

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 311 Truth In A Bottle Finished Lydia lay sprawled across the bed, pale as death, each breath so light it barely seemed to move her chest. At the foot of the bed, Nina crouched by the bedposts, cheeks wet with tears, her small body shaking with silent sobs. Alistair glanced at Nina, something like pity in his eyes. Then he turned to Hugh, his voice nearly begging. "Doctor Dray, please. Lydia's always been weak. And lately, with all the trouble in the family... she collapsed the other day and still hasn't woken up.

We brought in several doctors, but they all said it was nerves or grief, and that medicine wouldn't do anything..." Hugh stayed cool. He said nothing, only stepped to the bedside and pressed fingers lightly to Lydia's wrist. A moment later, he let go, his expression unchanged. "Well?" Alistair asked, barely hiding his nerves. "She's been poisoned," Hugh said. "Poisoned?" Alistair stared at him. "That's impossible." Hugh's voice stayed flat. "If you didn't trust me, why call me?" www. Alistair flushed and lowered his head. "That's not what I meant. It's just... Lydia's never had enemies.

She's quiet. Why would anyone poison her?" But even as he said it, a thought crept into his mind. Could it be Elspeth? Did jealousy push her to poison Lydia and get rid of her for good? "This isn't a common poison," Hugh said. He looked at Nina, and his tone softened slightly. "Miss, has your mother met anyone new lately? Or eaten anything unusual?" Nina recognized him at once. He was the kind doctor from Duskmoor Manor, the one who had treated her so gently last time. She remembered how careful he'd been. He was a good man. She wiped her face and answered, "Mom... didn't really see anyone.

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She just ate a piece of candy by herself." "What kind of candy?" Hugh asked. Nina's voice dropped. "Mom said it was her special treat. When I asked for some, she wouldn't give me any." "Is there any left?" Hugh said. Nina nodded. She got up, walked over, and pulled a bottle from Lydia's arms. "This one. Mom always kept it with her." Something shifted in Hugh's face when he saw it. Alistair noticed at once. "You know it, Doctor Dray?" Hugh nodded. He took the bottle and ran his fingertips over it. For the first time, a trace of warmth entered his gaze. Alistair seized on that.

"If you know what it is, then you have to save Lydia." ||| < 1/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 311
Truth In A Bottle 16% 99 Finished Hugh looked at him, his voice cold again. "I can save her. But you should understand something. From what the girl said, Lydia kept this bottle herself. No one poisoned her. She took it on purpose to fake an illness." Alistair went still, shock plain on his face. Lydia had poisoned herself? Pretended to be deathly ill-for what? Then the answer hit him. If Lydia doesn't get this sick, I never agree to sign the divorce papers. So this is her plan all along.

Alistair stared at her in disbelief. Hugh said nothing more. He turned his attention to preparing the antidote. There was no doubt about it- this was a poison only he knew how to treat. When he finished, he gave his instructions. "She'll wake up in an hour or two. As long as she rests, she'll recover completely." Alistair thanked him and personally saw him out. Then he returned to Lydia's bedside and waited for her to wake. The moment Lydia's eyes fluttered open, she tried to look toward the window-but Alistair was already standing in front of her. "Alistair..." Her voice shook.

He looked at her, cold and steady. "Lydia, why did you poison yourself?" Her heart slammed in her chest. She bit her lip, panic rising. "I..." Didn't that doctor say this poison can't be traced by

anyone?D I use too much? Her thoughts raced. Right now, she had to calm Alistair. She couldn't let him start hating her-not with the royal decree still on its way. She took a shaky breath and filled her eyes with tears. "Alistair... I've regretted rejecting you all these years. I spent so long wishing I could go back.

And now that we were found each other again, I wanted nothing more than to stay by your side, even if it was only as a servant I know it was selfish, but I wanted to be your wife again. I thought... if you saw me sick-if you still cared about me at all-you might be willing to marry me..." Tears slipped down her cheeks. Half of it was true, half invented, but that didn't matter now. Alistair had meant to ask where she got the poison. But seeing her cry, the anger drained out of him. All she wanted was to be loved. He sighed and pulled her into his arms. "You didn't have to do this.

I want to marry you, Lydia. Even if you weren't sick, I'd still want you as my wife... Lydia let herself fall against his chest, but her thoughts were still fixed on that royal decree. How much longer until I officially become a Lady of the First Rank? 合 2.4K 1 2/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13
admin

Chapter 312 The Heavy Price Of Truth 16%2 Finished Back at Duskmoor Manor, Hugh had returned from the inn and was reporting everything to Elowen. As he described Lydia's symptoms, Elowen paused, caught off guard. In her previous life, her aunt's poisoning had looked much the same-except her aunt had been in far worse shape. Lydia's case looked almost like a normal illness. Wait, was Lydia the one who poisoned Aunt in my last life? But too much had changed in this lifetime. Her aunt had insisted on separating from Alistair, and Lydia had ended up using the poison on herself instead...

"What kind of poison is it?" Cassian asked, intrigued. "Why can't ordinary doctors detect it?"

Before answering, Hugh glanced at Elowen. She was too deep in thought to notice. He pulled a small ceramic bottle from his pocket. "This is it. In a small dose, it barely shows any symptoms. Most doctors would call it exhaustion, maybe stress. Only a large amount makes it obvious. It's colorless and tasteless too. Unless someone knew to look for it, they'd never suspect it. The strange part is, Lydia didn't use all of it.

I have no idea where she got it." The second Elowen saw the bottle, her eyes lit up. "That's my grandfather's. Cassian raised a brow. "Your grandfather's?" Elowen nodded and pointed. "Look at the bottom. There's a twinleaf emblem. Everything Grandfather owned carried that mark. It was his personal crest. The lant was his favorite herb, so he adopted it as his sigil." "Twinleaf is a medicinal plant," Elowen added thoughtfully. "Apothecaries say it's useful for treating fevers and cleansing the blood." It was one of the first things she had memorized as a child. She'd never forgotten it.

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Without a word, Hugh handed the bottle to Cassian. Cassian turned it over. Sure enough, a carved twinleaf marked the base. He studied it, then passed it to Elowen. "If it was your grandfather's, then it belongs to you." Elowen checked the bottom and suddenly stopped, blinking fast. Beside the carved twinleaf was a tiny mark—an accidental fingerprint. Memory rushed back. Years ago, her grandfather had been sketching the crest, and she, still a little girl, had poked the paper and left a smudge. She'd assumed he would throw it out and make a perfect new one.

Instead, he had kept it—and added her tiny print to everything he owned. That had been his way of loving her, in his strict and orderly world. "Doctor Dray..." Elowen tightened her hands around

the bottle, her voice trembling. "Where did you get this?" Hugh answered plainly. "It was with Lydia." 1/2 12.25 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 312 The Heavy Price Of Truth Elowen stared at him. "Lydia? But... how?" How does Lydia even get something that belongs to grandfather? And when does that happen? Cassian's low voice broke through her thoughts.

"We'll bring her in and get answers soon enough." Elowen tightened her grip on the bottle and nodded. Later, as afternoon waned, Elspeth arrived wearing her usual grin. "Ella, come out with me for a bit." Elowen gave her a wary look. "Where? If this is another hopping trip for me, I'm not going." Finished Elspeth had more money than sense. She was always spoiling her, always trying to heap gifts on her. But Elowen felt the manor already had more than it could ever use. Buying more would only be wasteful. Elspeth laughed. "Please.

As if you'd let me buy you anything." Elowen pressed a hand to her chest and sighed dramatically. "Thank goodness." Elspeth smiled and shook her head. "No, really. I need you to come with me to the estate in town." "The one inside Vanelle?" Elowen asked. Elspeth nodded. "After I split from Alistair, I threw him and Lydia out. I want to check the place over and get everything in order before I head back to Rivenshire. It time I reviewed my properties there too." Elowen considered that. "And after that? Any plans?" Elspeth looked perfectly at peace.

"My oldest son is serving as an official in Northmarch. He married last year. He wrote recently to say my daughter-in-law is expecting. I thought I might go visit them. Maybe stay awhile." Elowen smiled. "That sounds wonderful. Surrounded by your children-that's real happiness." With only a light escort, they rode out to the estate. They had barely arrived when a slim figure appeared in the courtyard and blocked their path. 2.4K 212 admin

Chapter 313 Lydia's Mistaken Ambition The visitor was Lydia. 4零15%曲 Finished She had only just gotten over her illness, but the moment she heard a palace carriage was coming, she ignored how weak she still felt and hurried down from the inn to meet it. Lydia looked up at Elspeth, her voice carefully formal. "Marchioness of Havenstead-oh, wait. I must be forgetting myself. Now that you and Alistair are divorce, you're not the Marchioness of Havenstead anymore, are you? I'm afraid I don't know what to call you now." Elspeth frowned. She had no patience for this performance.

"What do you want, Lydia?" Lydia lifted her chin. The sickly, pitiable mask she always wore fell away, and her whole manner turned haughty. "I just think your temper is too hard, and you're too stubborn. You and the Marquess were never a good match. Still, you treated me well enough at Havenstead Manor. So if you ever end up alone and struggling, you can come to me at the manor." She paused, looking down on Elspeth as if she were granting a kindness. "For the sake of us both being women, I won't shut you out. I can at least make sure you live in comfort.

But under no circumstances can you see the Marquess again." Elspeth stared at her. "Did those medicines damage your brain? Is Alistair really worth all this?" Lydia stiffened, her voice turning sharp. "He is the Marquess of Havenstead! How many men in this world ever hold a noble title?" Elspeth answered without hesitation. "In all of Avenlor, since it was founded, excluding the royal family, there have only been twenty-six marquesses, whether granted the title in life or after death." Lydia went speechless, thrown by the answer. After a long pause, she forced herself to recover.

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"Alistair didn't just become a marquess. He comes from a distinguished family, and he's charming and graceful- Elspeth thought it over. "Alistair was handsome when he was young. Now he's

just... ordinary. And after twenty-five, he really started to decline. Graceful? Wher? All he has going for him now is the beard, and even that only makes him look respectable. If he shaved it..."

She paused, distaste showing at the corner of her mouth.

"Honestly, without the beard, his face barely holds together." Lydia's fingers curled so tightly her knuckles went white "You're only saying that because you're bitter about the divorce," Elspeth casually brushed dust from her fingertips. "You too late, Lydia. I had Alistair in his best years, when he was at his peak. The man you have now is past. But if you really think he's some rare prize, that's your business." Lydia was stunned. She had only ever heard men talk about women that way. Since when could a woman talk about a man like that?

"You" Lydia had just started to snap back when the sound of carriage wheels cut her off. The richly adorned palace carriage rolled to a stop in front of then Quin stepped down, bowed, and held a roll of bright silk in both hands.. 1/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 D 15%2 at Finished Chapter 313 Lydia's Mistaken Ambition A royal decree. Lydia forgot the argument at once. Every other thought disappeared, leaving only one behind. In just a moment, I become a Lady of the First Rank.

She steadied her breathing and stepped forward eagerly "Excuse me, may I ask who you are?" Quin turned to her, polite but reserved. "I serve His Majesty in court. My name is Quin." Lydia couldn't take her eyes off the decree. "Lord Jett, you're here to deliver a royal decree, aren't you?" Quin nodded. "Yes." Lydia pressed on. "But the Marquess isn't here right now. That won't be a problem, will it?" Quin glanced at her, puzzled. The decree isn't for the Marquess, so why does it matter if he's not here? Still, he kept his formal courtesy. "No, it won't." Lydia let out a relieved breath.

She straightened, smoothed her hair, and tried to assume a dignified, stately air. "Very well, Lord Jett. I'm ready." Quin took in her behavior with quiet confusion, but kept a polite smile. "All right." Then he turned straight to Elspeth, cleared his throat, and said in a solemn voice, "My lady, please step forward to receive the royal decree." Lydia jerked her head up, stunned. Isn't this decree for me "Lord Jett, there must be some mistake! She and the Marquess are divorced. She's no longer the Marchioness!" Quin did not waver. "Yes, I know." Lydia's voice rose with panic.

"I'm the Marquess's wife now!" Quin nodded. "Congratulations." Lydia's breath caught. She was being humiliated, and still she could not stop staring at the scroll. "Lord Jett, then shouldn't I be the one receiving the decree?" She stepped forward and reached for the silk, 2.4K 2/2 12:25

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Chapter 314 The Royal Decree Quin reacted at once and stepped back. The two armed guards behind him immediately drew their swords halfway with a cold flash, steel barring Lydia's path to the decree. "That's enough!" Quin dropped all pretense of politeness. "This decree is a personal gift from His Majesty to his aunt!" Lydia froze where she stood. Quin did not spare her another glance. He turned to Elspeth instead, opened the decree, and read in a clear, carrying voice.

"By the grace of God, His Majesty proclaims: Lady Elspeth of distinguished virtue and honor, steadfast in character and exemplary among women of the realm. In times of adversity you have shown dignity and compassion, and your conduct has brought credit to your house and to the kingdom. In recognition of your virtue and service, His Majesty hereby grants you the title of

Lady of the First Rank, with all rights and honors belonging thereto. Given under royal authority and confirmed this day by His Majesty." When he finished, Quin's smile became more genuine.

"My lady, please step forward and accept the decree." Elspeth sank to one knee and bowed her head to receive the decree. Quin stepped forward and placed the scroll in her hands. Lowering his voice, he added, "His Majesty hoped this would mark the beginning of a new chapter for you—and offer you his protection from anyone who might wish you harm." Elspeth held the decree and let out a soft sigh. "Good children, all of them." Theodric and Cassian... they both still care for me. With a dull thud, Lydia dropped weakly to the ground, her face pale.

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She stared at the scroll in Elspeth's hands, humiliated and crushed. "Lydia!" Alistair's voice broke the silence. Lydia looked up, eyes rimmed red, and saw him. Alistair hurried over and helped her to her feet. When he saw the state she was in, he frowned, a trace of anger turning toward Elspeth. "Lydia's still recovering. How could you be so cruel to her?" Elspeth's face went cold. Elowen, afraid her aunt might lose her temper and do something rash, quickly caught Elspeth's hand and said evenly, "No one bullied her." Elowen had watched the whole thing. She knew exactly what had happened.

"Lydia thought the title of Lady of the First Rank was being granted to her." Lydia's face went pale all over again, Alistair's gaze finally dropped to the bright scroll in Elspeth's hands. He hesitated, then said slowly, "Elspeth... you received the decree?" Elspeth's expression stayed icy. "Yes. Is there a problem?"

1/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 314 Th Battery power 15% Charge your tablet or tap here to turn on Power saving mode. Alistair opened his mouth, but nothing came out at first Finished Lady of the First Rank.

The highest honor a noblewoman could receive—a title granted not for a husband's or son's merit, but for her own. Most women could only dream of it, and it had never once occurred to him that Elspeth, after divorcing him, would receive such an honor from Theodric. Then, with a shiver, he realized something else. During all the years Elspeth had been married to him, the king had never shown the slightest sign of valuing her enough to bestow such an honor. Yet only days after their divorce, the decree had arrived. Is His Majesty making a statement to the entire court?

That he never approved of me? The thought unsettled Alistair to the core. Lydia clenched her teeth and forced down her disappointment. She slipped an arm around Alistair's and rested her head against him, her voice gentle and affectionate. "It's nothing, Alistair. I never cared about titles. As long as we're together, Lady of the First Rank or not, none of that matters." Of course it mattered. Lydia had wanted that title more than anything. Now that it was out of reach, she had no choice but to settle for second best. At least the manor's wealth would still be hers.

She smiled sweetly at Alistair. "When we move into Havenstead Manor in Rivenshire, all those assets will make sure we live comfortably for the rest of our lives." "Assets?" Elowen asked softly. Lydia turned, a strange chill running through her. Elowen tilted her head. "The Marquess didn't tell you?" Lydia's nerves tightened. "Tell me what?" Elowen smiled with perfect politeness. "When Aunt Elspeth and the Marquess divorced, the property was divided. Aside from Havenstead Manor itself, there's really nothing left to Alistair—no estates, no shops, only some money in savings.

If you're careful, it should last a few years." Lydia's eyes widened in disbelief. The Marquess had no fortune? All those lands and shop belonged to Elspeth? The realization hit her hard. If I know this would happen, I never cross Elspeth, Without noticing, her grip on Alistair's arm loosened.

Alistair felt the change in her touch, and for one brief moment, something deeply unsettling began to dawn on him too. - 2.4K () admin

Chapter 315 The Doctor's Secret 15% Finished Alistair refused to show any weakness in front of Elspetl. He clenched his jaw. "Lydia, let's go." Lydia hesitated, thoughts racing. The family fortune is gone. Am I supposed to follow him and live like that? But then she remembered-he still had his title. Theodic wouldn't strip that away too, would he? The two of them had just started for the door when Elowen spoke behind them. "Wait." Lydia stopped. Elowen looked at her steadily. "I have a question. That bottle-where did you get it?" Lydia went rigid. Panic flashed across her face. "I...

I dont know what you mean, Your Grace..." Elowen studied her for a moment, thoughtful, almost curious. Then she smiled. "Answer me, and I'll make sure Duskmoor Manor's carriage takes you and your husband safely back to Rivenshire." Lydia's eyes widened. Back to Rivenshire. That meant she could finally return as the rightful mistress of Havenstead Manor. No more hanging around the edges. No more living on scraps. She pressed her lips together, hesitated, then nodded. "Since Your Grace is asking...

I can't exactly pretend I don't know." Elowen nodded and led Lydia to a seat beneath the cloister arches. Sunlight streamed through the columns, dappling the stone floor. Lydia collected her thoughts and finally began. "Years ago, my father-in-law got gravely ill. We brought in every famous doctor in the city, but none of them could help. My late husband was always devoted to his father. He refused to give up. He searched everywhere for a cure and spent a fortune doing it. In the end, someone recommended a doctor..." Elowen tensed and leaned forward.

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"What kind of doctor?" Lydia's gaze drifted as she tried to remember. "He was old, all white-haired, but full of energy. Not like most old men. There was something exact about him. His clothes weren't expensive, but they were always spotless. Pressed. Not a wrinkle on them. He was very particular. I remember one thing especially-if he saw a cup out of place on a table, he'd stop and straighten it very time." Elowen's heart jolted. For a moment, she forgot to breathe. That was her grandfather, Everything around him had always been neat, precise, perfect order. It wasn't just a habit.

It was who he was. That was why, when she'd found her fingerprint beside the herb at the base of the bottle that day, she'd been so shaken. He had allowed her to leave a mark the e-a quiet kind of affection he had never shown anyone else. She forced herself to stay calm. Her voice came out tight. "And then? What happened to him?" 1/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 315 The Doctor's Secret 15% Finished Too much had happened in those years. Her mother had kept her away, and it had been so long since Elowen had last seen her grandfather. Does he even know Mom is dead? Lydia shook her head.

"I wouldn't know. But I heard that doctor never stayed anywhere for long. He cured my father-in-law, and soon after that, he left." She paused, then added, "There were rumors about him. People said he was some kind of-well, that he never aged, never died. They said he must be hiding so no one would find out. So every few years, he moved on." Elowen blinked. "Huh?" Lydia flushed, embarrassed to be repeating gossip. "I've told you everything," she said quickly. "So, Your Grace... when will the carriage be arranged?" Elowen said, "In a few days. My aunt will also be returning to Rivenshire.

You and your husband can travel with her." Lydia's expression stiffened. Go back with Elspeth? What if Elspeth saw the manor and changed her mind? What if she decided she wanted to remain mistress after all? Elowen went on as if she hadn't noticed. "I hear the southern road out of the Vanelle hasn't been safe lately. Bandits have been targeting travelers. With the marquis ill and no guards with you, you'd be easy prey. Losing money is one thing. But if you were attacked and something worse happened..." She paused.

"It's much safer to travel with the manor guard." Lydia gritted her teeth, but in the end she nodded. "All right." Elowen and Elspeth made one last round through the manor guest house, checking that everything had been sorted out, then prepared to return to Duskmoor Manor. When their carriage stopped at the gate, Gerda hurried out to meet them and lowered her voice. "Your Grace, you're back. Matilda, Lady Elira's chamberlain, is waiting in the main hall." Elowen raised a brow. "Where's the Duke?" "His Grace left after lunch," Gerda said. Elowen slowed and glanced back. "Where did he go?

Did he say?" "Bran said he went to the west market-to buy groceries 。 2.4K M 2/2 admin

Chapter 316 Invitation What? Has Cassian really gotten this addicted to cook? 15%3 Finished
Matilda was waiting in the front hall with a cup of water The moment Elowen stepped in, she set it down and rose. "Your Grace." "No need for formalities, Matilda. Did Her Majesty send a message?" Matilda bowed again. "Not a message, Your Grace, but a question. Christmas is approaching, and His Majesty and His Grace have always been as close as brothers. In years past, before his marriage, His Grace always attended the Christmas feast at court.

But now Duskmoor Manor has its own mistress, and this is Her Majesty Elira's first year hosting the palace festivities. There is some uncertainty about the proper etiquette, so she sent me to ask-

will you and His Grace spend Christmas at the manor this year, or attend the feast at court as usual?" Elowen paused. Had a whole year really gone by so quickly? In her last life, there had been no chaos. The Queen's Privy Seal was still in Isla's hands. Cassian never woke. That Christmas at the palace had been dazzling and grand.

But for Elowen, shut out and alone, every hour had felt like its own quiet punishment. Thinking of that distant banquet, she smiled at Matilda and said softly, "It would be lonely, just the two of us here. Please tell Her Majesty that if she doesn't mind the company, we'd be honored to spend Christmas at court again." Relief spread across Matilda's face at once. She thanked Elowen repeatedly, exchanged a few blessings, and hurried off to deliver the answer. By sunset, the lamps had been lit and the last light was fading from the sky.

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Cassian came home carrying a bundle, the cold still clinging to him. He stepped into the study.

"Ella, I picked up some fine venison. Have the kitchen make a stew tonight. It'll be perfect in this weather." A sudden, almost startling sense of ordinary happiness warmed Elowen. Just this simple domestic ease made her heart feel full. Resting her chin in her hand, she grinned. "Sounds good." "Oh, right. Matilda came by from the palace, Elira asked whether we'd stay here for Christmas's or go to court. I told her we'd go to court.

It'll be livelier," Cassian walked over, picked up the half-finished cup of water beside her, and drank it down like it was nothing. "Fine with me. Whatever you want, Ella." Elowen stared.

"Hey! That was mine! I was still drinking it!" Cassian lifted a brow, eyes glinting. "I've already kissed you. You still care about sharing a cup?" For a second, Elowen just sat there, stunned.

Then color rushed over her face and down her neck. She sputtered and reached to cover his mouth. "You-you-can you not say things like that?" Cassian just laughed, low and warm.

1/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 130 D Chapter 316 Invitation He truly loved how easily his wife blushed. A few words and she was completely flustered. With obvious affection, he caught her hand and pressed a kiss to the back of it. "Sorry." But I'll definitely say it again next time. 15%1 Finished Elowen tugged lightly at her hand, but he didn't let go. So she gave up and changed the subject. "Your Grace, is your leg almost completely healed now?" Cassian idly rubbed her fingers, clearly enjoying himself "Just about." "Have you told His Majesty?" "Not yet," Cassian said.

"Doctor Dray still comes by every few days to treat it. I want to wait until I'm fully recovered. No point telling His Majesty too early if something goes wrong." Elowen understood and nodded. #1 Cassian hesitated, then said, "How about we visit Hale Manor together tomorrow?" Elowen blinked. "Hale Manor? Why?" Seeing her flushed and dazed, Cassian couldn't resist running his thumb across her palm. "Don't remember? We talked about it. I was too sick to go before. Now that I'm better, I should go with you." She gave a sheepish little laugh.

"I guess I forgot." "Tomorrow afternoon," Cassian said gently, but in a tone that made it clear he'd decided. For a second she wondered why not morning, then figured he was probably avoiding the cold. "All right." Cassian's eyes softened even more. He looked like he meant to leave, but instead he leaned down and brushed a light kiss over her cheek. 2.4K 212 admin

Chapter 317 The Night's Lessons "Wait for me a minute." Cassian let go of her hand and disappeared down the hall. Elowen sat there with burning cheeks, one hand pressed to her face, her thoughts spinning. By nightfall, light glowed across the manor while darkness gathered outside. 林会 15%曲 Finished At dinner, Cassian came to fetch her from the study and led her toward the dining hall. The scent hit Elowen the moment they crossed the threshold, and her

mouth watered. The round table was covered with dishes, all of them steaming and rich with fragrance. Warren stood off to one side.

He bowed and welcomed them with proper courtesy. Elowen smiled as she looked over the spread. "That's a lot of food." Cassian helped her into her seat, then sat beside her. "What do you want to try first?" Warren gestured toward the table. "This is roasted venison. And here-venison with mushrooms and herbs. His Grace made that himself. The venison stew with root vegetables is mine, though only because His Grace insisted Your Grace should have something especially nourishing." Elowen turned to Cassian, her eyes bright with affection.

"I want to try everything you made." Cassian looked openly pleased, almost boyish in his price. He carved a delicate slice and placed it onto her plate while it was still hot. The venison had been sliced thin, rosy in the center, mixed with tender mushrooms and fragrant herbs. Elowen took a careful bite. The flavor was far better than she'd expected-rich, tender, and perfectly cooked, without the slightest hint of gaminess. She swallowed and said happily, "This is wonderful.

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If you opened an inn, every cook in the city would lose their job." The praise was a little exaggerated, but she meant every word. Cassian looked as if he might start grinning outright. Warren was stunned. No wonder His Grace likes her so much. She really knows how to charm a man. Maybe I should try that with my wife. Elowen turned to Warren. "What are your plans now? Will you stay with the regiment? Have you gotten your family settled?" He straightened at once. "I haven't thought that far yet, plan to bring my wife and daughter, Elara, to the city." At that name, Elowen paused.

Elara had once been fixated on Cassian and had caused trouble more than once. I wonder how she's doing now? Warren sighed. "But things are awkward for me now. I feel guilty. I'm not even sure whether I should write to my wife yet." 7/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 0 D Chapter 317 The Night's Lessons Elowen gave him a reassuring smile. "Don't worry. This trouble won't last much longer." Warren blinked. "How can you be so sure, Your Grace?" A flicker of uncertainty crossed Elowen's face. Finished In her last life, Nordia had sent envoys right around Christmas's and made peace with Avenlor.

That could still happen. Or maybe not. This life had already changed too much. Cassian had awakened early. Warren had returned ahead E schedule. Maybe the Nordan enjoys wouldn't come at all Or maybe they'd come angry. Before the silence could stretch, Cassian scooped her a bowl of soup. "Try the stew." "Thank you, Your Grace." Elowen smiled and tasted it, savoring the flavor. Then she looked back at Warren. "This is delicious. Really. Mrs. Wrenner is lucky to have you." Warren grinned and thumped his chest. "Thank you, Your Grace.

Honestly, His Grace is lucky too!" Cassian raised a brow, amused. Warren poured a cup of wine for Cassian and another for himself. Elowen noticed immediately. "What about mine?" Warren flushed. "This wine probably isn't for you, Your Grace." She tipped her head. "Why not?" Cassian caught her confusion and calmly set down his fork. "Because it's venison wine." Elowen froze. Then her cheeks flushed crimson. Venison. Hunters had always said it was strengthening. Warming. The sort of thing whispered to stir the blood on cold winter nights. She shot Cassian a sidelong glance.

As if he needs help with that. Am I even going to survive tonight? Cassian saw the blush spreading down her neck, and his eyes lit with amusement. He knew if he said one more word, she might crawl under the table. 2.4K 2/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 admin

Chapter 318 The Chronicle 15% Finished He smiled a little wider. "All right, I'll stop. Venison wine isn't as miraculous as people say. You can try it if you want, but it doesn't taste very good." Elowen looked at him suspiciously. "Really?" Cassian nodded. "Really." That was enough to reassure her. "Eat," he said, handing her another slice of roasted venison. The meat was done perfectly-crisp on the outside, juicy and pink within. The moment she tasted it, Elowen's eyes curved with pleasure, and all thoughts of venison wine disappeared. After dinner, Warren took his leave.

Elowen started to walk him out. "Lieutenant, let me see you-" "Ella." Cassian's voice dropped behind her. She turned at once. "What's wrong?" "I think I'm drunk." From the corner of the room, Warren nearly choked. His Grace is known for holding his liquor. He can finish a whole bottle without even turning red, let alone get drunk after just a few drinks. Drunk? No way. Elowen looked worried. She reached up and touched Cassian's forehead. "Maybe it's the wine. Are you dizzy? Does anything hurt?" Warren quietly withdrew his earlier opinion and wisely kept his mouth shut.

Cassian slowly shook his head. Elowen turned to Warren with an apologetic smile. "Sorry, but His Grace isn't feeling well. Let Bran see you out. Be careful on your way home." Warren looked from Elowen to Cassian, then back again "Yes, Your Grace," Once she made sure Warren was gone, Elowen turned back to Cassian, her voice soft. "Should I have someone bring you some

broth?" Cassian shook his head. "No need to trouble them." Elowen thought for a moment.

"Then I'll make it for you?" "It's late. Don't bother. She frowned. "But you're drunk.

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I don't want you feeling sick." He reached out and caught her sleeve. "If I lie down for while, I'll be fine. Will you come with me?" 1/3 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 318 The Chronicle Elowen nodded. "All right. Let's head back." She turned to leave, but Cassian caught her by the wrist Elowen looked at him, puzzled. "What now?" "My head's spinning," Cassian said. "I can't quite keep my balance. Ella, give me your hand." "I almost forgot you were drunk." Elowen held out her hand without hesitation. "Didn't you say last month that you wanted to read The Chronicle of Kingdoms?" he asked.

Elowen tried to remember. "Maybe... why?" His eyes sparkled with anticipation. "Why don't we read it tonight?" She frowned and teased him lightly. "Aren't you drunk? Can you even read?"

He looked at her with suspicious intensity. "But I really want to, Ella. Please?" How am I supposed to say no? Elowen gave in and told Anson to fetch the book from Cassian's study.

Cassian followed her out, quite satisfied with himself. Finished The bathwater had already been prepared, and Elowen used a damp cloth to wipe his face.

Cassian was tall and impossible to ignore, and the whole time he simply watched her, never looking away. She laughed. "Why are you staring at me?" "Because you're beautiful," he said, completely sincere. She smiled. "You're handsome too." He leaned a little closer and lowered his voice. "Really?" She dipped the cloth into the water again, smiling to herself. "Really." He asked, "More handsome than Alaric?" "You, obviously," she said at once. Alaric couldn't compare.

Cassian kept going. "More handsome than Kaelan?" She rolled her eyes. "Still you." He gave her a mischievous look.

"What about Doctor Day?" She looked at him. "Why are you comparing yourself to Doctor Dray?" "Because I want to." Then he dropped the teasing and gave her an almost plaintive look. "Well?" Elowen couldn't help laughing. "You're the most handsome man in the whole world." 2/3 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 318 The Chronicle. 15% Finished Cassian's eyes brightened. He bent down and kissed her lightly. "There's one exception. Ella, you're the most beautiful in the world. I can only be second." She giggled, delighted. Tipsy and affectionate, Cassian was almost unbearably sweet.

She finished wiping his face, then led him outside. The Chronicle of Kingdoms was already waiting on the table. She glanced at the book, amused and puzzled. "Why are you so eager to read this? Does it mean something special to you?" Cassian nodded. She sat by the table and reached to open it, but Cassian topped her. "Let's read in bed." Why in bed? His insistence was a little strange, but she let it go. No point arguing with a drunk. 2.4K 3/3 admin

Chapter 319 Lessons In The Chronicle 林会 15% 轟 Finished So she carried the book to the big bed and settled in. Cassian came with her and wrapped an arm around her waist. He lowered his voice. "Ella, let's read." She obediently opened the book. Then froze. On the very first page were drawings of tangled bodies, entwined in intimacy. For one blank second, her mind stopped working. Then she snapped the book shut, face blazing, and smacked Cassian in the chest with it. "You lied to me again!" Why was she always this easy to fool? First he'd pretended his leg hurt. Now he was pretending to be drunk.

She had sworn she wouldn't fall for his tricks again, but apparently he was going to have her wrapped around his finger for the rest of her life. Cassian only laughed, completely unashamed. "I didn't e. I might actually be a little drunk." Elowen blushed even harder. "How are you

thinking about this when you're supposed to be drunk?" He smiled, his voice low. "Maybe I'm a little drunk, but not that drunk. Besides, you said before that you wanted to read The Chronicle of Kingdoms." She glared at him.

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"I didn't know what was in it." "Now that you do," he said, "you don't want to?" She lowered her head, cheeks deep red. Cassian teased, "Want to study it together?" Exasperated, she shot back, "Apologize first." He did at once. "Sorry. My fault." It wasn't nearly enough, and before she could say so, Cassian leaned close and murmured in her ear, "If that's not enough, I can apologize properly later." She shoved at his chest. "Too many tricks, Your Grace." He lowered his voice even more. "It really is my fault." Am I sleeping alone tonight? Elowen huffed and dropped the book onto his chest.

"If you want to study, then you do it." He paused, then understood what she meant. Elowen's whole face turned scarlet as she stammered, "You were the one who said we could learn by doing..." A slow smile spread across Cassian's face. He looked at her so intently that her blush deepened even more. 1/2 12:25 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 319 Lessons In The Chronicle She tried to look away. He whispered, "I'm sorry. And I'll learn." He opened the book to a page and said hoarsely, "Shall We study this one tonight?" ३५% 15% Finished She snuck a glance, then instantly felt overwhelmed.

The drawing sent a rush of heat through her whole body. Her head swam. She couldn't think. And when Cassian leaned over her, she lost the thread entirely. Did he really mean it when he said they should try this one tonight? Is he planning to go through every position in the whole book? How many times does he read it in private ahead, thinking up ways to talk her into practicing with him? And where does he even get a book like this? "Ella, I want to hear you call

me," Cassian murmured, his voice rough with heat. She blinked, dazed. "Your Grace?" Cassian let out a soft groan.

"That sounds too distant, Ella..." The way he dragged out her name was teasing, almost like a hook brushing against her nerves. She protested weakly, "Don't tease me..." Blushing, she asked softly, "Then what do you want me to call you?" Cassian's voice dropped. "Just Cassian. When you say it like that, it sounds different." Elowen blinked. "Have I never called you that before?" "Not like this," Cassian said quietly. Elowen felt a little flustered for no clear reason. Saying his name suddenly felt far more intimate than she expected.

"Ella, call me," Cassian whispered, his gaze so intense it felt feverish. There was nowhere left to hide. She bit her lip, cheeks burning, and finally dared to say it. "Cassian..." That night, Cassian showed no restraint. Ever since his wounds had healed, he had only grown bolder in their marriage bed. 2.4K 212 admin

Chapter 320 Staying In Bed Until Noon 15% Finished Elowen lay limp in the tangled sheets, catching her breath in a rare quiet moment. Is the wine Cassian brings really that strong? The thought barely surfaced before another wave crashed over her and washed it away. The bed curtains swayed for what felt like hours. At some point, exhaustion dragged Elowen under. After that, she remembered nothing. When she woke, her head felt strangely light, as if she were floating in a soft fog. She had no idea how long she'd been lying there, waiting for her senses to come back.

Then she heard footsteps approaching the bed. Even half-asleep, she knew Cassian's steady stride. "Ella, you awake?" Cassian's low voice came from beyond the canopy. She managed a hoarse little "Mm." Was that really her voice? She tried to clear her throat, but it only sounded

rougher. Cassian stepped closer and pulled back the curtains with one hand. "I made you some honey-almond pudding. Think you can sit up and eat a little?" Elowen tried to push herself upright, but there was no strength in her body. Cassian caught on immediately and bent to help her.

Without his arm around her, she would've fallen right back into the mattress. "Right now..." Her voice broke off, and she went still. Is my throat really this bad? Cassian saw the look on her face. "That's my fault," he said at once, looking both guilty and embarrassed. "I kept you up most of the night. Had you crying and everything. I'm sorry." That brought everything back at once—the tears, her broken voice. No wonder he'd brought her something soothing. Heat rushed to her cheeks, but Cassian only looked more concerned. "Want something else to eat?" he asked. "Just say it.

Whatever you want, I'll make it." Elowen glanced at him, unable to quite meet his eyes. "I'm not hungry. I just... I can barely move." "You overdid it." Cassian leaned in, all eagerness. "Want he to rub your shoulders?" Her first instinct was to refuse, but before she could say word, his hands settled on her shoulders and began kneading gently. It felt so good she couldn't bring herself to stop him. Honestly, I wouldn't be this sore if it weren't for him. She sank back against the pillows without shame. "My legs," she said, not bothering to hide the complaint.

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"Those are worse." "Of course." Cassian sounded both dutiful and pleased. He moved to her calves and started massaging them with patient, practiced hands. "How's that? Too much?" Elowen tilted her head and nodded. "Feels good." Cassian kept going, slowly working the soreness out of her tired muscles. Elowen let her eyes drift half-shut as the ache gradually eased.

She even found herself almost forgiving what he'd done the night before. 1/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13
O Chapter 320 Staying In Bed Until Noon After a while, she remembered something.

"What time is it?" Cassian glanced at the light outside, then said, "It was almost noon when I came in." Noon? Ft 15% Finished Elowen blinked. She vaguely remembered Cassian promising weeks ago that after the wedding, they'd go together to Hale Manor and visit her family. At the time she'd thought the timing strange. Now she understood. He'd planned this from the beginning. She narrowed her eyes at him. "You did this on purpose didn't you?" Cassian only looked at her. "Didn't we agree you'd use my name?" Elowen stared, thrown off. "I thought that was just...

in bed." "I want to hear it everywhere," he said seriously. "Not jus there. It makes me feel close to you." Elowen looked uneasy. "Isn't that... too familiar?" Cassian raised a brow. "Ella, last night you called me a jerk and kicked me. Why worry about manners now?" Her whole face went red. "That was different. We were in bed." He smiled at her with open fondness. "It doesn't have to be different. We're married, Ella. I don't want you being so formal with me." Something warm opened quietly in her chest. She bit her lip, then hurriedly changed the subject. "You said that wine didn't do much.

But it seemed pretty effective to me." Cassian gave her a long look. "Ella, it wasn't the wine." She stared at him. "It wasn't? Then what was?" He answered plainly. "You called me Cassian." Elowen blinked. Then, before she could stop herself, she kicked at him again. "And you still want me to call you that?" Cassian didn't dodge. If anything, he gently caught her ankle and pressed a kiss to the top of her foot. "The first time's always exciting. You'll get used to it."

"Sure," Elowen muttered. She didn't say yes, and she didn't say no. She just shut her eyes. "Keep massaging.

Then I'll eat a little, You promised to take me to my family today." "Of course," Cassian said. When he was done, Cassian personally helped her wash up and made sure she finished every spoonful of the honey-almond pudding. The carriage had been ready for hours. Cassian had even arranged cushions and soft pillows on the seats so Elowen would be as comfortable as possible. On the way to Hale Manor, Cassian asked, "Ella, is there anything you want to say ahead of time?" She paused.

"About what?" 213 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 @ D Chapter 320 Staying In Bed Until Noon He explained, "Anything you want to say-or not say-today?" 林会15% Finished Elowen blinked, realizing he meant it. They were only going to visit her family's graves, yet Cassian treated it with the same solemn respect he would have shown if her family were still alive. The thought made her chest tighten. 。 2.4K admin

Chapter 321 Family Memories Elowen was still thinking about how to answer when Cassian spoke again. "I worked with your father, you know. He was strict, but brilliant. Didn't laugh much, either. But the second someone mentioned your mother, his ears turned red." Elowen couldn't help smiling. That was exactly like her father. Cassian tipped his head, thoughtful. "So that's where you get it. Blushing must run in the family." She laughed softly. "I've always thought so." "And your brother-I met him once or twice.

He always ooked lazy, but when it mattered, he was the most dependable man in the room. Sharp tongue, too. Nobody could win an argument with him." She chuckled. "Only if my mother wasn't

there. One look from her, and he'd shut right up. Later, he was even more afraid of my sister-in-law. She didn't even have to glare. He was scared anyway." Cassian lifted his brows. "I met your sister-in-law, but never your mother. She wasn't from Vanelle, was she?" Elowen shook her head. "She was originally from Falkriver." "Falkriver," Cassian repeated, turning the name over in his mind.

That was at the southwestern edge of Avenlor. Back in the previous king's reign, Falkriver hadn't even belonged to the kingdom. It was Elowen's father who led the campaign that brought it into Avenlor's territory-and, Cassian now realized, the same campaign that brought Elowen's mother home. He said thoughtfully, "Your mother's family has always been something of a mystery in Vanelle. His Majesty and I both looked into it once. Didn't find much. All I know comes from Hugh. He said the Wynnes were famous healers." Elowen looked up, surprised. "Doctor Dray knew my grandfather?"

Or just knew of the family?" Cassian shook his head. "No idea. Hugh never explained. He only said the Wynne family helped him once, and he owed them. That's why he agreed to treat your knee-because of that connection." Elowen's thoughts tangled. She had gone to Falkriver as child, but her memories of it were blurry. She definitely didn't remember ever meeting Hugh, and none of her relatives had mentioned him before. That's weird. Just then, the carriage came to a gentle stop. "We're here." Cassian got down first, then turned and offered Elowen his hand.

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The moment she tried to step down, her legs nearly gave out-they still hadn't fully recovered from the night before. Cassian quietly steadied her, solid as a wall, almost lifting her to the ground. Hale Manor looked much as it always had-quiet and stately, the main gates shut, only a side door left half open. There were no guards in sight, only Regan sitting on a stool, teasing a

dog at his feet. "Regan!" Elowen called. Regan looked up in surprise. The second he saw her, he scrambled to his feet and nearly stumbled over himself. "Miss-Miss Hale!

You're home!" 1/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 321 Family Memories 会 15% Finished Behind her, Cassian had settled into his wheelchair. He still kept up the act outside the manor. Bran started pushing him forward. It took Regan another moment to recognize him, and when he did, he looked even more flustered. "D-Duke of Duskmoor! You're here too? He started to bow, but Elowen quickly stopped him. "Regan, there's no need for that," she said. "You don't have to stand on ceremony with me." His eyes reddened at once. "You're home, Miss.

It would've been nice to know in advance..." As she reassured him, Elowen bent down and stroked the dog's soft head. She smiled gently. "This isn't anything formal. The last time I came back, the duke was ill and couldn't come with me. Now that he's better, we came together to pay our respects." Regan nodded quickly. "Yes... yes, of course." He stepped aside, voice shaking with emotion. "Your... your father and mother, and your brother... they've been waiting for you..." Elowen felt the weight of his words settle deep in her chest.

A sharp sting pricked at the back of her nose, and for a moment she thought she might cry. They continued deeper into the Hale Manor. The estate looked much as it always had. By Theodric's command, because the Hale family had given their lives in service to the realm, the manor had been left untouched. Though no one lived there anymore, a steward and a few servants still remained to maintain the house, keeping the rooms in order so that it would not fall into ruin. Elowen walked on slowly. Perhaps because Cassian was beside her, her emotions felt unusually raw today.

They passed the long corridor where soldiers used to come and go at all hours. Now it stood completely silent. They also passed the study where her uncles had once gathered, laughing and arguing late into the night. Elowen glanced toward it as they walked by. The doors were closed, the paint on the wood faded and worn with time. The bleak air of late autumn and early winter made the whole place feel even more desolate. In the courtyard stood the pear tree her brother had planted the year he married her sister-in-law.

Now the branches looked thin and brittle, as if the tree itself had begun to wither. Elowen stopped beneath it. She stood there for a long time, looking up at the tree, a sudden heaviness settling over her. For quite a while, she said nothing. Regan, trying his best to comfort her, said, "We... we water it every day, but... but it just won't thrive." Elowen managed a faint smile. "My brother was never good at gardening. He killed my mother's orchids every year. No one really expected the pear tree to survive, either." She took a careful breath, then turned to Regan. "It's alright.

Let's go." 2/3 admin

Chapter 322 The Room 15% Finished Of all the rooms in Hale Manor, the memorial room was the best kept. A long wall displayed engraved plaques bearing the names of the Hale family, each one carefully polished so the letters caught the lamplight. Elowen stood before them, trying to steady her breathing as a dull ache settled deep in her chest. Cassian positioned his wheelchair beside her, then slowly pushed himself to his feet and reached for her hand. The warmth of his palm grounded her immediately. He met her eyes, his voice quiet but firm.

"Let's stand here for a moment." Without speaking, Elowen remained beside him. Facing the memorial wall, Cassian spoke clearly and solemnly. "To my father- and mother-in-law, to my

brother-in-law, and to the elders of the Hale family. I give you my word today. As long as I live, I will protect Ella and never allow harm to come to her." When he finished, the room fell into silence. Elowen watched him, her thoughts drifting despite herself. She remembered her brother Julian teasing her after meeting Cassian for the first time. "I'd heard all the stories about the duke. Tall, handsome, all that.

I figured there was no way he could be better-looking than me. Turns out I was only a little wrong, Ella. I'm not the most handsome man in Vanelle anymore." He had pretended to be wounded for a moment before stroking his jaw and laughing. "Still, with a title like his, who could possibly accept the Duke as a son-in-law? Imagine having a man like that showing up at your house." Then he winked. "Ella, just imagine if his wife had an older brother. One visit from the Duke and your luck for the whole year would be gone," She could almost hear his voice now, full of mock outrage.

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I never thought it'd actually be you. Ella, you really better appreciate this. Good thing I died early, because the shock alone might've taken ten years off my life. Strangely, the thought didn't break her. Instead, it made her smile. Her brother had always annoyed her, but now even remembering him felt comforting. Cassian finished speaking and turned back to her. "Ella and I will come visit again soon." His calm voice settled deep in her chest. 1/2 O 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 @fo Chapter 322 The Room 15%! Finished For the first time, Elowen realized she wasn't truly alone anymore.

She was no longer the last branch of a broken family. Someone stood beside her now. Maybe that was why, even with all the sorrow, she could face this place with Cassian at her side. Maybe that was why the pain, little by little, was beginning to ease. She let out a slow breath, a faint

smile touching her lips. "Should we go back?" After a brief pause, she added softly, "Cassian." He froze, as if waking from a dream, then turned to her in disbelief. "...Ella, did you just call me-?" Color rushed into her cheeks. She looked away at once, mumbling, "Well... yes.

Cassian." He squeezed her hand, his voice dropping to a whisper. I like it when you call me that." Her cheeks burned, but she said nothing. Instead, she took hold of the wheelchair and pushed him toward the door. Cassian's mood lifted at once. Almost no one calls me Cassin anymore. There are so few people who would dare use it. But Elowen can. And now she wants to. She's really letting me in. Outside the room, Regan was waiting, with the dog beside him in an oddly dignified pose. "What's your dog's name, Regan?" Elowen asked, her curiosity returning.

Regan looked at the dog, then back at Elowen, scratching his head sheepishly. "I... haven't named him. I'm not much of a scholar, Miss. He just showed up one day outside the gate, and I gave him some meat. Now he follows me everywhere." Elowen crouched down, and the dog immediately leaped at her, tail wagging so hard it was almost a blur. She laughed and ruffled his head. "Since you showed up at Hale Manor, and you're gold, how about Emberfang?" The dog's tail looked ready to shake clean off. Cassian smiled at her. "Ella, that suits him. Looks like he loves it too." Elowen beamed.

She remembered Elias once praising her talent for naming things. Maybe next she'd name the courtyards at Duskmoor Manor-or even, someday, the children she might have with Cassian. "By the way..." Regan began, tripping over his words as usual. It took Elowen a moment to piece together what he meant. 2.4K admin

Chapter 323 A Visit And Unrest 15% Finished In the end, Regan explained that a few days earlier, a young woman had come to Hale Manor asking to enter the memorial room and pay her respects to Elowen's parents. Regan had never seen her before. When he asked her name and where she came from, she either couldn't or wouldn't answer. She only said she was "a friend." Regan remained polite, but he refused to allow a stranger into the family memorial room. The woman had a large man with her, and for a moment Regan feared they might try to force their way inside.

Fortunately, after waiting for a while, the woman eventually left quietly. Elowen frowned. A friend? Who is it, someone from my father's side or one of my mother's friends? If that's the case, why not just say name? her She had no memory of anyone like that from her previous life. She was still turning it over when another set of hurried footsteps came toward them. It was Bran, and his face was unusually grim. "Your Grace." He gave a quick bow, then turned to Cassian. "A message from the palace. His Majesty requests your immediate presence. It's urgent." Cassian's eyes narrowed slightly.

He gave Elowen's fingers a squeeze, his voice soft. "I'll be back as soon as I can. Go home and rest." Elowen nodded, though reluctantly. "Alright." Bran wheeled Cassian away. Elowen watched until they disappeared around the corner. Then, with Regan's help, she returned to the carriage and headed back to Duskmoor Manor. Through the rattle and sway of the ride, Elowen idly stated thinking up names for the courtyards on the estate. Once she got home, she went straight to her study, spread out the manor maps, and spent the afternoon testing names for every garden and walkway.

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She even made a note for the courtyard with the peacock. By the time she finished, dusk had settled outside. Cassian still hadn't returned. Elowen sat by the window fighting sleep, yawning over and over. Cora noticed first. "Your Grace, you should rest." Mira added, "The duke told us that if you're tired, you don't have to wait. Just go to sleep." Elowen looked down at her sheets of names and shook her head firmly. "No. I want to wait." Cora and Mira exchanged helpless looks, but neither pressed her again. Just then, footsteps sounded outside. Elowen straightened at once.

"Is that Cassian?" Bran came in instead and bowed. "His Grace won't be back tonight. His Majesty asked him to stay at the palace," Elowen blinked, startled. Cassian had gone to the palace before, but he always returned before night. This was the first time he hadn't. III 1/2 12:26
Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 323 A Visit And Unrest What could be so important? Finished She tightened her hands in her lap, then asked Bran, "Has this ever happened before? The duke being summoned and not coming home overnight?" Bran nodded. "Yes. Before your marriage, when the northern tribes invaded.

There was a great deal of bloodshed, and the Duke was sent to the front. He came back months later, badly wounded. Afterward, he slept for days. This time..." Bran sighed. "I really can't say. Maybe His Grace is being sent to the front again." Elowen washed up and got into bed, but sleep wouldn't come. Mira had tucked a warm stone into her blankets because she hated the cold, but it didn't help. The sheets still felt cold, and she couldn't settle. When she looked in the mirror the next morning, the shadows under her eyes were dark as bruises.

Breakfast had been made with all her favorites, but she could barely taste any of it. "Don't worry, Your Grace," Mira said gently. "Even if the Duke does go to war, that doesn't mean he'll be hurt. Try not to worry so much." The thought caught Elowen off guard. Am I... worried about

Cassian? Before she could think about it any longer, a servant announced from the hall, "Lady Elspeth is here." Elowen set down her spoon and looked up as her aunt swept in. Elspeth, always cold and poised, had a rare gleam in her eyes this morning. She looked almost delighted.

Elspeth took one look at Elowen's face and frowned. "What did Cassian do to you? You look awful." Elowen shook her head and answered honestly. "He didn't come home last night."

Elspeth arched a brow. "So you stayed up waiting for him? Already missing your husband?" A blush rose in Elowen's cheeks, making her look a little less pale. Instead of answering, Elowen deflected. "Aunt, what brings you here? You look like you've had good news." 2.4K 1 O 2/2

admin

Chapter 324 Parting Ways 15% Finished Elspeth sat down beside Elowen and let out a soft sigh."ve packed everything and settled what needed settling. I'm leaving for Rivenshire after lunch." Elowen went still. She reached out at once and caught her aunt's hand. "Why so soon? Can't you stay a few more days? Or at least wait until Cassian comes back?" Elspeth gave her hand a gentle squeeze. "What would be the point of waiting for him? I came because I wanted to say goodbye to you." Elowen looked at her uneasily. "Then... at least stay through the feast.

Yesterday, attendants from Her Majesty Elira sent word inviting Cassian and me to spend the holiday at the palace. Won't you come with us?" If Elowen remembered right, in her last life Elspeth had spent Christmas's at court too. She had even helped her once. The memory left a sharp ache behind. Elspeth patted the back of her hand. "No, Ella. Not this year." Elspeth sighed again. "To be honest with you, Ella... when I was younger, or when my sister was still alive, spending Christmastide in Vanelle always felt joyful to me.

But after I married, and after my sister passed from this world, the city began to feel strangely unfamiliar." She paused for a moment before continuing. "Even when I go to court for the Christmas feast, though His Majesty is my nephew, I still feel as though I don't truly belong there." After thinking it over, Elspeth gave a small, self-mocking smile. "I suppose that's the way of things. Once a woman marries, she belongs to her husband's house. The home she was born into slowly becomes a place she no longer quite fits." Elowen sat there for a long moment, not knowing what to say.

"But it's different for you." Elspeth's eyes softened. "Anyone can see Cassian truly loves you. You belong here. You're the mistress of Duskmoor Manor now. This is your home, Ella." Tears stung Elowen's eyes. "Aunt... I'm going to miss you so much." Elspeth brushed a strand of hair from her cheek, thumb warm and gentle. "Don't worry. I'll write as soon as I get home, and often after that." Elowen could only nod, head lowered, voice thick as she murmured her agreement. Elspeth's gaze dropped briefly to Elowen's stomach, and mischief flickered through her fond expression.

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"Just try to give Cassian a child soon, all right? This manor would be much livelier with little ones running around." Elowen's face turned bright red. Since they would be parting so soon, the two of them stayed there a long while, talking in low voices, sharing little stories and private thoughts, trying to say everything they wanted before the moment came. After lunch, Elowen personally made sure the house gurdy would escort Elspeth safely on her way.

She also [Jl 1/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 324 Parting Ways 15% Finished](#) had another plain carriage prepared for Alistair, Lydia, and Nina, just as promised—they would all return to Rivenshire together. When it was time to leave, Lydia looked almost exhilarated, like someone

marching off to claim a long-awaited prize. What's she going to do when she finds out Havenstead Manors basically broke now? Nina, quiet and timid as ever, slipped a neatly folded scap of paper into Elowen's hand. "This... this is for you and Doctor Dray," she said, looking thin and a little embarrassed.

After they were gone, Elowen unfolded it. The handwriting was clumsy and uneven, some of the characters misshapen, but with a little effort she could make out the words. "Thank you, Your Grace and Doctor Dray." At the bottom was a tiny drawing of a skinny girl with a mile on her face. Nina really is a good kid. Her only problem is that she has the wrong mother. By the time she finished seeing them off, the shadows of afternoon had begun to lengthen. She hadn't slept well the night before, and now that the house had gone quiet, drowsiness started to pull at her.

Mira quickly tidied the room, and Elowen slipped out of her outer dress and climbed into bed for a nap. But sleep refused to come easily. Half-dozing, trapped in that strange space between sleep and waking, Elowen seemed to see Cassian coming home. Startled, she threw off the covers and rushed out to meet him, ignoring the bitter cold. All she wanted was to know what had happened. But Cassian barely stopped. He only squeezed her hand before hurrying away, too preoccupied to explain anything. She could only watch as he gave orders, checked luggage, and put on his armor. Her heart jolted.

"You... are you going to war?" He nodded, grave and calm. "Yes." Even as he was leaving, he bent and kissed her cheek. His voice was steady. "Ella, wait for me." So she waited. And waited. Cassian never came back, Uneasy and afraid, Elowen tossed and turned through what felt like endless time. Then at last she heard someone shout with joy, "His Grace has returned!" She tried

desperately to open her eyes, to see Cassian's face. But it stayed blurred, hidden behind a veil of mist. The harder she tried, the less she could make out.

Panic climbed into her chest, Sweat broke across her forehead, Tears filled her eyes. O 2/3 12:26

Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 324 Parting Ways 15% Finished "...Ella. Ella." She heard his voice again, close and low, gentle as a lullaby. At last Elowen forced her eyes open, blinking through tears. Cassian's handsome face finally came into focus. "Bad dream?" he asked quietly. "Yeah..." Her voice shook, thick with tears. Cassian brushed his thumb over her cheek. "What was i?

Tell me." Her voice trembled as she admitted, "I dreamed you went off to fight and never came back." Cassian smiled, calm and reassuring. "I'm not going to war. Who told you that?" She pouted. "Bran..." Cassian didn't miss a beat. "Fine. I'll make him run extra drills for an hour later." 2.4K III O 3/3 admin

Chapter 325 True And Safe Seeing Elowen's tearful eyes, Cassian felt a deep ache in his chest. Finished He leaned down and kissed her gently on the cheek. "Even if I did have to go to war, I'd come back. Do you believe me?" Elowen sniffled. "But... believe what?" The corner of his mouth lifted. "Everyone knows Cassian, Duke of Duskmoor, never loses." Elowen made a soft, tearful sound. "I think... I've heard that before..." As she spoke, the tears clinging to her lashes finally grew too heavy and spilled down her cheeks, dampening her hair.

Cassian looked at her, oddly calmed by how open and defenseless she seemed. He gave a soft laugh. "All right, Ella. Why are you crying like this?" Elowen looked up at him through wet lashes. "I..." She couldn't get the words out. Instead, she grabbed the front of his shirt and buried her hot face against his chest, voice muffled. "I can't help it..." Her voice was always soft, but her

tears hit him hard. Her sadness was gentle and fragile, and impossible to ignore. He pulled her closer and felt the warmth of her tears soak through his shirt, burning against his skin.

Frowning slightly, Cassian rested his forehead against hers. So this was what it felt like to care so much it hurt. If he could, he would take all her pain himself. And he was fiercely grateful that now, and in the years to come, he could be the one to protect her. Elowen cried for a while longer, until she had nothing left. At last she loosened her grip on his shirt. Cassian drew back just enough to wipe away the rest of her tears. "Ella, no more crying, all right? I'm not going anywhere. His Majesty already promised I won't be sent to war again. He wants me focused on recovering.

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I'll stay here with you." She sat up, still sniffing, and rubbed at her red eyes. "Then... what did His Majesty say when he called you to court?" Cassian answered calmly. "A formal letter came from Nordia. They say they're sending envoys to Avenlor to open diplomatic relations." Elowen blinked, eyes still damp. In her previous life, Nordia's delegation had arrived around this time as well. She looked at him. "Do they know Lieutenant Wrenner came back?" Cassian nodded. "They do. But they didn't sound upset. He explained in a low voice, "There was turmoil in Nora's royal court a few months ago.

Things were chaotic there. No one cared much about bringing back the captured lieutenant.

Warren took the chance to III O 1/2 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 325 True And Safe 15%


Finished escape on her own. From the letter, it seems Nordia's new ruler wanted to mend ties with us anyway, and had already planned to send Warren back as a goodwill gesture. She just got away before they could do it." He paused, then continued, "They should reach Vanellen two

days. His Majesty wants me there to receive them-and to judge whether they really want peace, or just want time to recover.

There are negotiations ahead, and a lot had to be prepared. That's why I was kept at court so long." Elowen nodded quietly and rubbed her eyes again. Cassian reached up and brushed away a stray tear for her. "His Majesty wants me to welcome them in the crown's name." Elowen said thoughtfully, "You're His Majesty's brother. You're the right person for it. You have the rank, and people respect you." Cassian smiled at her. "His Majesty is a good man. He doesn't chase war for its own sake. If Nordia truly wants peace, that's good for everyone.

Both our countries need quiet after so many years." Elowen nodded again, and now her worry shifted back to him. "You must be exhausted... after staying at court so long..." He took her hand and corrected her gently. "You said you'd call me Cassian." Elowen blushed, suddenly embarrassed. "I forgot..." She took a small breath and softened her voice. "Cassian are you tired? Are you hungry?" He lifted her hand and pressed a light kiss to it. "I'm not tired, and I'm not hungry.

I just missed you." Then he pulled her into his arms and whispered, "Let's take a nap together." Elowen curled closer with a quiet, contented sound, wrapped in the safety of his embrace. ||

2.4K  1 2/2 admin

Chapter 326 A Small Miracle Finished Even though she had only just woken up, Elowen lay in Cassian's arms listening to the steady beat of his heart, and before long she drifted off again. This time the sleep was deep and peaceful. She didn't know how long she had been asleep when a familiar voice called her name, urgent with worry. "Ella?" It was Cassian. She wanted to answer,

but her body wouldn't obey. Her head spun, and her eyelids felt heavy. Vaguely, she felt his palm against her forehead. His voice sharpened at once.

"Get Doctor Dray!" Elowen barely registered the sudden stir around her. Her mind was foggy, and her body felt hot and weak. It took all her strength just to force her eyes open. When she did, she saw Cassian sitting at her bedside, holding her hand as though he had no intention of letting go. Her throat felt dry. "Cassian..." He leaned closer immediately, worry plain on his face. Ella, you're awake? How do you feel?" Out of habit she started to shake her head, then stopped and said, "A little dizzy." His frown deepened. "You're burning up. I think you have a fever." Elowen stared at him.

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"A fever? But... I've been careful. I didn't catch cold." He brushed the damp hair back from her forehead. "Hugh will know." Before long, Hugh hurried in with his medicine case. Cassian watched as Hugh sat down and quietly took Elowen's pulse. He didn't move for a long time. His brow drew tighter and tighter as he focused, and the silence dragged on. Cassian's patience snapped first. "Can you tell what's wrong, or have you forgotten your training?" Hugh didn't react. He waited a little longer, then finally let go of her wrist. Cassian pressed him at once. "She has a fever.

It's nothing serious, right?" Hugh looked at him, thoughtful. "She does have a mild fever, but that isn't the real issue." Cassian frowned. "If the fever doesn't matter, then what does?" Hugh answered evenly. "She's pregnant, Your Grace." For a moment, neither Cassian nor Elowen seemed to understand what he had said. Then Cassian, silent with shock, looked toward Elowen still-flat stomach. || O 1/2 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 326 A Small Miracle His voice came out

rough. "Say that again." 林金 15% 02 Finished "About a month along. It's early, so the signs aren't obvious. I checked several times.

There's no mistake." Only then did Cassian seem to breathe again. He turned back to Elowen. He didn't speak right away. He only reached out and touched her cheek, as if he needed to make sure this was real. "Ella..." It was barely more than a whisper. "Did you hear him?" Elowen nodded. He looked at her for a long moment, then said softly, "Thank you." She blinked, confused. Why is he thanking me? But Cassian had already turned back to Hugh. "Is the fever connected to the pregnancy? She's never been especially strong, and her knee was injured before. Does she need special care?

"Are there foods she should avoid? Anything she shouldn't do? What does she need during pregnancy? Should we hire a midwife and a nursemaid now?" Lying there, Elowen watched him worry over every little detail and couldn't help smiling. Hugh answered each question with patient calm. "I'd meant to leave once your legs had healed, but now that Her Grace is with child-and the early months are delicate-I'll stay until things are steadier." Cassian nodded at once.

"Good. I'll have a room prepared for you. Stay as long as needed." Hugh had no objection.

"That will do." With that, he left to prepare medicine. Once Hugh was gone, Cassian looked back at Elowen. "Sill dizzy?" She smiled. "Hearing I'm pregnant startled me, but I think I'm all right now." He laughed softly, and his eyes drifted to her stomach without thinking. Very gently, he laid his hand there, as if comforting both of them at once. It was far too early for there to be anything to feel. But Cassian knew that even now, inside her, their child was beginning to grow.

It felt like the truest bond in the world, 2.4K 川 O admin

Chapter 327 A New Beginning "Our child," Cassian murmured. 15% Finished The words sounded strangely new to Elowen. But she didn't dislike them. If anything, excitement began to bloom inside her. Will the baby be a boy or a girl? Will the baby look more like me, or more like Cassian? For a brief moment, she remembered what Elias had said about having something to look forward to. And Elspeth had said there was nothing cozier than a house with a new baby in it. Before, those words had meant little. Now they felt suddenly real. It was still early, and the sky outside remained dark.

Hugh finished making her medicine and brought it in himself. Cassian insisted on feeding her every spoonful. Standing off to the side, Hugh said matter-of-factly, "The fever isn't from infection. It's from thinking too much and wearing yourself out." Thinking too much indeed. Elowen flushed bright red, and a faint smirk tugged at Cassian's mouth. "Rest," Hugh said. "Sleep, sweat a little, and you'll feel better in the morning." "Thank you." Once Hugh's room had been prepared, he went off to sleep as well. Cassian, meanwhile, took his time feeding Elowen her medicine.

"Do you really miss me that much?" Elowen blushed, embarrassed but honest. "Yeah. I do." Cassian smiled, warm and pleased. "Then I'll make sure I'm here every day from now on." When the medicine was finished, he asked, "Want to sleep a little longer?" Elowen nodded. She still didn't feel fully well, but before lying down again, she looked at him hesitantly. "Will you stay? I... I don't want to sleep alone." He chuckled and agreed at once. "Of course." He took off his outer robe and slipped into bed beside her.

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Tucked against Cassian's steady warmth, Elowen finally rifted into a quiet, peaceful sleep. When she woke shivering in the middle of the night, Cassian didn't call for Mira or the maids. He

wiped away her sweat himself and changed her into clean nightclothes. By morning, she felt much better. The heavy, uncomfortable feeling from the day before was gone. As soon as she stirred, Cassian opened his eyes and pressed the back of his hand to her forehead. "Much better."

川| O 1/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 327 A New Beginning Elowen stretched and smiled brightly. "I feel fine." He nodded, satisfied.

"Are you hungry? I'll make you something." Her stomach answered for her with a low growl. "A little Maybe noodles?" Cassian stroked her cheek. "I'll make them. Stay here an rest." But the moment he got up, Elowen sat up too. "I want to come with you." He tried to stop her. "The kitchen will be smoky." She pouted. "But I want to be with you." Cassian gave in. "All right. But stay in bed while I get you some warmer clothes." She nodded obediently. Cassian returned with extra layers and dressed her with patient care. Then he paused. "Should I do your hair too?" 补会 15% 囍 Elowen wrinkled her nose.

"Just pin it up quickly. I'm too hungry to fuss with it, and I want to eat your noodles while they're still hot." He laughed. "Then I'll make them as fast as I can." Once she was dressed properly, he pinned her hair into a simple bun and draped her cloak over her shoulders to keep out the cold. While Cassian rolled out the dough, Elowen rested her chin in her hands and watched him. Then, out of nowhere, she said, "I came up with names for the manor courtyards yesterday." "Oh? What did you choose?" Finished Elowen gestured toward the courtyard outside.

"This one, where we live, I named Stillwater Court. It just felt right. Quiet on the surface, but strong underneath." She glanced at him, a little shy, trying to see what he thought. Cassian stepped closer, bent down, and kissed her. "It suits the place. I like it." Elowen flushed and hurried on. "The courtyard where Aunt Elspeth stayed has those rose trees, so I called it Rose

Hall. And Marwen's old place used to be Rose Hall as well, but I thought it deserved a fresh start. I was thinking of calling it Tranquil Court instead.

After every hing Marwen caused, a home ought to feel peaceful." Cassian nodded. "You've thought of everything, Ella." Smiling, Elowen kept going, naming the rest one by one-even the peacocks in the back garden, whom she had decided to call Aurelius and Sylpha. Cassian listened through it all with quiet fondness, and last set two steaming bowls of noodles on the table. || 2/3 O 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 @O Chapter 327 A New Beginning She looked up at him and grinned.

"Cassian, what do you think of all those names?" He met her eyes, didn't answer the question at all, and simply said, "Ella, I love you." 2.4K 3/3 admin

Chapter 328 Plan 15% Finished Elowen froze for a moment. Color rushed to her cheeks, spreading all the way to her ears. "...Why bring that up all of a sudden?" Cassian's eyes softened, amusement glimmering in them as the corners of his mouth lifted. "I've heard people like to name the things they consider their own. You've named the courtyards here and even the peacocks. That tells me something." He leaned back slightly, still watching her. "It means you finally see this place as your home. And you plan to stay with me for the rest of your life." Elowen's face burned even hotter.

She had always been shy, and hearing her feelings laid out so plainly left her utterly flustered. So she lowered her head and focused on her bowl of noodles. When she had first arrived at Duskmoor Manor, she had always been the one trying new recipes in the kitchen for Cassian. Thinking back now, she realized she had not cooked for him in quite a while. Back then, Cassian could barely knead dough properly. Now his cooking had improved tremendously. The broth

was light but rich, the noodles perfectly firm. Honestly, the dish was good enough to sell at a tavern.

Elowen suspected she had long since fallen behind him. Outside the door, Hugh stood quietly with a bowl of medicine in his hands. He had heard every word the couple had exchanged. A faint smile touched his lips. After a long moment, he lowered his gaze to the dark brown medicine in the bowl. His voice was barely louder than a breath. "You can rest easy now, can't you?" The words drifted away softly, as though they were meant for someone who was no longer there. Inside the room, the conversation faded. Only the quiet sounds of eating remained. Hugh took a slow breath and pushed the door open.

"The medicine's ready. Your Grace should drink it while it's hot once you finish eating." Elowen looked up at the sound of his voice and wiped the corner of her mouth. "Thank you, Doctor Dray. Just set it down for now!" Then she added warmly, "Have you had breakfast yet? You should join us. Cassian made the noodles himself, and they're really good." Hugh placed the bowl of medicine gently on the table and leaned lazily against the side. "I'll pass," he said. "His Grace might bite me." || O 1/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 a Chapter 328 Plan Elowen burst out laughing. "Cassian isn't that violent.

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He's very reasonable." Hugh raised a brow, looking at her with mild surprise. "What did you just call him?" Elowen blinked, confused. "Cassian...? Did I say something wrong?" She glanced toward Cassian instinctively, worried she had misspoken. Hugh shook his head lightly. For once, a genuine smile appeared on his face. "No. It's good." Somewhere deep inside, he even felt a faint flicker of envy. "Oh, right." S After finishing the last bite of noodles, Elowen suddenly

remembered something. She looked up, her expression turning serious. Finished "Cassian, Doctor Dray. About the pregnancy...

let's not tell anyone yet. Only the people in our courtyard should know." Hugh had just handed her the medicine. He paused. "Why?" Elowen held the bowl carefully and spoke calmly. "My sister-in-law once told me that plans succeed best when they're kept quiet. If you announce things too early, complications tend to follow. It's better to wait until things are stable." Hugh nodded in approval. "Your sister-in-law sounds like a sensible woman." Elowen then turned to Cassian. "Your legs are healed now. Have you told Theodric?" Cassian shook his head.

"Not yet." And in truth, he had no intention of rushing. Deep down, he had always known his injury had not been entirely accidental. Perhaps... keeping the truth hidden a little longer might lure out the person responsible. For the next two days, Cassian spent his mornings and afternoons preparing for the arrival of Nordia's delegation. But every evening, he returned to Duskmoor Manor without fail to spend time with Elowen. Finally, the agreed day arrived. At dawn, Bran came with urgent news. "The Nordan convoy is approaching Vanelle.

They'll reach the city gates within the hour." 川| O < 2/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 0 Chapter 328 Plan Cassian rose to prepare himself. 以命 15% Finished After washing and dressing, he sat while Elowen carefully straightened his robes and adjusted the crown in his hair. Her movements were gentle as she spoke quietly, "Be careful today. We still don't know if Nordia has come as friends or enemies." Cassian looked down at her worried expression. His heart softened. "Want to come with me?" he asked suddenly. Elowen blinked in surprise. Her eyes lit up. "I can?" Cassian nodded without hesitation.

"Of course." She considered it for a second, then smiled. "I haven't let the manor in days anyway." So the two of them set out together. Their carriage rolled through the streets toward the city gates. By the time they arrived, the area had already been cleared by elite troops. Soldiers stood in orderly ranks, armor gleaming, banners snapping in the cold wind. The atmosphere was solemn and tense. Not long after Cassian and Elowen reached the gate tower, the distant thunder of hooves echoed across the plain. The Nordanian delegation had arrived. Cassian remained seated calmly in his wheelchair.

Elowen, however, could not hide her curiosity. She leaned closer to the window. "Can I take a look?" After all, she was still a young woman. Many things in the world still felt new and fascinating. Cassian chuckled. "Go ahead," Elowen walked to the window and looked out. Outside the gates, a long procession had halted. A middle-aged man rode forward several steps. Unlike the traditional furs worn by Nordians, he was dressed in a wide-sleeved Avenlor scholar's robe made of luxurious fabric. The patterns, however, still carried subtle ruggedness typical of the northern lands. 2.4K admin

Chapter 329 Guests 15% Finished He had a lean face, high cheekbones, narrow eyes, and neatly trimmed beard along his jaw. He dismounted and bowed toward the gate tower. When he spoke, his language was flawless. "I am Byron, deputy envoy of Nordia. By order of His Majesty, I accompany this delegation to Avenlor to speak of peace between our realms. Our chief envoy is Prince Roderic, and Prince Zachary Howard and Princess Flowira Howard travel with us. We come in good faith, hoping for friendship between our kingdoms." His voice carried clearly up the tower. Mira frowned slightly.

"Why are their names so long?" Elowen smiled. "That's just how Nordian names are. Their titles are often used with their names." Mira nodded in understanding. "I see." Elowen glanced back outside. "What surprises me more is how well that envoy speaks Avenlor." She paused. "Nordia rarely deals with us. Someone like im must be unusual." What puzzled her most was something else. In her previous life, the people sent by Nordia had not been these individuals. It seemed that after her rebirth, things in Nordia had changed as well. If that was true...

Then many of the advantages she once had might no longer apply. "Very perceptive, Ella," Cassian said with a small smile. Come. We should go down." Bran stepped forward and carefully guided Cassian's wheelchair. They moved through the corridor toward the gate. Elowen tightened her cloak and followed behind. The moment Byron saw Cassian, he approached immediately. Instead of using the Nordian greeting of striking his chest, he followed Avenlor etiquette. Folding his hands formally, he bowed respectfully, "I am Byron, deputy envoy of Nordia.

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Greetings, Your Grace." Cassian sat calmly in his wheelchair, one brow lifting slightly as he studied the man. "You recognize me?" Byron straightened. "This is my first time seeing Your Grace in person. But even in Nordia, your reputation is well known. They say the Duke of Duskmoor possesses unmatched bearing. Even after losing the use of your legs, your dignity remains unchanged." He smiled faintly. "Seeing you today, I find the stories were no exaggeration." III 1/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 @@ Chapter 329 Guests His gaze shifted naturally toward Elowen.

"And this must be the Duchess of Duskmoor." Elowen inclined her head politely. "Byron." At that moment, a carriage behind them rattled open. 15% 价 Finished A slender hand pushed the

door aside, and a tall figure stepped out onto the carriage frame with effortless balance. She looked about seventeen or eighteen. Her figure was strikingly tall and strong. Thick curls of hair tumbled down to her waist, threaded with amber and coral beads. A lapis wolf-head ornament rested against her forehead. She wore a gold-woven gown trimmed with soft silver fox fur at the collar and sleeves.

Her features were sharp, her cheekbones high and strong. Her eyes were almond-shaped, a striking shade of green that caught the sunlight. And she was staring straight at Elowen. The look was bold and fearless, like a young she-wolf fixing on prey across a snowy field. Beautiful, but fierce. "This is..." Byron began. "I'm Flowira," the woman cut in coolly. Her Avenlor language carried a heavy accent. Elowen nodded. "So you're the princess." Flowira curved her lips slightly. "Duchess of Duskmoor you're very..." She paused, clearly searching for the right word.

"...appealing to men." Elowen blinked. That didn't exactly sound like a compliment. Someone inside the carriage muttered irritably. A moment later, a young man stepped down as well. He looked remarkably similar to Flowira. At first glance they could have been carved from the same mold. But his build was slender and delicate. He wore a pale silver robe embroidered with cloud patterns, a simple gray fur cloak draped over his shoulders. Aside from a ruby-set dagger at his waist, he wore almost no ornaments. 川 < 2/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 329 Guests The difference between them was temperament.

补气 15% Finished Flowira had a fiery beauty that drew the eye at once. Standing beside her, he was all pale calm and quiet composure. Handsome in a restrained way, with nothing about him that felt threatening. "Prince Zachary of Nordia," he said with a graceful bow. Greetings, Your Grace. Your Grace." His voice was low and steady, cool to the ear and easy to listen to. He

glanced at Elowen apologetically. "My sister's Avenlor language isn't perfect. She chose the wrong words. Please forgive her." Behind them, another ornate carriage creaked open.

A large figure jumped down, landing with a heavy thud, The man looked about forty. His rugged face was marked by a long scar running from his brow to his cheekbone, giving him a dangerous edge. He wore a robe patterned in Avenlor style, though carelessly. Despite the cold, the collar hung open, exposing his bronze, muscular chest. Rolling his thick neck lazily, he looked Cassian up and down. Then a faint, mocking smile curled at the corner of his mouth. He spoke a sentence in Nordian. 2.4K J| 3/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess admin

Chapter 330 The Duke And His Old Foe 15% Finished Elowen didn't understand a word the Nordian prince had said, but his attitude alone was enough to make her bristle. The man was openly rude. Cassian's brows tightened, the change slight but unmistakable. Byron hurried forward with a smoothing smile. "Your Grace, let me introduce Prince Roderic. His Highness asks, now that he has met you, when he will be received by His Majesty." Cassian answered in an even voice, cool as winter. "His Majesty has prepared a welcoming banquet.

Once the prince and his siblings have rested, they'll be summoned to the palace." The inn Cassian had chosen was at exactly the right distance from the palace, neither too near nor too far, and it had been cleared of all other guests. Only the Norlian party would be staying there. On the way to the inn, Elowen noticed Cassian was quieter than usual. She slipped her hand into his and laced their fingers together. "You seem upset," she said softly. "What's wrong?" Cassian gave her hand a squeeze. "I am." She looked up at him.

"Is it because of Prince Roderic?" He turned to her, a flicker of amusement in his eyes. "You caught that?" Elowen muttered, "He looked like he wanted a fight. Then he said something else

in his language. I couldn't understand it, but I'm sure it wasn't kind." Cassian's tone stayed matter-of-fact. "It was Nordian. He said, 'Why waste time talking to a cripple in a chair? When do we meet His Majesty?'" Elowen's face tightened at once, her brows drawing together. "That's unbelievably rude. Who talks like that?" Seeing her so angry, Cassian let out a rare, genuine laugh.

"Ella, you're this mad?" She nodded hard. "Of course I am. If someone messes with you, they're messing with me too. If they bully you, they're bullying me," Just like that, the last of Cassian's irritation disappeared. He toyed with her slender fingers. "Still, I can't say I'm surprised." Elowen tilted her head. "Why not?" A faint smile touched his mouth. "Did you notice the scar on Roderic's face?" She nodded. Cassian's eyes gleamed. "Nordia and Avenlor fought a battle a few years ago. I commanded our army. Roderic wasn't a prince then, just a young officer. That sar?

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I gave it to him." Elowen's eyes widened as she put it together. "So that's why." Cassian lifted her hand and kissed her knuckles. "Let it. He isn't worth the trouble." 1/3 12:26 Mon, Apr 13 0 Q
Chapter 330 The Duke And His Old Foe Elowen smiled and finally relaxed. "If you're not angry, then I'm not angry." No matter how he tried, Cassian couldn't quite suppress the smile tugging at his lips.. 15% Finished How had Clement and his wife managed to raise someone as gentle and sweet-and beautiful-as Elowen? And honestly, was Alaric completely blind?

He'd had Elowen right in front of him and acted like she wasn't even there. Then again, if Alaric hadn't been such a fool, Cassian would never have been this lucky. Elowen didn't return to Duskmoor Manor. Instead, she stayed in the carriage with Cassian all the way to the palace gates. It was late autumn, nearly winter, and darkness came early. By the time they arrived at the palace, night had already swallowed Vanelle whole. Keeping close beside Cassian's wheelchair,

Elowen followed him through the winding palace corridors toward the Gilded Hall, where the royal reception would be held.

Everyone important would be there tonight-not just the royal family, but Avenlor's highest officials as well. Since the war with Nordia years ago, the two kingdoms had barely exchanged envoys. This visit marked a major shift, and no one in Avenlor was taking it lightly. When Elowen entered the hall, candlelight flashed off the gilded pillars and glazed tiles, scattering gold through the room. Attendants stood in perfect silence. Music drifted through the air, soft and stately, giving the whole scene the weight and grandeur of the royal house. Only one person was missing: Alaric.

Theodric had confined him to the Crown Prince's Wing and tonight there would be no exceptions. Not long after they took their seats, the Nordian delegation entered. They had changed into traditional Nordian robes after returning to the inn. They strode into the hall and bowed formally before Theodric, Theodric sat at the head of the hall, commanding as ever, his voice measured and gracious. "Your arrival gives me great pleasure.

May this meeting lay the foundation for lasting friendship between our lands." At his side stood an official from the Ministry of Rites, translating his greeting into Nordian. Roderic, who led the delegation, did not answer at once. Instead, he swept his gaze across the hall, then suddenly called out in accented Imperial, "Your Majesty why is His Highness not here tonight?"

Theodric's expression did not change. His tone remained steady. "The crown prince has taken a chill and is resting in the Crown Prince's Wing. Perhaps you will remain in Vanelle a little longer.

When he recovers, the two of you may meet in person." Roderic dragged out his reply, thick with sarcasm. "Unwell, is he?" He gave a snort, then muttered something in Nordan. [III O 2/3 12:27](#)

Mon, Apr 13 [O Chapter 330 The Duke And His Old Foe](#) [15%2 Finished](#) The official from the Ministry of Rites went pale. He managed to translate the first part, but the rest stuck in his throat. His lips trembled, and he seemed unsure whether he dared continue. Theodric turned his sharp gaze on him. "Go on." Shaking, the official dropped to his knees. "The prince sys...

he thought perhaps the crown prince had fallen from favor with His Majesty and was being punished. That is why he cannot show up." [2.4K O 1 3/3 admin](#)