

UNREPAIRABLE LOVE / I MARRIED A MAN NOVEL ALTRERNATIVE

Chapter 21

Declan had never spoken to her harshly, but today he was dead serious. They were really freaking out that she hadn't divorced yet.

"Dad, can I not go? I swear I'll divorce Alexander," Elizabeth pleaded.

Declan's silence was a clear no.

"But I haven't divorced Alexander yet. Does this guy not care?" Elizabeth asked, feeling annoyed.

"He doesn't care!" Declan answered firmly.

Elizabeth forced a smile. *Is this guy as clueless as John?* she thought. He knew her husband was Alexander and still went ahead to date her. He must be nuts.

"Elizabeth, you know this guy. He really admires you. You two are a great match. Can you just listen to me this once?" Declan's tone softened a bit.

Hearing his words, Elizabeth felt she might've been too stubborn. Declan was practically begging her. But she really didn't want to date a stranger right now. She just wasn't in the mood.

"Dad, I get it. You want me to bounce back fast. I'll be fine," Elizabeth said, trying to sound sincere. This whole relationship mess had drained her, and she just couldn't deal with meeting anyone new right now.

Grant sighed, "Declan, if Elizabeth's not up for it, don't push her."

"But Dad, she..." Declan started to argue.

Grant shot him a look, like, "What, my words don't mean anything anymore?"

Declan slapped his thigh, sighed, and headed to the study.

"Thanks, Grandpa," Elizabeth said, trying to be polite.

Grant shook his head, “Elizabeth, you can’t stay down forever. You need to move on.”

Elizabeth nodded, “Okay.”

Just then, her phone buzzed. She checked it and saw a new entertainment news alert: “[Russell Group’s Ms. Russell flaunts her love on Facebook; netizens call it super sweet!]” She meant to ignore it but ended up clicking anyway. @Esme: My love. 1/4

The picture showed her leaning against a guy’s chest, with the sea in the background. The guy was in a suit, one hand on her shoulder, and she was snuggled up in him. Though his face wasn’t visible, Elizabeth knew it was Alexander. She recognized his hand and his style. Alexander had taken Esme to see the sea; he was doing something Esme had always wanted to do. Elizabeth gripped her phone tightly, tears welling up in her eyes. Grant patted Elizabeth’s shoulder, and she turned to him, eyes red. She really wanted Alexander to go to the beach with her, but he kept saying no. For Esme, though, going to the beach with her love was no big deal.

“That guy your dad mentioned is actually pretty good,” Grant reminded her.

Elizabeth looked up, a tear slipping down her cheek. “I get it, Grandpa.”

Meanwhile, by the sea... Esme was scrolling through comments on her phone, grinning. “Alexander, look! So many people are happy for us.” Alexander was reading a message from Nolan. He glanced at her phone and asked, “Did you post our picture on Facebook?”

“Don’t worry, I didn’t show your face,” Esme said, all cheerful.

Alexander frowned. He’d told her a million times not to post about him, but she never listened.

“Alexander, for Lily’s birthday, my family plans to give a rare ginseng,” Esme suddenly said.

Alexander looked up. Esme hugged his arm, serious now. “This time, I have to make your family accept me.”

Alexander felt bad for Esme. She hadn’t done anything wrong, but because of Elizabeth, the Tudor family never accepted her.

“Rare ginseng is hard to find,” Alexander said.

“Yeah, everyone in the Russell family is after it,” Esme replied.

Esme looked at Alexander, her fingers lightly brushing his cheek. “Alexander, I’ve put up with a lot for the past three years because I love you. I really hope this year, I can finally be your wife.”

Alexander met her eyes and nodded. “Alright.”

Esme’s face lit up with a smile. As she gazed into his eyes, a daring thought crossed her mind. She leaned in slowly, her lips almost touching his when he suddenly turned his head and hugged her instead. Esme froze, feeling awkward in his arms. Did he just dodge her kiss? In three years, he had never been intimate with her, never kissed her. She thought he was just being respectful, always protecting her. But now, when she made the first move and he still avoided it... what did that mean?

Alexander lowered his gaze, gently rubbing her hair. “Esme, you’re the daughter of the Russell family. Before we get married, I don’t want to disrespect you.”

Truth was, he didn’t feel that spark with Esme. He had tried to be close to her, but it never felt right. Even hugging her felt stiff. On the other hand, Elizabeth had this pull on him, making him lose control. Ever since that kiss with Elizabeth at the bar, he felt even more distant from Esme.

Esme blinked, feeling a sharp pain in her heart. She wrapped her arms around Alexander’s neck, her breath hot. “Alexander, I’m not afraid.” She was ready for him.

“Esme, don’t,” Alexander said, pulling her hands away, his brow furrowed, a hint of impatience in his eyes.

Esme’s confidence took a nosedive. She’d made a move, and her fiancé shot her down. Did that mean he didn’t want her? Her eyes welled up. “Do you not like me?” If he loved her, how could he resist?

“Esme, stop questioning my feelings,” Alexander snapped, clearly annoyed. Every time this came up, they ended up fighting. The more they fought, the more Esme felt he was hiding something. Only guilt would lead to arguments, right?

Esme looked down, feeling hurt. “Alexander, I really love you. I’ve been understanding.”

“Don’t let me lose,” she said, her voice breaking.

Hearing this, Alexander’s mind flashed back to Elizabeth. Elizabeth had once said, “I loved you for seven years, Alexander, and I lost.” His throat tightened, heart aching. 3/4

He glanced at the scar on Esme’s back—a scar she got saving him.

“Esme, after Grandma’s birthday, I’ll divorce Elizabeth. Once that’s done, we’ll get married,” Alexander promised. He used to just say he’d marry her someday. But this time, he promised they’d tie the knot as soon as his divorce was final. For Esme, that was huge. The sea sparkled, and the summer evening breeze felt perfect. She leaned against Alexander, looking at the ocean, nodding eagerly, full of hope.

“Alexander, I found this awesome restaurant. Wanna go tomorrow night?” Esme suggested.

C 22

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Elizabeth, seeing Alexander's sour face, felt a mischievous spark. She sauntered over to Joseph, linking her arm with his. She gazed up at him, eyes

full of playful affection, and teased, “Mr. Stewart, since Ms. Russell thinks we’re a good match, should we give dating a shot?”

Joseph squinted, glancing at Alexander and Esme. Alexander’s scowl deepened. Joseph caught on to Elizabeth’s game, and he decided to roll with it. He wrapped his arm around Elizabeth’s waist, pulling her close. His deep, velvety voice murmured, “Ms. Percy, does this mean you’re giving me a chance to pursue you?”

Elizabeth nodded, her fingers toying with Joseph’s tie, both flirtatious and charming. Joseph leaned in close to Elizabeth’s ear, grinning. *It’d be my pleasure.* He then looked up, locking eyes with Alexander. Alexander’s face was pale, his eyes like daggers, slowly shifting from Joseph’s hand to his face. Joseph’s smirk grew, a glint of victory in his eyes. To Alexander, this was a clear challenge.

Esme, sensing Alexander’s tension, clung to his arm and smiled, “I rarely see Mr. Stewart like this. Seems he really likes Elizabeth.”

Erme had hoped to show off her bond with Alexander in front of Elizabeth. But things didn’t go as planned; the situation slipped out of her control. Elizabeth stayed cool, her lazy gaze drifting over them.

Joseph adjusted his glasses and smiled, “Guys tend to lose their cool around someone they like. And yeah, I do like Ms. Percy, no doubt.”

Alexander felt a sting at Joseph’s words. Seeing Elizabeth’s sweet smile directed at Joseph made Alexander’s breath catch. Those smiles used to be just for me. She agreed to the divorce so quickly and moved on even faster. *Is she really over me, or is this all for show?* Alexander wondered.

Esme figured it was time to bounce and grinned, “We won’t bug you anymore. Alexander, let’s grab some food. I’m starving.”

Alexander glanced at Elizabeth and nodded at Esme, “Sure.” His face was a blank slate, and his tone was ice-cold.

Once they were gone, Elizabeth let go of Joseph. She watched them walk away, her eyes darkening. 1/2

To Elizabeth, Alexander’s indifference to her flirting with Joseph was nothing new. He was cool with his own fling with Esme but couldn’t stand her seeing

other guys. She knew him too well; it wasn't about caring for her, it was about his bruised ego as a husband.

"Young folks' marriages are a real puzzle," Joseph chimed in beside her.

Elizabeth snapped out of it and said, "Thanks, Mr. Stewart."

"No worries. It's my pleasure to help you, Ms. Percy." He raised an eyebrow, looking at her, then leaned in. "But what I said earlier, I meant it."

Elizabeth gave him a complicated look. "Maybe we should give dating a shot. What do you think?" Joseph's smile was warm, like a spring breeze. He was so close that if he moved just a bit more, they'd be kissing. For a second, Elizabeth thought she saw high school Alexander. Both of them were kind but had a sneaky side.

"Are all guys like this?" she wondered. Her hand clenched by her side, a wave of sadness hitting her.

Noticing her silence, Joseph chuckled and tapped her head. "Just messing with you."

Elizabeth laughed, "Mr. Stewart, stop teasing me."

"Alright," Joseph nodded, motioning for her to sit and keep eating.

Chapter 23

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Chapter 24

Alexander, waiting by the elevator, saw the whole thing. They looked like they were flirting.

“Glad Elizabeth found someone she likes,” Esme said with a smile.

Alexander’s eyes turned icy. He stepped into the elevator, clearly annoyed.

Esme noticed his mood. Alexander had been weird about anything related to Elizabeth since deciding to divorce her, making Esme uneasy. She needed to speed up their divorce and keep them apart.

“Hey Ms. Percy. I’m free tomorrow. Mind if I swing by with my dad?” Joseph poured Elizabeth some wine.

Elizabeth was about to say no when Joseph added, “C’mon, Ms. Percy, you saved my dad’s life. It’s only fair we visit. Plus, we’re kinda in this thing together.”

Elizabeth chuckled. “What thing?” she asked.

“A dating thing.” He raised an eyebrow, teasing her like, “Don’t overthink it.”

Elizabeth had to admit, Joseph had a sense of humor. “Fine, I’ve got time,” she nodded, giving in.

“Awesome!” Joseph’s mood lifted instantly.

Elizabeth glanced at him again, then shook her head. She thought, *If someone like Joseph had shown up earlier, would I have still fallen for Alexander?*

Dinner went smoothly, with easy conversation. Afterward, Joseph offered to take Elizabeth home, but she declined.

“I need to see a friend. You head back first, Mr. Stewart.”

At the hotel entrance, the breeze played with Elizabeth’s hair. Joseph knew she didn’t want to bother him, but he was worried about her being out late. “I’ll call a car for myself. My driver can take you to your friend,” he suggested.

Elizabeth glanced at Joseph and couldn’t help but think he was too much of a gentleman. “I’ll head back on my own. See you tomorrow,” she said with a smile.

Seeing her stubbornness, Joseph just nodded and let it go.

Elizabeth watched his car drive off and sighed. She stepped out of the hotel into the cool night air. With her bag slung over her shoulder, she walked down the pavement like a carefree kid.

She stopped in front of a high-end store. The clothes and jewelry in the window reminded her of high school. She’d had a fight with Declan, and in his anger, he froze her bank card. She’d been eyeing a limited-edition dress, but with no money and no help from her family, she couldn’t buy it.

When she passed by the store again, the dress was gone. Later, that dress ended up in her hands. Alexander had bought it for her. He said, “You deserve whatever you want.”

Feeling a warmth on her lips, Elizabeth wiped her face and realized she was crying. High school was when Alexander was the kindest to her. But now, he only glared at her and used the harshest words to hurt her. There was no going back.

Chapter 25

“The Stewart family is visiting for the first time, Elizabeth, why are you wearing *that*?!”

“Ellie, we need more fruit. Get on it!”

“Elizabeth, hurry up! Those jeans are awful. Put on a skirt!”

Rose was all over the place, and Elizabeth's white tee and jeans were a problem.

"Listen to your mom," Declan nudged Elizabeth, hinting she should change. Her outfit was totally wrong for the occasion.

Elizabeth stood in front of the mirror, pouting at her reflection. She thought she looked awesome; with her figure, anything looked good!

Just as she was about to head upstairs to change, someone outside called, "Mrs. Percy, the Stewarts are here!"

Rose grabbed Elizabeth's arm. "Don't change. They're here."

Elizabeth got dragged outside by Rose, feeling helpless. Her parents were way too nervous; they never acted like this with guests before. The Stewarts' visit seemed to mean something different this time.

Do they think Joseph and I hit it off yesterday, and now they're here to propose? she wondered.

"Mom, they're just here to thank me for saving their lives," Elizabeth reminded Rose.

"That's just an excuse, silly girl!" Rose glared at her.

"Mom, seriously, they're just here to thank me," Elizabeth insisted.

Rose, too tired to argue, said as she opened the door, "That's just an excuse; Joseph likes you!"

The door swung open. Joseph and Landon stood tall at the entrance. Behind them, their butler and two assistants held gifts.

"Landon!" Declan stepped forward, hugging Landon.

Elizabeth nodded at Joseph. "Mr. Joseph Stewart."

Joseph, eyeing Elizabeth, was impressed. "Your outfit's different today."

Usually, Elizabeth wore formal dresses and skirts. Today, she looked like a college student—clean and pure.

“Mom, look! Mr. Stewart likes my outfit!” Elizabeth boasted to Rose.

Chapter 25

Rose sighed, eyeing Landon. “Can’t you tell he’s just being polite?”

“Mrs. Percy, it’s not just politeness. I genuinely think Ms. Percy looks lovely, and it suits her. Clothes should be comfortable, right?” Joseph said, smiling.

Rose couldn’t help but smile back. Quite the charmer, she thought.

“Alright, come on in!” Rose gestured inside.

Declan ushered Landon in, with him following. Elizabeth walked beside Joseph, smiling.

Joseph raised an eyebrow. “No problem.”

“Declan, sorry for dropping by unannounced,” Landon said, a bit sheepish. “Elizabeth saved my life at the banquet a few days ago. Had to come and say thanks.”

Their butler and assistants set down the gifts and left.

“Landon, you’re too kind,” Declan said, giving Landon a friendly pat on the shoulder.

Elizabeth poured water for Landon and Joseph, then stood next to Rose.

“Landon Stewart, like I told Mr. Joseph Stewart, it was no big deal. You really don’t need to be so formal,” Elizabeth said.

Landon pointed at Elizabeth. “You’re something else! In that situation, you had the guts to act!”

Elizabeth knew he was talking about the pen incident.

“She’s got guts,” Declan said, with pride evident in his eyes as he glanced at Elizabeth.

“Bravery’s a good trait in a girl,” Landon kept praising her.

“We’ve reserved a private room for dinner tonight?” Landon suggested.

Declan promptly responded. “No, you’re the guest. I can’t let you pay. I’ve already made arrangements!”

“No, no, I insist this time!”

“Well, since we have some free time, how about a round of golf?” Declan suddenly proposed.

Landon nodded right away. “Sounds awesome!”

Chapter 26

“Does Elizabeth play golf?” Landon asked her.

Elizabeth shook her head. She was good at a lot of things, but golf? Not one of them. Learning it took patience, and she was never the patient type—unless it was about chasing Alexander.

Landon lit up when he heard she didn’t play. “Perfect! Joseph’s a golf pro. He can teach you!”

Joseph gave her a nod. “If you’re up for it.”

Seeing Declan so happy, she didn’t want to let him down, so she agreed.

The biggest golf course in Lisbon was on the outskirts. Joseph drove them all there. On the way, Declan and Landon were catching up, chatting away. Elizabeth sat in the front, snacking and making small talk with Joseph.

Outside the golf course, there were tons of luxury cars. She realized it was the weekend. It was a popular spot for wealthy young people to gather when looking for ways to pass the time.

Declan had already set everything up. When Elizabeth came out after changing, Declan and Landon were already playing. The sun was perfect, and the green grass was inviting.

Elizabeth wore a white and pink sports outfit, her hair in a ponytail. She had on light makeup that matched her outfit, making her look effortlessly stunning.

As she was about to head to the field, she suddenly heard someone say, “Alexander.”

She turned around, but there was no one in sight. Elizabeth thought she must've misheard.

"Mr. Stewart," Elizabeth waved to Joseph, who was waiting for her.

"Just call me Joseph. 'Mr. Stewart' is too formal," Joseph said.

"Alright." Elizabeth agreed, and he started calling her by her first name too.

"Do you come here often?" Elizabeth asked.

Joseph nodded. "Yeah, got some social stuff here."

"You really don't know how to play at all?" Joseph asked.

Elizabeth nodded. She had no clue. But she was good at rock climbing, shooting, and skydiving.

"That's good. Easier to teach beginners," Joseph joked.

Elizabeth followed him, asking, "You came to my place just to thank me, right? No other reason?"

Chapter 26

"Worried that I might have feelings for you?" Joseph teased.

Elizabeth laughed, kind of admitting it.

Joseph handed her a golf club. "Don't overthink it. Just have fun."

He stood in the light, and for a moment, Elizabeth felt his energy.

Joseph patiently taught her golf. Elizabeth was smart and picked it up fast. Soon, she could play on her own. Occasionally, Joseph would come behind her to correct her posture, and every time, his ears would turn a bit red.

When Elizabeth saw him blushing, she couldn't resist teasing, "Joseph, why are your ears red?"

Elizabeth was so stunning that any guy near her would turn red. A guy who didn't get shy around her? That'd be weird.

Joseph cleared his throat, frowning a bit. He grabbed Elizabeth's hand, trying to act cool. "In this position, you need to use less force."

Elizabeth checked out Joseph up close. He was definitely handsome, with those long lashes. He and Alexander had different vibes. Joseph's good looks were comforting, with a gentle touch. Alexander's handsomeness was more rugged, with sharp features and a dangerous charm.

"Alexander, let's try this position,"

Then that voice came again. Elizabeth looked up to the right, and when she met the man's gaze, her heart skipped a beat.

Alexander, why is he here too? she thought.

Unrepairable Love

Chapter 27

Alexander was dressed in gray, looking rather relaxed. But the moment he saw Elizabeth, his brows furrowed. His eyes darted to Joseph, then back to Joseph, who stood behind Elizabeth, holding her hands, his expression intense.

Esme gasped, not expecting to encounter Elizabeth and Joseph again. She just wanted some alone time with Alexander!

Joseph released Elizabeth's hands, stepped back, and stood beside her.

"What a coincidence," Alexander spoke first, his tone dripping with sarcasm.

Elizabeth shot him a look, catching his sarcastic tone. "Yeah, quite the coincidence, Mr. Tudor."

Alexander's eyes narrowed; her formal address only fueled his anger.

Elizabeth turned to Joseph, smiling. "Joseph, shall we continue?"

Alexander squinted. Joseph? They'd just gone on a date yesterday, and now she's all chummy with him?

"Sure," Joseph replied gently, his smile soft. "Let's have a game later."

"You know I can't beat you at golf," Elizabeth grumbled.

Joseph's lips curled, a hint of mischief in his eyes. "Well, if I win, how about a movie tomorrow?" He tilted his head, grinning wider.

Elizabeth looked at Joseph, unsure if he was serious or just playing along because Alexander was there. Either way, she was grateful to Joseph. He always had her back when Alexander was around.

Esme, watching their playful banter, couldn't help but ask, "I heard Mr. Joseph Stewart and Mr. Landon Stewart visited the Percy family this morning?"

Alexander frowned. Really?

"Was it to thank Elizabeth for saving Mr. Stewart a few days ago?" Esme asked casually, aiming her cue and glancing at Elizabeth.

Joseph smiled, answering politely. "That was part of it, but not the whole story."

"What do you mean?" Esme asked with a curious smile.

"I'm dating Elizabeth?" Joseph raised an eyebrow, sinking the ball with a smooth shot.

Alexander's eyes narrowed. He needed to know if they'd just met or if there was history. Was Elizabeth's sudden push for a divorce because of Joseph? The thought gnawed at him.

Elizabeth's voice broke through, "Nice shot."

Alexander grabbed a cue, his face unreadable. He figured she was a newbie. He took his shot, and the ball dropped in.

Elizabeth wasn't fazed. Alexander was always good at everything. She admired him for it. She got into rock climbing and off-roading because he loved them. In high school and college, she followed his lead, hoping to share his passions.

"So, you brought your father to meet Elizabeth's parents. Engagement on the horizon?" Esme asked, tilting her head.

"Something like that," Joseph nodded.

Elizabeth studied Joseph's face. He lied so easily.

Alexander stared off, then muttered, “No wonder my wife’s rushing the divorce.”

So she really has someone else and wants to get married, he thought.

Everyone turned to look at Alexander.

Elizabeth scowled, clearly ticked off. “The divorce papers are signed. I’m not ‘my wife’ anymore. If Mr. Tudor can’t figure out what to call me, try ‘Ms. Percy’ or ‘ex-wife.’”

Alexander’s icy stare locked onto Elizabeth. Their eyes met, each showing different emotions. His gaze was colder, carrying an unspoken challenge, like he was silently asking, “How long are you gonna keep this up?”

Elizabeth’s look was more detached, almost mocking. She wasn’t buying whatever he was selling.

Chapter 28

The tension was thick, and Esme quickly interjected, “Alexander, Alexander, why do you always pick fights with Elizabeth the moment you see her?” Alexander averted his gaze, his expression hardening. He forced a smile. “You two were married once. Even if you don’t care about her anymore, she’s still a woman. Can’t you just let it go?”

Elizabeth tuned out Esme’s words. She knew Esme was trying to rub her relationship with Alexander in her face and make her feel small. Just being in her presence was aggravating.

“Since we bumped into each other, it’s fate. Elizabeth, how about a game? Loser has to do whatever the winner says. Deal?” Esme approached with a fake-friendly vibe.

Elizabeth smirked; Esme was up to her old tricks. Esme knew Elizabeth sucked at golf, and now she wanted to play a game with her. Esme blinked, playing dumb. “Elizabeth, you scared? Don’t know how to play golf?”

“Don’t you already know if I can play or not?” Elizabeth shot back.

Esme didn’t expect Elizabeth to be so bold. She clung to Alexander’s arm. That little move made Elizabeth’s heart ache. She envied Esme. No matter what, Alexander always had her back.

“Does she really need to know if you can play?” Alexander snapped.

Elizabeth looked at him, a mix of emotions swirling inside. He always took Esme’s side. *I just love you. Why do you treat me like this?* she thought.

“Elizabeth’s not great at golf. How about this, Ms. Russell, I’ll play with—,” Joseph said, pulling Elizabeth behind him.

For the first time, Elizabeth felt safe, something she never felt with Alexander. Looking at Joseph’s back, she felt a wave of gratitude. Alexander glared at Joseph, eyes blazing.

Esme glanced at Joseph but didn’t bite. She just smiled at Elizabeth and said, “I still want to play with Elizabeth.” No matter what, Alexander would back her up. So Esme didn’t mind being a bit arrogant.

“Ms. Russell, isn’t it a bit much to force someone?” Joseph said, smirking.

“Didn’t Elizabeth come here to have fun? We’re just having a good time. What’s so unreasonable about that?” Esme shot back, her face smug.

Elizabeth’s throat tightened as she stared at Esme. Hard to believe they used to be so close. They’d skipped school together, wore matching dresses, bought the same jewelry—practically inseparable, almost like lovers. But now? Everything was different.

“If Elizabeth doesn’t want to play, she can just sit and hold my stuff, right?” Esme raised an eyebrow, a glint of malice in her eyes.

Elizabeth’s face went cold. *Does she think I’m her servant? The nerve!* she thought.

“Ms. Russell, are you serious? This is Elizabeth. You want her to serve you?” Joseph’s eyes darkened, losing their warmth.

“If Elizabeth won’t play golf or do anything else, did she come here just to flirt with men?” Esme snapped, unable to hold back. Her words got nastier by the second.

Elizabeth had enough. “Fine, I’ll play golf with you,” she said coldly. She was always straightforward, never afraid of a challenge; otherwise, she wouldn’t have married Alexander.

Alexander frowned, surprised Elizabeth agreed. Esme squinted, mocking Elizabeth for being so clueless. Elizabeth had barely touched a golf club, while Esme had been playing for years. Yet, Elizabeth dared to challenge her.

“Alright! Let’s make this bet even juicier! Loser has to kiss the first guy they see after leaving!”

Unrepairable Love

Chapter 29

“Esme, is that a bit much?!” Joseph shot back. Esme just smiled. “A bet’s gotta be thrilling to be fun,” she said, shaking her wrist and giving Joseph an innocent look. Joseph frowned, his hand slowly clenching into a fist. He didn’t deal with Esme much, but today he saw her true colors. Ms. Russell from the Russell family was definitely the most unreasonable one.

“Fine,” Elizabeth stepped up, standing next to Esme. “Elizabeth, you don’t have to do this,” Joseph warned her. Elizabeth wasn’t one to back down. “It’s just a kiss. What’s there to be scared of? It’s not like I’ve never kissed anyone before,” she said, raising an eyebrow with a hint of...

Alexander’s cold eyes narrowed, his gaze turning even icier. “Elizabeth,” Alexander suddenly called out. She looked indifferent. “Are you sure about this? Do you really want to go up against Esme?” Alexander’s voice was deeper, more intense.

Elizabeth locked eyes with Alexander, a sly grin playing on her lips. “Worried I’ll lose and kiss someone else, Mr. Tudor?”

Alexander’s eyes darkened, lips tight. “Who you kiss is none of my business. I’m just worried you’ll lose big time.”

Esme shot a glance at Alexander. When he called out to Elizabeth, she thought he was concerned she’d lose. But hearing his comeback, she felt a wave of relief. It looked like Alexander really didn’t care about Elizabeth anymore. Esme’s lips curled into a confident smile, determination gleaming in her eyes. Elizabeth caught her look, and they both dove into the competition.

Elizabeth eyed the distant bole, feeling oddly calm. Even though Joseph was usually the cool and collected type, the tension had him on edge. “Elizabeth is your wife, Mr. Tudor. Seeing you cozy with your new flame must sting,” Joseph couldn’t resist poking at Alexander.

“In the mood for your date now?” Alexander shot back. Joseph chuckled. “Alexander, Elizabeth can’t play golf to save her life. She’ll lose for sure! You really don’t care if she kisses another guy?” Their feelings were dead, but the divorce wasn’t final. How could he stand his wife kissing a stranger? Alexander’s face stayed blank, eyes unreadable.

Chapter 29 (continued)

“Or have you and Ms. Russell already...” Joseph let his words hang, staring hard at Alexander. “Joseph, out of respect for Landon, I’m cutting you some slack. Know your place,” Alexander snapped. Joseph frowned but didn’t argue. Alexander’s mood soured as he watched the game.

Elizabeth missed her first two shots. Esme, on the other hand, was on fire, sinking three out of five. Every time she scored, she shot a look at Elizabeth, clearly trying to rattle her. Elizabeth stayed calm, but sweat dotted her forehead. Her third shot missed too. Alexander felt a surge of irritation. Joseph’s words echoed in his mind – *Alexander, Elizabeth can’t play golf. She’ll lose! Do you really not care if she kisses another guy?*

Why did she insist on playing if she sucked at it? Had she not improved since high school? All she does is show off! he thought. “Elizabeth, why don’t you just give up?” Esme whispered. Elizabeth ignored her and took her fourth shot, missed again.

Chapter 30

“Take it easy. Don’t rush,” Joseph said to Elizabeth.

Chapter 30

“Take it easy. Don’t rush,” Joseph said to Elizabeth. Elizabeth nodded and smiled at him. Alexander was stunned by her bright smile aimed at another man, but he quickly shook it off. Since when did I start caring about Elizabeth? “Shouldn’t I be focusing on Esme right now?” he thought.

Esme nailed the ball, every move sharp and smooth. Years of golf will do that. Alexander snapped back to reality and clapped. “Esme, you’re incredible.” Esme blew him a kiss, giggling. “Love you, Alexander!”

Elizabeth, trying to concentrate, couldn’t ignore Esme’s words. They made her stomach churn. In the end, Elizabeth only got two balls in. Esme tossed her club, sipped some water, and declared, “You lost.”

“I accept,” Elizabeth said calmly, wiping her hands. Alexander watched her leave. Is she really gonna kiss some guy just because Esme said so? he wondered. Esme pulled him up, grinning. “Alexander, let’s watch the show!”

But Alexander couldn’t smile; he was getting more and more uneasy. Elizabeth looked up as a young waiter walked in with a tray of water. At least he was young. Kissing him didn’t seem like a big deal.

Joseph stepped up. “Elizabeth, you don’t always have to keep a promise...”

“It’s just a game. If Ms. Russell wants to play, I’ll see it through,” Elizabeth smiled at Joseph, then looked at Alexander. “Mr. Tudor loves his fiancée so much. He wouldn’t let me break my promise.”

Esme lifted her chin, looking all smug and ready to gloat. She was loving this moment of triumph. Alexander stared at Elizabeth with a frosty glare, the tension around him thickening.

“Mr. Tudor’s a gentleman. Plus, you’ve been married for three years. Just laugh it off and don’t take the bet seriously,” Joseph tried to smooth things over.

Chapter 30

Elizabeth glanced at Alexander, her eyes too calm, almost taunting him, making his mood even darker. If Elizabeth would just back down, he could help her out of this mess! If only she’d call out to him, he’d step in!

Elizabeth cut off the waiter. “Hello, Ms. Percy. Need any help?” The guy smiled, his voice smooth. Elizabeth’s lips curled slightly, her eyes locked on him as she softly asked, “Can I kiss you?”

The guy froze, caught off guard. Alexander’s brows knitted, his fists clenching, thinking she was out of her mind. Elizabeth glanced at Alexander, her eyes cold. She stood on her toes, hands on the guy’s shoulders, and whispered, “Excuse me.”

Just as she was about to kiss him, her wrist was grabbed, and she was yanked away. “That’s enough.” Alexander’s voice was low and rough, seething with anger. Elizabeth’s lashes fluttered as she lazily stepped back, locking eyes with Alexander. She looked cool and unbothered, like she had everything under control. But Alexander’s face was dark, radiating tension. Esme’s smile froze,

staring at Alexander in shock. She'd been enjoying the show, but he just shut it down.