

# Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 151 Falling Hard Elowen was walking too fast. Alaric only managed to catch the edge of her cloak. Finished He was already angry. When he pulled her back, he did not hold his strength at all. The packed earth of the yard was uneven, rutted from drills and horses. Elowen was not expecting it. Her footing slipped. And at that exact second, Alaric let go. Elowen lost her balance completely and hit the ground. Her right palm scraped hard across gravel, a raw burn flaring through her skin. Her wrist twisted beneath her weight, and a sharp, blinding pain shot up her arm.

"Your Grace!" Gerda cried. Gerda hurried over, pale with fright, reaching to lift her. "Gerda, wait, don't move me," Elowen said. She was still sitting on the ground. A thin layer of sweat formed on her forehead. Her face had drained of color, and her voice trembled in spite of herself. "My wrist's out." Alaric paused, then gave a short, disbelieving laugh. "Oh, come on. You tripped. That doesn't dislocate a wrist." She used to climb trees and dive into the river like it was nothing. Back then, he would struggle just to swing himself onto a horse.

Elowen could plant a foot and vault up one smooth motion, landing steady in the saddle. Now she falls once and suddenly her wrist is out. As if. She had to be doing this on purpose. Another scene, just to pull his attention back to her. "You've got something wrong with you," Elowen muttered through her teeth. Alaric frowned. "What did you say?" Elowen lifted her face and glared at him. Her eyes were faintly red. "I said there's something wrong with you, Alaric. Every single time I run into you, something blows up in my face. You're a walking curse." Alaric froze. She's cursing me.

She actually has the nerve to curse me. Heat rushed to his head. He strode forward two steps, ready to call out her ridiculous lie to her face. Then he saw her wrist clearly. in Elowen was still seated on the ground, her left hand supporting her right arm. Her right hand hung limp, bent at an unnatural angle. 1/3 2:38 pm Ppp. Chapter 151 Falling Hard This was not an act. It really was dislocated. 9440 Finished Alaric stopped dead. The sarcasm and accusations that had been ready on his tongue would not come out. "How did it get this bad?" Gerda's voice shook. She truly liked Elowen.

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Elowen sniffed and lowered her head. She had been sturdy since childhood. In the dead of winter she could run wild outside all day in a light dress and never catch a cold. She once jumped down from a wall several yards high with Julian. Her calves hurt for a bit, then she was perfectly fine. But ever since her knee injury, she had stopped riding. She went out less. Moved less. Slowly, her body weakened. Especially these past two years. One loss after another at Hale family. Some died in battle. Some left. Some passed from illness.

Elowen shut herself in her room for days at a time, barely able to eat. She had grown much thinner. How could she still be the same as before: "I'll go tell Duke of Duskmoor. Gerda said, already turning. "No." Alaric snapped, coming back to himself. Gerda did not intend to listen. But Elowen spoke at the same time. 'Don't go. Gerda." Gerda turned back, anxious. "But Your Grace, your wrist..." Elowen forced out a small smile. 'He's in council. It looks urgent. They need a decision fast. I already stepped in once and interrupted them.

Going in again wouldn't be appropriate." "But you're hurt!" "I'm hurt," Elowen said evenly, "but that doesn't outweigh military business. And he's not a surgeon. Even if he comes out, he can't set a bone! Gerda fell silent Everything Elowen said was reasonable. Too reasonable. A girl her

age, getting hurt like this, how is she not supposed to feel wronged? Or has she swallowed so much already that this does not even faze her anymore? Elowen turned to a guard nearby. "There should be a field surgeon in camp. Please have him come The guard acknowledged and left at once.

Gerda carefully helped Elowen to her feet and guided her to a side room to rest. Watching them go. Alaric's first instinct was to follow. He took two steps, then stopped. 273 2:38 pm PPP.

Chapter 151 Falling Hard Her wrist being dislocated had nothing to do with him. He had already let go. She just lost her balance. 0440 Finished And even if it somehow did involve him, would she really let it slide like that? Alaric tightened his jaw. It's not my fault. Yet his brow only furrowed deeper. After some time, the doors to the council chamber opened.

Cassian was pushed out by Bran, commanders surrounding him. Their expressions were heavy as they discussed strategy in low voices. "This move is too risky." "Perhaps we should rethink it." Cassian sat straight in his chair, calm and detached. "No." The others exchanged helpless looks but said nothing more. Alaric stepped forward at once. "Uncle." The moment Cassian saw him, clear disappointment flashed across his face. Alaric blinked. Cassian asked lazily, "What is it?" "His Majesty sent me. There's an important letter. He instructed me to place it directly in your hands.

You were in council, so I waited outside." 1.7K T 1 admin

Chapter 152 Gathering Storm Finistied As he spoke, Alaric drew the letter from inside his coat. It had been tucked close to him for some time, still carrying his warmth. Cassian took it. faint distaste flickering across his face. Alaric stared at him, confused. Cassian recalled what he had said. "You were outside. Did you see your aunt?" Alaric's mind flashed to Elowen's limp wrist. A

thread of guilt tightened in his chest. He kept his expression steady and nodded. "I did." A guard nearby opened his mouth as if to report something.

Alaric noticed immediately and cut in, "Uncle." Cassian glanced at him. "Yes?" "His Majesty is waiting in the palace. Perhaps you could read it now, so I can report back." With Theodric invoked, there was little room to refuse. Cassian gave a short acknowledgment and unfolded the letter. The commanders and guards stepped back, careful not to glance at confidential matters.

Alaric quietly let out a breath. Cassian read through it. His expression did not change. He folded it again. "Tell His Majesty I understand. I already have a response in mind.

I will go to the palace later to discuss it with him." Alaric hesitated. "You won't send a written reply?" "No." "Then... would you consider going now? We could head back together." Cassian's gaze cooled. "Are you telling me how to manage my time?" Alaric lowered his head quickly.

"No, Uncle." "Then return," Cassian said coldly. "Don't linger in camp." He had no patience to spare. Elowen had come to the Northern Garrison to see him for the first time, even brought medicine herself. He did not intend to keep her waiting.

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And he certainly did not intend to look at her childhood companion any longer than necessary. Even if that companion was his own nephew, one more second might tempt him to throw the boy straight out the gate. 1/3 2:38 pm P pp. Chapter 152 Gathering Storm Alaric left without another word. His steps were quick, almost hurried. Finished Cassian noticed, but did not dwell on it. He secured the letter and asked a guard, "Where is Elowen?" "She's resting in the side room." Cassian nodded.

He was about to signal Bran forward when the field surgeon arrived in a rush, medical case in hand, bowing respectfully. Cassian's instincts sharpened. "Who's injured?" "Your Grace fell. I've come to examine her." Cassian frowned. "How did she fall?" The surgeon did not know. Cassian turned sharply to the guard. "Explain." Under the weight of that tone, cold sweat broke across the guard's back. "She was walking normally. His Highness suddenly grabbed her. She fell. Her wrist appears to be dislocated." Cassian stilled. Her wrist is dislocated. Because of Alaric?

He understood all at once why Alaric had tried to rush him back to the palace, and why he had walked away so fast, almost like he was running. At the time, it had struck him as odd. Now it all clicked. The kid had been rattled. Cassian's gaze went cold, the last trace of patience draining from his face. "Your Grace," Bran said carefully. "See Elowen first," Cassian replied through clenched teeth. Alaric could be dealt with later. Inside the room, Elowen sat quietly, staring at her dislocated wrist.

Gerda watched her with concern, unsure whether she was thinking about the Crown Prince or wondering when Cassian would arrive. In truth, neither. Elowen studied her wrist thoughtfully. Maybe my next heroine should be outrageously strong. The kind who can drop an or with one punch. If she ever runs into a walking curse, she could slam him straight into a stone wall and leave him embedded there. Footsteps sounded outside, accompanied by the soft roll of wheels. "Your Grace!" Gerda called, relieved. 23 Finished 2:38 pm ppp.

Chapter 152 Gathering Storm Elowen turned in surprise and met Cassian's cold, striking gaze. A flicker of unease rose in her chest. Instinctively, she tried to hide her wrist. The moment she moved, pain spiked sharply. She sucked in a breath. Cassian's brows drew tight. The surgeon stepped forward quickly and set down his case. "Your Grace, let me see your arm." Elowen

obediently extended it. After examining it, he said, "It needs to be set." He hesitated. "It will hurt. A lot." Gerda looked stricken. Elowen broke into a bright smile. "It's fine. A little pain won't scare me.

I've handled worse." 1.7K 。 admin

Chapter 153 Fractured Honor The army surgeon turned to Cassian for direction. Cassian's expression was shadowed, impossible to read. He tipped his chin slightly. "Do as she says." The surgeon sighed. "Yes, Your Grace." He began preparing to set the joint. Elowen stayed seated, posture straight, face calm. Watching her, the surgeon felt some of his tension ease. 9:00 Finished But standing not far away, Cassian lowered his gaze and noticed her left hand, partly hidden in the folds of her skirt. It was clenched tight, the knuckles drained white. She was scared. She just refused to show it.

Cassian's expression hardened. A crisp pop cut through the room. Not loud, not soft. The displaced joint slid back into place. Elowen swallowed the cry that rushed to her throat. Her face had gone pale, yet she managed a small, easy smile. "That wasn't as bad as I thought. Honestly, it barely hurt." The surgeon let out a short laugh. "Your Grace truly has grit. Not many ladies could sit through that without flinching." He then carefully explained what she needed to watch for in the coming days, how to apply ointment to the scrape on her palm, how to let the wrist heal properly.

Gerda listened intently, nodding again and again so she would not miss a word. When everything was said, the surgeon picked up his medical case. Cassian, who had remained silent until now, spoke evenly, "Gerda, walk him out." "Yes, Your Grace." "And the rest of you, step outside." Bran and the others obeyed at once. Soon, only Elowen and Cassian were left in the room. A

flicker of unease stirred in her chest. She studied his face, trying to read his mood. He looked grim. Was he angry? Why?

Was it because she had shown up at the garrison and interrupted serious discussions, only to trip and fall in front of everyone? That must have made Duskmoor Manor look careless. 143 Chapter 153 Fractured Honor Finished If Alaric hadn't dragged me around like that, none of this would've happened. Still, right now she had to apologize properly. She would be living under his protection from now on. She could not afford to upset him. "You..." Before Cassian could finish the word, she blurted, "I'm sorry!" Her tone was earnest, her expression just as sincere. Cassian blinked.

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"For what?" "I didn't mean to fall," she said softly. "Please don't be upset. I'll be more careful from now on. And if you'd rather I not come to the garrison again, I'll stay at Duskmoor Manor. I won't cause trouble." Her smile held a faint note of apology. Cassian's face did not soften. If anything, his brow drew tighter. "I am angry," he said. She knew it. A wave of worry washed over her. How was she supposed to fix this? "But I'm not angry at you." He looked straight at her. "Ella, why are you apologizing?" She froze. "You came to bring me medicine. That made me happy.

What I was discussing with them matters, yes. But you matter too. Those things don't cancel each other out." He narrowed his eyes slightly. "And Alaric was the one who grabbed you. He's the reason you fell and hurt your wrist. That wasn't your fault. Why are you taking it all on yourself?" Elowen stared at him, caught off guard. A sharp sting rose behind her eyes. She did not know how to describe the feeling. Since her parents and brother passed away one after another, no one had stood up for her like this.

In the life she remembered before, whether it was Alaric or Isla, whenever something went wrong, somehow it ended up being her fault. Over time, she had gotten used to it. No matter what happened, she apologized first. The faint roll of wheels drew closer as Cassian moved in front of her. "There's something else," he said. She looked up at him. His eyes were steady. "Ella, you don't have to act tough." 2/3 Chapter 153 Fractured Honor "I'm not acting," she replied instinctively. "I'm Clement's daughter. I shouldn't be afraid of pain." Cassian actually smiled.

"Clement's daughter isn't human?" Firushed He tilted his head slightly. "Look at me. I'm His Majesty's most trusted brother. People call me ruthless. But if someone runs me through with a blade, I bleed like anyone else." She had no answer to that. "Give me your hand." She lifted her right hand obediently. Cassian took the ointment from the table and spread it gently across the scrape on her palm. His movements were careful, almost painstakingly so. Just last night, he had been tending to her injuries too. She had married into Duskmoor Manor to live comfortably.

Why did she keep ending up hurt? A husband who could not shield his wife from harm had failed her. After applying the ointment, Cassian leaned closer and blew lightly over her palm. She was about to thank him when he set the jar aside first. "Let's go." She blinked. "Go where?" He gave her a faint smile. "To the palace." It took her a second to understand. She shook her head. He lifted one brow. "You don't want to?" She nodded seriously. "You're His Majesty's brother. Of course you're close. But Alaric is His Majesty's son, and the heir of the Crown Prince's Wing.

If you bring me to the palace and tell His Majesty that Alaric caused my injury, he might scold him for your sake. But that would embarrass His Highness, and it would reflect poorly on His Majesty as well." 1.7K 3/0 ( admin

Chapter 154 Quiet Resolve Cassian studied her for a moment. "You're worried about me.", Realizing that seemed to lift his mood. A subtle smile touched his lips. Finished She continued, "It was only a dislocated wrist. It's already set. I really don't want this to strain the bond between you and His Majesty because of me." Though they were brothers, there was still the line between ruler and subject. Even blood brothers could turn against each other. Power made everything more fragile. She would not gamble with that. Cassian had treated her well. She wanted him safe. And if anything happened to him, Duskmoor Manor would be dragged into danger. As his duchess, what kind of future would she have then? "So," she said gently, "let's just go back to Duskmoor Manor." Cassian shook his head faintly. "No rush. We're heading to the palace first." Her shoulders drooped. "Why?" He looked at her. "Ella, do you remember Lieutenant Wrenner?" "Yes," she said quietly. "He's been held in Nordia for years." Not long ago, Rowena had brought Elara to Vanelle because of him. Cassian continued, "Rowena told me she received a letter from him.

On the surface, it looked like a simple message saying he was safe in the north and encouraging them to join him in Nordia. But hidden inside were coded signals." At the words coded signals, Elowen quickly covered her ears. Cassian's lips curved slightly. "What are you doing?" "If I hear something confidential, that's not good." He raised a brow. "You think covering your ears will stop you from hearing?" She hesitated. "Well..." He gently lowered her hands. "And don't move around so much. Your wrist isn't fully healed" His gaze lingered on her injured palm. His voice softened.

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"It's fine if you know." He explained plainly. "According to the code, Lieutenant Wrenner believes he has a chance to escape back to Avenlor. He wants my help." 1/3 2.38 pm Chapter

154 Quiet Resolve Finished Her eyes widened. "These past few days, I've been busy because of this. I've been working through every possibility with the generals. First, we have to guard against a trap from Nordia. Second, we need to decide who rides north to meet him." "Then what did you decide?" she asked. "Who's going?" Cassian did not answer directly. Instead he said, "We're going to inform His Majesty."

The note Alaric delivered earlier was about this. I need to report in person." She paused. "Then you should go. I'll return to Duskmoor Manor." He did not release her wrist. His thumb brushed lightly across her skin. "But I don't want to go alone." A faint warmth spread through her chest. "Come with me?" His voice was low, almost coaxing. She drew in a slow breath. "All right." She stood and pushed him outside. "But once we're there, you're not telling on Alaric." A hint of amusement flickered in his eyes. "I won't." Only then did she relax. They rode in a carriage toward the palace.

By the time they arrived, dusk was nearly over. Inside the study, Theodric was buried under stacks of reports, rubbing his temple with clear frustration. When Quin announced that Cassian and his duchess had arrived, Theodric's expression brightened immediately. "Quick, send them in." Elowen pushed Cassian into the study and started to offer a formal greeting. Theodric beat her to it with a long sigh. "You're finally here. Look at this. What am I supposed to do with these reports?" He waved a document in Cassian's direction. "This one has spent three months asking if I'm in good health.

If I weren't, I'd have handed matters to Alaric already. What a waste of parchment." He grabbed another sheet. "And this one wrote just to say his daughter-in-law had a big, healthy baby boy" Elowen blinked, caught off guard. Cassian, however, sounded calm. "That would be the perfect

of Rivenshire." Theodric looked up in surprise. "How did you know?" "Last time I was here, Your Majesty mentioned his daughter-in-law was about to give birth. He didn't know whether it would be a grandson or granddaughter and was anxious." 213 Chapter 154 Quiet Resolve Theodric nodded in realization. "Right.

That's him." He dipped his pen in ink with a faint snort. "All day long, they fill pages with nonsense." Elowen silently worried for the prefect. He's about to get scolded, isn't he? Theodric began writing. "In that case, congratulations." Elowen froze. His Majesty is congratulating him? 1.7K Finished 3F3 admin

Chapter 155 Gift Talk Finished Theodric finished writing, set the pen aside, and glanced at Cassian. "By the way, when someone has a healthy baby boy, what's the right kind of gift?" Elowen blinked. Wait...he's sending a gift too?Wasn't His Majesty just complaining they were a headache? Cassian shook his head. "I wouldn't know." Theodric looked at Elowen instead.

"What do you think?" She didn't expect to be included. She paused, then answered a beat late, "I..." She cleared her throat and corrected herself, "I'm not really sure. Usually...

you give what you can afford." Theodric rubbed his chin, thinking it over. "Alright. Send a silver amulet for the baby." Cassian smiled. "That's thoughtful, Your Majesty." Elowen was still trying to process everything. The way Theodric and Cassian acted around each other in private was nothing like she had imagined. Not even close. "So." Theodric said, setting the memorials aside, "what brings you two here tonight? Dinner's almost ready. ( You here to steal a meal?" "Not this time." Cassian's smile was faint. "It's about Lieutenant Wrenner." 4 Theodric's expression turned serious. "Right.

I had Alaric deliver my letter. What's your answer?" I've discussed it with them. In a few days, I'll head north myself." Elowen's fingers tightened slightly. She lowered her gaze toward Cassian. He's going himself? "With your leg like that?" Theodric frowned. "We can send someone else." "I don't trust anyone else," Cassian said evenly. "And neither do you. Lieutenant Wrenner is too important." Theodric pressed his brow, silent. Elowen was still stunned that Cassian intended to go to Nordia in person when he added calmly. While I'm gone, I'll have to trouble you to keep an eye on her.

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She gets hurt far too easily Theodric raised a brow. "Oh?" 2:38 pm ppp. Chapter 155 Gift Talk Only then did he notice her hand. What happened?" Cassian's tone was casual. Nothing major. His Highness grabbed her, she fell." Theodric's voice sharpened. "He did what?" Elowen instinctively hid her right hand behind her back, about to say she was fine. Cassian spoke first. "It's not serious. Her right wrist was dislocated, and she scraped her palm." Theodric frowned hard. "And you call that not serious?" Finished Cassian's voice stayed calm. "Ella grew up in Hale Manor.

Her father and her brother fought in real battles. The wounds they've taken, the blood they've lost, are far worse than this. Compared to that, what she suffered today is minor." Theodric's expression tightened. The Hale family had bled for him, for Avenlor. If he watched his own son mistreat her and did nothing, even took his son's side, what kind of ruler would that make him? If word spread, who would stay loyal? Who would still march north and risk their life? "Quin His voice was firm. "Bring Alaric here." After Quin left. Theodric turned back to Elowen, his tone gentler. "Don't worry.

"I'll handle this fairly. If he crossed a line and caused this. I won't let it slide." At this point, Elowen could only thank him. She tilted her head slightly and glanced at Cassian. Cassian leaned back in his chair, the faintest curve at the corner of his mouth. Theodric looked between them and seemed to recall something. "Right." Cassian lifted his gaze. "There's something I need to ask you." "Of course, Your Majesty." Theodric cleared his throat. "It's important. Come inside" Cassian inclined his head.

Elowen stepped forward to wheel him in, but Theodric had already risen. Ter got hum She hesitated. That didn't feel appropriate. Theodric waved it off. "Relax. When he was Imle and soaked through his clothes was the one who cleaned him up and changed him." Elowen stared. "Oh..." 2.38 pm ppp. Chapter 155 Gift Talk Finished Cassian let out a quiet laugh. His brother really has no filter. "Your hand's still injured. Sit and rest." Theodric instructed her, then motioned for attendants to look after her before wheeling Cassian into the inner chamber. Elowen remained outside, thoughtful.

She had to admit, their relationship as brothers... was much closer than she had ever imagined. An attendant brought warmed wine. Elowen wrapped her hands around the cup and took a slow sip. If I'm not allowed in, it must be something major. Theodric didn't bother easing into it. "You and your wife haven't shared a bed yet, have you?" Cassian went silent. Theodric studied him. "Don't tell me you haven't even held hands." Cassian defended himself immediately, "We have." Theodric rubbed his chin. "So just holding hands. Nothing else." 1.7K 。 1 admin

Chapter 156 Private Matter Finished Cassian looked away, suddenly very quiet. Theodric narrowed his eyes. "Didn't you study what I gave you?" The Art of Intimacy. A perfectly useful guide. Cassian shifted his gaze. "I did." "But haven't actually put it into practice." Cassian said

nothing. Theodric let out a short, incredulous laugh. This brother of his had a face that could stop traffic, and yet here he was playing the slow, innocent route. Married this long and still nothing. It was honestly painful to watch. "Here's what's going to happen," Theodric decided.

"You're heading north to bring Lieutenant Wrenner back. Once you return, set military matters aside for a while. Take care of things at home first." The wine was rich and fragrant. Before she realized it, Elowen had already drunk more than half the cup. Theodric and Cassian still hadn't come out, but footsteps echoed from the doorway first. Elowen turned and met Alaric's cold, irritated stare. He walked in, voice edged. "Back again." There was no respect in his tone. Especially that again. It made her stomach tighten. Truthfully, she didn't want to be alone with him.

It always felt like something bad was about to happen. She stayed seated, eyes lowered to her wine, not responding. Alaric didn't drop it. "I heard from Lord Jett you came here for me." Quin stood nearby, looking baffled. When did I ever say that? Elowen kept her gaze on the surface of the wine. "I came with Cassian. It has nothing to do with you. He's here to discuss official matters with His Majesty." "With him?" Alaric glanced around. "Then where is he?" "He's inside with His Majesty." Alaric scoffed. "You expect me to buy that? This isn't the first time you've done this.

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Using someone else's name to get me here." Elowen frowned slightly. Back when things hadn't fallen apart, they had been close. Alaric used to shut himself in his study, buried under dense, ancient texts. 2:38 pm ppp. Chapter 156 Private Matter 0191 Finished She knew how much pressure he was under. She had tried to cheer him up, sometimes even borrowing someone else's

name just to get him out for a break. At first, he had laughed, ruffling her hair. "Ella, you're a genius." Later, he stopped smiling.

He would only frown and say, "Stop putting me in this position." And now, she had done nothing, yet he was already blaming her. "I'm about to marry Daphne," Alaric said, his tone mocking though he wore a smile. "This kind of messy attachment isn't good for either of us. Even if you disapprove, it's happening. And let's not forget, you were the one who insisted on marrying Cassian. Regret it now? Too late." He actually sounded pleased. Elowen was about to snap back when she noticed shadows moving behind him. Theodric and Cassian were still inside. They could hear every word.

She swallowed her anger. "His Majesty summoned you. I didn't use anyone's name." "Oh?" Alaric stared at her. "Then tell me, why did His Majesty call me?" "He heard you caused my injury. He wants to know what happened." Alaric's face darkened. "You falling had nothing to do with me. Now you're blaming me and running to him?" "It wasn't me," Elowen said firmly. Alaric let out a cold laugh. "Not you? What, Uncle Cassian went and complained? You think he'd stoop to that? A low chuckle sounded behind him. The voice was unmistakable.

Alaric's spine went rigid, a cold sweat breaking out across his back. He turned slowly. Cassian sat in his chair at the entrance to the inner chamber. Behind him stood Theodric, anger clear on his face. Alaric's legs nearly buckled. "Your Majesty... Uncle Cassian..." "It was me," Cassian said calmly. "She was hurt badly. When His Majesty asked what happened, I couldn't lie. I told him." Alaric froze. That did not sound like an apology.

"You pushed her at the training grounds and ran off," Cassian continued evenly "I should've realized you didn't want His Majesty to know." 273 2:38 pm Chapter 156 Private Matter 1.7K

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Chapter 157 Gate Of Shame Alaric tried to argue, "I didn't..." 0 Firouhed Cassian sighed, cutting him off, "You called me a gossip, fine, I'll take that one. In a few days I'm riding out on a long trip, and I might not come back alive. Can you forgive me?" Alaric's face went red, then white. "Uncle, I..." "Own up and apologize!" Theodric barked. Alaric did not dare hesitate. He dropped hard to both knees in front of Cassian. Cassian turned to Theodric and spoke like he was trying to smooth the whole mess over, "Alaric is the Crown Prince, so don't come down too heavy on him.

Today he only made my wife's wrist slip out of joint, and afterward he refused to admit it. If he's taught properly, he'll learn. Before this, whenever he saw my wife, he always called her by her name. Today he even knew to address her as his aunt. It was just that what he said was a little odd, telling her not to regret marrying me, and calling me a gossip." The last part landed with a sting. Sweat broke out on Alaric's back. He wanted to throw himself forward and clap a hand over Cassian's mouth. Please, just stop talking. Theodric's frown tightened, tighter, tighter. Finally.

Theodric's face went flat and cold. "You, get out there and stay on your knees." Alaric jerked his head up. "Father... what does that mean?" Theodric's tone was heavy and final. "Go outside to the Royal Meridian Gate. Stay there for two full hours. No one is allowed to speak for you. Without my order, you do not get up." Alaric looked stunned. The Royal Meridian Gate sat at the

very center of the palace grounds, the passage linking the outer court and the inner residences. Servants and officials passed through it all day, countless people.

To be kept on his knees there for two hours, his legs would be ruined, and his dignity as Crown Prince would be ground into the stone in front of everyone. "Did you not hear me, or did you not understand me?" Theodric said, looking down at him. Alaric lowered his head, fear prickling along his scalp. He did not dare defy Theodric. He clenched his jaw, forced himself up, and walked out. Outside the Royal Meridian Gate, Alaric drew in a deep breath, swept his coat aside, and dropped to his knees. People came and went beside him. He could feel their looks landing on him.

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It felt like pins in his back sharp and humiliating. 2:38 pm ppp. Chapter 157 Gate Of Shame He did not dare blame Theodric. He did not dare blame Cassiah either. 01 7141 Finished Elowen... this is all Elowen's fault. Why is she so fragile that one pull sends her stumbling? And fine, she falls, but how does her wrist just pop out like that? Now I'm the one dealing with the fallout. Good thing I never married her, or I'd be stuck with this kind of bad luck for the rest of my life. Elowen was still shocked that Theodric had punished Alaric so harshly.

"Elowen, today was that boy's fault." Theodric said, earnest and direct. "You were wronged. I will find a way to make it up to you." "You're too kind," Elowen said, trying to refuse. Theodric insisted, "It is not some priceless treasure." Not priceless? Elowen did not believe him. A moment later, Elowen stared at the set of gilded gemstone regalia the attendants presented with both hands, and she nearly lost her composure. This was clearly even more valuable than the ivory scepter from last time. Cassian lifted a brow. "That set belonged to Isolde, didn't it?" Theodric nodded.

"I knew you would remember." Cassian's mouth tilted slightly. Back when they were still princes, their mothers had only been consorts, and the empress in the central palace had been Isolde. Under Isolde's roof, the two brothers had swallowed plenty of grievance. After Theodric took the throne and Isolde passed away, the set was stored away in the palace treasury. Elowen heard that and immediately waved her hands, stumbling over her words, "This, this, this is too precious, I can't accept it..." "How can you not, Theodric said. "I already had them bring it out." Elowen thought for a moment.

"If you truly want to compensate me, could you grant me one request instead?" "Oh?" Theodric asked. "What request?" Elowen told him plainly. After he heard it, Theodric laughed out loud. "That is a good thing I will grant it Elowen's eyes curved with relief. "Thank you" Theodric lifted his chin. "And you will take the regalia set as well Elowen could not smile anymore. 2 D Chapter 157 Gate Of Shame 0471 Finished Cassian chuckled softly. "Give it to me, I'll hold on to it. Don't take offense, she's a little shy." Elowen's heart jumped. Theodric laughed warmly beside them.

"Fine." Elowen dropped her head, mortified. On the way back, Cassian looked completely at ease as he asked, "You don't like gilded gemstone regalia?" Elowen shook her head. "It is not that I don't like it..." The set was stunning, every piece exquisite. But it was not like the ivory scepter. That ivory scepter, if Elowen ever separated from Cassian, she could sell it and turn it into coin. This set was too precious, and it had once belonged to Isolde. Even if she dared to sell it, no one would dare to buy it. Then it would just sit in her hands forever.

Elowen weighed her words, then tried again. "With my station, wearing this doesn't feel right."

1.7K 2 373 2:38 pm admin

Chapter 158 Cloak And Crown Finished "You don't have to wear the whole set," Cassian said, his tone easy and unhurried. "Pick one piece. It's enough. You're beautiful. Gold and gems were made for you." Elowen paused. In all her memories, this was the first time Cassian had ever called her beautiful. She suddenly remembered what he had said before, that the one he cared about was her. And now he was saying she was beautiful. Maybe... she and Cassian would not part ways after all. Inside the palace, word that Alaric had been forced to remain on his knees at the Royal Meridian Gate spread fast.

When Isla heard, she slammed a cup onto the floor. It shattered. "What?" she demanded. A maid lowered her head. "They say the Crown Prince caused the Duchess of Duskmoor to injure her wrist. When His Majesty learned of it, he was furious. He forbade anyone from speaking on the Crown Prince's behalf and ordered him to remain outside the Royal Meridian Gate for two full hours." Isla's brows drew tight, anger flashing in her eyes. "The Duchess of Duskmoor again." Every time Elowen was involved, nothing good followed.

Isla turned sharply, her long skirt sweeping behind her as she strode out with her attendants to find Theodric. Theodric was seated at his desk reviewing state papers. When a servant announced Isla's arrival, he did not even look up. "I said two hours. No one is to plead for him, including Isla." Isla's eyes were red. "Your Majesty, Alaric is your own son. Two hours like that, what if he injures his legs? What if he cannot stand properly afterward?" Theodric finally raised his head. "Because he is my son, and because he is the Crown Prince, I must discipline him.

Today's punishment is for his own good." Isla clenched her fingers, then forced herself to speak. "Or is it not about discipline at all? Is it because you fear angering Cassian?" Theodric's gaze sharpened. "What did you just say?" Isla realized she had gone too far. She pressed her lips

together and stayed silent. Theodric stared at her. "You believe I punished Alaric because I do not dare offend Cassian?" Isla did not answer. Her silence was answer enough. 2:38 pm PPP.

Chapter 158 Dipak And Clown Finished Cassian's military record was unmatched.

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In court and beyond it, his prestige ran high, sometimes even higher than Theodric's. Theodric set down his pen and gave a cold laugh. "Yes, I fear Cassian." Isla froze. "If not for Cassian, the unrest would not have been settled so quickly." Theodric said, his voice hardening. "The moment he fell unconscious, the garrison fell into chaos. Those cousins and distant relatives you recommended, was a single one of them capable? They even siphoned off military funds. When Cassian woke, the first thing he did was use his own silver to cover the deficit. How could I not fear that?"

Without Cassian, I do not know if this throne would remain secure, or if this realm could even be defended." Isla's confidence faltered. Her tone softened. "Even so... the punishment was too severe." "Severe?" Theodric's voice grew colder. "He caused the Duchess of Duskmoor to fall, her wrist was dislocated, and he refused to admit it. He slipped back into the palace ahead of her. When I summoned him to answer for it, what did he say? He told the Duchess of Duskmoor not to regret marrying Cassian. He called Cassian a gossip. A Crown Prince speaking like that.

Tell me, should I punish him or not?" Isla's expression changed. "He truly said she would regret it?" "I heard it myself," Theodric said. "Do you think I would lie?" "I would not dare." Isla replied. Theodric let out a quiet breath. "As compensation, I bestowed the gilded gemstone regalia upon the Duchess of Duskmoor." Isla's eyes widened. That set. She had seen it before. Lavish, intricate, rare. She had once assumed it would one day be hers. Instead, it had gone to

Elowen. A duchess wearing ornaments more precious than her own. "She is young, yet sensible," Theodric continued.

"She even attempted to decline the gift. Unlike Alaric. He is no longer a child, yet he still acts without thinking." Hearing her son criticized, Isla felt a sharp sting in her chest. She forced a tight smile. "Your Majesty is right." "From today on, the Crown Prince will be instructed directly by me," Theodric said. "You focus on preparing his betrothal to the Garrett family." Isla bit down on her frustration. "Yes, Your Majesty." Theodric's anger subsided slightly. He returned his attention to the documents on his desk. Isla did not leave immediately. After a brief pause, she spoke again.

"In a few days, it will be the day of Alaric's formal betrothal." 2/3 2:38 pm Chapter 158 Cloak And Crown Finished Theodric did not look up. "I ask for Your Majesty's permission," Isla said carefully. "Allow Maerwyn to attend her brother's betrothal banquet." "No." The refusal came instantly. Isla hesitated, then tried another approach. "Then what of Marwen? She may be foolish and has offended Your Majesty before, but she is Aldric's lawful wife. She bore him children, and she is family by marriage.

For Alaric's betrothal, she ought to be invited." Compared to Maerwyn, Marwen mattered far less. Theodric barely paused. "Since I have entrusted this matter to you, decide as you see fit."

1.7K 1 373 2:38 pm ppp. admin

Chapter 159 Nightfall A subtle curve lifted at Isla's lips. "Yes." Finisher At Duskmoor Manor, night had settled in, and Elowen had nearly finished reviewing the ledgers when Mira stepped in from the courtyard, carrying a tray. Just as Cassian had instructed, a small dish of honey sat beside the cup of medicine. Elowen took a sip of the dark brew, then dipped a spoon into the

honey and tasted it, going back and forth until the cup was empty. "What about Cassian's?" she asked. Mira replied, "His needs a little longer on the stove, but it's almost done." Elowen rose from her seat.

"I'll go take a look." In the courtyard, the temporary kitchen was mostly assembled. For now, their medicine was being simmered there. When Elowen arrived, she saw the clay stove bubbling steadily, the pot rolling with thick, rhythmic blips. Once it was ready, the liquid was poured into a large bowl. Steam curled upward in heavy waves, the sharp bitterness obvious from the smell alone. Elowen offered, "I'll bring it to him." Her wrist still had not fully recovered from the dislocation, so although she insisted on going, it was Mira who carried the bowl.

Elowen picked up a small dish of honey instead. It was mild and easy enough for her to manage. At this hour, Cassian was still in the study. When Elowen reached the doorway, she saw him seated at the desk, head bent over a book, completely absorbed. He turned a page. Something caught his attention. His brows drew together slightly as he paused, thinking. Elowen stepped inside quietly, not calling his name. As she neared the desk, her eyes skimmed over the open pages. It looked like illustrations. Two figures intertwined in a rather unconventional position.

Before she could get a clearer look, Cassian closed the book in one swift motion. On the cover were the words, *The Chronicle of Kingdoms*. Elowen tilted her head. She had read that book before. There were no illustrations like that in her copy. So what exactly was he reading, and why didn't it match the version she knew? "What brings you in?" Cassian asked, one hand resting casually atop the closed book. 173 2:38 pm ppp. Chapter 159 Nightfall 0:00 Finished Elowen forced her attention away from it. "Your medicine's ready, so I brought it." His expression softened.

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"Ella, you always take care of me." She smiled, a little shy. Mira stepped forward, set the bowl down, then quietly withdrew. "It's still warm," Elowen said. "Go ahead." Cassian picked up the bowl without hesitation, just as he had earlier at the garrison, and drank it down in one steady swallow. Elowen watched him finish. "That bad?" Cassian nodded. "Yeah. Brutal." Elowen brightened and held out the small dish of honey. "Good thing I came prepared. Try some. It helps." Cassian glanced at the honey, then looked back at her, something shifting in his eyes.

"Ella, you know there's more than one way to get rid of that taste." She blinked. "Oh? Like what?" Cassian took her hand and gently drew her into his arms. Then he lowered his head and kissed her. Elowen froze for a split second before realization dawned. What he meant wasn't just the honey. It was her. The kiss was light, just a brief brush. When they parted, her cheeks were warm. "But Cassian, your mouth still tastes like medicine." He gave a quiet hum, dipped his fingers into the honey, and brushed a bit against her lips. His voice dropped.

"How about now?" There was still a faint bitterness lingering on her lips, but the sweetness melted instantly on her tongue. rich and bright, washing everything else away. While she was still savoring it, Cassian cupped her cheek and kissed her again. His tongue brushed lightly against hers, as though sharing the honey, or tasting her instead. That thought sent her heartbeat racing, heat spreading through her entire body. And then she remembered. They were still in the study. The door was still open. Elowen pressed her hand against his chest, trying to push him back a little.

But beneath her palm, his chest was relaxed yet solid, warm muscle yielding slightly under her touch. The unexpected sensation made her hesitate. In that brief pause, Cassian deepened the kiss. 213 pm Chapter 159 Nightfall Finished Her head spun. She couldn't fight back even if she

tried. She could only cling to him as he took control. And embarrassingly enough, it felt good. Her fingers tightened slightly, giving an unconscious squeeze. She had no sense of how long it lasted before he finally pulled away. The honey in her mouth was down to half.

She had no idea how much she had eaten herself, and how much he had stolen. Still flushed, she kept her eyes closed, licking her lips without thinking. "Enjoying that?" Cassian's voice was low, rough around the edges. It took her a moment to realize he was talking about what she had just done with her hand. Her face burned instantly. She turned her back to him and covered her cheeks. Cassian watched her, amusement in his tone. "I'm not complaining. Ella, I didn't spend all those years building this just to let it go to waste." Her voice came out small, thick with embarrassment.

"Cassian, please stop..." He knew she was thin-skinned when it came to teasing like this. If he pushed any further, she might actually bolt. 1.7K ◦ H admin

Chapter 160 Promises He let the teasing go. "It's late. You tired?" Finally, something normal. Elowen lowered her hands but kept facing away. "A little. I was going to head back after dropping off your medicine." Cassian nodded. "I'm about done too. I'll walk back with you. I need a few solid days of rest." A few solid days. Elowen suddenly remembered something important. She turned around. "Cassian, you..." "Yeah?" he asked, patient. She pressed her lips together. "When are you leaving to bring Lieutenant Wrenner back?" He didn't dodge it. "In a couple of days.

End of the month, most likely." "Oh." She nodded slowly. "That soon." Seeing the last of her blush fade, he reached for her hand. "You going to worry about me?" She gave a small nod. His

expression softened. He squeezed her fingers. "I'll be fine." She still looked uneasy. "Your leg isn't fully healed, and you're traveling that far. What about the medicine?" "Hugh's coming with me," Cassian said gently. "He'll take care of it." Her brows stayed faintly knit. Cassian lifted her hand and brushed a kiss over her knuckles. "Isn't the engagement banquet at the Crown Prince's Wing coming up?"

"I'll go with you." She nodded. "An uncle showing up for his nephew, that's only right." He snorted softly. "Who said I care about that kid? I'm going for you." Then he arched a brow. "You asked His Majesty for that favor today. You had a plan, didn't you?" She hadn't expected him to catch that. A little embarrassed, she nodded. She glanced at him cautiously. "Are you upset?" Cassian looked genuinely puzzled. "Why would I be?" "Because I didn't talk to you first," she said quietly. "I decided on my own." He smiled and brushed his thumb along her cheek. "Ella, I respect your decisions."

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I'm not going to be mad at you for thinking for yourself." 173 ( 2:38 pm ppp. Chapter 160

Promises She exhaled softly. Firdshed "And one more thing." He looked straight into her eyes.

"Remember who you are now. You're the Duchess of Duskmoor. There are barely a handful of people in this kingdom ranked above you. Say what you want. Do what you want. You don't

have to tiptoe around anyone." She stared at him, stunned. No one's ever said that to me before.

Everyone had called the Crown Princess position an honor. But no one knew how lonely she had been in the Crown Prince's Wing.

Sometimes she had felt less free than the staff who swept the halls. Then again. Alaric had never cared for her. Cassian was different. After a beat, his tone shifted. "There is one thing you're not allowed to do." She tilted her head. He held her gaze. "You're not allowed to ask me for a

separation." She stiffened, guilt flickering across her face. Forcing herself steady, she said, "I won't." Unless you're the one who gets tired of me. Unless you're the one who decides to let me go. Real love was rare. The kind that lasted a lifetime was even rarer. Maybe it didn't exist at all. One day.

Cassian might grow tired too. What she had to do now was guard her heart. That way, if things ever changed, she could walk away with her dignity intact. On the day of the engagement banquet, Mira and Cora helped Elowen get dressed. Cassian came by to check on her. A smile tugged at his lips. "Ella, you look unreal." She flushed. "Mira and Cora did all the work..." "What about the set His Majesty gifted you last time?" he asked. I put it away." As she spoke, Elowen leaned toward the mirror to apply her lip color. Cassian told Cora to fetch it before Elowen could stop her.

Cora returned with the jewelry set. Cassian selected the gold hairpin and carefully positioned it in Elowen's hair. She hesitated. "Cassian, isn't that a little flashy?" He slid it into place, calm and unhurried. "If the Duchess of Duskmoor doesn't get to shine, then no one does. He stepped back, studying her with softened eyes. "It suits you." 2:38 pm ppp. Chapter 160 Promises Elowen glanced at her reflection. It was clearly a royal piece, finer and more radiant than her other accessories. Still, it was only one hairpin. Elegant, not over the In the end, she let it stay. top.

Once ready, she and Cassian climbed into the carriage and set off for the Crown Prince's Wing. Halfway there, Elowen remembered something. "Isn't Marwen going too? I didn't see her." Finished Cassian replied lazily, "She probably left before sunrise and is already outside the gates, waiting for them to open." admin