

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 221 A Polite Facade : For this girl who had shown up out of nowhere, Yvonne couldn't quite hide the unease simmering beneath the surface. 41 Finished Her background, her manners, even that overly timid way about her, none of it matched the daughter-in-law Yvonne had once imagined. She paused, then shifted the topic as if nothing were amiss. "As it happens, Lady Aveline is visiting today." Elowen followed her lead. "What brings Lady Aveline here today?" At that, Yvonne let out a soft, amused scoff. "She somehow caught wind that Azure is finally writing again after all these years.

No idea how she managed it, but she actually got her hands on the first page of the manuscript. She's beside herself, saying good things should be shared, insisting we all take a look together." Elowen lifted a delicate brow, just a touch of interest slipping into her voice. "I see. Azure's work is rare indeed." The group began moving toward the reception hall. Just as they reached the entrance, hurried footsteps echoed from the corridor to the right. They turned to look. A young man in fine robes was striding over in a rush.

He was moving so fast he nearly tripped, catching himself at the last second. His face was slightly flushed, a sheen of sweat at his temples, his breath uneven, clearly having come in a hurry. It was Piers. The moment he steadied himself, his gaze locked onto the slim figure in pale pink standing behind Elowen. His eyes burned, all that longing and concern almost spilling over. Elowen understood instantly, He must have heard Sylvia was here and rushed over without a second thought. "Piers?" Yvonne frowned at the sight of her son's lack of composure, her tone sharpening.

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"What's gotten into you?" Startled by her voice, Piers finally pulled his gaze away from Sylvia.

A flicker of embarrassment crossed his face. He quickly composed himself and bowed to Elowen. "Your Grace." Then he turned to Yvonne, forcing his breathing to steady. "Mother, I heard we had distinguished guests, so I came to help... entertain them." 1/3 14:30 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 221 A Polite Facade : 41 Finished Even he sounded unconvinced. Yvonne knew her son too well. He had never cared for social calls. Even the most important guests couldn't drag him out unless he absolutely had to.

For him to rush here like this, the reason was obvious. She was displeased, but with Elowen present, she held back, shooting him a sharp look instead. Just as Yvonne was about to lead Elowen and Sylvia inside, Piers suddenly spoke again, as if gathering his courage. "Mother, Your Grace, a moment. I just remembered something I need to ask His Grace. Would it be possible for Your Grace to pass along my question?" His eyes turned to Elowen, earnest and hopeful. Elowen already saw through him.

He wanted to use this as an excuse to learn more about the marriage decree, or perhaps test Cassian's stance, all for Sylvia's sake. Since he had invoked Cassian, Yvonne couldn't openly interfere, even if she saw right through him. Keeping her expression composed, Elowen smiled lightly. "Of course. If I know the answer, I'll tell you. If not, I'll pass it along." Piers immediately gestured. "This way, Your Grace." Seeing Elowen about to leave, Sylvia couldn't help but grow tense. The thought of going in alone, facing a room full of unfamiliar noblewomen, made her chest tighten.

Elowen noticed at once. She gently took Sylvia's slightly cold hand, giving it a reassuring squeeze. "Don't be afraid. Just remember what I taught you. You don't need to overthink it, and

you don't need to please anyone. When you go in, just carry yourself with ease. Trust your instincts." Her voice was calm, steady, grounding. Sylvia took a deep breath, forcing down her nerves, then nodded firmly. There was still a trace of hesitation in her eyes, but now there was resolve too.

Elowen stepped aside with Piers, moving to a quieter spot beneath the corridor, The moment they stopped, the composure Piers had been forcing cracked instantly. Anxiety and frustration flooded his face. He let out a breath. "Your Grace, you must have noticed... my 2/3 14:31 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 221 A Polite Facade mother isn't exactly in favor of this marriage." His voice was tight, weighed down with helplessness. Elowen listened quietly, not surprised in the slightest, and gave a small nod for him to continue. Sunlight fell across her calm profile, soft and steady. 1.8K 1 41 admin

Chapter 222 A Calculated Move Finished "Even if this marriage was granted by His Majesty and can't be refused," Piers said, brows drawn tight, "I'm worried she won't let it go. If Sylvia marries into the family... I'm afraid she'll have a hard time. That she'll be treated poorly." Before Elowen could respond, a shadow moved. A guard in dark attire approached silently, swift as wind, stopping three steps away. He lowered his gaze, awaiting instruction. The previous guards had failed. Cassian had already dealt with them. The ones assigned now were far more capable.

Elowen's gaze shifted slightly. "Give me a moment," she said to Piers, then leaned in. The guard stepped closer and spoke in a low voice. "His Highness heard you're at Falconcrest Manor. He's on his way." Elowen frowned. That man again... As her thoughts turned, something clicked. She looked at Piers, a faint smile forming. "I understand your concern," she said lightly. "As it

happens, I'm dealing with a small inconvenience myself." Her eyes curved with quiet amusement. "Why don't we help each other out?" Piers didn't hesitate.

"Your Grace, please." Elowen's lips curved just slightly, her tone lowering as she laid out her plan. As Piers listened, doubt flickered across his face. "Will he really... act like that?" "From what I know," Elowen said calmly, her certainty unmistakable, "he will." Her gaze lingered on him for a moment before she let out a soft sigh, measured and deliberate. "If this puts you in a difficult position, we can forget it," she added gently. "It was only a suggestion. You're free to refuse, As for your situation with Sylvia..." She paused, her voice softening.

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"Since I'm her cousin by marriage now, helping her is only right. I'll do what I can." A flush rose to Piers's face instantly. 1/3 14:31 Sat, Apr 11 G Chapter 222 A Calculated Move 41 Finished He prided himself on loyalty and keeping his word. That moment of hesitation now felt small, almost shameful. He straightened at once and bowed deeply. "Your Grace, rest assured. Since I've agreed, I'll see it through. I won't go back on my word. As for Sylvia...

I'll be counting on you." Because his head was lowered, he didn't catch the fleeting glint of mischief in Elowen's eyes, gone as quickly as it appeared. By the time he looked up, her expression was perfectly composed again. With things settled, Piers immediately turned to go. "Your Grace, we should head back. Sylvia's alone in there. She'll be scared... and people might take advantage of her." Elowen let out a soft laugh, unhurried. "You think so?" Her tone was light. "She may look fragile, but she's stronger than she seems." Piers blinked, caught off guard.

Meanwhile, inside the reception hall, Aveline stood at the center, beaming, carefully handing out several sheets of paper. Even Sylvia, seated quietly in the corner, received one. "This," Aveline

said, unable to hide her excitement, "is Azure's handwritten draft. It may only be a single page, but after all these years of silence, even this is incredibly rare." She went on at length, praising the writing, its elegance, its depth, then invited the ladies present to share their thoughts. The room quickly filled with agreement. None of the noblewomen would risk offending her.

Compliments flowed easily, one after another. "Every word is flawless." "The vision is extraordinary." "Truly beyond the ordinary." The atmosphere turned warm, almost celebratory, But in the corner, Sylvia kept her head lowered, reading the page over and over. A faint crease formed between her brows, confusion flickering in her eyes. Is it really that good? 2/3 14:31 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 222 A Calculated Move 41 Finished The wording felt overly ornate, almost forced. The ideas were shallow, lacking substance. She knew Azure's work. In Vanelle, almost everyone had read Tales of Luminara.

That story had been simple, sincere, quietly moving. Compared to that, the page in her hands felt... off. It didn't even seem like it came from the same person. "Miss Ashcroft, what do you think?" Aveline's voice cut in suddenly, her gaze landing on her with precision. 1.8K 1 14:31 Sat, Apr 11 ... Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess : admin

Chapter 223 A Voice Of Her Own 41 Finished Sylvia snapped out of her thoughts, startled, her gaze lifting in a hurry, only to meet Aveline's sharp, assessing eyes head-on. Aveline's lips curved faintly, her tone smooth but impossible to ignore. "I saw how absorbed you were just now, Sylvia. You must have been quite moved. Care to share your thoughts?" There was no real room to evade. Sylvia instinctively glanced toward Yvonne, who sat at the head of the room. Yvonne simply held her cup, her expression calm and unreadable. She offered no hint, no guidance, not even the slightest signal.

Sylvia's heart sank. Not surprising. Yvonne had never liked her. Why would she step in now? She pressed her lips together, thoughts turning over in her mind. The safest choice would be to go along with the crowd, to echo what everyone else had said. That way, nothing could go wrong. But she just could not bring herself to say something she did not believe. Elowen's voice echoed in her mind, gentle yet steady, as if it had been spoken only moments ago. "You don't need to be nervous, and you don't need to try to please anyone. When the time comes, just carry yourself with confidence.

Say what you truly think. Be natural." That quiet strength lingered, grounding her. "Did you not hear me?" Aveline prompted again, a trace of impatience slipping into her expression. All eyes in the room turned toward Sylvia, filled with curiosity and scrutiny. Sylvia drew in a slow breath, as if settling something within herself. Then she lifted her gaze. Her voice was soft, but clear. "This is just my personal view, but while the writing is certainly elaborate, it feels overly polished, almost forced. It loses something of its natural charm because of that.

It doesn't come close to the effortless flow of Tales of Luminara. And the ideas it tries to reach for feel a bit too distant, too abstract, like something you can admire but never truly connect with." The moment her words fell, the room went still. Yvonne paused slightly, her fingers tightening just a fraction around her cup. She looked up, a flicker of surprise crossing her eyes as she gave Sylvia a rare, measured once-over. Because of Marwen, she had never thought much of the girl.

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But she had even less patience for the overly dressed-up nonsense on that page. Yvonne had grown up in a family steeped in scholarship, surrounded by learned minds. She had no taste for pretentious writing like this. Listening to the others praise it had been unbearable. She had

assumed Sylvia would follow along. She had not expected her to speak with such clarity. Outside the hall, Elowen tilted her head slightly, her gaze falling on Piers, who stood beside her, visibly tense. A hint of amusement colored her voice as she repeated his earlier words, "Alone, was she?

Being bullied?" Piers had gone completely still. Then, as the shock faded, a smile slowly spread across his face, something softer, deeper settling in his eyes. He had never imagined that the shy, gentle girl he knew could show this kind of quiet strength. This side of her... He likes it far more than he expected. Inside, Aveline's expression darkened. This was the first time someone had openly contradicted her, and she did not take it well. She let out a cold scoff. "Abstract? It stands above the vulgar tastes of the crowd. Do you really think someone like you could understand it?

You're judging something far beyond you." The words landed sharp and cutting, Sylvia's face paled, her gaze dropping. "That's not quite fair." Elowen's voice came at just the right moment as she stepped into the hall, her tone gentle, yet carrying an undeniable steadiness. "No matter how well something is written, once it's out in the world, some people will love it and others won't. Even the works of Duchess Yvonne's great-grandfather were not universally praised.

That's simply how it is." 2/3 14:31 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 223 A Voice Of Her Own : 41 Finished
Piers stepped in right after, backing her up without hesitation. "Exactly. Even His Majesty encourages open discussion in court. Everyone is free to speak their mind. It's no different when it comes to writing. People are bound to have different tastes." Aveline's displeasure only deepened. She shot Piers a sharp look. "Matters of state are hardly comparable to judging a mere story." Then her gaze shifted to Elowen, carrying open disdain. "I've heard you barely had any proper schooling.

I doubt you even understand what you're reading. And yet here you are, weighing in on literary merit?" Faced with the insult, Elowen did not get angry. Instead, she let out a soft laugh. "You're well-informed. I didn't have much of an education, and I know very little about writing." She paused, then added lightly, "But I do know who Azure is." Aveline froze, suspicion flickering across her face. "You know Azure?" Elowen nodded calmly. "A few months ago, at a palace banquet you did not attend, Daphne admitted it herself. Her Majesty and His Highness were both present.

She wouldn't have lied about something like that." 1.8K admin

Chapter 224 The Trap Springs 41 Finished Aveline stared, stunned. "It was her... Daphne? No wonder she was chosen as Crown Princess. Her Majesty truly sees far ahead." The words slipped out before she could stop them. Then, as if remembering something, her gaze flicked toward Sylvia, her voice dropping into a quiet mutter, "Unlike certain people..." She did not finish the sentence, but the meaning was obvious. Yvonne's brow creased ever so slightly. It sounded like a jab at Sylvia, but it did not spare her either.

"By the way," Elowen said smoothly, shifting the conversation, "on my way here, Piers mentioned the chrysanthemums in Falconcrest Manor's garden are in full bloom. I hear there are some rare varieties this year. Would it be too much to ask for a look?" Yvonne paused briefly, then picked up the thread. "Yes, a few years ago, we planted some rare strains. They've been difficult to cultivate, but they've finally come into their own. If you're interested, we can move to the garden.

The pavilion is a pleasant place to rest." The others quickly agreed, the earlier tension dissolving as if it had never existed. Piers stepped forward at once. "Mother, I'll go ahead and have

refreshments prepared in the pavilion." Yvonne glanced at him, a flicker of suspicion passing through her mind. Her son had never cared for these social gatherings. Why the sudden enthusiasm? Then it clicked. Sylvia was here. Of course. Trying to impress the girl, and her along with it. Yvonne let out a quiet scoff inwardly.

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So this is what it's like, you forget your own mother the second a girl shows up. Still slightly displeased, she gave a small nod. At the gates of Falconcrest Manor, Alaric arrived in haste. He had barely stepped inside when a broad-shouldered man with a dark complexion moved to 1/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 . Chapter 224 The Trap Springs block his path. Alaric frowned, instinctively taking a step back. 41 Finished The man quickly stepped forward again, lowering his voice so only the two of them could hear. "Your Highness.

Her Grace knew you would come today and asked me to wait here for you." Alaric froze. "She sent you?" "Yes." The man leaned in slightly, his voice dropping further. "She said everything that's happened was forced on her. She had no choice. These past days, she hasn't been able to stop thinking about you. She said that in her dreams, you're always there, holding her, comforting her." Alaric's breath caught. Joy surged through him, impossible to suppress. He knew it. He had always known it. She had no choice. If not for Cassian's power, how could she have ended up in Duskmoor Manor?

Just imagining what she must have endured at his side twisted something deep inside him. A rush of aching tenderness flooded his chest. "Where is she?" he asked quickly. "The pavilion in the back garden," the man replied. "She's waiting for you there." Alaric did not hesitate. "Take me to her." As they moved through the manor, his thoughts churned like a rising tide. He had missed her too much. Even before everything, he had cared for her, though he had never fully

understood his own heart. And now... Now that he had another chance, he would not hold back. She dreamed of being in his arms.

And he? He had dreamed of the same, of pulling her close, of pressing soft kisses against her skin. The more he thought about it, the faster his heart pounded. "Your Highness, we've arrived." The man stopped. "She's inside. I'll leave you to it." 2/2 14:32 Sat, Apr 11. Chapter 224 The Trap Springs Alaric lifted his gaze. 41 Finished The pavilion was half-hidden among dense trees and flowers, the light dim, the shapes within blurred. The air carried a faint blend of coffee and sweet pastries. A figure stood inside, still and waiting. Heat rushed through him.

All the restraint he had held back broke at once. He strode forward and pulled the person into his arms without hesitation, his voice low, thick with emotion. "I've missed you." Before the words had even settled, he leaned in, unable to stop himself. But a hand pressed firmly against his chest, stopping him cold. "Your Highness, what do you think you're doing?" The voice was clear, edged with anger. Alaric's pupils tightened as his eyes finally adjusted to the dim light. The face in his arms came into focus. Sharp features and a defined jaw, not Elowen, but Piers.

The shock had barely begun to register when a sudden rush of footsteps sounded behind him. A woman's startled voice broke through the air. "There's someone in the pavilion..." 1.8K 4 admin

Chapter 225 A Public Scandal 41 Finished Another voice rang out right after, sharp with disbelief. "Your Highness... why are you holding him like that?" Yvonne pushed through the crowd without hesitation and rushed forward. What she saw with her own eyes, inside that elegant lakeside pavilion, nearly made her collapse. Alaric had Piers pulled in against him, the hold not entirely willing. The world spun. Blood rushed to her head. She staggered, almost fainting on the spot, and the maid behind her caught her just in time. "You... you two..."

what is this..." She couldn't even form a full sentence. One hand clutched at her chest as her breathing turned uneven, her face drained of color. Elowen stepped forward and gently steadied Yvonne by the shoulders. "Your Grace, there has to be some misunderstanding." As she spoke, her gaze flicked across the pavilion, subtle and controlled, meeting Alaric's eyes for the briefest moment. The second Alaric saw her, his pupils blew wide. He wasn't stupid. At this point, it was obvious. This whole thing had been set up. Someone had lured him here with a message, supposedly from Elowen.

No, that can't be right. Elowen is soft-hearted, she always looks at him like he matters more than anything. She would never scheme like this. Then it has to be Cassian, it has to be him forcing her, or using her. Alaric clenched his jaw, humiliation twisting with anger in his chest. "If it's just a misunderstanding, that would be nice," Aveline cut in, her tone light but edged. "Let's hope this isn't something... more unconventional." A few days ago during the autumn hunt, Alaric had caused a scene. Kaelan got caught up frightened badly enough to run a fever for days.

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in it, Aveline only had one son. She had been holding that anger in ever since. Now she didn't bother hiding it. 1/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 .. Chapter 225 A Public Scandal The moment those words landed, the way everyone looked at Alaric changed. 41 Finished Alaric's face went rigid, color draining as he forced the words out. "I don't have any... twisted inclinations. This is a misunderstanding." "What Your Highness says must be true..." Yvonne took a slow breath and spoke again. No matter what, she was still the lady of this household. She forced her emotions down and managed a tight smile.

"It's nothing more than a misunderstanding. There's no need to dwell on it. Coffee and refreshments have already been prepared. Please, everyone, take a seat." The guests followed her

lead and moved into the pavilion one by one. Alaric had just humiliated himself in front of everyone. Normally, he would have walked out without a second thought. But when he looked at Elowen, he hesitated. It had been so long since she'd seen him. She had to have missed him. He straightened his posture and walked in anyway.

With him present, and after what had just happened, the atmosphere turned painfully strained. Every conversation felt cautious, loaded with things left unsaid. The coffee and pastries were set out, but no one actually touched them. Yvonne caught on to the shift. She took a sip of tea, then said, "Your Highness, I heard the young lady from the Garrett family is the one behind the name Azure?" Alaric's attention was still fixed on Elowen. He answered without thinking. "It's her." That was enough. The room stirred. Just like that, no one cared about the earlier scene anymore.

The whispers shifted to Azure. Even Aveline lifted her gaze slightly. Truth be told, she found Alaric's behavior disgraceful. But Azure.... That was someone she couldn't help but admire. 2/3
14:32 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 225 A Public Scandal : 41 Finished The two feelings tangled together, until all that came out was a quiet, restrained sigh. "What a fortunate man..." She meant Alaric. Elowen sat quietly the entire time, sipping coffee, nibbling on pastries, watching everything unfold like it was a performance. When she judged the moment right, she set her cup down and stood.

"Your Grace, it's getting late. Cassian should be returning soon, and I promised I wouldn't be out long. I'll take my leave." Sylvia stood as well and gave a proper bow. Yvonne nodded. Piers immediately rose. "Mother, I'll walk them out." Yvonne knew exactly who he meant to escort. But compared to rumors involving Alaric, this was far easier to accept. She didn't stop him. The moment Alaric saw Elowen leaving, he couldn't sit still anymore. He stood abruptly. "I... have

matters to attend to as well." One after another, they left. And the moment they were gone, the pavilion erupted.

"Do you think... His Highness actually-" A lady covered her mouth with her fan, her voice low but buzzing with excitement. "But isn't he about to marry the Garrett girl? Then what was that just now..." "Oh, please. Matters like this are hardly for us to discuss. Best to be careful." Even as she said that, her eyes were already gleaming with the urge to spread the story. Yvonne's expression darkened as she listened. 1.8K 3/3 admin

Chapter 226 Aftermath : Aveline tightened her grip on her cup. If it had been anyone else, she wouldn't care. But the one Alaric was about to marry was Daphne. 41 Finished Azure. If Alaric was disgraced, Azure would be dragged down with him. That was unacceptable. She made up her mind right then. This wouldn't end here. Under the corridor of Falconcrest Manor, Elowen walked with Piers and Sylvia. She turned to Piers, her expression apologetic. "Today dragged you into this mess. You ended up taking the heat for it. I'm sorry." Piers didn't look bothered. "You don't need to apologize.

I agreed to help. There's nothing to regret." Elowen smiled slightly. "Don't worry. I haven't forgotten about you and Sylvia. Give it a few more days. Your mother will see her differently." She paused, eyes steady. "When that happens, she'll realize Sylvia is exactly the kind of daughter-in-law she's been looking for. No room left to complain." Piers stopped in his tracks, brought his hands together in a formal gesture, and bowed with genuine sincerity. "Then I owe you my thanks." With that settled, he personally showed them a shorter route out.

They made it to the carriage without running into Alaric. By the time they returned to Duskmoor Manor, the sun had already dipped low, light brushing the tops of the flowers. Elowen asked

Anson about Cassian, only to learn he hadn't come back yet. A flicker of confusion crossed her mind. Where has he gone? Still, she didn't dwell on it. Cassian always had his own way of handling things. Something in the Northern Garrison had probably held him up. The pastries at Falconcrest Manor earlier had been delicate and not overly sweet. The thought lingered.

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On impulse, she decided to make something herself, so Cassian could try it when he returned.

1/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 226 Aftermath 0: 41 Finished She headed straight for the kitchen.

The cook, a round-faced middle-aged woman, hurried over the moment she saw her, smiling with both surprise and respect. "Your Grace, you could've just told me what you wanted. There's no need for you to do it yourself." She kept talking as she worked. "People outside would kill for a position here. The pay generous, and the household is kind.

The other day I made too much dough and thought I'd get scolded, but instead, His Grace rewarded me with fifty gold. My whole family couldn't believe it..." Elowen listened, a small smile on her lips. "There's no need for extra hands right now. But if we do need people later, I'll let you know. If someone you recommend is capable and reliable, we'll consider it." The cook was overjoyed. By the time the pastries came out of the oven, a familiar sound rolled in from the courtyard. Wheels against stone. Cassian was back. Elowen was busy plating the pastries and didn't look up.

The sound drew closer, stopping right in front of her. "Ella." Cassian reached out and pinched her cheek, his tone low and slow. "I hear you had someone deliver a message to Alaric. Said you still have feelings for him, that you've been thinking about him this whole time?" The cook slipped out quietly, closing the door behind her. The kitchen fell silent except for the soft crackle

of the fire. Elowen didn't look up. "That's not what I said." She placed the last pastry neatly on the plate. "I said everything before was just... circumstance. That I've missed him lately.

That sometimes, in my dreams, he still holds me and tells me everything will be okay." Only then did she lift her eyes. She met Cassian's gaze without the slightest hint of panic, smiling instead. "He already believes I still care. I just made sure he believes it a little more." She picked up a warm pastry and held it out to him. "People say if you want the catch, you have to make the bait irresistible. Try it." 2/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 226 Aftermath : 41 Finished Cassian leaned in and took a bite, his eyes never leaving her. After a moment, he let out a quiet laugh.

"So this is the bait." Elowen blinked. "What?" Cassian said nothing, just kept eating. It took her a second to catch on. Color rose to her cheeks. "I wasn't using you as bait." Cassian's eyes softened with amusement. "You don't need to. I walked right into it." Elowen flushed and looked away, refusing to respond. Cassian smiled. "How did things go at Falconcrest Manor?" "Not great," Elowen said. "Duchess Yvonne doesn't like Sylvia." "I could speak to them," Cassian offered. "No." Elowen shook her head. After today, she had seen it clearly. Yvonne didn't just disapprove.

She looked down on Sylvia. 1.8K 3/3 admin

Chapter 227 A Fragile Plan Finished If Cassian showed up in person, the Duke of Falconcrest and Duchess Yvonne wouldn't dare object, and the wedding would be arranged with all the grandeur and urgency expected. But that kind of splendor was only surface deep. To outsiders, it would look dazzling, all lights and celebration, but for Sylvia, marriage was for life, and what came after might not be easy. No matter how much Piers cared for her, he was still just one man.

He couldn't shield her every moment of every day. In the end, it all came down to whether Yvonne truly accepted Sylvia.

"I've thought it through," Elowen said, her expression steady and sincere, "If everything goes smoothly, Duchess Yvonne will come around. When that happens, everyone wins." Cassian watched her, something soft settling in his eyes. He gave a faint smile. "Alright." The way he looked at her made her ears warm. She shifted the topic, "Do you like the pastries?" "Very much," Cassian said without hesitation. Elowen smiled, pleased. She picked up another plate of delicate honey-almond tea cakes and started toward the door. "Then you keep eating.

I'll bring these to Sylvia so she can try some." Her wrist was caught gently. "Where are you going?" Cassian asked, his voice carrying a quiet pull. "I told you, I'm taking them to Sylvia." Elowen glanced back at him, amused. "Go later." His arm tightened slightly as he drew her back to his side, his voice dropping near her ear, "It's been a while. I missed you." Elowen lost her balance and landed in his lap. She tilted her head. "We slept next to each other last night.

That's your idea of a long time?" Even so, she set the plate aside first, Cassian let out a low laugh, his chest rising beneath her. His arm wrapped tighter around her. "A whole morning, that counts," He leaned in, resting his forehead lightly against hers, their breaths brushing together.

"Just one kiss." Then he kissed her. 1/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 227 A Fragile Plan : 41 曲

Finished Alaric returned to the Crown Prince's Wing, restless and on edge. Not long after, he was summoned to the study by Theodric.

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The moment he stepped inside, a stack of papers came flying at him, smacking straight into his head. "Useless!" Theodric's voice rang out, sharp with anger. Alaric dropped low at once,

pressing his hand to the floor. "Your Majesty, please calm your anger." "Answer me," Theodric snapped, "What were you doing at Falconcrest Manor?" Alaric kept his gaze lowered, his voice tight with unease. "Your Majesty, I only stopped by briefly, had some coffee, and left." A cold laugh followed. "Seems your injuries have healed nicely.

First you run to Duskmoor Manor to stir trouble, now Falconcrest Manor for coffee. Where next, Hale Manor?" Alaric's face drained of color. Theodric caught every flicker of his reaction, his tone growing colder. "So you won't be going to Hale Manor after all. Not surprising. The one you've been so fixated on is no longer there." Nothing in Vanelle escaped Theodric's notice, especially anything tied to the Crown Prince's Wing. Cold sweat gathered at Alaric's temples. "Your Majesty... I was wrong. "Wrong?" Theodric's eyes were filled with disappointment, sharp and unyielding.

"Alaric, don't think sitting in that position means you're secure. Among your brothers, there are those steadier than you, more capable than you. And Cassian is in his prime, stronger than you in both mind and command. Now that he has a household of his own, if I were to entrust the realm to him someday, it would not be unreasonable." The words struck like thunder. Alaric's head snapped up, disbelief flooding his eyes. If the throne went to Cassian, then Elowen, as Duchess of Duskmoor, would stand beyond his reach forever. He bowed deeply, his voice tight with urgency and regret.

"Your Majesty, I was foolish. At the hunting grounds, I frightened... my aunt, and I've felt uneasy ever since. I feared it might cause tension between you and His Grace, so I only meant to apologize in person." 2/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 227 A Fragile Plan Theodric listened in silence. Maybe he believed it, maybe he didn't. But at least it sounded acceptable. 41 Finished

After a moment, his voice came down hard. "Your marriage to the Garrett family is near. Stay in the Crown Prince's Wing and prepare properly.

No more complications." He paused, then added with a scoff, "If rumors start spreading about improper conduct, do you think I'll tolerate the disgrace? Or that the royal house will?" Alaric didn't dare resist. He admitted fault, promised again and again to focus on the wedding. By the time he left the study, his back was soaked with sweat. He steadied his breath, then turned to Quin waiting outside. "Quin, did Aveline come to the palace today?" Quin smiled slightly, bowing. "Your Highness sees clearly. Some days ago, Kaelan fell ill after being startled, and his fever wouldn't break.

His Majesty sent a royal physician. Aveline came today to express her gratitude." 1.8K 0 1 14:32
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Chapter 228 Quiet Undercurrents Alaric caught the meaning behind those words. 41 Finished
Aveline had indeed come, and Theodric's fury today likely had something to do with what she said. But at the root of it, it was his own fault. His behavior during the hunt had frightened Kaelan and given others reason to speak against him. He narrowed his eyes, forcing down his irritation. Right now, keeping his position mattered most. In his past life, Kaelan had passed the imperial exams and entered court.

The boy had been upright and unbending, and even with Aveline behind him, he had struggled in that world. In the end, hadn't Aveline still gone to Theodric for help? And that problem had been resolved by him, the crown prince. Back then, she had been nothing but grateful. As long as he remained crown prince, as long as he eventually took that throne, everything would fall into place. What was a little humiliation now? Alaric took a slow breath, forcing himself to calm

down. Fine. He would follow Theodric's will for now and marry Daphne first. Cassian didn't love Elowen. He was only using her.

Once Alaric found the woman Cassian truly cared about, Cassian would cast Elowen aside. And then, he would bring Elowen into the Crown Prince's Wing. She might have to settle for a secondary position at first, but once she bore him an heir, that could change. In this life, he and Elowen would end up together. As the crown prince's wedding approached, all of Vanelle buzzed with speculation. But the talk wasn't really about the ceremony. It was about Daphne. First, Azure, silent for so long, had begun writing again.

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The first release had been snatched up 1/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 228 Quiet Undercurrents instantly. Second, rumors claimed that Daphne, soon to be crown princess, was actually Azure. Compared to the noise across Vanelle, Duskmoor Manor was unusually calm. Finished Elowen sat at her desk, finishing the last line of a letter. She sealed it carefully and handed it to Mira. "All set. Send it out." "Yes, Your Grace," Mira said brightly, taking the letter and leaving. Cora stepped in quietly. "Your Grace, Doctor Dray has arrived." Elowen looked up.

Hugh stood in the doorway with his medical case. "Please come in," Elowen said with a polite smile. After checking her pulse, Hugh nodded. "You look much better lately. Your knee must be improving." Elowen inclined her head. She remembered clearly that around this time in her previous life, the steady autumn rains had made her knee ache constantly, keeping her awake at night. Now there was no pain at all. It had truly gotten better. "At this rate," Hugh said thoughtfully, "you should be fully recovered by the end of the year."

Just take care of yourself and avoid further strain." Elowen was about to thank him when his expression turned serious. "Is His Grace not at the manor again?" She paused. "He left early this morning." Hugh frowned. "Didn't His Majesty already hand off the military matters so he could rest? If he keeps pushing himself like this, does he even want his legs to heal?" Elowen tilted her head slightly, "Maybe he had something important to deal with?" "Nothing is more important than his health." Hugh considered for a moment, then looked at her. "You should say something to him.

He'll listen to you." Elowen lowered her voice. "He might not." 2/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 228 Quiet Undercurrents 41 Finished Hugh raised a brow. "If he won't listen to you, then no one can control him." Elowen blinked, caught off guard. She was his wife, but even so, her place had limits. Cassian said he liked her, treated her well, even handed over the household matters. That was already more than enough. What he did outside was his own business. If she pushed too far, he might w tired of it.

Still, since Hugh had brought it up, and it concerned Cassian's health, she decided she would mention it later. No matter how busy he was, he always came back at night to sleep beside her. Night fell. Elowen leaned by the window, reading. The candlelight flickered, the words on the blurring. Her head dipped, lower and lower, until her forehead was about to hit the edge of the table, a warm hand caught her. page Her eyes fluttered open, meeting Cassian's gaze, a hint of amusement in his eyes. "You're back," she murmured softly. Up close, she caught a faint chrysanthemum scent on him.

There were no such flowers in the manor. Where had it come from? Cassian looked at her.

"Tired?" Elowen pulled her thoughts back and nodded. "Doctor Dray came by today. He said take better care of yourself and stop running around so much." you should 1.8K 。 H admin

Chapter 229 A Kiss And A Storm 41 Finished At Duskmoor Manor, Cassian brushed a loose strand of hair from Elowen's temple and let his fingers linger. He looked at her, voice low and easy. "What about you, Ella, do you want me around more?" Elowen nodded without hesitation. "I do." you had the guards A hint of amusement warmed his eyes as he traced her cheek. "I heard running errands these past couple days, buying Azure's new release over and over." She had known he would find out. It was never something she meant to hide anyway. Elowen lowered her gaze and gave a quiet hum of acknowledgment.

"I've read Tales of Luminara before," she said, voice soft, "it was really good. But this new one feels... flat. It just doesn't grab you." "Maybe it starts slow," Cassian said, lifting her chin so she had no choice but to meet his gaze, "maybe it picks up later." His eyes narrowed slightly, sharp and knowing. "Or maybe you're trying to help this Azure build some buzz." Elowen looked away, the tips of her ears warming. He really was impossible. He always saw right through her.

"Is it because Azure is Daphne," Cassian went on, his thumb brushing lightly across her flushed cheek, "or is there something else?" She gave a vague answer, but unease stirred under her ribs. If he kept asking, he might actually figure it out, that Tales of Luminara had been hers all along. Elowen took a breath, heat rising in her face, and before he could press further, she tilted her head up and leaned closer, her voice soft and almost coaxing. "Your Grace... kiss me." Cassian's brow lifted. She was usually reserved, never this forward, never the one to ask.

Which made it all the more impossible to resist. A low chuckle slipped from him before he closed the distance and kissed her. The kiss deepened quickly, pulling her under. Elowen's breathing turned uneven, her head light, the world blurring at the edges. 1/3 14:32 Sat, Apr 11 J Chapter 229 A Kiss And A Storm 41 Finished Only when she could barely catch her breath did she press a hand weakly against his chest and pull back a little, voice soft and broken. "Your Grace... I..."

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I should get cleaned up..." He lingered, clearly unwilling to let go, brushing another light kiss against the corner of her lips. "Alright." She slipped away almost like she was fleeing. By the time Elowen finished washing up and returned to bed, she had already curled beneath the covers. Not long after, Cassian came back as well, fresh from his bath, the faint chill of water still clinging to him. He reached out without thinking and drew her into his arms. She breathed in quietly. The faint chrysanthemum scent that had lingered on him earlier was gone.

Cassian's voice came low by her ear, picking up where he had left off. "We weren't done talking." "Hm?" She looked up. "I don't care about Azure, or Daphne, or anything else," he said calmly, steady as ever, "as long as you're happy." There was no hesitation in his tone. "No matter what happens," he said, voice steady, "I've got it handled. Just do whatever you want." Her chest tightened suddenly, warmth rushing through her like a tide. Elowen leaned up and pressed a soft kiss to his lips. That single touch was enough.

Cassian's interest sparked instantly, and in the next moment, he pushed her gently back into the covers and kissed her again, deeper this time. At the Garrett residence, the bookshop owner handed a heavy pouch of coins to Daphne, her face lit with excitement. "I was worried at first. The man who handled your printing and illustrations quit, so I thought this new release might not

sell well. But who would've guessed, it's even hotter than Tales of Luminara was when it first came out. People have been coming in every day asking for it.

"We can't keep up with demand." Daphne weighed the pouch in her hand, a smug smile curling at her lips. "Of course it's selling. I wrote it." 2/2 14:33 Sat, Apr 11 .. Chapter 229 A Kiss And A Storm That old Azure had never stood a chance. : 41 Finished She glanced at the woman again. "Keep pushing it hard every day until my wedding. Do it right, and you'll be rewarded." The owner beamed, nodding eagerly. "Don't worry, I'll make sure everything's handled perfectly." With that, she left, satisfied, her steps light. Silence returned to the room.

Seline looked at her daughter and couldn't help but mutter, "Honestly, why put so much effort into these books? Sure, they make money, but not that much. You'd be better off focusing on becoming the Crown Prince's consort. Once you're in that position, your father can move up, your brother can get a good post, and people will be lining up at our door with gifts and gold. Why bother with all this?" Daphne scoffed. "Mother, you really don't see it. Right now, Her Majesty and His Highness don't think much of our family.

"Only if I build a name for myself will they start taking us seriously." Seline frowned, still doubtful. "You mean to tell me writing a few books can give you that kind of reputation?" "Of course." Daphne turned, pride clear on her face. "You've been shut inside too long, you don't know how things work out there. Even Maerwyn and Lady Aveline are following my work, waiting for my new release. Doesn't that say enough?" Seline paused, something clicking in her mind. "But... isn't this your first book?"

Why do people keep saying you wrote something before?" Daphne's expression flickered for just a moment before smoothing out. She spoke lightly, as if it meant nothing. "Mother, keep that to yourself. Don't mention it to anyone. I just didn't tell you before." 1.8K E 售 3/3 admin

Chapter 230 The Night Before : 41 Finished Daphne quickly shifted the topic before Seline could dig deeper. "Mother, once I become the Crown Prince's consort, every noble lady in Vanelle will be trying to win our favor. I'll make sure you receive a proper noble title." That promise hit exactly where it mattered. Seline's face lit up instantly, all her doubts gone. "Daphne, you really are my good daughter! Oh, and I even had someone look into it, your wedding day is supposed to be incredibly lucky. Everything will be grand, a celebration no one will forget.

It won't be any less than what Elowen had." At the mention of Elowen, Daphne let out a soft, dismissive laugh. "Her? She married a crippled duke. She might look like a duchess now, but what future does she really have? At best, she'll just grow old in that estate." Her eyes gleamed with confidence. "I'll be the mother of the realm." Seline nodded quickly. "Exactly." Then she chuckled. "Elowen must be so jealous. Probably crying behind closed doors, losing sleep over it." At Duskmoor Manor, Elowen lay in Cassian's arms when she suddenly sneezed. Is someone talking about me?

She didn't dwell on it. Eyes still closed, she shifted slightly and settled back into his embrace, drifting off again. With Cassian there, she always slept well. Until the night before Alaric and Daphne's wedding. The darkness outside pressed heavy against the windows, and Elowen couldn't fall asleep. A trace of unease lingered in her chest. What if her memory was wrong, what if everything had changed this time? What if it didn't rain tomorrow in Vanelle?

"Nervous?" Cassian's voice came from above her. He had felt it, her restlessness.

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1/3 14:33 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 230 The Night Before "No," she said lightly, brushing it off. "Just feels a little stuffy." He didn't press her. 41 Finished Instead, he loosened his hold slightly and lifted a hand, patting her back in a slow, steady rhythm. Sometime past midnight, thunder cracked across the sky, loud and sudden, followed by the sharp drumming of heavy rain against the roof and windows. The moment Elowen heard it, something inside her finally eased. She curled closer into him, breathing in that familiar, grounding scent, and at last, sleep claimed her. She dreamed.

She was back in her past life. Before she died, she had seen Alaric. After asking for a separation, she had gone to see Daphne. Daphne had been reclining comfortably, her complexion glowing. When she saw Elowen, she didn't bother to rise, only offering a lazy smile. "You're here. I should stand, but I can't. I'm expecting, and Her Majesty and His Highness both told me this is the Crown Prince's first and only child. I have to be careful." She smiled, polite but hollow. Elowen hadn't cared. "I've asked for a separation," she said softly.

"From now on, you'll be the Crown Prince's consort." Daphne's eyes lit "Really?" Elowen nodded. "He agreed." The smile on Daphne's lips grew impossible to hide, though her tone stayed gentle. "Honestly, you never should've married him in the first place. Who gets married on a day like that, with rain pouring like a storm? Either you were terribly unlucky... or it was a warning." She tilted her head slightly. "You insisted on marrying him anyway, Everything that came after, that was just fate catching up with you." Back then, Elowen had thought... Yes.

2/3 14:33 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 230 The Night Before That was right. She never should have married Alaric. 41 Finished But fate had not been entirely cruel. It had shown her mercy, and given her another chance. The next morning, thunder still rolled outside as Elowen woke. She sat

up in bed, pushing aside the curtains and leaning forward to look out. The world beyond was washed in white, rain pouring down like a curtain, the flowers in the courtyard beaten down and scattered. A soft laugh slipped from her. Behind her, Cassian's voice was low, still heavy with sleep.

"You like rainy days?" Elowen nodded. "I like this one." He smiled faintly and pulled her back into his arms. "Sleep a little longer." She hesitated. "But today is Alaric's wedding. Shouldn't we leave early..." Cassian didn't even open his eyes, voice lazy and unconcerned. "In weather like this, the Garrett family and the Crown Prince's Wing will have their hands full. They'll be lucky to start on time. We can rest a bit more." She had barely slept the night before anyway. So Elowen wrapped her arms around his waist and closed her eyes again, letting herself relax.

Daphne. Now your wedding day has rain too. Tell me... are you ready for what comes after? The wind tore through the courtyard as rain came down in sheets. Festive lanterns swung wildly on their hooks, the ribbons and draped fabrics soaked through and hanging limp. Servants hurried in and out, struggling to secure everything, but nothing would stay Daphne had woken in the middle of the night and never fell asleep again. Now dawn had come. The hour was almost here, in place. 1.8K 3/3 admin