

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 201 Unseen Elowen turned her face slightly and asked, "Where is the Crown Prince?"

42 Finished Cassian answered calmly, "That day I struck him hard enough that he lost consciousness and was carried back to the Crown Prince's Wing. He woke later that night, and His Majesty ordered ten strokes of the rod. He is covered in injuries now, running a high fever, recovering in the Crown Prince's Wing." "Recovering," Elowen repeated quietly, her eyes unfocused as if speaking to herself. "Still wrapped in silk and velvet. Still waited on by servants.

Still attended by the finest physicians and the most expensive medicines." Beaten once. Hit a few times. And that's enough for him to go on living like some pampered Crown Prince? She closed her eyes briefly, then asked, "Cassian... where is Aunt Elspeth?" "She has been staying at Duskmoor Manor these past two days," Cassian replied. Elowen looked startled. "She's here?" Cassian lowered his gaze. "She blames herself for not protecting you." Elowen was silent for a moment before saying softly, "Cassian, I would like to see her." "Now?" "Yes.

Now." Cassian studied her for a few seconds, then glanced toward Cora. "Go and invite her."

Before long, Elspeth arrived. Elowen looked up at her and thought she seemed thinner than before. "Ella..." Elspeth stood by the bed, wanting to step closer, to comfort her, to apologize, yet guilt crowded her thoughts and she did not know where to begin, Elowen managed a faint smile.

"Aunt, I'm all right. I slept for two days. I'm better now." The words made Elspeth's eyes redden at once, If Elowen had blamed her, she might have felt less burdened. Instead, the girl was the one offering reassurance.

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then how did you-" 2/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 201 Unseen Cassian did not look away. "I used my mouth." She froze. A faint flush rose to her pale cheeks. : A subtle curve touched his lips.

This, at least, looked more like the Elowen he knew. "Your Grace." Bran's voice came from outside, hesitant. "Her Majesty... has arrived." Elowen stopped mid-motion. 42 Finished Bran continued carefully, "Her Majesty says she has come specifically to visit the Duchess and has brought a rare aged mandrake root from the royal apothecary, hoping for Your Grace's swift recovery." Elowen's brows tightened. Isla rarely left the palace. She certainly would not lower herself to visit a duchess without cause. "On the day of the hunt, Isla was unwell and did not attend," Cassian explained evenly.

"But what happened still reflects upon her. Alaric is gravely injured and burning with fever. His Majesty has ordered that no one is to visit the Crown Prince's Wing except physicians, not even Her Majesty. She fears for her son's health, and she fears he may be stripped of his title." He continued, "She has come every day for the past two days. She wishes to ask for leniency." you Memories of that day tightened Elowen's throat. She closed her eyes. Her fingers curled into the sheets. "I don't want to see her." 1.8K H admin

Chapter 202 The Decision 0: Her eyes reddened as she looked at Cassian. "May we send her away?" "Yes," Cassian answered without hesitation. He turned to Bran. "Tell Her Majesty to return. Inform her it is my decision." Bran was not surprised. He bowed and withdrew. 42 Finished Elowen exhaled quietly. "Finish the medicine?" Cassian asked. She nodded and drank the rest obediently. Afterward she said, "I'd like to sleep a little longer." "All right," he replied.

She lay back down. Mira carefully tucked the covers around her. Soon she drifted into sleep. In her dream, she returned to childhood.

That summer had been unbearably hot. The palace had sent rare fruits, some brought from far-off lands at great expense. Her father had prized them greatly and decided to host a small feast so the family could share in the royal favor. Elowen had stolen several instead, wrapping them in cloth and bringing them to share with Ember. One for her, One for the horse. They ate until satisfied, Later, she wandered back lazily for a nap and encountered her mother investigating the missing fruit, She tried to slip away but was called to a halt. "Where have you just come from?" Elowen smiled brightly.

"I went to see Ember. It's terribly hot. Ember looked faint." Her mother arched a brow. "The palace sent fruit. Did you and Ember share some?" Elowen shifted. "That would be rather improper..." 1/3 14:28 Sat, Chapter 202 The Decision Finished Her mother laughed despite herself. "Improper? And yet you stole it?" Elowen blinked, puzzled how she had been discovered. Her mother snorted softly. "You forgot to wipe the juice from your clothes." Elowen gasped in dismay. She was ordered to pray alone in the chapel as punishment. She stood there in silence. Ember waited outside without moving.

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The servants watched with quiet amusement. "Miss and Ember truly share fortune and misfortune together." "General Hale tried to lead Ember away earlier and was nearly kicked." "In this world, Ember only listens to Miss." Elowen's throat tightened even in sleep. Tears slipped from the corners of her eyes. She heard a sigh. Not from her dream. From the room. A warm, rough thumb brushed gently across her cheek, wiping away her tears. She sniffed and opened her

eyes slowly. It was night. Pale moonlight filtered through the window, falling across Cassian's features. He was watching her closely.

"Did you have a nightmare..." he began softly. Before he finished, she threw herself into his arms. He stiffened briefly. Her body trembled against him. She was crying. Her tears soaked through his clothing, cold against his chest. A dull ache spread inside him. "It's my fault." If he had not left. If he had returned sooner. During the two days she lay unconscious, Elspeth had told him that while he was away, Elowen had thought of him constantly. On the day of the hunt, she had been so distracted thinking of him that she seemed lost in her own thoughts.

When he heard that, something inside him had twisted sharply. He had gripped the armrest of his wheelchair so hard that the wood warped beneath his 2/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 202 The Decision fingers. Later, he replaced the chair. 42 Finished Over the past two days, he had ordered many executions, believing it might ease her pain. It had not been enough. "Ella," he said quietly, his palm moving gently along her back, "tell me what would make you feel better." She lifted her head slowly, her face streaked with tears. "I..." Her voice trembled, unable to form the rest.

"What if," Cassian said steadily, "Alaric were stripped of his position as Crown Prince. Stripped even of his status as prince. Reduced to a commoner. Made to suffer. Then put to death." "Ella, if you nod, I will make it happen." Her fingers tightened in his clothing. Through blurred tears, she nodded firmly. Meanwhile, at the Crown Prince's Wing, Alaric's fever still had not broken, and no one dared to sleep, anxious for his recovery yet equally afraid he might truly fall from Theodric's favor. Inside the haze of fever and pain, his mind drifted in and out. Sweat covered his body.

"Ella!" He jolted upright in bed. Servants rushed forward at once, anxiously asking after him. He stared at them, breath uneven, unable to speak. After a long moment, he realized something impossible. He had... returned. Just moments ago, he had been in the Crown Prince's Wing. It was the third year after Elowen's death. On the very day Daphne was formally wed to the Crown Prince, she was caught in an affair. 1.8K ◦ 1 3/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 admin

Chapter 203 A Second Chance Finished Daphne had actually slept with a guard from the Crown Prince's Wing behind his back. Alaric flew into a rage. He immediately ordered a blood test to prove paternity, dragging out the boy he had believed to be his son with Daphne. The result was undeniable. The child was not his. Humiliated and furious, Alaric drew his sword and moved to kill Daphne on the spot. Knowing she had no defense left, Daphne dropped to the floor instead of begging. She started laughing. "Your Highness, don't you think you're pathetic?

The only one who ever truly loved you was Elowen. And she's dead because of you." "Shut your mouth," Alaric snapped. "When did I ever harm her?" Daphne let out a cold laugh. "Years of indifference. Years of grinding her down. You call that nothing? Did you never hear her crying? Did you never see her knee getting worse, see her limping with every step? She was just a girl. She died because she loved you. She died because she married you." Pressed hard by her words, Alaric coughed up a mouthful of blood. When he opened his eyes again, he was back years earlier.

The memories of his previous life rushed in. Regret and pain flooded his chest until it ached. The only person who had ever truly loved him was Elowen. And he had loved her too. Since childhood. When she married him, he had been happy. Truly happy. He had been a fool. He had

hurt her for years. Alaric clenched his jaw. Fortunately, he was still the Crown Prince. Given another life, he would make it right. He would win her back, His head burned with fever.

The memories were fragmented, He could recall pieces of his past life, but what year this was now, what exactly had happened recently, his mind was a blur. Why does my whole body hurt this bad? "Tristan." 1/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 203 A Second Chance Through clenched teeth, he forced the name out. Finished In his previous life, many had served him in the Crown Prince's Wing, but only Tristan had remained truly loyal. It had been Tristan who risked everything to tell him about Daphne's betrayal. Alaric trusted him.

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At this time, however, Tristan was not yet a prominent figure in the Crown Prince's Wing. He did not stand out. When the heir suddenly woke, a crowd rushed forward in concern. Tristan was pushed to the very edge, unable even to see Alaric clearly. Only when Alaric called his name did the crowd part. Tristan stepped forward, startled. "Your Highness?" Alaric asked directly, "What year is it?" Tristan replied, "Your Highness, it is the fifteenth year of His Majesty's reign." Year fifteen. That's the year Elowen marries into the Crown Prince's household. Relief flickered through Alaric.

"What month?" "The tenth month, Your Highness. It just began." If he remembered correctly, his wedding with Elowen had also been in the tenth month. It had rained heavily that day. He hated rainy days. He had taken it out on her. Thinking back now, shame rose in his chest. What does the weather have to do with her? On their wedding night, he had even ordered her to curl up and sleep on the floor beside the bed. The regret cut deep. But something did not add up. He did not recall falling gravely ill at the beginning of the tenth month in his previous life.

His body bore signs of having been beaten. Who would dare lay a hand on me? He voiced the question. "I can't remember clearly. Why am I this injured?" 2/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 203 A Second Chance 42 Finished Tristan answered carefully, "Your Highness, first the Duke of Duskmoor struck you. Later, His Majesty ordered ten strokes of the rod." Alaric frowned. "The Duke of Duskmoor?" In the last life, Uncle Cassian was still unconscious at this point. So why does he suddenly wake up and strike me? Unless... No. Rebirth was not something that happened lightly. He was the chosen one here.

If Cassian had also returned, he would be maneuvering for the throne, not earning Theodric's anger by striking the heir. That would only damage his standing. Tristan did not know what Alaric was thinking. He continued, "Though His Majesty was angered by what happened at the hunting grounds and punished Your Highness, you are still the heir. His Majesty is your father. Her Majesty has also been trying to smooth things over these past few days. His Majesty will eventually forgive you." Alaric's brows drew together.

It sounded as though he had done something foolish before regaining his memories and had earned Theodric's wrath. Fortunately, he was awake now. With the knowledge of a lifetime, he would ascend the throne faster and more smoothly than before. "Though His Majesty has forbidden Her Majesty from visiting the Crown Prince's Wing, she sent Hilda to deliver a message. The wedding is in a few days. That is the priority.

She asks that Your Highness follow the royal physician's instructions, take your medicine, and recover properly." Whatever the situation with Cassian, the thought of the wedding lifted Alaric's mood. 1.8K 。 1 admin

Chapter 204 Midnight Noodles He had already decided. Finished Even if rain poured down on the wedding day, even if his shoes and stockings were soaked, he would not lose his temper with Elowen. On their wedding night, he would brush her cheek and say, "Ella, you look beautiful today." She loved being praised. She would blush every time. A faint smile curved his lips. But his body hurt too much. He carefully lowered himself onto his stomach. The immediate priority was healing. Before drifting off, he called Tristan back. "There's something you need to handle.

It concerns the Duke of Duskmoor." At Duskmoor Manor, Elowen had finally stopped crying. A deep sense of gratitude rose in her heart. Thankfully, in this life, she had married Cassian. In the face of steady tenderness and love, even deep pain could be thinned out until it faded. Cassian's fingers were gentle as he wiped the last traces of tears from her face. Then, in the quiet stillness of the room, her stomach growled twice. It was so sudden it echoed in the silence. Elowen flushed red instantly and pulled the blanket over herself as if she could disappear.

Cassian's voice carried a hint of laughter. "Hungry?" From under the blanket, she gave a muffled, "Yes." "What do you want to eat?" "I'm not sure," His hand lightly tapped her head through the covers. "How about I send for something warm?" She blinked and peeked out, eyes wide.

"Cassian, you know how to cook?" "Picked it up," he said with a faint smile. "On the ride back with Lieutenant Wrenner, we were 1/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 204 Midnight Noodles 42 Finished talking. He told me that before his wife married him, she swore she would spoil him with her cooking.

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In the end, she never once set foot in the kitchens. He is the one who prepares her meals."

Elowen could not help smiling. "He said his pasta is her favorite. When she was expecting, she would always ask for a second helping." "That good?" Cassian nodded. "I picked up a few

tricks." He looked at her. "Want to try?" She nodded honestly. "Yes." Soon they were dressed. Elowen pushed Cassian out of the room. Four people were on night watch, Mira, Cora, Gerda, and Bran. After what had happened, everyone felt guilty. Some blamed themselves for failing to protect her. Others for not being present.

Gerda stepped forward. "Your Grace, where are you going this late?" "She is hungry," Cassian said calmly. "I'll wake the kitchen staff at once." "No need," Cassian replied. "She wants the pasta I make." Gerda froze. Since when does the Duke of Duskmoor cook? The small kitchen in the courtyard had only just been completed and was already in use. Elowen's medicine had been prepared there these past few days. Elowen nudged Cassian inside. Thinking of Gerda's expression, she hesitated.

"Have you ever set foot in a kitchen before?" "No." "So this is..." "My first time." She suddenly wondered whether she would actually get pasta tonight. Cassian looked composed. "I've always been quick to learn. Cooking won't defeat me." 2/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 204 Midnight Noodles She turned her head aside. He sounded entirely confident. "Ella, sit and wait." Elowen had indeed heard that Cassian was a prodigy. 42 Finished He remembered texts after a single reading. His essays were praised throughout the realm. In battle, he won nearly every campaign.

He commanded loyalty from soldiers and earned Theodric's deep trust. If he says he can do it, he probably can. She sat on a small stool and watched. Cassian began. Elowen rested her chin on her hands, elbows on her knees, observing him at the table. He seemed to be kneading flour. After a long moment, he spoke gravely. "Ella, this flour has gone bad." "What? How?" "Come look." She stood and stepped closer. One glance at the table and she paused. Cassian frowned

slightly. "See? It won't come together." She thought for a moment. "Is it possible that flour needs water?" Cassian looked at her.

"Water?" he repeated. "Lieutenant Wrenner didn't mention that." 1.8K M admin

Chapter 205 Burn The Fire 42 Finished Elowen played along, her tone light, "This is all Lieutenant Wrenner's fault. He clearly didn't teach you properly." She glanced at Cassian.

"Should I take over?" Cassian shook his head. "You're not fully recovered yet. And besides, tonight I said I would cook the pasta." Elowen pressed her lips together. She did not want to crush his confidence. "Alright." She helped him in the small kitchen, locating the water jar and a wooden ladle. When she found the jar, she also noticed a basin of dough resting nearby, already risen and ready to bake.

Her eyes lit up. "There's leftover dough from dinner." Cassian was pleased. He made a mental note to reward the cook generously the next day. "I know the rest," Cassian said confidently.

"Ella, you can go rest." Elowen nodded, though she was honestly worried he might set the kitchen on fire. She softened her tone. "But I've never seen you cook before. I kind of want to watch." Cassian had a soft spot for her voice. He did not refuse. Elowen stood to the side and watched him roll the pasta. His grip was strong.

The strands he pulled were even and smooth, neat enough that you tell they would cook well. could Next came boiling them. Cassian poured water into the pot and added the pasta. Elowen's expression slowly changed. "Cassian..." "Mm?" "You... forgot to light the fire." Cassian paused. Elowen tilted her head. "Lieutenant Wrenner forgot to teach you that part too, didn't he?" Cassian let out a short laugh. "No. He did, I just forgot." Elowen laughed with him. "Then let me handle it.

Boiling pasta is the easy part." 1/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 205 Burn The Fire 42 Finished

When Cassian still looked like he wanted to object, Elowen added gently, "Cassian, how about you manage the fire? If it gets low, you have to add wood right away. That part takes skill."

Takes skill? Only then did Cassian nod. While Elowen cooked, Cassian sat in his wheelchair, watching the stove. He glanced at the flames. Then at Elowen. She had pushed her sleeves up and was focused on stirring the pasta. Her eyes were lowered slightly, her profile calm and intent.

Something shifted in Cassian's chest. If I am not a duke, and she is not the daughter of Hale Manor, if we are just ordinary people... If Elowen marries me, maybe this is what our life looks like. His legs would be fine. He would work in the fields all day under a blazing sun, tired and sore, but the moment he thought of her, strength would come rushing back. He would return home at dusk, and she would cook for him. "Done." Elowen's bright voice broke his thoughts. She looked over and saw that he seemed distracted. She assumed he felt embarrassed about not knowing how to cook. She smiled.

"Cassian, everyone has their strengths. The kitchen might not be yours, but you are good at more things than most." Cassian lifted one brow. "Such as?" "For example, you're amazing at leading troops. And you read all the time." She thought back. "The other day in your study, I saw you reading *The Chronicle of Kingdoms*." *The Chronicle of Kingdoms*? Cassian's gaze deepened. Elowen missed it. She kept talking. "I feel like I've been reading less these past two years. Cassian, when you're done with that copy, can I borrow it?" Cassian smiled faintly.

"When you're feeling better." She was still weak. He could barely bring himself to kiss her.

Elowen did not notice anything unusual. 2/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 205 Burn The Fire : 42

Finished She had been planning a new story recently but had not started writing. She did not know how to begin. If she wanted to write well, she had to read. Without reading, or if she read too little, her writing would turn thin and hollow. But piling on fancy language or aiming too high with grand themes was no good either. This was a storybook. People read stories because they loved stories.

They needed them to pass the time. The language did not need to be overly ornate. Not every reader had been educated by scholars. If the wording was too obscure, many would not understand it. As for themes, lofty ideals like duty and nation were fine. But romance was not something shameful. Who did not have it somewhere in their life? Elowen planned to begin her new story soon. It would be another love story. To spark inspiration for the opening, she decided she needed to read more. Perhaps Cassian's unusual copy of *The Chronicle of Kingdoms* would give her ideas.

At the Garrett residence, Daphne and Eleanor sat together in the study. Daphne lounged lazily on a daybed, watching Eleanor finish reading the first page of her new manuscript. "Well?" Daphne asked eagerly. A? < Eleanor's eyes were wide. "I can't believe it. You're really the famous Azure." Daphne scoffed. "That's not what I asked. I'm asking how this new story is." A flicker of awkwardness crossed Eleanor's face. It would be hard to admit she thought it was nowhere near as good as the first one. 。 1.8K admin

Chapter 206 Cruel Plans : After all, Daphne was about to become Crown Princess. Eleanor forced a smile. "It's even better than your last one." "Exactly." 42 Finished Daphne's lips curled smugly. "The previous one was a mess. All that shallow romance. The writing was terrible too." She could not understand why so many people liked it. Clearly there were too many fools in the

world with no taste. But that was also because there had not been truly good storybooks. Once her new one was published, the genre would change entirely. It might even go down in history.

Eleanor laughed nervously and quickly changed the topic. "By the way, I heard a lot of people in Vanelle have died recently because of the Duchess of Duskmooor. Do you think... I might get dragged into this?" She had barely slept the past two nights over it. She had offended the duchess before. What if the duchess decided to settle accounts? The Duke of Duskmooor clearly doted on his wife. He did not care whose face he embarrassed anymore. Eleanor was afraid her family might be ruined. "What does that have to do with you? Relax." Daphne examined her nails, unconcerned.

"Are you sure I'll be fine?" Eleanor's voice wavered. "I said you'll be fine." Daphne shot her a look. "You don't trust the future Crown Princess?" She gave a small snort. "All this over a horse as it necessary? Fine, those guards died. But the Crown Prince suffered so much for it too. Elowen is getting more and more arrogant. She'll fall sooner or later." Eleanor hesitated, "But..." She had been there that day. She had seen everything. 1/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 206 Cruel Plans 42 Finished It was not just about a horse. The Crown Prince had ordered the duchess to get down and beg.

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The Duke of Duskmooor's fury had not come from nowhere. Daphne narrowed her eyes. "But what?" Eleanor shook her head quickly. "Nothing. I mean, yes. Of course." Daphne shifted into a more comfortable position. "If you listen to me from now on, you'll live well. Promotions for your father aren't impossible." Eleanor looked at her eagerly. "Tell me what you need." Daphne smiled. "Simple. When I marry the Crown Prince, the Duchess of Duskmooor will attend. When

she does, bring up your family's horse in front of her." Eleanor blinked. "Why?" "Are you stupid?" Daphne rolled her eyes.

"Her horse just died. With how fragile she is right now, she's probably crying into her pillows every night. She won't even have an appetite. But she has to attend the wedding. If you mention horses in front of her, she'll think of hers. In front of all those guests, she'll probably burst into tears." Eleanor stared. "I even thought about convincing Her Majesty to add a horse meat dish to the banquet," Daphne sighed. "Too bad she refused." Eleanor shivered. Hell must be empty. The monsters are all out here. "If there had been horse meat, it would've been perfect." Daphne smiled cruelly.

"Elowen takes a bite, and I tell her, oh, don't worry, Duchess, it's not your horse." Suddenly, hurried footsteps sounded outside. Before Daphne could react, the study door was kicked open with a loud crash. She turned, the mocking smile still on her face. When she saw who it was, she blinked. "Why are you here, Marchioness-" She never finished. Elspeth strode forward, her face cold as steel, and slapped her twice, sharp and loud. Daphne screamed. Her hair fell loose. Clear red handprints bloomed across her cheeks. She had not expected it. Her face burned.

Her ears rang, "You vile girl." 2/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 A Chapter 206 Cruel Plans : 42 Finished
Elspeth did not care about decorum. Her voice shook with fury. She had heard everything at the door. There really are people like this in the world. Even killing her would not be enough to make the anger go away. Eleanor shrank back, pale, afraid she would be next. Elspeth did not spare her a glance. She stared at Daphne, teeth clenched, and slapped her twice more. Blood appeared at the corner of Daphne's mouth. She looked up pitifully.

"Marchioness, I don't understand what I did wrong." "You know exactly what you did." Elspeth let out a cold laugh. "If it hadn't been for your arrangements, how would Lydia have followed us to Vanelle? How would I have left the hunting grounds? If I hadn't left, none of this would have happened." 1.8K 2 3/3 admin

Chapter 207 Reckoning Daphne's eyes flickered. 42 Finished "And one more thing," Elspeth said coldly, "what exactly did you say in the study just now? Don't tell me you've already forgotten. Perhaps I should help refresh your memory." She lifted her hand again. "Marchioness, please, Marchioness!" Galen rushed in at last, breathless, struggling to keep up. By the time he stumbled into the study, he was still gasping for air. "You must... you must have made a mistake. Daphne... she wouldn't do something like this." Seline followed close behind.

The moment Daphne saw her parents arrive, courage surged back into her. She scrambled off the couch and hid behind them. When Galen saw the swollen, battered look of Daphne's face, his fists clenched tight. "You may be the Marchioness of Havenstead, and indeed His Majesty's aunt, but that does not give you the right to bully others like this." Seline's eyes welled up. "Exactly. Daphne is days away from entering the Crown Prince's Wing. You lay a hand on her like that, you're not just hitting my daughter. You're disrespecting the Crown Prince's Wing.

You're disrespecting His Majesty himself." Elspeth was already furious. Hearing them bring up the Crown Prince's Wing and His Majesty only added fuel to the fire. She looked around, grabbed a stool nearby, and hurled it straight toward the three of them. Galen jumped backward just in time. The stool missed his head by inches. Seline, however, was shoved off balance in the chaos. She lost her footing and fell heavily to the ground. Daphne rushed to help her up, but Seline stayed seated on the floor, refusing to rise. Instead, she raised her voice in a sorrowful cry.

"The Marchioness abuses her power! Look at what she has done to our family! Galen, report this! We will take this to the palace! We will ask His Majesty to judge!" Elspeth showed not the slightest trace of panic. She let out a cold laugh. 1/4 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 207 Reckoning "Go ahead. Go now. If you don't, I'll lose what little respect I have for the Garrett name." The moment those words landed, Daphne's face changed. What she had done could never withstand investigation.

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42 Finished If this truly reached the palace and even a small inquiry began, she might not even become Crown Princess. Seline's anger flared. She shot to her feet. "Mother!" Daphne panicked and grabbed her arm. Seline frowned, about to ask what she was doing, when she caught Daphne's expression. Guilt. With her back turned to Elspeth, Daphne gave Seline the faintest shake of her head. Seline's heart skipped. Could it be... "Go," Elspeth's voice cut through the air again. "Why aren't you going?" Seline swallowed hard, forcing herself to steady her voice.

"Daphne is about to become Crown Princess. We really shouldn't turn this into open war between households." Elspeth's face hardened. "Don't you dare say that," Elspeth said, each word clipped. "Say it again, and you'll regret it." Seline's face stiffened instantly. "You wanted to inform His Majesty, didn't you? If you won't go, I will." Elspeth enunciated every word. "I have already verified the truth. Let's see if His Majesty's investigation uncovers even more." She turned and strode toward the door. Daphne stared at her retreating back, panic swallowing her whole, It's over.

Everything is over. Even if Theodric spared her for the sake of the Crown Prince's Wing, Cassian would never let her go so easily. But before Elspeth even left the Garrett residence, a black-clad guard stepped forward and 2/4 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 207 Reckoning blocked her path.

Finished "Marchioness, please come with us." Moments later, she was escorted all the way into Duskmoor Manor and brought into the small kitchen. Elspeth saw Elowen sitting there eating pasta. Her face lit up instantly. "Ella, you're finally up?

You look much better." Elowen lifted her head from the bowl of broth and called obediently, "Aunt." "Oh." Elspeth smiled warmly, the anger from moments ago gone entirely. Across from Elowen, Cassian also greeted her, "Aunt." Elspeth looked at him. Her brows immediately drew together. "What was the meaning of dragging me here? I've already investigated everything. That day I was deliberately lured away. It was Daphne's scheme. His Majesty must know. A woman like that has no business becoming Crown Princess." Cassian spoke calmly. "Aunt, it wasn't me.

Ella asked them to bring you." Not long before that, news of Elspeth storming into the Garrett residence had already reached Duskmoor Manor. Since Elspeth had made her promise to Elowen that day, Cassian had arranged for guards to discreetly keep watch over her movements, mainly to prevent matters from spiraling beyond his control. When the report came in, Cassian and Elowen had still been eating pasta. After listening, Elowen's fork paused mid-air. Cassian had not rushed to decide. Instead, he had asked gently, "Ella, what do you think?" Elowen had replied, "It's better to stop Aunt.

There's no need to inform His Majesty just yet." It had indeed been Elowen's idea. Elspeth looked at her now. "Ella?" 3/4 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 admin

Chapter 208 Not The Time Elowen lifted her face nervously. "It was me... Aunt, I'm sorry." 42
Finished Elspeth drew in a deep breath. Elowen braced herself, certain she was about to be scolded. Instead, Elspeth slowly let the breath out. Her tone softened completely. "It's alright,

Ella. I'm not upset with you." Cassian glanced at her. This is how you treat us differently?

Elowen looked uncertain. "You really aren't?" "No." Elspeth's expression grew gentle. "I just want to understand.

Why didn't you want me to take this straight to the palace?" Elowen straightened slightly, speaking carefully, "Because it isn't the right moment." Elspeth frowned faintly. "Not the right moment?" Elowen nodded. "First, Daphne isn't Crown Princess yet. What she's done can't be tied directly to the Crown Prince's household. Second, what happened at the hunting grounds involved me, but it didn't threaten anything larger. I was hurt. I lost Ember. Several people have already paid for it.

If we push further now, it will look like I'm pressing the issue out of spite." Elspeth considered that in silence. The more she thought about it, the more sense it made. When she looked back at Elowen, there was surprise in her eyes, and something close to pride. "Ella, I didn't expect you to think this far ahead." Elowen lowered her gaze, embarrassed. "My sister-in-law taught me some of it." Elspeth smiled. "Then your sister-in-law must be formidable, What family is she from again?" "The Jones family," Elspeth lifted her brows. "That name carries weight in Vanelle." She glanced at Cassian.

"If I remember correctly, Her Grace Elira is from the Jones family as well, isn't she?" 1/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 208 Not The Time 0: 42 Finished Cassian inclined his head. "Your memory is sharp." Elowen added, "My sister-in-law and Her Grace are cousins. Though the Jones estate is large. She once told me that even living under the same roof, they rarely crossed paths." Elspeth sighed lightly. "Her Grace Elira has survived a long time. Aside from Isla, she holds the strongest position in the inner court." Elowen gave a small nod.

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"No one lasts there without knowing how to play the game." Cassian looked at the two of them in silence. A marchioness and a duchess, talking palace politics like they're just chatting about the weather. Elspeth refocused. "So if we don't take this to His Majesty now, what do we do?" Elowen answered calmly. "We don't rush. The ones feeling pressure right now are Her Majesty and the Crown Prince's household. His Majesty has sealed off the Crown Prince's Wing. No one is allowed in. Her Majesty will most likely come see me tomorrow." Elspeth studied her.

"And you'll receive her?" "Of course." "Alright." Elspeth finally let out a breath she had been holding. Then she seemed to remember something. "By the way, Aunt, how are things at your place?" Elowen asked it gently, but her concern was real. If she remembered correctly, the Marquess of Havenstead had come to Vanelle this time, and Lydia had come along as well. No matter how one looked at it, things on Elspeth's side could not be simple. Elspeth's brows knit slightly, She forced a smile. "It's just a cousin, I can manage." Clearly unwilling to dwell on it, she rose to her feet.

"It's late, Ella. I should head back." Elowen nodded. "Alright. Safe travels, Aunt." After a brief pause, she added softly, "If anything happens, please come to me." Given Elspeth's temperament, dealing with Lydia would not be easy. Could it be... that in the last life, Aunt's death had something to do with Lydia? 213 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 208 Not The Time 0: 42 Finished Elowen's thoughts tangled as she watched Elspeth leave. She kept her eyes on her until the figure disappeared completely. Only then did she yawn. "Tired?" Cassian asked, his voice low and steady.

Elowen looked at him and nodded honestly. Her body was still weak. Even after two days of unconscious rest, she had not fully recovered. Cassian's eyes curved slightly. "Then I'll keep you

company." Elowen's cheeks warmed. She gave a soft hum in agreement. Once they lay down, Elowen could feel the steady warmth radiating from him. Drowsiness rolled over her in waves. Her eyelids grew heavy. With the last bit of strength, she murmured, "Cassian..." "Yes?" Cassian lowered his gaze. "Starting tomorrow... don't be so good to me." Cassian lifted a brow.

"Because I can't make pasta?" Elowen almost laughed despite herself. "No." She shifted closer into his arms. "I think if Her Majesty believes you treat me poorly, she'll be pleased. And when people are pleased, they get careless. When they get careless, they make mistakes." Cassian studied her for a long moment. "Did your sister-in-law teach you that?" Ella nodded faintly. He continued, "Then tell me. What exactly counts as treating you poorly?" On that subject, Elowen had plenty of experience, Eyes closed, she began listing them as if reciting from memory. "Be distant.

Let the servants slight me. You clearly see it, but pretend you don't. Even take their side. Say I forced this marriage and deserve whatever comes my way," 1.8K 3/3 admin

Chapter 209 Soft And Sharp Cassian did not speak right away. : 42 Finished Elowen wrapped her arms around his waist, her voice soft and drowsy. "Cassian, don't forget. Tomorrow..." Cassian listened, his heart softening to the point of ache. He looked down at her face and wanted very badly to kiss her. But halfway through her sentence, Elowen drifted off to sleep. Cassian swallowed the warmth rising in him. After a moment, he answered quietly, "Alright." He pulled her gently into his arms. Then, unexpectedly, a strange feeling crossed his mind. His brows knit together.

What she had just said earlier... that did not sound like something a sister-in-law would casually teach. It had felt real. Almost like experience. But she was only seventeen. It was her first

marriage. Where would she have learned such things? Cassian thought of the betrothal banquet. Before that, Elowen had been wholly devoted to Alaric. Everyone assumed she would beg to marry into the Crown Prince's Wing. Yet she had suddenly changed her mind and asked to marry Cassian instead. He let out a faint sigh. Ella. How many secrets are you carrying? He looked at her peaceful sleeping face.

His heart gradually steadied. Even if she has secrets, what does it matter? Right now, she's here with me. She's my wife. She was the bloom he had chosen to tend. In time, her heart would turn toward him. When their hearts aligned and trust grew deep enough, she would tell him everything herself. During the two days Elowen had been unconscious, Cassian had stayed by her side without closing his eyes. To say he was not tired would be a lie. Only now, with her breathing even in his arms, did he 1/3 14:28 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 209 Soft And Sharp finally allow himself to rest.

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42 Finished Holding her close, he fell asleep as well. They slept long and deep, until late the next morning. Elowen woke because she felt too warm. She struggled to lift her head. Her gaze fell on Cassian's neck. He had just returned from the Northern Reaches, his skin slightly darker from the sun. His Adam's apple rose cleanly at the center, the line of it sharp and smooth. Without thinking, she reached up and brushed it lightly with her fingertip. His throat moved once. Then again. Whether from her touch or not, she could not tell. Guilt flickered across her face.

She quickly pulled her hand back and shut her eyes, pretending to sleep. Her wrist was caught instantly. Elowen opened her eyes in surprise and met Cassian's dark gaze. He had just woken. The rims of his eyes were faintly red. He lowered his eyes to her, studying her closely. "Cassian, I-" She had intended to explain why she had touched him. Before she could finish, Cassian

leaned down and kissed her. It had been nearly half a month since their last kiss. Elowen froze, eyes widening. Cassian, however, kissed her slowly, seriously. His eyes closed, his lashes casting faint shadows.

The kiss deepened. The deeper it went, the softer her body became. She could not help it. She closed her eyes. It felt like she was melting. It felt good. At some point, she even pressed closer and kissed him back. She had no idea how long passed before Cassian finally pulled away. The bed curtains still held the warmth of their breath. Elowen's cheeks grew hotter and hotter. After a while, she asked quietly, "Cassian... is that tonic still affecting you?" Cassian laughed softly. "No." 2/3 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 209 Soft And Sharp :. He touched her cheek. "That was over long ago.

Ella, I just wanted to kiss you." She froze, then flushed completely. 42 Finished Cassian kept looking at her. That bright red face was dangerously endearing. Dangerously distracting. Elowen could not handle his gaze. She scrambled up and called, "Mira. What time is it?" Mira had been waiting outside the curtains. "Your Grace, it's already noon." Elowen blinked. "That late?" Mira replied, "His Grace instructed that you rest well." Elowen could not exactly scold Cassian. She pressed the back of her hand to her cheek to cool it. "Come in then. I need to get up and wash.

If Her Majesty comes by later, I should receive her." Mira stepped closer. "Your Grace, it's alright. Her Majesty is already here." Elowen froze. She flung the bed curtain aside and leaned out. "Her Majesty is here?" Mira nodded. "Yes. She has been waiting for some time." She added, "Duchess of Falconcrest is with her." Elowen's head throbbed. Just last night, she had told Cassian she wanted him to act a little colder toward her in front of others. Isla was outside. And

Cassian was in her bed. How was that supposed to look distant? And with Duchess of Falconcrest here as well.

Elowen felt as though she had been placed beneath a blazing hearth, every gaze pressing down on her at once. A hand slid around her waist. She gasped softly as Cassian pulled her back into his arms. She looked at him. "Your Grace, Her Majesty is outside." "I heard," Cassian said, the corner of his mouth lifting. "Do you want me to put on a show with you?" 1.8K W 3/3 admin Chapter 210 A Performance :. Elowen nodded earnestly. Cassian's lips curved. "Kiss me." She blinked. "But you just did." "Did I?" he asked lightly. "You did." "That was before," he said, smiling. "I want another." 42 Finished Her face burned instantly. His hand slid slowly along her back. His voice "Ella. Just one. Please." coaxing. The warmth in his palm made her shiver. His voice alone made refusal impossible. Flustered and brave all at once, she leaned forward and pressed a quick kiss to his lips. Then, after a second, she added another.

Her face crimson, she whispered, "That's enough." Cassian laughed softly and kissed her hard in return. "The rest, tonight." Her heart jumped. Cassian released her and got out of bed. Elowen sat there for a moment, heat still lingering in her skin, his words echoing in her mind. When did we get like this? This close. Though she did not resist him, and even found a quiet comfort when he held her close and kissed her, marriage meant more than that. There were other duties a wife was expected to fulfill. Consummation. At the thought of it, Elowen's heart began to pound.

Once everything settled... perhaps she should take it upon herself to learn how to properly please her husband, Isla stood in the courtyard under the bright sun, no shade overhead. Beside her stood Duchess Yvonne, Both were women of rank, unused to standing under harsh sunlight. Sweat already beaded at their temples. Cora urged gently, "Your Majesty, Duchess, the sun is

growing stronger. The hall is prepared 1/0 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 210 A Performance with coffee and pastries. Please rest inside." : 42 Finished Isla shook her head. "No. Elowen is ill. I bear responsibility.

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I cannot sit comfortably while she suffers." Yvonne looked indignant on Isla's behalf. "Your Majesty was unwell the day of the hunt and did not attend. How can this be blamed on you?" She turned to Cora. "I heard the Duchess has been bedridden for three days. And Her Majesty has come three days in a row. Is Her Majesty supposed to wait here for ten or fifteen days?" "Yvonne," Isla said gently, stopping her. Her expression was mild and compliant. "Elowen is angry with me. And with Alaric.

If I must wait a month, even three, to earn her forgiveness, that would only be right." Cora frowned slightly. Those words sound humble. But Her Majesty is putting herself too low and lifting Her Grace far too high. Isn't that just inviting resentment? Cora was about to speak in Elowen's defense. Yvonne cut in sharply, displeased. "No matter what, she is still only a duchess. You are the queen. Lowering yourself like this, begging at her door, overturns order. And for what? One horse. How many people have died in Vanelle these past days? Is that not enough? She refuses to see you.

Must His Majesty come personally?" A faint smile touched Isla's lips, quickly hidden. After Yvonne finished, Isla pressed lightly on her hand. "Yvonne, say such things only before me. Do not speak carelessly outside." Yvonne was known throughout Vanelle for her loose tongue. What she saw and heard today would never stay quiet. When word spread, Isla would gain praise for humility and grace. And Elowen would be labeled arrogant and ungrateful. That was exactly what Isla intended. She sighed. "Cassian and Elowen are newly married.

Cassian is deeply fond of her..." "Crash!" Before she could finish, a sharp sound of something shattering rang from inside. 2/3 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 210 A Performance 42 Finished Then Cassian's voice thundered with anger. "I have done this much for you, and you still refuse to drink your medicine? Do you expect me to beg?" Isla froze. Yvonne froze as well. Neither understood what was happening. Then Bran's voice followed urgently, "Your Grace, please calm down. Her Grace is still recovering. That day at the hunt, she was dragged and humiliated by His Highness, covered in bruises.

She was forced to watch the horse she raised as a child be stabbed to death. The Hale family died on the battlefield. That horse was her last memory. She's only seventeen. How could she not be heartbroken?" Isla's brows tightened. Yvonne's expression shifted. She suddenly regretted her earlier words. Seventeen. Elowen was only seventeen. 1.8K B admin