

## Bound love 1671

Chapter 1671:

Jayden met his glare without flinching. “Have you forgotten what happened between you two? What exactly are you to her?”

Shaun went rigid, his jaw tightening. “My history with her is one thing, but she should never be with Lowell!”

Jayden remained unfazed, his tone flat and unyielding. “She can be with whoever she damn well pleases. Your opinion? Doesn’t matter.” He paused deliberately, then leaned in slightly, his gaze locking onto Shaun’s. “Since we’re laying our cards on the table, let me tell you something else.”

Shaun’s eyes darkened with suspicion. “What?”

Jayden didn’t blink. “Your car accident. The police came up empty—no leads, no suspects, no clear motive. But someone wanted you dead.”

Shaun stiffened. Since regaining his memory, he had been so fixated on finding Tracy that the accident had faded into the background. Now, dread curled around his spine like a vice.

Jayden saw the flicker of hesitation and grabbed Shaun’s shoulder, his grip firm. “The person who caused that accident—the one who tried to kill you—was Tracy.”

Shaun recoiled as if struck. “That’s impossible!” The words shot out, fierce and unshaken. “She would never do something like that! Why would she? There is no reason for her to hate me!”

Elyse’s expression hardened. “Are you so sure? Have you really forgotten what you did to her?”

“I had no choice!” Shaun’s voice was sharp, defensive. “I was forced into it!” But even as he said it, the words felt weak, like a crumbling wall barely holding up against a storm.

Elyse let out a bitter laugh. “Right. Some things, maybe you had no choice in. But tell me—when Dolores wrecked your wedding and humiliated Tracy in front of everyone, were your hands tied

then? And when Lowell and Dolores pushed her off that cliff, when I begged you to look into it, to give her the justice she deserved—”

“What did you do? You turned your back on her. You shielded Lowell and Dolores. You convinced yourself that Tracy jumped rather than believe they tried to kill her.”

Her voice trembled with raw emotion. “You told her you loved her. That you wanted a fresh start. Is this what love looks like? You broke every promise, Shaun. You shattered everything.”

A bitter taste clung to Shaun’s tongue, heavy and acrid. He managed to say, “I was wrong. About everything.”

Elyse let out a sneer, sharp as shattered glass. “I remember when Tracy finally decided to move on. She had a fresh start, a solid foundation. For once, she was building something for herself... and then you ruined it. You tore it all down, burned that bridge to the ground.” Her gaze locked onto Shaun, piercing and unrelenting. “How could you be so selfish?”

Shaun put on a wry smile. “You might not believe this,” he murmured, “but I never thought I loved Tracy. I convinced myself I didn’t. And yet... turns out, I’ve loved her all along. Loved her more than anyone. I was just too damn scared to admit it.”

Chapter 1672:

“Scared?” Elyse pressed, her voice edged with skepticism. “Of what?”

Shaun’s gaze drifted, unfocused, lost in something only he could see. “Maybe because I’m a coward,” he admitted, his voice quieter now. “In my family, love was weakness. Shameful. We all knew we should choose money or a woman who would bleed us dry.”

“They were always running the numbers, weighing the risks. Love was too slippery, too unpredictable. Money, though—that was solid. Tangible.”

“But love was rare. And in its own way, it was worth more than all the wealth in the world. I desired wealth, but my hunger for love was even greater.”

Now, he wished he could turn back time. He would give up every penny for just one more chance with Tracy.

Seeing the despair creep into his expression, Elyse swallowed back the sharp retort poised on her tongue. She caught Jayden's eye.

Jayden, always quick on the uptake, gave a small nod. "I'll dig into Tracy and Lowell," he assured Shaun. "But don't do anything reckless. You'll scare her."

Shaun let out a dry, humorless laugh. "Scare her? She tried to kill me! What the hell could I do to scare her?"

Elyse's patience finally snapped. "If you don't want Tracy to hate you even more, you'll shut up and listen to us."

A flicker of anger sparked in Shaun, but this time, he reined it in. He couldn't take another trip down memory lane, not when every reminder twisted the knife in his gut a little deeper.

Once Elyse and Jayden were in the car, exhaustion settled over them like a heavy fog. Both let out long, drawn-out yawns.

Elyse rubbed her temples. "Tracy and Lowell are together? That doesn't even make sense. Shaun must have it wrong."

Jayden drummed his fingers against the steering wheel, thinking. "I wouldn't be so sure."

Elyse frowned. "Why not?"

Jayden shot her a sideways glance. "Tracy's original plan was to take out Shaun, Lowell, and Dolores, remember? Shaun and Dolores survived. If she still wants revenge... what's the next logical move?"

Elyse stared at Jayden, utterly bewildered. "Kill them again?"

Jayden shook his head. “Unlikely. After what happened to Shaun and Dolores, their families are on high alert. Security’s tight, and Tracy knows it. She wouldn’t risk another direct attack.”

“So,” Jayden continued, his voice measured, “the most probable way for her to get revenge is...” He trailed off, his expression darkening.

Elyse caught the shift in Jayden’s demeanor and felt a cold prickle at the back of her neck. “Is what, Jayden? What would she do?”

Chapter 1673:

Jayden exhaled slowly, hesitating. “It’s just a theory. We need to find her and hear it from her first.”

His reluctance set off alarm bells in Elyse’s mind. A sinking feeling curled in her stomach—Tracy had done something reckless. Something irreversible. She just didn’t know what.

Jayden seemed to sense her unease. “Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. Even if Tracy is with Lowell, there’s been no sign of trouble. If she were planning something, we would have heard about it by now. Try not to worry.”

Elyse sighed, rubbing her temple. “I just don’t understand. Why would she be with someone like Lowell? He is her enemy.”

Jayden’s gaze flickered with something unreadable. “That’s because you don’t understand the true nature of revenge,” he said quietly. “It’s not always about killing someone. Sometimes, the worst kind of revenge is something far more insidious.”

Elyse returned home, grabbed a quick bite, and was about to head to bed.

The moment her head hit the pillow that night, she drifted into a deep, undisturbed sleep.

She saw Tracy in her dreams—standing before her, draped in a flowing white dress, a soft smile lingering on her lips.

Elyse's chest tightened at the sight of her best friend. A thousand emotions surged through her, and she whispered hoarsely, "I miss you so much. Do you miss me too?"

Tracy said nothing. She only smiled and gave a slow, silent nod. Elyse took a step forward, yearning to embrace her friend—but her body refused to move.

Panic flared in her chest. Looking down, she saw thick, black ropes coiling around her legs like living shadows. She struggled, twisting and pulling, but they refused to yield.

Her gaze darted back to Tracy, desperation rising in her voice. "Tracy, help me! I'm trapped!"

But Tracy remained as she was—smiling, silent, and unmoved. Elyse's calls grew frantic, her struggles more violent, but the ropes only tightened.

Just as exhaustion threatened to pull her under, she noticed something strange—the ropes binding her weren't coming from nowhere. They were stretching out from Tracy's direction.

Her breath hitched. She looked down, confirming what her instincts had already screamed. Lifting her gaze, she asked, "Is it you? Are you the one keeping me away? Don't you miss me? Don't you want to hug me?"

At her words, a crimson stain spread across Tracy's pristine dress, blooming like a wound. Tears—dark, red tears—slipped from her eyes, carving streaks of blood down her pale face.

Bathed in red, she looked both terrifying and heartbreakingly sorrowful.

For a moment, Elyse could only stare. Then, fueled by sheer desperation, she fought against the restraints with renewed strength. "Tracy, don't be afraid! I'm coming!"

Chapter 1674:

Something gave way. The black ropes loosened just enough for her to stumble forward—one step, two—hope surged in her chest.

But then, as if angered by her defiance, more ropes lashed out, wrapping around her body, her limbs, her mouth—one even covering her left eye.

Paralyzed, she could do nothing but watch as Tracy remained just beyond her reach, silent and bleeding. Her friend looked lonely.

Elyse's body trembled violently, and in the next instant, she jolted awake, her breath ragged, heart pounding.

For several seconds, she stared blankly at the ceiling. Then, turning her head, her eyes landed on Jayden beside her, and only then did the tightness in her chest begin to ease.

She exhaled shakily, burrowing into the warmth of the blanket, but the dream lingered. The nightmare was burned into her mind. What did Tracy want? Why had she appeared like that? And more importantly... how could she be with Lowell? Shouldn't she hate him more than anyone?

Sleep was impossible now. Elyse lay still, thoughts circling endlessly, but no matter how much she tried to make sense of it, the answers eluded her.

When Jayden finally stirred awake, he immediately noticed something was off. His brows knitted as he turned to her. "Thinking about Tracy again?"

Elyse hesitated, then nodded, frustration thick in her voice. "She hasn't come to see me. Could she be avoiding me... out of guilt?"

Jayden fell silent, considering her words before giving a slow nod. "That's possible."

Elyse became even more frustrated. "When will we finally hear from her?"

"Today." Jayden sat up, running a hand through his hair. "Shaun mentioned a villa complex, remember? I had someone watching the entrance. The moment we get photos of Tracy and Lowell going in or out, we'll know if Shaun was telling the truth."

Elyse tightened her grip on the blanket, drawing in a slow, steady breath. "Alright," she murmured. "I'll wait."

At the same time, in a secluded villa nestled near the mountains, Lowell stirred awake in the darkened bedroom.

His hand instinctively reached out, brushing against Tracy's arm before he pulled her into his warm embrace.

He had always yielded to her peculiar rules. He wasn't allowed to see her face—not until she permitted it. And so, he waited.

Lately, he had begun to savor the thrill of her surprises, the mystery she shrouded herself in. Yet, despite that, a nagging curiosity lingered. What did she really look like?

One night, when Tracy was deep in slumber, he finally gave in to temptation. His fingers, light as a whisper, traced the contours of her face.

The moment he confirmed she wasn't some grotesque creature lurking in the shadows, relief settled over him like a soothing tide.

Chapter 1675:

His quiet exploration, however, stirred Tracy from sleep. She groaned in protest. "I'm sleeping."

A chuckle rumbled in Lowell's chest as he gently patted her back, coaxing her back into rest. "I was too rough and woke you up. Don't be mad."

Still half-asleep, she mumbled, "If you'd just sleep instead of bothering me, I wouldn't be."

Smiling to himself, Lowell murmured his agreement and held her close. Soon, they both drifted off once more.

By the time the clock nudged past eight, Lowell was fully awake. Moving with careful quiet, he slipped out of bed and into the next room to change.

Not long after he left the villa, Tracy's phone buzzed sharply against the nightstand.

With her eyes still shut, she answered with sleepy impatience. "What?"

Hardy's voice came through the line, cool and steady. "Someone's staking out near your place. I don't know who they are, but your cover might be blown."

Tracy let out a slow breath, unfazed. "So what if it is? I've already gotten what I wanted. As for the plan, we'll just buy ourselves more time."

Hardy was silent for a beat before advising, "Then stay indoors for now. If Lowell wants to come, let him—but you shouldn't go out."

Rolling onto her side, Tracy tucked herself deeper into the blankets. "Alright, I got it."

Elyse waited anxiously for a day, her unease growing with each passing hour without any news about Tracy.

When the weight of uncertainty finally crushed her resolve, she sought out Jayden, who met her imploring gaze with grim determination. "The surveillance team only spotted Lowell entering the villa complex, but there's been no sign of Tracy."

"Then she can't be there, right?" A tremor of desperate hope threaded through Elyse's voice.

Jayden's shoulders sagged beneath an invisible burden. "There are others inside. I believe Tracy sensed something and sought sanctuary there."

Elyse's teeth worried at her lower lip as determination crystallized within her. "Where's this villa area? I need you to take me."

His eyebrows arched in surprise. "You want to see Tracy? Are you certain she wants to see you?"

"I have to try," Elyse breathed, her resolve as firm as steel beneath her softness.



After weighing the consequences, Jayden relented. “Very well, I’ll take you.”

A suffocating silence enveloped their journey to the villa area. At a particular entrance, Elyse stood mesmerized by the dying sun, her emotions churning like storm-tossed waves.

Her trembling finger found the doorbell.

Once, twice, then frantically, she pressed it, each chime swallowed by crushing silence. As desperation seized her, her fists thundered against the door. “Tracy, I know you’re in there! Please come out!” Her anguished pleas echoed unanswered until she collapsed, tears streaming down her face.

Chapter 1676:

Jayden rushed to her side, enfolding her in protective arms. “Tracy’s not ready to see you. Shall we leave?”

Misery etched deep lines across her features as she nodded in defeat. “What choice do I have? She’s hidden away like a turtle in its shell, and I can’t force her out.”

Jayden released a gentle sigh as he helped her rise.

Above them, unseen, Tracy watched their retreat through tear-glazed eyes.

Her phone’s sudden ring shattered her reverie—Hardy’s name blazed across the screen. Her movements were mechanical as she answered.

“Well done. Elyse gave up and left,” Hardy reported. “Your cover’s blown, but we can buy you some time.”

Tracy’s voice wavered. “She was crying just now... so heartbroken. It’s...”

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"Well done. Elyse gave up and left," Hardy reported. "Your cover's blown, but we can buy you some time."

Tracy's voice wavered. "She was crying just now... so heartbroken. It's tearing me apart."

Static crackled through Hardy's weary sigh. "Nothing can be done. We're near our goal. Elyse will understand when the time comes."

"But I don't want her to see me," Tracy whispered, the confession weighing like lead on her tongue. "If the plan succeeds, if I get the chance, I just want to disappear."

A heavy silence stretched between them before Hardy responded with quiet resolve. "Running isn't the answer, Tracy. You need to face this."

Tracy's voice trembled with raw emotion. "She didn't see me. She must be devastated, right?"

"Yeah," Hardy confirmed solemnly. "I witnessed it. She was inconsolable. Wasn't easy to watch."

Tracy's fingers curled into tight fists as she battled to contain the tempest of emotions within her.

Drawing artificial strength into her voice, she pivoted the conversation. "Has Lowell returned yet? When should we expect him?"

"He's still tied up at the office. No need to worry," Hardy replied. "Listen, I've got matters to attend to. Stay inside and keep out of sight."

The moment the line went dead, Tracy's strength crumbled like a house of cards. She slid down the wall, collapsing in on herself. Tears traced silver paths down her cheeks.

“I’m so sorry, Elyse,” she choked out between sobs. “I’m so, so sorry. I never meant to shut you out. I just can’t return. I can’t.”

Elyse’s anguish erupted in soul-deep sobs.

She found solace in Jayden’s protective embrace, weeping until exhaustion finally claimed her.

Jayden attempted every consolation he knew, but her grief remained impenetrable.

At last, she drifted into fitful slumber in the car, granting him his first breath of relief.

As he steered toward home, his phone chirped with news that Lucille and Leon were heading to Shaun’s residence.

Comprehending their intentions, Jayden swiftly altered course toward Shaun’s home.

Though Shaun had anticipated Lucille and Leon’s arrival, his fixation on Tracy’s situation left him with no patience for their intrusion. He abandoned them at his threshold without ceremony.

Upon arrival, Jayden discovered the couple clutching a document, their determination unwavering despite their frail appearance.

Chapter 1678:

“Why aren’t you both home resting instead of standing out here?” Jayden challenged. “Do you truly believe Shaun will receive you?”

Leon pierced Jayden with an unreadable gaze. “This matter doesn’t involve you. Keep your distance.”

Jayden’s response dripped with contempt. “I oversee all of Shaun’s affairs now. How could this not concern me?”

Leon scoffed. “What a joke. You’re not Shaun’s parents; what makes you think you have the right to meddle in his affairs?”

Lucille chimed in, “Shaun’s affairs don’t concern you, so you’d do well to leave and mind your own business.”

“If there’s anything you’d like to discuss with Shaun,” Jayden said in a firm tone, “then you might as well tell me what it’s about. I’m the one to decide whether you get to see him or not.”

Lucille and Leon exchanged a glance, clearly unconvinced by Jayden’s words.

Just when they found themselves at an impasse, Shaun appeared. He stood in the doorway and shot the pair a cold glance. “You two sure are relentless. I’ve made it abundantly clear that I don’t want to see you, yet you just won’t leave, huh?”

“I’m willing to stand here all day and all night for my daughter’s sake,” Lucille declared self-righteously. “Half an hour is nothing!”

Jayden raised an eyebrow. “Does that mean we should let you stand here for a whole day and night before we consider your request?”

“Stay out of this!” Lucille snapped, waving her hands at him. “Just leave!”

Shaun chuckled dryly. “Now, this is amusing. You say you’re doing this for Dolores? I’d love to know what could have happened to your precious daughter to warrant such persistence.”

The mention of Dolores seemed to flip a switch within Lucille. She crumbled before their eyes, bursting into tears.

Gone was the elegant and graceful woman, and in her place stood a common fishwife. “Damn you, Shaun Kennedy! How dare you even utter Dolores’ name? She almost died because of you!”

Jayden pocketed his hands and leaned back against the wall, acting like a spectator to a riveting drama. “What happened to Dolores?” he asked curiously. “Why are you saying these things? Did Shaun do something to her?”

Shaun's expression darkened considerably at that. Could Jayden just stop being nosy, for once? This matter was enough of a headache as it was!

"He's a monster!" Lucille wailed. "He hurt my daughter!"

Jayden raised an eyebrow again. "How so?"

When Lucille next opened her mouth, it wasn't to talk, but to shriek. "That bastard defiled my daughter and abandoned her! My poor Dolores poured her heart out to him, and he treated her like trash."

Shaun breathed out a humorless laugh. Sometimes, all one could really do was laugh when faced with such absurdity.

Chapter 1679:

"You say I slept with Dolores? Prove it. Give me the details—the time, place, hotel records, surveillance footage—anything. If you don't have any proof to back up your accusations, I suppose I shall see you in court."

Leon spat out, seething with rage, "Of course, we have proof! This is all the evidence we've collected so far!"

He strode over and slapped a manila envelope against Shaun's chest. "Take a good look at it yourself! If it weren't for the ties between our families, we would have gone straight to your parents! You should be thankful we're giving you a chance to save face instead of blowing this up into a public scandal!"

Shaun tore open the envelope. Inside were a handful of photographs and a single sheet of paper.

The photos were multiple shots of different hotels and convenience stores, but none of them had him and Dolores together in one frame.

According to the note, Shaun had allegedly taken advantage of Dolores three months ago at a hotel in Cedarvale. It also claimed that he had forgone using protection, which they took as an added insult. The incoherent collection of photos and the single, typed accusation reeked of a poorly-crafted setup. Whoever was behind this was desperate to frame Shaun, but they had no ground to stand on. And so, they put together this pathetic excuse of “evidence” and hoped it would do the trick.

Shaun tossed the envelope to Jayden and crossed his arms over his chest. He glared at Leon and Lucille and asked, “What do you want?”

The couple took his reaction as compliance, and they immediately puffed themselves up.

“We watched you grow up, Shaun. We know that deep down, you’re not a bad person. But what you did to Dolores... We can’t just turn a blind eye and pretend it never happened. Naturally, we expect you to take responsibility and marry her. From now on, you must treat her well and never cause her any pain or humiliation again.”

Shaun stroked his chin, a faint smile playing on his lips. “Is that all?”

Leon cleared his throat. “Well, you have committed a grave offense, so we think that... a little compensation, shall we say, is in order. Your family has a project that I’ve been...”

“I’ve been quite interested in it for a while now. If you would like to offer it as an apology, I would gladly accept.”

“I understand what you want now,” Shaun said lightly, almost cheerfully. “But I’m not admitting to anything. Feel free to sue me. Like I said, I’ll see you in court.”

Lucille froze for a few seconds before springing into action. She lunged at Shaun, screaming, “You slept with my daughter, and this is the kind of attitude you show us? Take responsibility for your actions like a real man! You must marry Dolores!”

Shaun stepped to the side and dusted off his clothes, his lips twisted in disgust. “I never slept with Dolores. God knows what kind of men she’s been shacking up with! There’s no way I would marry someone so loose!”

His words had Lucille trembling with rage. “How dare you slander my daughter! You have no idea what you’re talking about!”

Chapter 1680:

“I have nothing to do with your daughter,” Shaun reiterated coldly. “I don’t care about her, and I certainly won’t marry her.”

“You will pay for this,” Leon threatened in a low voice. “You slept with our daughter, and you won’t even admit it! I’m sure you’re aware of the consequences of your actions.”

Shaun sneered. “I couldn’t care less about your so-called consequences. If you want to take this to court, then by all means, go ahead. But I need you to stop making a scene in front of me.”

Without warning, Lucille lunged again, this time aiming to claw at his face. “You monster! How could you do this to Dolores?”

Shaun initially had no intentions of getting physical with them, but after deflecting her attacks several times, he finally had enough. In his frustration, he shoved her away—hard.

Lucille stumbled backward, lost her balance, and landed soundly on her ass. To no one’s surprise, she began to wail. “Oh God! Everyone, this evil man has defiled my daughter! My poor, innocent daughter! He must answer for his crimes!”

Then, Dolores suddenly appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. She dropped to her knees beside Lucille and embraced her distraught mother. “Mom, please don’t! Don’t blame Shaun; he just doesn’t remember that night. If he did, he would never treat me like this!” Lucille clung to Dolores, her sobs loud and grating. Shaun could no longer tell whether it was from genuine grief or if the woman was simply a master of acting.

“Oh, my poor daughter! Don’t you worry, Mom and Dad will protect you!” Lucille was making it sound like Dolores had suffered the greatest injustice imaginable.

Dolores pulled herself up and stumbled toward Shaun, painting a clear picture of a weak, vulnerable woman. Thanks to her recent illness, she looked especially fragile.



“Shaun,” she said softly, her voice barely above a whisper, “about that night... It’s okay. I know that I... I like you, maybe too much. I was holding on to a sliver of hope that—”

“Cut the act,” Shaun interrupted sharply. “I can’t even stand the sight of you. Didn’t I already tell you to stay away from me? Or did you think I was joking?”

Dolores gave him a faint smile. “I remember you telling me that you’d marry me, Shaun. That night, you told me that you would never let me suffer. I believed you, and I’ve been waiting all this time for you to finally marry me. You have to believe me. I’m the woman who loves you the most in this world.” A flicker of anticipation flashed in her eyes as she finished speaking. What was she hoping for? Sympathy? Pity, even?

She was betting on Shaun’s conscience.

But she didn’t know that he had already regained his memory. He saw right through her little charade.

Shaun stared at Dolores for a brief moment before raising his hand and slapping her across the face.

That wiped the smile right off her face. Her eyes widened in a mix of shock and confusion.