

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 251 Lessons, Then His Teasing 40 Finished Elowen lowered her head and wrote fast, carefully listing every "don't" in her notebook, one after another. Sylvia leaned in to peek. Elowen's pages were covered in tight, neat notes, and Sylvia could not help admiring her for it. Then Sylvia glanced at her own empty hands, still unsure what she was supposed to do with them, and a wave of embarrassment hit her. Elowen seemed to notice Sylvia staring. She looked up and whispered, "You can copy mine later." Sylvia nodded hard. Cecilia chose that moment to speak, cutting off their side chat.

"A woman should keep her composure," Cecilia said evenly. "At the start, what matters is guiding, not demanding. Use small, casual touches, and a look that lingers, so you can pass the message between husband and wife without spelling it out. And when you're in bed, it should feel natural, like two people moving together." She continued, not pausing. "You can respond on purpose to make it more enjoyable, but you need to know where the line is. Don't let it turn crude. You still need dignity." Elowen listened, then raised her hand, genuinely puzzled.

"Cecilia, I get the general idea, but once you're in bed, what are you actually supposed to do? What does 'natural' even mean?" Cecilia's mouth curved into a knowing smile, but she did not answer directly. "That's hard to explain with words alone. You and Sylvia will need pictures." She glanced toward the maid standing nearby. The maid immediately understood. She stepped forward and presented two beautifully bound, thread stitched books with blank covers, placing one in front of Elowen and one in front of Sylvia.

"Now," Cecilia said, "turn to page five." Elowen did as she was told and opened the book. On the page was a delicate illustration in soft colors. Two figures were closely entwined, their clothing partly loosened. Nothing was graphic, but the posture and the expressions made the meaning unmistakable. Elowen's mind went blank. Heat rushed up her neck, and her ears burned. 1/3
14:37 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 251 Lessons, Then His Teasing 40 Finished Cecilia acted as if she did not notice either of them freezing up. She continued, using the illustrations and speaking in a much more specific, blunt way.

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Elowen stared, listened, and felt her thoughts float out of reach, like her head was buzzing too loud to hold anything steady. When Cecilia finally reached the end, she summarized in a calm, matter of fact tone. "Moderation between husband and wife doesn't harm a woman. Done properly, it can even help keep you healthy and balanced." She paused, glanced at their flushed faces, and let out a light laugh. "That's enough for today. Tomorrow, I'll go over methods related to conception." A lesson that had lasted nearly an hour was finally over. When Elowen closed the book, her palms were damp.

She and Sylvia stood together, both red faced, and thanked Cecilia formally. Elowen drew in a steadying breath and forced her voice to stay composed. "Thank you for today, Cecilia. Please rest. If you're missing anything you need, tell Cora." Cecilia answered respectfully, "Of course. If you ever have questions later, you can ask me anytime." Elowen managed a tiny, almost inaudible, "Mm." By early evening, Cassian finally returned to the estate. He looked like he had been out all day. Mud flecked the hem of his outer coat. Elowen stayed in the room and helped him change into a clean one.

They were close enough that she could catch a faint trace of cool air clinging to him. Cassian lowered his gaze, watching Elowen as she focused on untying his belt. With clear amusement, he asked, "Cecilia came by today, Ella, how did it go? Did you learn anything?" Elowen had spent the afternoon forcing herself back to normal. The second he asked, the images and Cecilia's words slammed back into her head, Her face flared red all at once, the color spreading down her neck. "A little," she mumbled, barely louder than a whisper. Cassian lifted one eyebrow, unhurried, and pressed, "Oh yeah?

What did she teach you?" There was no way Elowen could repeat any of it out loud. She fumbled for a moment, then locked onto the muddy coat in her arms and shoved the conversation somewhere else. "Where 2/3 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 251 Lessons, Then His Teasing did you even go today? How did you get this dirty?" 40 Finished Cassian's gaze rested on her flushed face for a beat, then he let her take the exit. "I went outside the city to see someone, then I handled a few things. The ground was wet, and I got splashed." "Oh.

Then I'll take it out and have it washed." Elowen clutched his outer coat and turned as if she could escape the room with it. Cassian caught her wrist. "Wait, Ella." His eyes dropped to her red cheeks, and he smiled. "If you're already this shy, what are you going to do when we get to the hot springs?" Elowen froze. Before today, she would have missed it. After what Cecilia had taught, and after hearing Cassian say that, she understood all at once. "We're going to the hot springs, so we have to...?" 1.8K 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 ... admin She stopped mid sentence, the rest hanging in the air.

Neither of them needed her to finish. 1.8K 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 ... admin

Chapter 252 Two Days Later Elowen felt heat rush through her whole body. 40 Finished Cassian let out a low laugh. "Even if we don't do anything, we still have to get naked and soak in the hot

springs together, right?" The words sent the heat straight to Elowen's head. Before she could stop herself, her imagination ran ahead. She pictured a quiet pool with steam drifting through the air, and Cassian standing close beside her. Her heart lurched. Panic and embarrassment flooded her at the same time.

She instinctively tried to turn and run, but Cassian was still holding her wrist, his grip warm and steady. Her eyes dropped to the cloak in her arms. It suddenly felt like the only shield she had. Without thinking, she lifted it and held it up in front of her face, trying to hide her burning cheeks. A soft laugh sounded nearby. "Ella," Cassian said, amused. "Those clothes are dirty." As he spoke, he reached over and pulled the cloak down. The movement loosened her carefully arranged hair. Several strands slipped free and fell across both sides of her face.

Her cheeks were flushed deep red, and the loose strands framed her face in a way that made her look even softer. Cassian watched her quietly, For a brief moment, it felt like his heartbeat skipped, Elowen could not stand the intensity in his eyes, Her heart pounded, and she grabbed the first distraction she could think of. "R-right. Cassian," she said quickly. "Where exactly are we going for the hot springs?" Cassian cleared his throat once before answering. "Sunspire Hill. About twelve miles east of Vanelle, near the border with Lyria.

The hot spring estate there was built by my father back when he was still ruling. After Theodric took the 1/4 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 ... Chapter 252 Two Days Later. throne, he gave the estate to me." He paused briefly before continuing. : 40 Finished "Dawnfall Ridge is nearby. The terrain is steep and the views are hidden away. Sunrise and sunset are the best times to see it. The clouds catch the light and the mountains look layered in color. There's also a church on the mountain, Serenity Church. It's very well known in Vanelle. People say prayers there can help cut off...

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complicated attachments. And it's said to be especially effective for couples praying for children." "Dawnfall Ridge. Serenity Church." Elowen froze. She knew Dawnfall Ridge far too well. Her brother Julian and her sister in law had fallen in love there at first sight. She could still remember herself from that time, sitting by the window with her chin resting in her hands, talking excitedly to Alaric, who had still been her close friend back then. "If I could take the most important person in my life to Dawnfall Ridge just once and watch the sunrise there," she had said.

Alaric had watched her the whole time, smiling quietly. The moment Elowen realized how direct her words sounded, embarrassment rushed over her. She quickly waved it off, pretending she did not care. "Then my life would basically be perfect." Alaric had laughed. He reached over and ruffled her hair gently. "Alright, Ella," he had said. "One day, I'll take you there." But in her previous life, that day never came. After she married into the Crown Prince's Wing, she never became pregnant. Theodric worried about it. Isla personally brought Elowen to pray for children at a church.

The church they visited was Serenity Church. It was also there that Elowen accidentally discovered a secret. That secret was what gave her the courage in this life to make that promise to Piers. She had never expected Cassian to take her there now. But that meant she would not have to search for the chance herself. The opportunity had come 2/4 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 U Chapter 252 Two Days Later to her. Thinking of this, the embarrassment on her face faded slightly. She looked up at Cassian. 40 Finished "Cassian," she said carefully, "since the estate belongs to us, we don't need to rush.

What if we wait two more days before going to Sunspire Hill?" Cassian looked at her. "Why?" Elowen glanced away. She quickly grabbed the first excuse she could think of. "I want to finish everything Cecilia is teaching me first." Cassian raised an eyebrow. "So you want to finish learning first, and then when we get to the hot spring, we can do whatever we want?" Elowen nearly choked. The heat that had just faded rushed back even stronger. She stumbled over her words in a hurry. "Cecilia said it today. Even married couples need restraint.

You have to follow the seasons and take care of your health. You can't just... just..." But Cassian was watching her lips move, soft and flushed from nerves. Only one thought crossed his mind. What is she even trying to say? I want to kiss her. So he did. He slipped an arm around her waist, pulled her gently closer, and kissed her. When the kiss ended, Cassian leaned back slightly. His breathing was a little uneven. "Then we'll wait two days," he said quietly. "Ella, study well." Elowen felt weak all over after the kiss. Her head felt light, and her cheeks were still burning.

3/4 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 G Chapter 252 Two Days Later : It took her a long moment before she managed to speak again. 40 Finished "Then... I'll take this out so someone can wash it," she said softly. "Dinner should be ready soon." 1 1.8K admin

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Min. Cassian let her leave. Finished, Elowen stepped out of the room, feeling disconnected from herself. She handed the cloak to the man waiting outside, took a deep breath, and signaled for Mira to come over. "Mira, I need you to discreetly look into something for me," she whispered. Mira leaned in attentively as Elowen explained. When she finished, Mira nodded with quiet confidence. "Don't worry, Your Grace. I understand. I'll handle it right away."

Later that evening, Mira returned. While assisting Elowen in washing up and removing her cosmetics, the two found themselves alone in the bedchamber. As Mira gently combed through Elowen's hair, she lowered her voice. "Your Grace, I did as you instructed. They are indeed leaving, and the timing has been confirmed." Elowen studied her reflection in the mirror before asking, "When?" Mira whispered, "In two days." Elowen gave a satisfied nod. "Good. That's all I needed to know."

By the time she returned to the room, Cassian was already there, engrossed in a book, the candlelight outlining his profile sharply. Elowen approached and perched lightly on the edge of the bed before settling beside him. As if struck by a sudden idea, she said, "Cassian, I noticed that aunt wasn't in high spirits today. Perhaps if we visit the springs estate with just the two of us, it might not be enough to cheer her up. What if we invite the Duchess of Falconcrest and Sylvia as well? A few more guests could enliven the atmosphere and allow the Duchess and Sylvia to get acquainted." Cassian murmured his agreement.

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"Fine." With his consent, Elowen's face brightened with a smile. "Thank you. You're always so kind to me." She relaxed, attempting to move further onto the bed but accidentally brushed against something beside Cassian. In normal circumstances, she might have overlooked it. However, thanks to Cecilia's teachings, she was no longer the naive girl she once was. The moment she brushed against it, she froze, recalling something Cassian had mentioned before.

"My situation might be... a little too good." At the time, she hadn't grasped the meaning. Now, it hit her all at once, sending a wave of heat to her face. The night seemed to stretch endlessly as Elowen closed her eyes, attempting to sleep, but her mind was restless, entangled in thoughts of

the hot springs, the illustrations, and Cassian's enigmatic words. Only in the latter half of the night did sleep finally claim her.

The following morning, the mirror reflected a weary face, dark circles under her eyes. Elowen carefully applied powder to conceal them. Despite forcing herself to focus during Cecilia's lesson, her mind wandered. Once the session ended, Sylvia blushed and left the room, leaving only Elowen and Cecilia. Cecilia, perceptive as ever, gathered the materials and met Elowen's gaze warmly. "Your Grace seems troubled today. Is there something on your mind that you wish to discuss privately?" Elowen sighed inwardly, acknowledging Cecilia's astuteness. Taking a deep breath, she drew closer, as if reaching a decision. In a hushed tone, she asked, "Cecilia... I'm feeling apprehensive. The first time... does it hurt a lot?" Even a minor injury could cause days of discomfort, and this was far more significant. Her complexion paled slightly. Cecilia offered a reassuring smile. "The initial experience may be slightly uncomfortable, but that's normal." Seeing Elowen's tension, Cecilia softened her voice. "It won't be unbearable, and it won't last. Like a fish left stranded on dry land, once it returns to water, it's free to move where it pleases." The analogy stirred something in Elowen, her heart skipping a beat. She understood Cecilia's implications, having received detailed explanations earlier that day. Cecilia continued in a soothing tone, "With time, you'll grow accustomed to it. There's no need to fear. Every woman goes through this. The discomfort of intimacy pales in comparison to what follows. Childbirth truly tests a woman's limits. These are the trials women must endure to transition into womanhood." Elowen pondered Cecilia's words. Did sharing a man's bed and bearing children define a woman's essence? Did remaining unmarried diminish that essence? What about those who chose not to wed? Should they be treated akin to men? Elowen rejected such notions,

believing that a woman's identity remained unchanged, regardless of marital status or motherhood.

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Chapter 254 Preparations. : 40 Finished Cecilia finished with one final remark. "Over the next few days, I'll teach you a few more ways a wife can keep her husband satisfied. Pay close attention. Once you've learned them, you'll have His Grace wanting you so badly he won't be able to keep his hands off you." Elowen's cheeks flushed. She lowered her gaze quietly. Over the next two days, Elowen made careful preparations for the trip to Sunspire Hill.

She personally arranged the carriages, selected the clothing and other necessities they would need, and wrote an invitation that was delivered to Falconcrest Manor. Out of respect for the Duke of Duskmoor, Yvonne had no choice but to accept, even if she wasn't particularly pleased about it. Even so, Elowen couldn't help feeling uneasy. She kept thinking that when the moment truly came, she might faint from the pain-or burst into tears. But... She was already married. She couldn't avoid sharing a bed with her husband forever. If it hurt, then it hurt.

She would grit her teeth and get through it. On the morning they were meant to depart, Cassian had urgent matters to handle. He said he would head straight to Sunspire Hill once he finished, rather than travel with Elowen. Elspeth arrived early. Not long after Elowen finished breakfast with Elspeth and Sylvia, a carriage from Falconcrest Manor pulled up outside Duskmoor Manor. As planned, Yvonne came to the manor first, and from there they would travel together to Sunspire Hill, Elspeth suddenly remembered something and turned to Sylvia.

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"Sylvia, is Piers coming today?" Sylvia lowered her head and shook it gently, her voice tinged with disappointment. "He wrote to me the day before yesterday. He wanted to come, but Duchess Yvonne assigned him other duties. He couldn't get away." Elowen understood immediately. 1/4 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 40 Chapter 254 Preparations Finished Then she smoothly shifted the conversation again. "Oh, and did you hear? That Azure-well, the former Crown Princess now-the stories she wrote? Every bookshop is stacked with copies that won't sell.

People who already bought them either burned them or tossed them out. I heard they've piled up outside the city like a little hill." The estate steward came forward to greet them, directing the servants to unload the luggage. Once everyone had settled into their rooms, Elowen summoned one of the shadow guards. "Go to Serenity Church, and see whether the Baker family carriage has arrived." A few days earlier, Elowen had sent Mira to make inquiries. Mira had confirmed that the Baker family planned to visit Serenity Church today. The shadow guard acknowledged the order and left.

Not long afterward, he returned and reported, "Your Grace, the carriage is currently resting at Serenity Church. It's Her Majesty's third sister-in-law, and Her Majesty's niece is with her." Elowen glanced up. "Clarisse?" The shadow guard nodded. "Yes. I heard they call her by that name." Elowen's eyes darkened slightly. In her previous life, when she had come to Serenity Church with Isla, she had run into Isla's third sister-in-law, Anwen Baker, and Anwen's daughter, Clarisse.

During their conversation, Elowen had learned that Clarisse still hadn't married, and that Anwen had brought her to the church to pray for a suitable match. At the time, Elowen had been puzzled. Clarisse was considered one of Vanelle's most sought-after young noblewomen.

Countless families would have wanted her as a bride. So why had no marriage ever been arranged? That night, Elowen had accidentally uncovered Clarisse's secret. Only then did she finally understand why Clarisse's marriage had never been settled.

In this life, Elowen intended to use that secret to ensure Sylvia could win Yvonne's approval- and safely marry into Falconcrest Manor, The shadow guard hesitated for a moment, then added, "Your Grace, there's one more matter." 3/4 admin

Chapter 255 Cassian's Message Elowen's voice stayed calm. "Go ahead." 40 Finished The shadow guard dipped his head slightly. "On my way back, I ran into Anson. He asked me to pass along a message-His Grace is tied up with state affairs. He most likely won't make it here tonight." Cassian wasn't coming tonight. Instead of disappointment, Elowen felt a wave of relief wash through her. "What happened?" she asked. "He didn't explain," the guard replied. After a brief pause, he added, "But His Grace made it clear that he truly can't get away right now.

The moment he finishes, he'll ride straight here as fast as possible to join you." Elowen nearly laughed. Perfect. If Cassian wasn't coming, she wasn't dying tonight. Still, with the shadow guard watching, she lowered her gaze and let a trace of disappointment settle across her face. "It's alright. His duties come first-I understand," she said softly. "When you report back, please tell him not to rush. I'm doing just fine here on my own." Watching her, the guard couldn't help but feel a pang of sympathy. Elowen must be swallowing her sadness to say something so thoughtful.

He silently resolved that when he reported back, he would make sure Cassian knew just how much Elowen missed him. Once he left, the faint tension between Elowen's brows disappeared. She even began humming a light little tune. After checking her reflection in the mirror, she made

her way toward the courtyard where Elspeth was staying. Before she even stepped inside, she could already hear Elspeth and Yvonne chatting happily in the gazebo, their conversation flowing easily back and forth. 1/4 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 J Chapter 255 Cassian's Message Elspeth noticed her first and smiled.

"Ella's here." 40 Finished Elowen walked over with a gentle smile. "I came to see whether you're settling in comfortably." Then she turned to Yvonne with polite warmth. "And I see the Duchess of Falconcrest is here as well. I was planning to stop by and greet you too." Yvonne stood and returned the courtesy. "Thank you for your concern, Your Grace. Everything is quite comfortable." Elspeth affectionately pulled Elowen down beside her. "You came at the perfect moment. Sit with us." Elowen sat, her gaze drifting toward the distant silhouette of Dawnfall Ridge.

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"This is my first time here," she said. "I didn't even realize there was a hot-springs estate in a place like this. I'd only heard people talk about how beautiful Dawnfall Ridge is-especially at sunrise and sunset." Yvonne's curiosity showed immediately. "I heard your brother and sister-in-law first met on that mountain." Elowen's eyes curved with a smile. "You really are well informed." She paused, her voice softening into a quiet sigh. "A while ago, I heard Cassian mention there's a Serenity Church up on Dawnfall Ridge. It's quite famous.

People say prayers there are especially effective-whether you're hoping for a good match... or for children." As she spoke, her hand drifted unconsciously to rest against her lower abdomen. Her expression dimmed slightly. "I've been married to Cassian for some time now, and still nothing. I suppose I should go offer a proper prayer," Then she turned toward Elspeth, her voice carrying a faint note of coaxing, "Aunt, do you have time to come with me? I don't want to go alone. It

would feel too lonely." Elspeth smiled immediately. "Of course I'll go with you." Then she warmly invited Yvonne.

"Why don't you join us as well? A walk would do you good." Yvonne smiled and nodded.

Elowen seemed to think of something and asked, "Should we bring Sylvia along?" 2/4 14:37 Sat,

Apr 11 .. Chapter 255 Cassian's Message For a brief moment, Yvonne's smile faltered. 40

Finished "Perhaps not," she said. "Sylvia's marriage has already been arranged by His Majesty, so there's nothing to pray for in that regard. And since she isn't married yet, there's no need to pray for children either." Elowen wasn't surprised. She simply nodded and instructed the servants to prepare a carriage.

Within fifteen minutes, an elegantly decorated carriage rolled out from the estate, heading toward Dawnfall Ridge. Serenity Church stood halfway up the mountain. Because distinguished guests were visiting, the gates had already been closed to outsiders. When the church attendant heard that guests from Duskmoor Manor had arrived, he quickly went to inform the prior.

Moments later, the gates opened once more. The prior himself stepped out with several members of the clergy to receive them. "I didn't know Your Grace would be visiting," the prior said respectfully.

"Please forgive our inadequate reception." Elowen returned the greeting with a gentle smile.

"Forgive us for intruding on your quiet sanctuary." The prior smiled and led the three women inside. As they walked, he added, "Your timing is fortunate. Members of Her Majesty's family are also staying at the church today." Yvonne looked surprised. "The Baker family? Which member came?" "Her Majesty's niece," the prior answered honestly. "Lady Clarisse.

She came to pray blessings-and for a good match." for Yvonne's gaze shifted slightly, though she only acknowledged it with a faint nod and asked nothing further. Elowen listened quietly at her side, the polite smile never leaving her face, They first stopped before the altar to offer their prayers. Elowen bowed her head, resting her hands lightly together as she prayed in silence.

When she finished, she rose and glanced outside the hall, 3/4 14:37 Sat, Apr 11 U J Chapter 255
Cassian's Message Finished "It's almost sunset," she said. "I've heard the view behind the church is beautiful.

Why don't we go take a look?" 1.8K H admin

Chapter 256 The View Behind Serenity Church Elspeth and both agreed. 40 Finished The three of them set off along the narrow stone path at an unhurried pace. Walking behind, Elowen watched Yvonne for a moment. She looked as though she wanted to say something, but hesitated, holding it back.. Yvonne noticed the pause and spoke first. "If there's something on your mind, Your Grace, please-go ahead and say it." Elowen let out a soft breath, her tone sincere. "Forgive me for being so direct, but...

are you unhappy about Sylvia's marriage?" Before Yvonne could answer, Elowen quickly added, "No offense meant. It's just-if this truly isn't what you want, then for Sylvia's sake... and for yours, and for Falconcrest Manor, I can report the matter to His Majesty and request that the engagement be dissolved." Yvonne froze. "Your Grace, at..." Elowen's expression remained calm and steady. "I mean it sincerely." There wasn't the slightest trace of insincerity on her face. Yvonne frowned faintly. "Well...

since you've asked..." Elowen's shoulder to the towering spires of the church rising behind Her eyes drifted past Elowen's shoulder them. A holy place. Elowen wouldn't speak carelessly here,

Yvonne let out a quiet breath. "To be honest, it's not that I dislike Sylvia. It's just that I already had someone else in mind for my daughter-in-law," Elowen asked gently, "Clarisse?" "Exactly." 1/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 ... Chapter 256 The View Behind Serenity Church Yvonne didn't bother hiding it. A trace of emotion colored her voice.

40 Finished "Clarisse has every accomplishment a young lady of good breeding ought to have-music, painting, etiquette. And she's quite lovely besides. But what impressed me most is her wit with the pen. At my birthday banquet she offered a short verse in my honor. It was so elegantly written that even the well-educated gentlemen in my family were left speechless. I've been fond of her ever since." She paused briefly. "Ever since then, I've thought that if Clarisse could marry into my family, it would be a blessing earned over lifetimes-for both my son and me.

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I hope you won't take offense, Your Grace, but in my heart... Sylvia simply doesn't compare." By then, they had reached the viewing platform. The setting sun spilled across the sky like molten gold, bathing the valley below in warm shades of amber and orange. Elowen lowered her gaze and looked down from the platform. "Oh? Is that Clarisse down there?" Yvonne followed her line o sight. Her eyes lit up immediately. "It is!" Delight spread openly across her face. "It's been quite some time since I last saw her. She's grown even more beautiful. And look at her bearing-so poised, so composed.

That's exactly how a noble young lady ought to carry herself." Elspeth frowned slightly, puzzled. "But why is she hurrying around like that all by herself? She doesn't even have a maid or a chaperone with her." Yvonne studied Clarisse for a moment before answering gently, "I've heard Clarisse has a very kind heart. At her family estate she feeds stray cats and dogs all the time. Churches usually have the most abandoned animals around. If she's rushing somewhere, it's

probably because of them." She paused, then smiled faintly, "Since we've run into her, I'll go down and greet her.

It's been far too long-I've missed her." 2/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 256 The View Behind Serenity Church 40 Finished As she spoke, she lightly adjusted a loose strand of hair and smoothed the crease in her sleeve before heading down the stone steps that curved away from the viewing platform. Seeing how quickly she left, Elspeth turned to Elowen. "Would you like to come with us?" Elowen remained where she stood. "You go ahead with her. I'd like to stay here and watch the sunset for a while." Elspeth nodded. "All right.

Stay here then-and don't wander off too far." Elowen's eyes curved into a gentle smile as she nodded obediently. Only then did Elspeth turn and hurry after Yvonne. Elowen remained alone on the viewing platform. She watched the direction where Yvonne and Elspeth disappeared down the steps. Slowly, the corners of her lips lifted into the faintest trace of a smile. Yvonne led the way, already halfway down the winding staircase. Below the platform, a sturdy young man stepped out from the shadow of a tree.

He looked to be in his early twenties, dressed in coarse working clothes, though his movements were light and agile. He seemed to say something to Clarisse. From this distance, the words were impossible to hear. Yvonne spoke to Elspeth behind her. "That's the steward's son from the Baker household. I've seen him a few times before..." Before she could finish the sentence, Clarisse suddenly pulled the young man close. The two of them collided in a hurried embrace and began kissing, urgent and impatient. Yvonne froze mid-step. She stared at the scene below, disbelief written all over her face.

For a brief moment, she wondered if she was dreaming. Her fingernails dug hard into her palm.

The sharp sting of pain snapped through her hand. Real. This is real. 3/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11

Chapter 256 The View Behind Serenity Church 40 Finished Clarisse and the young man clung to each other as they kissed. His hands quickly grew bold, roaming over her body before slipping straight inside the neckline of her dress. What shocked Yvonne even more was Clarisse didn't dodge. She didn't resist. Instead, she leaned in even closer, responding to him eagerly. Elspeth arrived a moment later.

Lowering her voice, she murmured, "Yvonne... it seems Clarisse already has a lover within her household." Yvonne bit down on her lower lip and said nothing. Her face had already turned a ghastly shade of pale. Just then, a plain carriage rolled slowly along the narrow side path nearby.

1.8K H 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 J admin

Chapter 257 The Carriage Outside Yvonne drew in a slow breath, trying to steady herself. 40 Finished "It's probably someone from the estate," she said quietly. "Maybe they came to bring them back." But the driver had already climbed down from the carriage. He moved with the easy confidence of someone used to the place. Without hesitation he walked straight up behind Clarisse and slipped an arm around her waist. Then he crouched. A moment later his head disappeared beneath the folds of Clarisse's skirt. Clarisse arched her back slightly.

Her hips rolled forward, and her expression twisted into something that hovered between discomfort and pleasure. Elspeth and Yvonne were both seasoned women. Neither of them needed a second glance to understand exactly what was happening. The shock hit them both at once. Their expressions changed, each more stunned than the other. Clarisse seemed to notice something. She lifted a hand and pointed toward the carriage. The driver understood

immediately. The three of them climbed into the carriage together. Moments later the carriage began to sway.

The movement grew stronger and more uneven with each passing second. Yvonne's face darkened, She lasted only a few breaths before turning away sharply, her cloak snapping as she spun. She strode back toward the path almost as if she were fleeing. Elowen remained where she stood. Her gaze drifted toward the western ridge. The sun was sinking behind the mountains. Its deep red glow slipped between layers of drifting cloud, spreading softly across the jagged peaks and shadowed valleys. 1/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 257 The Carriage Outside : 40 Finished
The light had lost its harsh edge.

What remained was warm and quiet. It truly is beautiful. Then hurried footsteps sounded behind her. Elowen turned. Yvonne stood there, her face pale with fury. So she had seen everything. In her previous life, Elowen had once come to this very overlook alone. That time she had stumbled onto almost the same scene. Back then she barely understood anything about the dealings between men and women. Even so, she had known what she was witnessing. Something hidden. Something shameful. Something no respectable household would ever admit to. Truthfully, it had not surprised her.

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Her sister in law once told her that people romanticized noble houses far too easily. They believed that if a family carried an old name or scholarly reputation, then the people raised within it must surely be upright and refined. But the larger the household, the easier it was for corruption to take root in places no one bothered to look. The ugliness simply stayed buried. And the family Clarisse came from had long since rotted from the inside. It still stood, yes. But only because the collapse had not quite finished yet. Clarisse herself was proof enough.

The reason she had not married yet was not because no one wanted her. It was because she had been entangled for years with servants, stable hands, carriage drivers, and men she should never have been anywhere near. Marriage would have put an end to that freedom. So she delayed it for as long as she could. Yvonne had never known any of this. That was exactly why she had been so fond of Clarisse. And Elowen knew something else as well. If she had tried to tell Yvonne the truth outright, Yvonne would never have believed her.

2/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 257 The Carriage Outside 40 Finished She would have assumed Elowen was trying to protect Sylvia's engagement to Falconcrest Manor by slandering Clarisse. The only way to shatter Yvonne's illusion was to let her witness it with her own eyes. Once she saw it herself, admiration would turn into disgust soon enough. That was why Elowen suggested praying for children. Why she mentioned watching the sunset from the overlook. 2 And why she guided them here. Right to the middle of Clarisse's little secret.

Elowen smoothed her expression and greeted Yvonne with a polite smile. "You're back already," she said. "Did you manage to speak with Clarisse?" The memory of what she had just seen flashed across Yvonne's mind. Her face shifted to ghost pale. She could not force out a single word. Elowen let out a small sigh. "I've been thinking," she continued gently. "If you truly like Clarisse that much, then in a few days I could go to the palace and speak to His Majesty. I could ask for Sylvia's engagement with Falconcrest Manor to be withdrawn.

If that happens, you could approach Clarisse's family openly and arrange the marriage you wanted." "No." Yvonne's refusal came out sharp and immediate. Elowen blinked in mild surprise. "With the gods as my witness, I'm serious," she said. "If you trust me, I'll do everything I can to make it happen." "That engagement cannot be canceled." Yvonne cut her off quickly.

"His Majesty arranged it himself. It is an excellent match. Sylvia is a good girl. I want her as my daughter in law.

That decision stands." Elowen tilted her head slightly, confusion flickering across her expression as though she truly could not understand the sudden change, 3/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 ... Chapter 257 The Carriage Outside Yvonne's face was still pale. She drew in a deep breath. "Please forgive me," she said stiffly. "I'm tired. We walked too far today." "Let's return and rest." She turned immediately and left. Her steps were uneven, and the the unmistakable shape of panic. 40 Finished way she hurried away carried When Yvonne disappeared down the corridor, Elspeth finally leaned closer to Elowen.

She lowered her voice. "Ella," she asked quietly, "what exactly did you say to her?" Elowen faced her calmly. "I only told the truth," she replied. "I saw how much she liked Clarisse, so I suggested that if she truly wanted her as a daughter in law, I could speak to His Majesty and ask him to withdraw Sylvia's engagement to Falconcrest Manor. That way she could approach Clarisse's family and arrange the marriage she wanted." Elspeth blinked. Then she burst into laughter. She reached out and lightly tapped Elowen on the forehead. "You sweet girl," she said with a fond smile.

"You're far too honest for your own good." 。 1.8K 4/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 Awakening Love:

Reborn to Be His Duches admin

Chapter 258 Sunset Thoughts And Visitors Elowen only tilted her head slightly and said nothing. 40 Finished Elspeth let out a long sigh, still caught up in the shock of it. "After today, Sylvia's match with Piers is as good as settled." Her expression turned complicated. "You didn't see it. Clarisse climbed into a carriage with two men. In broad daylight. Right there on church grounds.

It's just..." She trailed off. Elowen listened quietly, a mild smile resting on her lips, offering no reply. Elspeth looked at her calm, obedient face and felt her heart soften.

"You probably didn't even understand what you saw. You've never had a scheming bone in your body. Always thinking about other people instead. Just look at today. Yvonne clearly didn't want Sylvia as a daughter-in-law, and you were already thinking of stepping in to help call the whole thing off. You're far too kind for your own good. What are you going to do later in life?" Elowen smiled. "I'll have you watching out for me." That single line melted Elspeth at once. She squeezed Elowen's hand. "That's right. I'll look after you.

Otherwise people who know how to play their little games will swallow you They started back the way they had come. Just before leaving, Elowen paused and glanced back. whole." Only the last rim of sun still hung above the mountain ridge. The clouds burned deep red, the color spreading across the sky like spilled dye. For a brief moment, something stirred quietly in her chest, She thought that if Cassian could see a sunset like \$, he might like it. But the thought vanished almost as quickly as it came, replaced by something far more practical. No. Better not.

If Cassian were here, she'd be the one paying the price. Elowen and Elspeth soon caught up with Yvonne, and the three of them headed out together. In the front courtyard, Anwen was already waiting. 1/3 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 258 Sunset Thoughts And Visitors : 40 Finished She was past forty, but she carried herself well. There was an ease about her that came from a life where comfort had never needed to be fought for. Her hair was arranged in an elegant formal style. Her complexion looked smooth and carefully maintained.

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She had clearly heard that Elowen's party had arrived and had come specifically to greet them. first A warm, practiced smile spread across her face as she greeted each of them in turn. "It's my time seeing the duchess up close. You're truly lovely. No wonder His Grace dotes on you so much." Then she turned to Elspeth. "And you look every bit as formidable as ever." Finally she faced Yvonne, her tone growing even more familiar. "It's been ages. You look radiant today- honestly, even better than you did back in Vanelle." Yvonne didn't look radiant because she felt well.

She looked radiant because Clarisse had nearly made her choke on her own fury. Still, she forced out a stiff smile and asked as though it were an idle question. "Where's Clarisse?" Anwen answered smoothly, still smiling. "Thank you for asking. Clarisse said the journey left her tired, so she went to rest early. I tried waking her just now, but she was sleeping so soundly I couldn't rouse her." Sleeping soundly? Hardly. She's just exhausted herself in that carriage. But she didn't expose it. She only gave a vague nod. Anwen continued, sounding faintly regretful. "Such a pity.

It seems our families simply weren't meant to be. If His Majesty hadn't already made the royal match and promised Sylvia to Piers... I had once hoped Falconcrest Manor and our family might become relatives." Hearing Clarisse's name again made Yvonne feel sick to her stomach. She kept her polite smile firmly in place and cut Anwen off. "His Majesty's judgment is beyond question. And truthfully, the match suits me perfectly well. Sylvia is gentle and well-bred in every way, I've taken a great liking to her.

I've wanted her as part of the family for quite some time." Anwen froze, clearly surprised. She had always heard that Yvonne favored Clarisse. She looked as though she wanted to say more, but Yvonne had no interest in continuing the 2/3 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 ... Chapter 258 Sunset

Thoughts And Visitors 40 Finished conversation. She lifted her eyes toward the sky. "It's getting late. The mountain road is harder to travel once it's dark, and we still have to make our way back to the springs. We'll be on our way." Anwen had no choice but to swallow whatever else she'd meant to say.

They left beneath the deepening evening sky, and before night fully fell, they arrived back at the hot-spring estate on Sunspire Hill. Each private courtyard had its own channel bringing in spring water and a separate bathing pool. Elowen's main courtyard held the largest-and most luxurious-pool on the entire estate. Everything had already been prepared. Elowen dismissed the attendants, removed her clothes, and slowly slipped into the water. The warmth wrapped around her at once, drawing a quiet sigh of relief from her lips. The courtyard was silent, except for the gentle ripple of water.

Before long, lulled by the heat, Elowen leaned back against the stone edge of the pool. Comfort settled over her, and her thoughts began to wander. 1.8K W 3/3 admin

Chapter 259 The Wrong Hand 40 Finished With her eyes still closed, Elowen spoke in the relaxed, habitual tone she always used with her maid. "Mira, I'm thirsty. Could you pour me some water?" A cup was placed into her hand almost at once. Without giving it a second thought, Elowen accepted it and took a sip. A moment later, however, something felt wrong. The hand that had offered her the cup was not Mira's. The fingers were long and steady, the knuckles defined, and the skin carried the faint roughness of someone accustomed to sword hilts and riding reins. That was no maid's hand.

A shiver crept up Elowen's spine. She slowly turned her head. The first thing she noticed was a familiar wooden wheelchair beside the edge of the pool, its wheels still marked with damp

streaks of mud. Her gaze lifted. A dark robe fell neatly along a tall frame, the subtle stitching catching the light. Then she saw his face. Cassian. His features were sharp and striking, the sort of severe handsomeness that drew attention without effort. He was looking down at her, his expression balanced somewhere between amusement and calm observation.

Elowen startled so violently that she lost control of the water still in her mouth. She spat it straight across his face, Cassian paused. Warm water slid slowly down his cheek and dripped onto the front of his robe, darkening the fabric. He did not grow angry, nor did he show the slightest irritation. Instead, he raised one eyebrow with quiet deliberation. 1/4 14:38 Sat, Apr Chapter 259 The Wrong Hand Finished "Ella," he said mildly, "are you attempting to poison your husband?" "How could I possibly do that?" Elowen hurriedly protested.

Flustered, she placed the cup aside and began to rise, intending to wipe his face. She had barely lifted herself halfway out of the water when the surface rippled around her shoulders. The warm water slipped away from her skin, and the cool evening air brushed against her. The realization struck instantly. She was not wearing anything. Color rushed to her face so quickly it felt as though her cheeks were on fire. In a panic, she dropped straight back into the pool, sinking so quickly that only her wide, startled eyes remained visible above the surface.

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"Cas-" She stopped herself and corrected quickly, her voice turning small and embarrassed.

"Cassian... why are you here? I thought the guard said you had important business tonight and wouldn't be able to come. They said it might be tomorrow or the day after instead." From Cassian's vantage point, only half of her face was visible above the water. She looked timid and wary. Cassian studied her quietly, the hint of humor in his eyes growing more pronounced.

"Didn't you say that if I didn't come," he replied calmly, "you would be terribly disappointed and spend the entire trip feeling miserable by yourself?" Elowen blinked in confusion. She had no memory of saying anything like that. Cassian's voice softened slightly. "So I cleared my schedule, finished everything that required my attention, and rode straight here." Elowen felt both indignant and furious at the same time. Someone had clearly been spreading ridiculous rumors behind her back. That's just cruel! Absolutely cruel! Outside the courtyard gate, the guard on duty suddenly sneezed loudly.

2/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 259 The Wrong Hand 40 Finished Bran glanced over and laughed. "What's that about? Someone speaking ill of you?" The guard rubbed his nose and answered with complete confidence. "Not a chance. The duchess is probably praising me for delivering that message so quickly. I handled everything. perfectly." Bran gave him a friendly pat on the shoulder. "If that's the case, you may have just done yourself a great favor. When the little heir of Duskmoor Manor is born someday, he might even call you uncle." The guard immediately waved his hands in alarm.

"Oh no, I couldn't possibly deserve that." Even so, the mere thought of a future heir at Duskmoor Manor made his eyes brighten with quiet excitement. Back at the hot spring, Cassian's presence had Elowen so nervous that she gradually edged backward until her back nearly touched the stone wall behind her. The smooth stones beneath her feet were slick with water. Her footing suddenly slipped. A small, startled cry escaped her lips. She disappeared beneath the surface. Hot water rushed into her nose and mouth, and panic struck instantly.

She struggled to push herself upward, but her feet could not find solid footing, leaving her flailing helplessly beneath the surface. In the midst of the chaos, she heard the splash of water

nearby. A strong arm wrapped around her waist. In the next moment, she was pulled upward. Elowen broke the surface coughing violently as she struggled to draw in air, her eyes stinging and reddening from the water. When she finally looked up, she realized Cassian's face was only inches away from her own. He lifted a hand and gently brushed the water from her lashes. "Does anything hurt?" he asked quietly.

Elowen tried to steady her breathing before shaking her head. "I... I'm alright." 3/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 ... Chapter 259 The Wrong Hand Cassian gave a low murmur of acknowledgment. His gaze 40 Finished then dropped almost unconsciously to the bare curve of her shoulder that rose above the water's surface. Only then did Elowen fully grasp the situation she was in. She was completely naked. And she was currently pressed against Cassian's chest. His robe was soaked through and clung to his body, making the solid lines beneath the fabric impossible to ignore.

Elowen's face flushed crimson again, the heat spreading all the way to the tips of her ears. The rising steam from the hot spring was far too thin to conceal anything at such close distance. Even when she tried to avert her eyes, her peripheral vision betrayed her. Cassian's voice grew lower and rougher. "Ella," he said slowly, "are you enjoying the hot spring?" 1.8K 2 4/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 admin

Chapter 260 What Cecilia Taught Finished Elowen's head felt light and unfocused. All she managed was a soft, uncertain hum in reply. Cassian leaned closer, his breath warm against her ear. "What Cecilia taught you-do you remember it?" still The sudden shift caught her off guard. Elowen froze for a moment, then nodded. "I remember." After a pause, she added quietly, "I studied it carefully. I even kept notes..." A low chuckle rumbled from Cassian's chest. "That's my

good girl." One brow lifted slightly. "Then you know what tonight calls for, don't you?" Elowen just stared at him.

Cecilia's very direct lessons rushed back all at once. The diagrams she'd been shown. And, embarrassingly enough, something she had once noticed about Cassian by accident. The first thing she felt was fear. The color drained from her face, and she instinctively tried to pull away. Perhaps sensing her instinct to pull away, Cassian suddenly sucked in a sharp breath, a faint crease forming between his brows. Alarm flashed across Elowen's face. She hurried closer and caught his arm, worry clear in her voice. "Cassian-what's wrong?" "My leg," he said under his breath.

"It's acting up." Guilt hit her instantly, "Your leg hasn't fully healed yet. This is my fault-I couldn't even keep my footing and made you move-" "Ella," Cassian cut in quietly. "There's one way to make it stop," Elowen didn't hesitate. "Tell me what to do." Cassian lifted a hand to her cheek, the rough pad of his thumb brushing lightly across her skin. He closed the distance the next second and claimed her mouth, This kiss was nothing like the careful, almost restrained ones before. There was nothing tentative about it now-only a firm, possessive certainty that left no room for refusal.

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1/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 U Chapter 260 What Cecilia Taught 40 Finished Her lips parted under the insistence of it, and he deepened the kiss, drawing her into it as he took her breath for himself. Elowen's thoughts dissolved into nothing. His other hand rested at the small of her back, shifting slightly along her waist beneath the water, sending shivers racing through her. The water around them rippled and swayed. Only after a long while did Cassian finally pull away. His forehead rested lightly against hers, his breathing uneven. "Better," he murmured.

"Leg doesn't hurt anymore." Elowen wasn't fooled. Whatever had been bothering him, it had never been his leg. Cassian looked down at her, his gaze darker than the night outside-filled with things she only half understood. "Ella," he said softly, voice roughened by something deeper. "May I?" Elowen blinked, a beat behind, before realizing what he meant. Her heart pounded. Heat rushed through her face, as though the warmth of the bath had seeped into her bones and muddled her thoughts. "I'm scared," she whispered. Cassian lowered his gaze slightly. "Of what?" Elowen turned her face away.

"That I won't have the nerve." Then, more quietly, the embarrassment catching in her voice, she added, "And also..." She searched for words that sounded respectable enough to say, "I'm... not exactly used to it," The words struck Cassian harder than she realized. His jaw tightened for a moment as he forced himself to steady his breathing. Then he let out a quiet sigh. 2/4 40 Finished 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 Chapter 260 What Cecilia Taught "Ella, you really are..." Elowen looked up, puzzled and wide-eyed.

"What?" Cassian drew a slow breath and touched her flushed cheek again, careful this time, almost reverent. "Don't be afraid." His voice was low and gentle, but steady with certainty. Under that calm reassurance, Elowen finally nodded. The light in Cassian's eyes sharpened immediately. He leaned down, gathered her into his arms, and pressed a kiss to her cheek. Elowen squeezed her eyes shut, too embarrassed to look at him. Warmth built between them, breath tangling in the humid air. Time stretched. Far longer than Elowen could manage on her own. All she could do was cling to Cassian.

The water stirred around them, restless and swirling. And eventually, everything settled again. They stayed there in the warm pool, holding each other as their breathing slowly returned to

normal. After a while, Elowen finally spoke again, her voice hoarse. "Cassian... we should probably get out." All she wanted now was to collapse into bed and sleep. Cassian's arm still rested loosely around her waist. His voice sounded relaxed, almost lazy with satisfaction. "Not yet." Elowen tilted her head, confused.

"What?" Through the mist rising from the water, his eyes gleamed-bright, with that same dangerous spark she recognized. Only stronger than before, Suddenly, Elowen had the overwhelming urge to run. 3/4 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 . Chapter 260 What Cecilia Taught "It's still night," Cassian said, brushing another kiss against her cheek. "Perfect timing." Elowen froze. Her eyes widened as she stared at him. 1.8K 合 40 Finished 14:38 Sat, Apr 11 admin