

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 211 Fractures 42 Finished When Yvonne was seventeen, she could not even stand the sight of a fowl being dressed in the courtyard. Once, she happened upon a barn cat tearing a sparrow apart in the stables, and the image haunted her dreams all night. Let alone the Duchess of Duskmoor, forced to watch her own horse killed before her eyes. Inside the room, however, Cassian's anger had not cooled. "She's heartbroken?" he said coldly. "Did I not kill someone for her? She was unconscious for two or three days. I stayed by her side without taking off my clothes.

And what did she do when she woke up? Refused to drink her medicine. Said she'd rather die. If she dies, how am I supposed to answer to my brother? She was granted to me by His Majesty." Isla's brows knit even tighter. Yvonne tilted her head and lowered her voice. "Your Majesty... it sounds like His Grace treats Her Grace well because of His Majesty. Not because he's as in love as people say." Isla said nothing. Something about it felt off, but she could not quite put her finger on it.

"Then Her Grace is pitiful too..." Yvonne had only gotten halfway through the sentence when the sound of wheels drew closer. Bran pushed Cassian out. His face was dark, sharp features pressed down by a simmering fury. Yvonne quickly swallowed the rest of her words. "Your Grace." Cassian looked at the two of them. He seemed to steady his breath before speaking. "Your Majesty. Duchess Yvonne." Isla studied his expression. "Cassian, how is Elowen today?" Cassian frowned faintly, as though hearing something unpleasant. 62 But mindful that they stood before others, he moderated his tone.

"She's somewhat better. She just woke up. If Your Majesty wishes to see her, please go in. The past few days she was unconscious and not fit to receive guests. Now that she's awake, I would not have Your Majesty turned away again." He paused. Gora, escort Your Majesty and the Duchess Yvonne inside. I have matters to attend to and will not accompany you." He signaled Bran to wheel him toward the study. 1/3 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 211 Fractures : 42 Finished
Isla saw nothing overtly amiss on Cassian's face, yet she did not fully relax. She kept a quiet suspicion in mind. Cora led the way.

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The two women stepped inside. The moment they entered, they saw shattered porcelain and spilled medicine on the floor. Two maids were bent over, cleaning in silence. From the inner chamber came a fit of coughing, thin and weak, like someone on the brink of collapse. It tightened the heart just to hear it. Isla and Yvonne exchanged a glance. After a while, the coughing subsided. They moved further in. Elowen sat weakly propped against the bed in a white nightgown. Mira held a cup and helped her drink water. Afterward, Mira wiped her lips gently and stepped aside with the cup.

Elowen lifted her eyes toward Isla and Yvonne. Her lips were pale, her smile faint and fragile. "Your Majesty, Duchess Yvonne. Forgive me for not coming out to greet you." As she spoke, she struggled to rise from the bed. Seeing her sway, Yvonne hurried forward to steady her. Isla said softly, "You are not yet recovered. Please stay seated." Yvonne felt how light Elowen was beneath her hands. There was hardly any weight to her at all. When she glanced down, she noticed the scar along Elowen's chin, close to ruining her face. Her heart softened.

Thinking back to what Cassian had said outside, she felt a sting of guilt for her earlier words.

"Your Grace," Gerda entered carrying a bowl of medicine. Following Cassian's earlier

instruction, she said, "Freshly brewed. His Grace instructed that you must drink it." In truth, the bowl Cassian had smashed earlier had been his own, and it had gone cold. This one was Elowen's. But to Isla and Yvonne, the scene meant something else entirely. For the sake of appearances, Cassian had not even prepared honey this time. Elowen's face fell slightly.

She lifted the bowl and forced herself to swallow it bit by bit, fighting the bitterness. 2/3 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 211 Fractures : 42 Finished The sharp smell spread through the room. Isla and Yvonne both instinctively raised handkerchiefs to their noses. After finishing the full bowl, Elowen truly looked exhausted. She leaned back and asked faintly, "May I ask what brings Your Majesty and the Duchess here today?" Isla smiled kindly. "Nothing in particular.

We heard you were ill and came to see you." Yvonne added, "Her Majesty has come several days in a row." Elowen reacted as if hearing this for the first time. Her eyes widened, even filling with tears. "Thank you for Your Majesty's concern..." Yvonne continued, "Of course Her Majesty would worry. His Highness has been punished. He's confined to the Crown Prince's Wing. Even Your Majesty is not permitted to see him." Elowen looked toward Isla, surprise carefully displayed. "How could that be?" Isla's expression turned awkward. She seemed about to speak. Yvonne spoke first.

"He was gravely at fault that day at the hunt. The whole Vanelle is talking about it. His Majesty could hardly ignore it. Though Her Majesty did not attend the hunt, His Highness is still your son. His Majesty has inevitably taken it out on you. The Queen's Privy Seal is no longer in Your Majesty's hands. It has been given to Her Grace Elira." 1.8K B 3/3 admin

Chapter 212 Shifting Winds : This time, Elowen's surprise was real. So not only had Alaric been confined, even Isla's authority had been removed. No wonder Isla had been visiting Duskmoor

Manor day after day. 42 Finished Inside, Isla bristled with dissatisfaction, barely restraining herself from glaring at Yvonne. She had intended for Yvonne to spread rumors about Duskmoor Manor. Instead, Yvonne had spread news of her own disgrace here. Isla took a slow breath and forced a smile. "Alaric made a mistake. As his mother, I cannot stand apart from it. Besides, Elira has always been virtuous.

I trust her to oversee the inner court." She glanced at Elowen. "In a few days it will be Alaric's wedding. Now I may devote my full attention to it." Elowen caught the faint edge in her gaze. The words felt deliberate. She coughed lightly. "Perhaps I should speak with His Grace and make a visit to the palace. I would not want the Crown Prince's Wing blamed on my account." Yvonne said kindly, "You might wait before speaking to His Grace. He did not look pleased earlier." Elowen nodded.

"Thank you, Duchess." Isla suddenly said, "His Grace startled me today." She still harbored doubt and studied Elowen closely. Elowen lowered her eyes. "His Grace is usually very good to me. Perhaps he is simply exhausted from caring for me these past days." Isla found nothing unusual in her tone. Her suspicion eased slightly. After a few more words and urging Elowen to recover well, Isla rose to leave. Yvonne followed. Elowen tried to get up to see them off, but Isla gently pressed her back. "Rest." Elowen then instructed Cora to escort them.

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Once the footsteps faded, she immediately shed her frail expression and leaned forward eagerly, When Mira entered, she asked at once, "They're gone?" Mira nodded. "Gone. They should be in their carriage by now." Elowen was about to ask where Cassian was. 1/3 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 212 Shifting Winds Finished Before she could, Mira leaned closer and whispered, "Bran sent word. His Grace is in the study." Elowen's eyes curved with satisfaction. Still recovering,

she did not dress elaborately. She simply draped a robe over her shoulders and went to the study. Cassian was reading.

Seeing her enter with smiling eyes, he lifted a brow. "I treat you poorly and you're this happy?" "You treat me very well. Today was only for show." Her tone was natural. "Besides, it's enough that I know you treat me well. There's no need to prove it to outsiders. Not everyone wants to see us happy. The kinder you are to me, the more resentment I invite. Some people would love to see us fighting every day, separated within a year." Cassian suddenly covered her mouth with his hand. Elowen blinked innocently. "Do not say that word," he said firmly. She tilted her head.

He loosened his hand slightly. Her lips moved. "Separated?" Cassian laughed despite himself and pinched her cheek. "You're doing that on purpose." She covered her face quickly. "I am not." His gaze fell to her lips, dark eyes deepening. A sense of foreboding rose in her chest. She quickly changed the subject. "By the way... what are you reading?" "The Annals of the Spring Court," he said calmly. She looked puzzled. "Did you finish The Chronicle of Kingdoms?" He paused. "No." "Why not?" His voice carried a trace of amusement. "When you're fully recovered." She grew more confused.

What does that book have to do with my health? Before she could ask more, Bran entered with medicine. "Your Grace, your medicine." With others present, Cassian finally lifted his eyes from her lips. Elowen did not pursue the question. She watched carefully as he drank the entire bowl.

2/3 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 212 Shifting Winds 42 Finished Later that day, Cassian went to the palace for over half an hour. No one knew what he and Theodric discussed. By evening, Theodric issued an order lifting the confinement of the Crown Prince's Wing.

After being slapped by Elspeth and frightened, Daphne had slept poorly, dark circles under her eyes. "Miss, word from the palace!" Iris rushed . Daphne grabbed her hand, trembling. "Did His Majesty cancel the engagement? Are they here to arrest me?" She gripped so hard Iris winced. "No, Miss. You're safe. It's about the Crown Prince's Wing." 1.8K 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 A admin

Chapter 213: The End of the Fever

Daphne's anxiety surged as she inquired, "What fate befell the Crown Prince's Wing? Tell me it wasn't tarnished because of me as well."

"How could that be? The Crown Prince's Wing has been reinstated," Iris reassured her. "Worry not, my lady - your union with His Highness remains intact."

Daphne froze, the realization sinking in that she would still ascend to the role of Crown Princess. Tears welled in her eyes as she softly repeated, "I will still be the Crown Princess..."

Affirmatively, Iris nodded, "Indeed. It appears the Marchioness of Havenstead has taken into account both Her Majesty and the Crown Prince's Wing. In a few days, the wedding will take place - you are soon to be the lady of the Crown Prince's Wing."

The thought of becoming the lady of the Crown Prince's Wing set Daphne's heart racing. She took a deep breath and exclaimed, "Quickly, assist me in dressing. I must see His Highness without delay!"

Iris hesitated, suggesting, "Wouldn't it be wiser to wait until your injuries have healed a bit?"

Dismissing the notion, Daphne scoffed softly, "You naive girl, what do you know? If I delay until I am fully healed, it will be too late. It must be today. The moment the Crown Prince's

Wing is reopened, I shall present myself—showing him my unwavering affection. And with my face marked like this, his sympathy... his affection will only deepen."

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Impatiently, she snapped, "Why are you lingering? Hurry and prepare me!"

A quarter of an hour later, brimming with excitement and anticipation, Daphne departed in a carriage bound for the Crown Prince's Wing.

Meanwhile, at the Crown Prince's Wing, Alaric's fever had slightly subsided, though his recollections remained foggy. He had offended the Duchess of Duskmoor and had been confined to the Crown Prince's Wing, a restriction that had been lifted that day.

Alaric's thoughts turned icy as he pondered that the Duchess of Duskmoor must have caused a commotion by attempting to seduce him, provoking his ire. Theodric, cautious of Cassian, had penalized him for it.

As a servant attended to him, Alaric felt a weight lift from his shoulders. The ache on his face throbbed persistently, yet it did not weaken his determination. The image of Elowen rushing to his side, her eyes filled with concern and tenderness, lingered in his mind.

The servant then announced, "Miss Garrett has arrived at the Crown Prince's Wing."

Alaric stiffened, questioning, "Whom did you say?"

The servant, trembling, replied, "Miss Garrett, Lord Chancellor Galen's daughter... Daphne Garrett. She heard of Your Highness's recovery and came to pay a visit."

A wave of irritation and disappointment washed over Alaric. "What is she doing here? Is there anyone else seeking an audience with me? Where is Elowen?"

Alaric clenched his jaw in disbelief. The reopening of the Crown Prince's Wing held significance, and Elowen, his devoted attendant, would have notified him first. How could she have not appeared when he was gravely ill and confined?

Before he could dwell further, Daphne swept into the hall, emanating grace and poise. Her meticulously selected attire accentuated her slender form, yet to Alaric, it resurrected memories of a sorrowful past.

Tristan had exposed Daphne's treachery, triggering a scene that had left Alaric seething and disgraced. The recollection of her deceit and his subsequent outburst flooded back as she now stood before him, tears glistening in her eyes.

"Your Highness, you've lost so much weight!" she exclaimed, her voice tinged with worry.

Chapter 214 Trap Finished The two faces-past and present-overlapped in Alaric's vision, and a surge of disgust rose from deep within him. The fury from his past life, mixed with the lingering weakness of his illness, came crashing over him, burning his eyes red. His hand lashed out. A sharp slap. Daphne screamed as she was knocked to the ground, clutching her face, staring at him in disbelief. "Your Highness?" - Alaric's gaze was full of revulsion. "Tell me where is Elowen? Did she scheme against her you again?"

"Did you trap her somewhere so she couldn't come to the Crown Prince's Wing?" Daphne had no idea why she'd been struck-let alone why she was being accused like this. Overwhelmed with grievance, tears poured down her face. "Your Highness. How would I dare detain her? It's

already a blessing if she doesn't bully me..." "And you still dare to lie!" Alaric barked, raising his hand again. As another blow was about to fall, Daphne curled up on the floor in terror. "Your Highness! Have you forgotten? At our engagement banquet, Elowen kicked and struck me!" Alaric froze. Engagement banquet?

My engagement banquet with Daphne? Shouldn't it have been with Elowen?! Daphne, choking on sobs, looked up at him. "Your Highness, you know this-ever since Elowen married His Grace, the Duke of Duskmoor, she's only grown more arrogant. Not just me-even you, she doesn't take seriously anymore. This time, your confinement was all because of her. She's probably laughing at you back at Duskmoor Manor-why would she come see you?" Elowen... the Duchess of Duskmoor? No... Impossible... She loved him with everything she had-how could she marry someone else? It had to be Daphne.

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She was lying, trying to drive a wedge between them! In the past, she had done this more than once. One time, she even arranged for every carriage 1/3 14:29 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 214 Trap. to be taken away, leaving Elowen stranded alone at Duskmoor Manor. 42 Finished Alaric remembered it clearly-that day, it was Cassian who had someone escort Elowen back to the Crown Prince's Wing. "Your Highness..." Daphne's voice turned soft and pitiful. But to Alaric, it only sounded more repulsive. His expression hardened. "Enough!" He grabbed a cushion and hurled it at her. "Get out!

Get out!" The cushion struck her head. It didn't hurt much, but it knocked loose the hairpin at her temple. Her hair fell, her carefully arranged appearance instantly ruined. She scrambled up and fled the room. The more she should have been ght about it, the more wronged she felt. She had come to visit Alaric-he pleased! Why is he suddenly this angry? What just went wrong? After

Daphne left, Alaric shouted sharply, "Tristan!" Tristan hurried in. One look at the situation and he immediately dropped down.

"Your Highness, what are your orders?" Eyes still red, Alaric demanded, "What Daphne just said-is it true that Elowen is now the Duchess of Duskmoor?" Tristan hesitated for a moment.

"Your Highness... what Miss Garrett said is true. The current Duchess of Duskmoor is indeed the daughter of Hale Manor. The marriage... was arranged by Her Majesty. It's been months now-everyone in the city knows." With a deafening crash in his mind, the world seemed to spin and shatter around Alaric. Elowen had become the Duchess of Duskmoor-when they met, he would have to address her as his aunt by marriage?

How is that even possible?She loves me with everything she has. How does she end up marrying someone else?It has to be Uncle Cassian. He must be forcing her. Throwing his weight around. He must be using Alaric's position as Crown Prince to pressure her. And to protect him, Elowen has no choice. She sacrifices herself. She gives in to Uncle Cassian. There was no other explanation. Gritting his teeth, fighting through the dizziness and pain wracking his body, Alaric struggled to 2/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 214 Trap get out of bed. "No...

I have to go to Duskmoor Manor..." 41 Finished Tristan moved forward on his knees to stop him.

"Your Highness, you haven't recovered-how can you go out?" "I have to!" Alaric's voice was

hoarse, urgent. "She endured this for me-I have to go save her!" That evening, Elowen had

dinner with Cassian. Having just recovered from illness-and with the meal especially delicious

today-she lost track of herself and ate far too much. Leaning back in her chair, cup in hand, she

looked like she was questioning all her life choices. "Want to take a walk?" Cassian asked.

Elowen immediately lifted her head.

"Yes, please!" The sky hadn't fully darkened yet. The summer heat in Vanelle was fading, a gentle breeze bringing a touch of cool comfort. The courtyard was neat and orderly. The newly added kitchen and other additions were already completed-clean lines of gray brick and tile. The freshly turned vegetable beds were arranged in tidy rows, the soil dark and damp. But with autumn approaching, it wasn't the season for planting, so they remained empty for now. "Have you been to the back courtyard?" Cassian asked suddenly. Elowen blinked, then answered honestly, "Not yet." 1.8K (admin

Chapter 215: Moonlight at Duskmoor Manor

After Elowen's marriage into Duskmoor Manor, her world had been confined to the front court, with the inner grounds remaining unfamiliar territory. "I'll show you," Cassian said, "You'll like it." Passing beneath a stone arch, they turned along a covered gallery, and a breathtaking view opened up before them. Layered rock formations rose in deliberate yet harmonious design, accompanied by dense clusters of trees and flowering shrubs.

Despite the arrival of autumn, a few late blossoms still lingered, their faint fragrance gently drifting through the cooling air. In a quiet enclave, tall reeds and broad-leafed plants created a serene atmosphere. Standing beneath them were two white peacocks, pure as snowfall, exuding a regal and celestial aura. Elowen's eyes sparkled with wonder. "Cassian, you keep peacocks?" Cassian, with a quiet nod, mentioned they were a gift from His Majesty. Gesturing towards them, he added, "You can feed them. They're tame." He had come to realize Elowen's particular fondness for animals - fine horses, stray kittens, and now, these pearl-feathered white peacocks.

As expected, Elowen eagerly stepped forward. With a small feed pouch hanging beside the enclosure, she scooped up a handful of grains and extended her palm carefully. The peacock

approached without hesitation, pecking gently from her hand. With her free hand, she lovingly brushed the feathers atop its head. "Do they have names?" she inquired. "Not yet," Cassian replied. This prompted Elowen to recall that the residential wing where Cassian stayed had never been formally named either. She had reviewed the estate ledgers and discovered that only the private residence Marwen once occupied had been granted a proper title - Rose Hall.

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Hale Manor had not been remarkable until her father brought her mother home, christening various residences, even the small ginger cat in the orchard. A realization dawned upon Elowen - she was now the lady of Duskmoor Manor, responsible for naming its residences and even its prized birds.

As night fell swiftly, the sky turned deep and clear, with a pale moon rising above the manor roofs, casting silver light across the stone courtyard. Though Elowen had been bedridden for days, she felt no inclination to return indoors yet. Just as she was contemplating how to ask, Cassian, composed as always, suggested stargazing from a pavilion deeper within the grounds, known for its clear sightlines.

Delighted, Elowen accompanied him, guiding his chair along a path of smooth river stones. The pavilion exceeded her expectations, with sheer curtains drifting in the breeze. Inside, a stone table, stools, and a chessboard awaited them. Cassian raised a brow, proposing a game of chess, to which Elowen eagerly agreed, choosing to play with the black pieces.

As Bran lit the lantern suspended from the pavilion beam, warm amber light mingled with moonlight, casting a soft glow over the chessboard. The two engaged in a game, illuminated by

the serene moonlight that streamed through the drifting curtains, creating shifting patterns across Elowen's figure as she rested.

Cassian, noticing Elowen's gradual relaxation, tilted his head slightly, listening intently. A faint smile graced his lips as he observed her drifting off to sleep. The night enveloped them in stillness, interrupted only by the distant hum of summer insects. Bran's respectful voice broke the silence, announcing the arrival of His Highness, prompting Cassian's concerned inquiry about his well-being.

The scene at Duskmoor Manor captured a moment of tranquility and companionship under the moonlit sky, where the beauty of nature intertwined with the unfolding of their shared story.

Chapter 216 A Prince In Fury : 41 Finished Bran let out a quiet breath. "Yes, Your Grace. His Highness does look unwell. But he was in no state to be reasoned with. He forced his way through. We couldn't stop him-and we dared not lay hands on the Crown Prince." Before he could finish, a commotion broke out from the outer court. Guards were trying to restrain someone. Over them rose Alaric's voice-sharp, strained, edged with anger. Cassian lifted his gaze just as Alaric shook off his attendants and strode straight into the inner grounds.

He wore informal robes, thrown on in haste, collar crooked as though he had come straight from his sickbed. His face was pale, lips drained of color. Only his eyes burned an unnatural red. His gaze fell at once on the pavilion. The gauze curtains hung low. On the daybed within, a small figure slept peacefully. Alaric stopped short. His eyes darkened further as they locked onto Cassian. "Uncle," he demanded, voice tight, "what exactly is this supposed to mean?" "You're asking me?" Cassian let out a quiet, humorless laugh. "It's well past nightfall.

You ought to be resting in the Crown Prince's Wing. Instead, you force your way into my residence and cause a disturbance. What is that supposed to mean?" His tone was even. The authority beneath it was not. It settled over the courtyard without sound, pressing cold against Alaric's spine. Behind the curtain, Elowen shifted faintly, disturbed by the noise. Alaric's chest tightened. That's Elowen. He clenched his jaw. "You know why I'm here, Uncle Cassian." He raised a hand, pointing toward the daybed in the pavilion. "We grew up together. She always meant to marry me. You knew that.

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So why did you take her?" "Take her?" Cassian's voice cooled further. "The marriage was decreed by His Majesty-your father. She is my lawfully wedded Duchess of Duskmoor. If you claim she was taken from you, are you questioning His Majesty?" "I-" 1/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 216 A Prince In Fury : Alaric faltered. His face grew even paler. He could not defy his father's decree. But he would not accept it. "It was an accident," he said hoarsely. "Ella loves me." 41 Finished He lifted his head, eyes blazing. "You're the one Father trusts most.

Even now, you hold more power than anyone anyone at court. You could have chosen any woman in Avenlor. Why did it have to be her?" His voice roughened. "Hale family has fallen. Her family is gone. She has no influence left. She brings you no advantage. And she isn't even the greatest beauty in the realm-" "Alaric." Cassian's voice cut through him like steel. "She is." Alaric froze. "I'll assume your fever has clouded your judgment," Cassian continued. "So let me make this simple." His gaze fixed on Alaric through the drifting curtain, heavy and unyielding. "First. She is not your Ella.

She is my wife. By rank and by law, you address her as Aunt." The word struck like a hammer. Color drained from Alaric's face. "Second. At the banquet announcing the marriage, she stated

before the court that she wished to marry me. That is why His Majesty granted the match. And now you claim she loves you?" A faint scoff followed. Alaric stared, disbelief written plainly across his face. Elowen says that? No. That's impossible. 7 He shook his head sharply, as though trying to rid himself of the thought. She loved him. She had always loved him. She would never choose someone else.

She must have been forced. "You're lying," he said, voice shaking, "Believe what you want," Elowen stirred again on the daybed, as though on the verge of waking. Cassian's patience ran out. "You will leave now." 2/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 216 A Prince In Fury Alaric said nothing. : 䄂 (41) Finished Cassian continued, colder still. "Otherwise, tomorrow in the Gilded Hall, a memorial may be submitted-questioning why the Crown Prince, while ill, intruded upon a prince's private residence at night. Consider how His Majesty will interpret that. How the court will.

How the realm will." Alaric swallowed. "Is that a threat?" "You may consider it one." 1.8K admin

Chapter 217 A Cold Warning 0: 41 Finished Cassian's voice stayed level, a faint, emotionless curve at his lips. "Like you said, I'm His Majesty's only brother he truly favors, and my power runs deep. That means I can make threats you'd be wise to take seriously." A sudden gust of night wind swept through, lifting the sheer drapes. From where Alaric stood, he could see Cassian seated beside the bed, confined to the chair. Moonlight poured in, casting sharp lines across Cassian's profile, turning him into something cold, almost untouchable.

you wake your aunt Cassian's lips curved just slightly, his eyes cutting and frigid. "Alaric, if you wake again, you can forget about being crown prince." Alaric stiffened. Even sitting there,

Cassian still felt impossible to challenge. Fear spread through him, slow and suffocating. This was Cassian, the one he had feared since he was a child. The wind faded, the drapes settling back into place, blocking the view once more. Alaric clenched his fists, his nails digging into his palms, the sting grounding him as he forced himself to calm down. He didn't believe Cassian's words.

Elowen loved him. That couldn't just change overnight. There had to be something else behind this. But tonight, he couldn't take her away. Not with Cassian right in front of him. Pushing harder would only humiliate him, maybe even make things worse. He had already been confined once, and from what Tristan said, Theodric had grown increasingly dissatisfied with him. His position in the Crown Prince's Wing wasn't as secure as it looked. If he provoked Cassian and lost his title, it wouldn't be worth it. There would be time. There had to be Alaric took one last long look toward the pavilion.

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Ella, wait for me. I'll find a way. "Uncle..." 1/4 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 ... Chapter 217 A Cold Warning 41 Finished Before leaving, Alaric drew in a breath. "No matter how she ended up marrying you, whether she chose it or not, what we had was real. We grew up together. That wasn't nothing." Cassian paused for a moment. "Take care of yourself, Uncle Cassian." With that, Alaric turned and walked away, anger and resentment burning in his chest. Bran followed at a distance with his men, making sure Alaric and his entourage fully left Duskmoor Manor.

The courtyard slowly fell quiet again, broken only by the faint chirping of insects and the rustle of leaves in the breeze. The moonlight remained steady, as if nothing had happened at all.

Cassian stayed where he was, still seated, his expression darkened by Alaric's last words. At the betrothal banquet, there had been too many things between Elowen and Alaric that didn't quite

make sense. "Cassian..." A soft voice came from the couch. Cassian turned, his gaze landing on Elqwen. "You're awake?" Elowen gave a small nod. "He woke me up." She studied his face.

"Are you...

upset?" Cassian paused, saying nothing. Elowen let out a quiet huff, half complaining, half coaxing him. "He's so annoying, and so loud. He just kept going and going. I thought a bunch of people were yelling out there." "Ella." Cassian cut her off, his eyes fixed on her face. "At the banquet... why did you say you wanted to marry me?" Elowen froze for a second. "I.." Before she could continue, Cassian suddenly raised his hand and covered her lips. "Forget it." Confusion flickered in her eyes, 2/4 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 J Chapter 217 A Cold Warning : Cassian's gaze darkened.

"You don't have to explain." 41 Finished It was true that she and Alaric had grown up together. It was also true that she had once cared for him, maybe even planned to marry him. The thought drove Cassian into a quiet, consuming jealousy. But he couldn't take it out on her. He wouldn't. The timing had been wrong. None of it had been her fault. Forcing her to explain would only make him feel worse, and make her feel like she was being doubted. He steadied himself with that thought, then softened his tone. "Are you tired? Let's go back and rest." Elowen nodded slowly. Cassian released her.

"Let's go." He turned, about to leave the pavilion first. "Wait." Elowen's voice stopped him. He turned back. She was still lying there, eyes bright as she looked at him, arms reaching out toward him in a quiet, playful plea. "I was sleeping too comfortably. I don't have the strength to get up now. Help me." Cassian stepped closer and bent down beside her. Elowen leaned on his shoulders as she sat up, tilting her head so her lips brushed lightly against his cheek. "I grew up

with Alaric," she said softly, "but that doesn't mean I had to marry him. He treated me badly, Really badly.

We're not even friends anymore, How could I marry him?" Cassian stilled. "I didn't know you well before," she continued, her voice gentle, "but I knew you were a good man. My mother always told me, whether it's marriage or friendship, choose someone who's already good at heart. That day, when His Majesty asked who I wanted to marry, I hadn't planned anything... but there was only one answer in my mind." She looked at him. "It was you." 3/4 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 U admin

Chapter 218 Only You : Elowen's cheeks warmed slightly. "Now I think... maybe it was meant to be." 41 Finished The words settled softly into Cassian's chest. When she finished, she leaned in and kissed him. Up close, her cheeks were flushed, vivid and alive. When she looked at him, it felt like she saw only him. In that moment, every dark thought disappeared. Cassian didn't care about Alaric. He didn't care about the past. He pulled her closer into his arms and kissed her back, deeper this time, lingering. Elsewhere, Alaric left Duskmoor Manor, his body still weak, his mood heavy.

The moment he returned to the palace, he learned Isla had already been waiting for him in the Crown Prince's Wing. A flicker of unease rose in him. She must have heard something. He steadied himself and stepped inside. Candlelight flickered, casting shadows across Isla's carefully composed face, though the exhaustion beneath it was impossible to hide. Losing the Queen's Privy Seal had taken something out of her. Even her usual authority seemed dimmer. "You're not fully recovered, yet you're already running outside the Crown Prince's Wing," Isla said, her voice calm but cold.

"Where were you in such a hurry?" "Nowhere," Alaric replied. Isla's expression sharpened. "Do you think I'm blind, deaf, or a fool?" Her fingers struck the wooden table sharply. "Speak. What were you doing at Duskmoor Manor?" Alaric's legs gave out under him, and he dropped down onto the cold floor. He looked up at her, at the carefully painted face that couldn't hide her tension, and made a decision. "Mother... I went to see Elowen." 1/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 J Chapter 218 Only You Isla paused. "Elowen?" 41 Finished Alaric clenched his fists. "I don't like Daphne. I don't want to marry her.

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The ceremony hasn't been completed yet. Please find a way to cancel this engagement."

"Absurd!" Isla slammed her hand against the table, the cups rattling. "The betrothal has already been announced, invitations sent. Everyone in Vanelle knows the Garrett family's daughter is entering the Crown Prince's Wing. And now you want to call it off? What about the dignity of the royal family? What about your position? How do you expect His Majesty to see you? What will the court say?" Her anger rose with every word, her chest heaving.

"Look at yourself," she continued, her finger trembling as she pointed at him. "Do you even realize that because of your repeated misconduct, His Majesty has already taken the Queen's Privy Seal from me and handed it to Elira? That woman now oversees the entire court. And her son, Caelan, won first place at the last hunt. His Majesty praised him as 'bold and decisive, just like himself.'" Those words struck Alaric like a blade. Theodric had never praised him like that. Isla stared at him, her voice heavy.

"If you keep acting like this because of Elowen, losing his favor, are you planning to hand your position over to Caelan as well?" Alaric's face went pale. The title of crown prince... that was everything. Without it, how could he ever take Elowen back? "You are still his son," Isla said,

her tone easing slightly. "Replacing a crown prince would shake the court. As long as you behave, he won't make that decision." Alaric lowered his head and agreed. Seeing him finally compliant, Isla's anger faded a little as she stood. He quickly stepped forward to support her.

Resting her hand on his, she said, "In the end, everyone has their fate. At the banquet, Elowen chose Cassian herself. She refused you. No matter how difficult her life may be now, she has no one to blame but herself." Alaric froze. "Elowen... she..." 2/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 218 Only You 41 Finished "I went to Duskmoor Manor today," Isla continued, her tone edged with cold amusement. "And I saw that her life there isn't as perfect as it looks. Outside, Cassian treats her well, even gave her his personal seal to support her.

But inside, she lost her temper over being ill for just a few days. It seems all of that kindness is just for show." She let out a quiet scoff. "And really, what kind of man is Cassian? Cold, calculating, impossible to read. Even I find him unsettling. What chance does Elowen have? She's nothing more than something he can control." She spoke casually. But Alaric heard every word. His brows tightened. Just as he suspected, Elowen was suffering in Duskmoor Manor. How could someone like Cassian, broken and shadowed, ever cherish someone like her?

It had to be an act in public, while in private she was neglected, maybe worse. Only he truly cared for her. Only with him would she be happy. Once that thought took root, it wrapped tightly around his heart, suffocating and obsessive, yet filling him with a twisted sense of purpose. 1.8K

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Chapter 219 He Has To See Her : 41 Finished He had to see Elowen. He had to hear the truth from her own lips. And he had to get her out of that cold, suffocating place. After Isla left, Alaric called Tristan over. He was still pale from illness, forcing himself upright as he spoke. "What I

asked you to look into a few days ago, where does it stand?" he said. Tristan lowered his head slightly. "Your Highness, as instructed, I've been tracking His Grace's recent movements. But His Grace rarely leaves the manor due to his condition, so it's been difficult to get a clear picture.

It may take a little more time." Alaric frowned, impatience flashing across his face. "Drop that for now," he said. "Have someone else handle it. I want eyes on Duskmoor Manor instead. If Her Grace steps outside, I want to know immediately. Report straight to the Crown Prince's Wing."

He needed to see Elowen alone. Needed answers, face to face. Tristan nodded. "Yes, Your Highness." The next morning, Elowen woke with a faint heaviness still lingering in her body. Yesterday at the pavilion, she had managed to coax Cassian into a good mood.

He had pulled her close and kissed her for a long while. And when they returned to the room, it hadn't stopped. He had held her at first, then pressed her back against the bed, kissing her again and again, slow and unhurried. It had gone on so long that even now, her lips still felt slightly numb. The space beside her was already cold. Cassian had left early, Elowen sat up slowly, pulling the blanket around her shoulders as she called for someone to come in. Mira entered with several maids behind her, each carrying washing items, moving in quietly and in order.

"Where is Cassian?" Elowen asked, rubbing her temple. 1/4 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 .. Chapter 219 He Has To See Her 41 Finished Mira stepped forward, lifting the bed curtains with practiced ease.

"Your Grace, His Grace left before dawn with Bran. He didn't say where he was going." Elowen nodded, not overly concerned. Cassian always had his own way of doing things. There was no need for her to worry. After breakfast, she headed into the study Cassian had built specifically for her.

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The room was spacious, with tall windows along the southern wall allowing a soft wash of light to filter through sheer curtains. The atmosphere felt quiet, everything arranged with careful intention. A broad writing desk stood beneath the window, its surface orderly and precise. A quill and ink bottle rested neatly to one side, while stacks of parchment and ledgers were arranged in clean, deliberate rows. Elowen took her seat and opened a ledger. During the heat of summer, she had added an extra expense for chilled sweet drinks to help everyone cool down.

Now that the weather had turned, it was time to change that. She glanced up at the attendants in the room. "Back when it was hot, I added an extra serving of sweet drinks each month," she said. "Now that it's getting colder, we don't need that anymore. What should we replace it with?" Mira lit up immediately. "Your Grace, I'd love a new brow pencil. I saw a fresh batch at the shop the other day, the color was perfect." Gerda laughed softly and shot her a look. "You think of nothing but yourself. What about the guards and the staff?"

"Are you handing them brow pencils too?" Anson thought for a moment before speaking carefully. "Your Grace, perhaps it would be better to convert it into coin. That way everyone can use it as they see fit." Elowen's eyes brightened. "That's a good idea." She made the decision right away. "Then we'll convert the budget for the drinks into cash. And add an extra two silver coins from the estate each month, distribute it together." Anson hesitated. "Your Grace, isn't that a bit too much?" Before, the drinks barely amounted to anything per person.

Adding two silver coins would make a real difference. 2/4 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 U Chapter 219 He Has To See Her Elowen waved it off without concern. 41 Finished "It's not too much," she said. "Cassian said it himself, we're not short on money. Everyone works hard, they should have more in their pockets. It'll make things easier for them. And winter's coming. Let them save a little and

have a proper holiday." There was a carefree boldness in the way she said it. Just then, a maid's voice came from outside.

"Your Grace, Miss Ashcroft is here." Elowen looked up at once, a smile spreading across her face. "Bring her in." Light shifted across the doorway as Sylvia stepped inside. The It had only been a few days, but she looked different, like something that had finally been allowed to grow. There was more color in her face now, a quiet brightness in her timid, shrinking girl from before seemed to have faded. Elowen smiled warmly. "Sylvia, you're here. Come, sit. You're looking better every time I see you." Sylvia stepped forward, stopping at a respectful distance.

She inclined her head in a restrained, courtly gesture. "Your Grace," she said. Elowen's lips curved, a trace of amusement in her eyes. "You're still calling me that?" Sylvia faltered for a brief second, her hands tightening lightly at her sides. Warmth rose to her cheeks. "...Elowen." Elowen nodded, pleased. "That's better. So, what brings you here?" Sylvia sat down carefully, hands folded on her lap. "A few days ago... when you weren't feeling well, I came to check on you," she said. "But you were still asleep, so I didn't dare disturb you. I only stayed outside for a while." Elowen smiled.

"That was thoughtful of you." She paused, then shifted the conversation. "About your marriage," she said. "Now that His Majesty has issued the decree, we should start 3/4 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 41 Chapter 219 He Has To See Her Finished preparing. Your mother has left Vanelle with your brother. It's only right that I take care of this for you." 1.8K (i) 1 admin

Chapter 220 A Visit To Falconcrest Even as she said that, Elowen wasn't entirely confident. 41 Finished Her own wedding had been arranged by Isla. She had gone through most of it without

really understanding the details. She turned toward the two experienced matrons beside her.

"What exactly needs to be done for a marriage?" she asked. Gerda spoke first, her tone measured.

"Your Grace, in noble custom, a marriage is arranged through several formal stages, the agreement between families, the formal announcement, the exchange of gifts, the setting of terms, and finally, the wedding ceremony itself. Each step follows its own traditions." Edith inclined her head slightly before adding, "With His Majesty's decree already issued, the earlier formalities are considered settled.

What remains now is the exchange of engagement gifts and the setting of the wedding date."

Elowen listened in silence, her fingers resting lightly against the arm of her chair as she considered their words. Then something else came to mind. "Before the wedding," she said, her voice steady, "isn't there usually someone assigned to guide a young lady... in what's expected of her?" Gerda gave a small nod. "There is." Elowen paused, thinking it through. "Then we should find someone appropriate." For Sylvia. And maybe...I can learn a little too.

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Sylvia gave a quiet "mm," then lifted her face slightly, worry lingering in her expression.

"There's something else," she said softly. "It's been a while since the decree was issued, but Falconcrest Manor hasn't made any move. I feel like... the Duchess might not like me." Elowen understood immediately, Between past issues and lingering impressions, it wasn't surprising. But she smiled gently, reassuring her. 1/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 220 A Visit To Falconcrest 41 Finished "Don't overthink it," she said. "It's not neglect. Right now, Alaric's wedding takes priority.

As Crown Prince, his ceremony comes first. Falconcrest Manor values propriety. They won't move ahead of him." Sylvia's expression eased slightly. Elowen considered for a moment. "Let's do this," she said. "We'll visit Falconcrest Manor today. It's proper, and we can also get a sense of things. And..." she smiled lightly, "it'll remind people that even if you've lost your father and your mother has left Vanelle, you still have Duskmoor Manor behind you." Before long, a carriage rolled out from the side gate, heading toward Falconcrest Manor.

At the same time, across the street, a man dressed like an ordinary servant set down his cup at a roadside stall. He tossed a few coins, slipped into an alley, mounted a waiting horse, and rode hard toward the Crown Prince's Wing. The carriage came to a smooth stop outside Falconcrest Manor. Elowen stepped down with Mira's help and immediately noticed several lavish carriages already lined up nearby, decorated in fine detail, drawn by strong, well-bred horses. These were no ordinary guests. She glanced at the servant who came to receive them. "Do you have visitors today?" she asked.

"Yes, Your Grace," he replied with a respectful smile. "Lady Aveline sent invitations early this morning, inviting several ladies to gather and view something special she acquired." Elowen nodded slightly. Aveline, Kaelan's mother. A woman of high status, and... a personality that stood apart. Just as she was thinking, Yvonne had already come out to greet them. Dressed impeccably, her posture flawless, she greeted Elowen with a warm, measured smile. "You've come despite not fully recovering. You shouldn't have troubled yourself," she said. Elowen returned the smile.

"Thank you for your concern. I'm much better now. You came to visit me personally the other day, I wanted to return that courtesy." She glanced gently at Sylvia beside her. "Cassian

mentioned the imperial decree yesterday, and I realized we hadn't properly discussed 2/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 J Chapter 220 A Visit To Falconcrest : 41 Finished the arrangements. Since it's such an important matter, it's only right both families stay in touch. So I brought Sylvia to pay our respects and ask about the preparations." Only then did Yvonne's gaze settle on Sylvia.

Sylvia lowered her head immediately, her voice soft but clear. "Your Grace." Yvonne's smile didn't change, but there was a faint stiffness beneath it as she gave a slight nod. 1.8K 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 J admin