbing the thought. “Yeah, that’s true.”

“But only someone like her could keep him grounded,” George said with conviction. “Do you know how they ended up getting back together?” he asked abruptly.

Elyse blinked, momentarily stunned. “Wait—did my dad go back to find her?”

“No,” George replied, a nostalgic smile tugging at his lips. “It was your mom who went looking for him. Somehow, she tracked him down and flew all the way to our little town.”

Her jaw dropped. “My mom made the first move?”

He chuckled. “She sure did. Spent the entire day searching for him.”

George’s expression darkened slightly. “She finally found him in a dingy, cramped gambling den. The place reeked of stale smoke, with shadows clinging to every corner. Your dad hadn’t slept for over a day. He looked rough—bloodshot eyes, hair a mess, blending in with the gamblers like he belonged there.”

Chapter 1663:

Elyse’s concern deepened. “That sounds awful. What happened next?”

George’s mouth curved into a knowing grin. “Your mom gave him a beating.”

Elyse froze mid-thought. “Are you serious?”

George stroked his chin, a nostalgic chuckle rumbling deep in his chest. “Dead serious. Your mom chased your dad straight out of the gambling den, all the way to the downtown fountain. He was bawling, saying he lost his lunch money, begging her to stop hitting him.”

A whirlwind of emotions flickered across Elyse’s face before a smile took hold. “Well, my dad messed up. My mom had every right.”

“Oh, she wasn’t done with just roughing him up,” George said, shaking his head. “After she was through with him, she stormed right back inside and wrecked the gambling den.”

Elyse’s eyes widened as she sucked in a sharp breath. “Did she get hurt?”

“She was fine. But those poor gamblers—already running on no sleep and cheap coffee—got beaten up too. They swore off gambling right then and there,” George said with a hearty laugh.

Anthony chimed in, nodding along. “Yeah, I remember Rickey after that. He was a total mess. Huddled by the fountain, looking pitiful, begging me for tissues.”

Elyse’s brows furrowed. Just how unreliable was her dad?

George caught her expression and chuckled. “I bet you’re wondering how your mom ever ended up with a guy like your dad, huh?”

Elyse nodded slowly, a thoughtful look crossing her face. “Yeah, something like that.”

“Rickey told me the whole story,” George mused. “Your mom didn’t fly all the way out here to make up with him—no, she came just to rip into him, to call him a coward to his face. And once she got that off her chest, she was heading straight back home. She was done.”

Elyse’s mouth fell open. “She crossed an ocean just to rip into him?”

George nodded. “Oh yeah. They had a blowout that night. I could feel the fury in the air.”

Elyse looked down, her voice quieter. “So they didn’t get together because they were truly in love?”

Anthony hesitated, choosing his words carefully. “Not exactly. After your mom left for the airport, something hit Rickey like a freight train. He suddenly panicked, begged my friends and me to help him find a car so he could go after her. He was desperate.”

Jayden frowned. “What made him change his mind so fast? He seemed ready to just accept his fate.”

George took a sip of tea, his eyes twinkling. “Your mom,” he said simply, “Rickey had it easy his whole life. He’d never faced real hardship, and when life knocked him down, he didn’t know how to get back up—so he tried to escape from any difficult situations.”

Chapter 1664:

He set his cup down and smiled at Elyse. “But your mom? She had been getting knocked down her whole life. To her, setbacks weren’t the end of the world—just obstacles to push through. She had the kind of strength Rickey had never seen before.”

Elyse’s expression softened. “So my dad found the courage to stand back up because of my mom.”

“Exactly,” George said with a knowing nod. “She didn’t understand foreign languages, and that was her first time on an international flight. But she still made the trip just to confront him. And not for some grand romantic reunion—no, she came to rip into him and get her closure.”

Anthony let out a nostalgic chuckle. “That’s right. I remember that day clear as ever. My buddies and I helped Rickey borrow a car, and he tore off for the airport to win your mom back.”

Elyse, touched, asked, “Did she forgive him?”

Anthony scratched his head. “Not right away. The moment she realized he was there to win her back, she tackled him to the ground and started swinging. She was so busy pounding on him that she missed her flight.”

Elyse flinched before letting out a stiff chuckle. “Well, whatever the case, it worked. She stuck around. She gave my dad another shot.”

Jayden had been quietly taking in their exchange, saying nothing. Later that evening, back at the hotel, he remarked offhandedly, “You know, you’re a lot like your mom.”

Elyse, caught off guard, turned to him with a raised brow. “Oh? In what way?”

Jayden met her gaze with a knowing look. “When you hit me.”

Elyse's eye twitched. Without missing a beat, she seized a handful of his hair, her teeth clenched. "What absolute nonsense are you spouting? When have I ever laid a hand on you?"

Jayden winced. "Alright, alright, maybe you haven't hit me, but you do have a real knack for yanking my hair."

Elyse let go, folding her arms with a deadpan expression. "And that counts?"

Jayden smoothed his disheveled hair with a dramatic sigh. "Oh, it definitely counts."

Elyse exhaled and dropped onto the sofa, rubbing her temples. "When I first heard about my dad being framed by Rebecca and how much it wrecked him, I felt awful for him. But after hearing George's side of things... I don't know. I'm starting to see a less noble, more—spineless—side to my dad."

Jayden sat beside Elyse, wrapping her in a comforting hug. "People are complicated," he murmured. "I've heard so much about your dad that I almost feel like I know him. But this is the first time I'm hearing about your mom. Finding out she hit your dad... it made me realize something—you got your strength from her. That's where your resilience comes from."

Elyse's head snapped up, her red-rimmed eyes locking onto Jayden's. His words stirred something deep inside. Before she could second-guess herself, she threw herself into his arms, tears spilling freely.

Chapter 1665:

He held her close, his embrace warm and steady, mirroring the way she had once comforted him. His hand moved in slow, soothing circles on her back, silently letting her know he was there.

She sobbed until there was nothing left, until her breathing evened out. Jayden, a little flustered, grabbed a napkin and clumsily dabbed at her tears. "You know," he said, clearing his throat, "back at George's yard, when I heard them talking about your parents, I had a thought."

Elyse sniffled, swiping at her eyes. "What thought?"

He scratched his chin, looking thoughtful. “It felt like your parents left behind stories—pieces of themselves scattered like breadcrumbs, waiting to be discovered. And through all these ups and downs, we’re slowly uncovering them.” He shot her a lopsided smile. “I wouldn’t be surprised if there are more stories out there, just waiting for us to stumble upon them.”

She sat quietly, letting his words settle. Then, after a beat, she said softly, “That’s a beautiful way to put it.”

He hesitated before asking, “I want to go on this journey with you—to find those stories together. Will you let me?”

For a moment, she didn’t say anything. Then, without warning, she pulled him into a tight hug, knocking him back onto the bed before capturing his lips in a fierce, breath-stealing kiss.

It was fiery, almost overwhelming. Within seconds, he winced, sucking in a sharp breath as pain shot through him.

He gently cupped her face, his thumb brushing over her lips as he murmured, “I know you’re excited, but please—go easy on me. Biting really hurts.”

Elyse merely snorted, dismissing his words without a second thought. In that moment, all she wanted was to kiss him breathless.

Sensing her fiery enthusiasm, he knew resistance was futile. Since he couldn’t stop her from nipping at him, he decided to take control instead.

In one swift motion, he rolled over, shifting their positions until he was hovering above her. Caught off guard by the sudden change, Elyse barely had time to react before boldly declaring, “I must kiss you passionately.”

A slow, teasing smile curved Jayden’s lips as he replied, “Love is a two-way street. If you wish to kiss me with such passion, then it’s only fair I return the favor.”

Elyse blinked, curiosity flickering in her gaze. “What?”

He gently pinched her cheek. His voice was low and filled with promise as he murmured, “I’m going to make love to you so fiercely that you’ll feel just how much I adore you.”

“No, no! You promised to let me rest—I don’t want to!” Elyse gasped, her eyes widening in shock as she wriggled beneath him, trying to escape.

But would Jayden really let her escape now that she had willingly fallen into his arms?

Of course not. He had no intention of letting her slip away. Instead, he planned to savor every moment, holding her close as if she were the most precious thing in the world.

Chapter 1666:

Soon, Jayden made quick work of Elyse’s clothes, his movements effortless and precise. After all, he had dressed her that morning—he knew every clasp, every button, and exactly how to undo them. Realizing she was completely outmatched and had no chance of escaping, she huffed in frustration before sinking her teeth into his shoulder in defiance.

He didn’t resist—he simply let her vent her frustration, enduring the bite with quiet patience. Once her defiance waned, he gently ran his fingers over her skin, his touch soothing and full of warmth.

She gritted her teeth, her voice filled with stubborn defiance. “Skipping it just this once won’t kill you!”

His voice was low and coaxing as he murmured, “Relax, spread your legs. Once I’m finished, I promise you can sleep.” With that, his hands started to roam gently.

Elyse parted her lips to protest, but before she could utter a single word, Jayden silenced her with a deep, possessive kiss. His lips pressed firmly against hers, leaving no room for argument, his intentions unmistakable.

The next morning, the sharp ring of a phone shattered the quiet, pulling Jayden from the depths of sleep. Beside him, Elyse remained peacefully nestled in the sheets, her breathing soft and steady. Reaching for his phone, he squinted at the screen, expecting something mundane. But the moment his eyes landed on the message, his drowsiness vanished in an instant.

He sat up to take the call, the sudden movement stirring Elyse from her sleep. She blinked drowsily and murmured, “What’s wrong? You look like you just saw a ghost.”

Clutching his phone, Jayden hesitated before answering. “The bodyguard just told me—Shaun never came home last night. He only made it back around noon... and then collapsed.”

That jolted Elyse fully awake. The news hit like a cold splash of water, leaving her momentarily speechless. She didn’t even know where to start with her questions.

Jayden ran a hand through his hair, his frustration evident. “We still don’t know what happened. The doctor’s checking Shaun out now, but there aren’t any visible injuries.”

Elyse frowned, deep in thought. “So, he fainted from sheer shock? But what could’ve rattled him that badly?”

A beat of silence passed. Then, as if struck by the same realization, Jayden and Elyse locked eyes and spoke in unison. “Tracy!”

Elyse sat up, her brows furrowed with uncertainty. “Did Tracy shock Shaun so badly that he passed out? And did they meet?”

Jayden shook his head. “I’m not sure yet. My team just started investigating, so it’ll take some time to get answers. But if Tracy’s involved... Alas, what a rocky relationship.”

Elyse’s expression was a mix of concern and curiosity. “No one knows how this will turn out for them.”

Jayden leaned back. “We can’t predict the future, so there’s no point worrying too much. I’ll send more people to investigate and tighten Shaun’s security. At least until we get home, we can’t afford another night without knowing where he is.”

Chapter 1667:

Elyse nodded in agreement. Meanwhile, George mentioned that the violin would take a week to repair. Once it was ready, they could finally leave with it.

During this waiting period, Elyse spent time not only with Anthony and Cathy but also made regular visits to the ranch to see Linda and Ken. She developed a particular fondness for the bread they baked—the taste was simply incomparable. More than once, she worried that once she returned home, she'd never find bread of this caliber again.

While staying in town, Elyse also grew close to Cathy. Whenever Cathy finished work, the two would go shopping together, their laughter echoing through the streets. Their bond became so strong that even Jayden and Anthony felt a twinge of jealousy.

Before they knew it, the final day arrived—marking both Cathy's birthday and the moment Elyse received the newly repaired violin. Dressed elegantly, Elyse positioned herself in a quiet corner, waiting for Anthony's cue.

From her vantage point, she could see the bustling square where Cathy sat on the steps, waiting for Anthony. Tonight, Cathy looked particularly stunning. She had taken extra care with her appearance, applying lipstick and accentuating her lashes, making her even more captivating. Several young men in the crowd stole discreet glances at her.

Elyse smiled. "Cathy looks absolutely gorgeous tonight."

Jayden, without missing a beat, responded, "In my eyes, you're the most beautiful."

Elyse shot him a playful glance before asking, "Did you get the roses? You're the designated flower bearer tonight, so don't mess it up."

"Don't worry, I'll make sure they're both overjoyed," Jayden reassured her. Just then, he spotted Anthony sneaking up on Cathy and nudged Elyse. "It's starting. Are you ready?"

Elyse quickly turned her attention back to the scene.

Anthony approached, slightly awkward in his ill-fitting suit, carrying a speaker. The moment Cathy's lips curled into a smile, Anthony pressed a button, and lively music burst from the speaker.

Then, to everyone's surprise, he started to dance. His movements were clumsy yet filled with sincerity. At first, the onlookers chuckled, amused by his dance. But as they watched him give his all, their laughter turned into applause, touched by his earnest effort.

Amidst the lively atmosphere, Elyse quietly slipped forward, violin in hand, ready for her moment.

When Anthony's dance ended, he stopped in front of Cathy, his gaze locked onto hers, filled with deep affection. Cathy, caught off guard by his grand gesture, found herself both surprised and utterly charmed. She smiled at him, wondering what he had planned next.

Then, on cue, Elyse stepped beside them, positioned her violin, and began to play.

As the music surrounded them, Anthony's face flushed. He reached into his pocket, pulled out the gift he had carefully chosen, and, with unwavering determination, declared, "Happy birthday!"

Chapter 1668:

Cathy gasped in surprise, her initial laughter softening into a warm, affectionate smile. She reached out to steady him, overwhelmed by his sincerity.

Anthony pulled her into an embrace, his eyes glistening with emotion. In that moment, they looked like they were meant to be.

Just then, Jayden appeared, holding an enormous bouquet of roses—so grand it symbolized eternal love. He walked up to Anthony, presenting it with a knowing smirk.

Anthony's eyes widened at the sheer size of the bouquet. "How much did you go over my budget for these?" he asked, half in shock, half in disbelief.

Jayden simply patted his shoulder. "Consider it my treat."

Still speechless, Anthony took the massive bouquet and quickly turned back to Cathy, presenting it to her with a beaming smile. "Sweetheart, these are the roses I got for you. I hope you like them."

Cathy, touched by the gesture, burst into laughter at the sheer extravagance. Shaking her head, she said with a playful smile, “Thank you, but... I don’t think I can carry all of these.”

Anthony said, “I’ll take the bouquet.”

He shifted his stance, freeing a hand to clasp Cathy’s. Together, they walked toward the restaurant.

Elyse and Jayden, after finishing their task, decided to tag along to ensure everything went smoothly.

Elyse’s eyes widened when she saw the restaurant covered in roses. “I’ve never seen so many roses.”

“Did you sponsor all of this?” she asked, incredulous.

Jayden grinned. “Yeah, I snagged nearly every rose in town to help Anthony out.”

After a brief pause, Elyse said, “But it’s just Cathy’s birthday, not a proposal.”

Jayden, unusually thoughtful, shrugged. “Anthony will explain.”

Elyse giggled behind her hand. “You went overboard, didn’t you?”

Jayden’s tone turned serious. “I have my reasons.”

Elyse frowned, confused, then noticed the hint of a smile on his face.

“What’s so funny?” she asked.

“Nothing,” he said with a smirk, ruffling her hair. “Let’s go. They deserve some alone time.”

Elyse nodded briskly and followed him through the door.

Their flight home was scheduled for 1 AM. They had just enough time to grab a proper meal and say their goodbyes before heading to the airport.

After tying up loose ends, they were about to leave when Anthony, breathless from running, caught up with them.

“You’re leaving already?” he asked, panting. “Can’t you stay a few more days?”

Elyse offered a wistful smile. “We’ve got things to take care of back home. Sorry, but we need to head back first.”

Chapter 1669:

Anthony handed Elyse a violin case. “I made this one myself. It’s not as good as my dad’s, but I’m getting better. Next time you visit, you can trade it for a better one.”

Elyse’s eyes widened before softening into a warm smile. “Thanks, Anthony. This means a lot.”

He offered a shy but charming smile.

Jayden grinned. “So, was your girlfriend surprised by the birthday celebration?”

Anthony scratched the back of his neck, looking sheepish. “She actually thought I was going to propose. She had herself all ready, but I was just there to wish her a happy birthday.”

Elyse burst into laughter. “Guess you’ll have to outdo yourself when you actually propose.”

Anthony chuckled softly. “Don’t worry, I’ll make it even more special next time.”

After a brief chat, Elyse and Jayden headed into the airport, ready to board their flight home.

Two days later, they landed and, without adjusting to the time difference, rushed straight to Shaun’s house.

The bodyguards met them at the entrance, their expressions grim. One spoke up, “Shaun’s been restless for days. He wouldn’t say why. Today, he tried to escape through the window.”

Elyse’s eyes widened. “What?”

The guard continued, “He didn’t get far. We caught him at the back door.”

Now, Shaun sat inside, tied up, awaiting Jayden’s return.

As soon as Jayden stepped inside, he spotted Shaun squirming on the sofa—a sight that might’ve been comical if it weren’t so absurd. Jayden crossed his arms, his tone sharp. “What nonsense are you talking about now?”

Elyse stood beside him, concern flickering across her face. “Why are you so stubborn? You always insist on doing everything yourself.” Shaun’s face remained blank. He closed his eyes, as though dismissing them entirely.

Jayden scoffed. “You’re not gagged. So what’s with the silence?” Elyse’s brow furrowed. Something was wrong—this wasn’t the Shaun she knew. The tension in the room prickled at her senses, urging caution.

Jayden narrowed his eyes. “Did your memory come back?”

Elyse’s breath caught. “Wait—do you remember now?”

Jayden crouched in front of Shaun, his voice low, tinged with suspicion. “Did you see something—or someone—you weren’t supposed to? Like... Tracy?”

That struck a nerve. Shaun’s eyes snapped open, fierce and defiant, the fire in them impossible to ignore.

The intensity of his gaze made Elyse’s heart skip a beat. The weight of unspoken truths hung heavy between them, thickening the air.

Shaun no longer carried his usual carefree demeanor. The warmth that once came from forgetting his past was gone, replaced by a cold, distant edge—revealing his true nature. Only this hardened version of Shaun could break Tracy’s heart.

Chapter 1670:

His voice was icy. “Untie me. The deal with my father never included being tied up or locked away.”

Jayden let out a low chuckle. “Fair point.”

With a nod from Jayden, two burly bodyguards stepped forward and freed Shaun.

Jayden folded his arms. “Now, tell me what you saw. The deal with your father still stands, so I’m willing to help you.”

Elyse, her heart pounding with worry, turned to Shaun with urgency. “Have you seen Tracy? Where is she? Is she okay?”

Shaun let out a sharp scoff, his lips curling in disdain. “She is perfectly fine. No need to lose sleep over her.”

Elyse’s face lit up with relief. “Really? Where is she? I need to see her!”

A sneer flickered across Shaun’s face. “You can’t. She has been gone for a while, but has she come looking for you? No. She has moved on and got herself a whole new life. Guess an old friend like you didn’t make the cut.”

The disdain in his tone made Elyse frown, suspicion creeping into her voice. “Why did you say that?”

Shaun dropped his gaze, suddenly tight-lipped.

Sensing the shift, Elyse pressed him, but he stood his ground, refusing to say more.

Jayden, who had been quietly watching, narrowed his eyes and took a shot in the dark. “Did you see something you weren’t supposed to? Like... who she’s with?”

Elyse turned back to Shaun, her eyes locking onto his like twin daggers. A long, tense silence stretched between them before Shaun finally exhaled sharply, running a frustrated hand through his hair. “Tracy got into Lowell’s car. They’re living together.”

The words hit like a thunderclap, plunging the room into silence.

Jayden was the first to shake off the shock. “That’s ridiculous. You must’ve seen wrong. Lowell and Dolores nearly killed Tracy—there’s no way she would willingly be with him.”

Elyse was quick to echo the disbelief. “Exactly! She would never side with the enemy. She is not that naive!”

Shaun, bracing himself for their doubt, clenched his fists, his anger bubbling over. “I know what I saw! I staked out the place all night. She went in with Lowell, and she never came back out. The next morning, Lowell walked out alone. They’re living under the same roof—hell, they’re probably even sleeping together!”

Elyse’s breath caught in her throat, her mind reeling.

Jayden rubbed his chin, his expression unreadable.

Meanwhile, Shaun trembled with barely contained fury, his mind a storm of rage. He gripped his temples, as if trying to hold himself together. After a few deep breaths, he managed to steady himself. Jayden’s voice cut through the tension, cold and razor-sharp. “Even if Tracy is with Lowell, what’s it to you?”

Shaun stiffened, his eyes flashing. “What’s that supposed to mean?”