

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 331 A Banquet And A Retort The words wasn't loud, but it carried through the hall all the same. Several senior ministers stiffened where they sat, barely restraining their anger.

Theodric paused with his cup in hand, his eyes turning dark and cold. The hall went silent. The stillness felt almost physical. Then Cassian broke it. "It sounds like Your Highness speaks from experience," he said, calm and sharp. "Are Nordian princes often kept under house arrest for their offenses?" He spoke in Avenlor language, but once the words were translated, Roderic reacted at once.

His face darkened. His eyes flashed as they dropped to Cassian's legs, and a sneer twisted his mouth. "Why worry about confinement?" Roderic said. "I doubt His Grace gets far with legs like that." At that, the Ministry of Rites official nearly folded to the floor in terror. So this was why none of the senior Rites officials had volunteered to translate tonight. Every one of them had suddenly been sick or busy. I thought this was finally my chance to stand out at court. If I make it through with my head attached, I'll count myself lucky... Byron tried to smooth things over.

"Your Highness, that really isn't appropriate-" Roderic scoffed. "What's he going to do? He doesn't even understand the language." Cassian laughed then, low and cold. He raised a hand and lightly tapped his own leg. "Prince Roderic, I believe you were speaking about my legs?" He said it in flawless Nordian. Roderic froze. The sneer vanished from his face. Cassian held his gaze, cold amusement in his eyes. "Interesting. I injured my legs the same year you got that scar. The difference is that I crushed Nordia's army and returned in victory.

You lost that valley and had to retreat, wearing a fresh scar from my blade." 93 Roderic's face turned red, then white, then red again. His fists clenched so hard it sounded as if his knuckles might crack. Before anything else could happen, Zachary-the fourth Nordan prince-stepped forward. He placed himself subtly in front of Roderic and bowed first to the throne, then to Cassian, "Your Majesty. Your Grace," He kept his head lowered, his voice respectful. "Prince Roderic has spoken too harshly and offended both His Majesty and His Grace. I ask forgiveness on his behalf.

Nordia comes in sincerity. We hope for alliance and goodwill. Please accept our apology." ||| O
1/3 12:28 Mon, Apr Chapter 331 A Banquet And A Retort In the heavy silence, the only sound was the faint crack of candle flames. Finally At last, Theodric gave a rich, pleasant laugh that never ached his eyes. "No harm done in Aventor w // the strongest friendships are often forged in conflict. Consider us properly acquainted" He gave a dignified gesture.

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"Please, Tonight's feast is set in your honor" After a few courses and several toasts, the chill in the hall gradually faded, replaced by an easy warmth After sitting for so long, Elowen began to feel a heaviness in her chest. She leaned slightly toward Cassian and whispered, "Cassian. I need some air" He turned to her, his voice gentle, "Do you want me to come with you?" Elowen shook her head and glanced toward the Nordan guests. "Let Mira come with me. If the Mordians try anything else, you should stay here for His Majesty, Cassian considered it, then nodded. "All right.

But take care too" His gaze flicked over her still-flat stomach, a silent reminder to be careful. Elowen understood at once. She smiled sweetly and nodded back. Not realizing she was being watched, she slipped quietly out of the hall, with Mira and Bran following behind. The moment

she stepped into the palace courtyard, the wind bit into her cheeks. She pulled her cloak tighter, her breath clouding before her. "It's freezing." Mira hurried after her and nodded hard. "It really is.

I swear this winter feels colder than any other." Bran scanned the grounds with a soldier's caution and seemed completely unaffected. "Doesn't feel that bad to me." Mira shot him a look. "That's because you're all muscle from the army. Some of us actually feel the cold." Bran scratched the back of his head. "Maybe. But I'm nothing compared to His Grace. He could outlast me any day. The duchess knows that, right?" He looked at Elowen with a face so open and innocent that the meaning of his words hit her a heartbeat late. Heat rushed straight to her cheeks.

A few very private memories flashed through her mind, and her heart started pounding at once. Thank goodness for the cold wind, she thought, silently willing the blush away. Suddenly Bran went still. "Someone's coming." Elowen looked around in confusion. Then a clear, cold voice with a heavy accent called from behind her. 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Finished Chapter 332 Warnings In The Snow "Duchess of Duskmoor." Elowen turned and saw Flowira, the fifth princess of Nodia, standing a short distance away and watching her without blinking.

The light didn't fully reveal Flowira's expression, but there was something wild and untamed in her posture. Elowen found it more than a little intimidating. Still, she made herself smile politely. "Princess Flowira." Inside, she felt anything but steady. Her Nordian was poor, and she was afraid of saying something foolish. For a moment, she considered asking Bran whether he spoke the language-or simply making an excuse and hurrying back to Cassian. But Flowira closed the

distance in long, direct strides. She looked Elowen up and down so openly that Elowen instinctively took half a step back.

Flowira either didn't notice or didn't care. She stopped a few feet away, tilted her head, and asked in clear, if awkward, Imperial, "You and the duke? Very close?" Elowen nodded, smiling naturally. "Yes.. Flowira's dark brows drew together, as if she disliked the answer. "But you..." She searched for the next words, then said bluntly, "You don't deserve him." The words caught Elowen completely off guard. Wonderful. Why is it always the fifth princess? First Maerwyn couldn't stand me, and now Nordia's fifth princess wants to tell me I'm not good enough for Cassian.

Flowira, however, seemed completely unaware of the effect she was having. If anything, she looked rather pleased with herself. Still speaking in stiff, overly formal court language, she continued, "After all, you are... breathtaking. The sort of beauty sung about in ballads." Elowen blinked, a trace of confusion flickering in her eyes. She wasn't worthy of Cassian because... she was too beautiful? What kind of reasoning was that? "But you should still be careful," Flowira went on. Her gaze drifted down to Elowen's narrow waist.

"You're very slender." She lifted her hand and made a quick snapping motion with her fingers, her tone earnest, as if she were offering practical advice, "You're so skinny a strong wind could blow you away." Her tone was strangely earnest, as if she were offering practical survival advice. For a moment, Elowen truly couldn't tell whether this was a threat, a warning, or simply the result of

the result of |||| O 1/2 admin

Chapter 332 Warnings In The Snow WR Flowira's clumsy Imperial. She only knew the conversation was getting stranger by the second. That was enough. Finished Keeping her voice polite, she said, "Princess, the banquet isn't over, and my husband is waiting for me inside. I should return. Please excuse me." Without waiting for an answer, Elowen took Mira's hand and made a quick retreat. In her haste, she failed to notice the serving girl hidden in the shadow of a nearby column, pressed against the marble as she memorized every word of the awkward exchange.

When Flowira finally finished her walk and headed back inside, the girl slipped out of the shadows and ran toward the Crown Prince's Wing. In the Crown Prince's Wing, Daphne listened as the servant repeated Elowen's conversation with Flowira. Her pale, sharp features lit up, and her eyes gleamed with anticipation. "So Nordia's fifth princess can't stand Elowen either? Maybe she even has her eye on the duke." The servant kept her head bowed and said nothing. She had grown up in the palace and knew the rules. The queen had sent her to carry information, nothing more.

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Offering her own opinion would be dangerous. Daphne didn't need help drawing conclusions anyway. She was already thinking ahead, fingers digging into her palm. "Wonderful. The timing couldn't be better. If I can win the Nordan princess over, Elowen won't know what hit her." "Your Highness," Iris said carefully, after a pause, "I fear.. it may not be quite that simple. Or quite what Your Highness thinks." Daphne shot her a glare. "You think I'm stupid? That I can't see what's right in front of me?" Iris dropped to her knees at once. "Never, Your Highness.

I only mean that you've suffered too many losses. to that couple-not because you lack intelligence, but because they're cunning. I don't want you making another rash move. If Your

Highness intends to act, perhaps we should first learn Princess Flowira's true intentions." Daphne glared at her a while longer, then gave a sharp short. "So what do you suggest?" Iris lifted her head, speaking with care. "Perhaps invite Princess Flowira here, so you can speak face-to-face. If she truly hates the duchess and likes the duke, that could be useful to us." 2.4K O admin

Chapter 333 Rumors Take Root 15% 雞 Finished Daphne was silent for a moment, still annoyed, but she saw the sense in it. At last she waved a dismissive hand. "Fine. We'll do it your way."

The banquet ended late into the night. Bran pushed Cassian's wheelchair along the path out of the palace. After holding his tongue all evening, he finally muttered, "Your Grace, Prince Roderic is really something. Always poking at your old injury. It's cruel."

Good thing their fourth prince knew how to smooth things over, or tonight could've ended a lot worse." Walking beside Cassian, Elowen lifted her eyes, her profile soft in the moonlight. "But isn't that a little strange?" Cassian looked at her with interest. "What do you mean Ella?" She thought it through aloud. "Roderic started by insulting the crown prince, then turned on you and said even worse things. If the fourth prince was really that thoughtful, shouldn't he have stopped him sooner? Why wait until after you answered back?" Cassian gave her an approving look.

"I think you're exactly right. He was waiting for the right moment." Bran froze. He had been so busy fuming that he hadn't thought that far ahead. Now that Elowen had pointed it out, he replayed the exchange in his mind. A thin sheen of cold sweat broke out along his back. "You mean..." he said slowly, turning to her. "They planned it together?" Cassian's lips curved slightly. He shot Elowen an approving look before replying in an easy, almost lazy tone. "Nothing more than the oldest trick in diplomacy. One plays the villain, the other the gentleman." Bran blinked.

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"People really do that?" "They do," Cassian said calmly. "Nordia wants relations with Avenlor. But they can't come begging for it. If they lower themselves too much, they'll look weak, like realm ready to bend the knee." He paused a moment, his voice steady and unhurried. "On the other hand, if they swagger in acting untouchable, they risk ruining the talks entirely." Bran listened, his brow slowly tightening. "So someone in the delegation has to play the brute," Cassian continued. "The one who's loud, difficult, impossible to push around. That shows they're not to be taken lightly.

And someone else plays the reasonable one. The voice of compromise. That's how they signal they're genuinely open to building ties." His gaze lowered slightly, thoughtful, "Together, they test how far we'll bend. Push for better rms. All while keeping up the appearance that they're strong, but still willing to talk." Cassian lifted his eyes. ||| 1/2 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 0 Chapter 333 Rumors Take Root 金15%廳 Finished Bran shook his head. "I thought Nordians were supposed to be blunt and straightforward. Guess not." Cassian smirked. "There are crafty Nordians and honest Avenlorians.

A person's character has nothing to do with where they're from, Bran. Haven't you learned that yet?" Then he added, "The Nordian envoys will be staying in Vanelle for a while. They'll want to figure out who really holds power before they make any offers. If all goes well, at least the next few days should be quiet." And for the next few days, Vanelle was quiet. At times, Elowen almost forgot the Nordian envoys were still in the city. She took each day as it came and focused on keeping herself-and the baby-healthy. The end of the year drew closer, and the weather turned colder by the day.

But Cassian was always warm, especially when they lay together in bed. Sometimes Elowen grew hot enough in his arms to break into a sweat. One morning near the end of the month, she was still deeply asleep when peals of laughter drifted into the room. She had always loved sleeping late-especially now, with the weather so cold and the blankets so warm. Still half dreaming, she snuggled closer to Cassian and mumbled, "What's going on out there...?" Whoever it was sounded delighted. A sudden thought popped into her head. "Wait...

did Alaric out of the Crown Prince's Wing?" Cassian let out a quiet chuckle. "Unlikely." At that moment, Gerda's voice came through the door, lowered but gruff. "Quiet down. Have you no manners? His Grace and Her Grace are still sleeping." Then Mira's cheerful voice rang out, bright and triumphant. "Oh, come on, Gerda. It's snowing! You know the duchess loves snow more than anything. I have to tell her." Gerda answered in her sternest tone, "That's enough. The duchess needs her rest, especially now." Inside, the word snow was enough to wipe away Elowen's drowsiness.

Her eyes lit up, and she sat straight up in bed. Cassian felt her move. The fire kept the room warm, but he knew Elowen felt the cold more than most, especially now that she was pregnant. When she tried to slip out of bed, he caught her around the waist and pulled her right back into his arms. 2.4K 2/2 admin

Chapter 334 First Snow Of The Year "It's snowing!" Elowen looked up at him, her whole face shining. 15% Finished Cassian looked down at her, his heart going soft. Still, he didn't let go right away. "You want to go out and play?" She nodded at once, her curls bouncing and brushing his jaw. "Then you need to get dressed first." He loosened his hold a little, though he still kept

her close. "Bundle up before you go." She nodded even harder and blurted, "Then hurry. I can't wait." He couldn't help himself.

He leaned down and kissed the corner of her mouth before getting out of bed to fetch her clothes. He had thought it through carefully. First came a pale gold winter robe with a high collar, trimmed with delicate silver embroidery and lined with soft silk padding—the one Elspeth had helped her choose in Vanelle. Over that went a deep blue skirt threaded with gold, the hem worked with tiny baskets of winter flowers. At last he crouched to pull on her fur-lined boots, then fastened a thick red cape around her shoulders. Its hood was edged in silver fox fur, bright against her cheeks.

The moment he finished, Elowen darted forward, kissed his cheek in quick thanks, and said in a rush, "Thank you, Cassian. I'm going out." Before he could answer, she was gone. Outside, Gerda had just finished scolding Mira. Mira stood there with her head bowed, fingers twisting nervously in the hem of her sleeve. She muttered under her breath, her voice thick with grievance. "But back home, every time it snowed, Her Grace always had me wake her. It's been like that for years.

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It's never changed..." Gerda was about to shoot her another sharp look and properly explain that things were different now, that old habits didn't carry the same weight here. Just then, the door behind them creaked open. Elowen stepped out onto the threshold. Snow had fallen during the night. The world lay wrapped in white, the courtyard blanketed in fresh powder. Yet somehow the air felt warmer than it had in days, and far quieter. She lingered for a moment, taking in the snow-covered garden with undisguised delight.

Then she remembered Cassian inside, Worried the cold might drift into the room, she gently pulled the door closed behind her before turning to Gerda. Her voice was gentle, but firm. O 1/2
12:28 Mon, Apr 1300 Chapter 334 First Snow Of The Year [≈] 15% Finished "Gerda, whenever it snows, Mira wakes me. It's something we've done since we were children. Mira did the same thing last year too. She came to wake me first thing in the morning." Mira straightened at once, hopeful again. Gerda frowned. "You love the snow, but you're expecting now. It's freezing out here." Elowen tilted her head.

"Since when does being pregnant mean I'm banned from snow? Doctor Dray told me no wine, not no fresh air. He said gentle exercise is good for me." Gerda gave up with a sigh. "Then please be careful." Elowen grinned and shot Mira a knowing look. Together they stepped out into the untouched snow, leaving prints behind them as their laughter mixed with the quiet of the morning. Gerda watched them go, half exasperated and half smiling. She's still just a girl. When she first married, she was stiff and mervous, trying so hard to seem grown.

Now, under His Grace's care, she's becoming herself again. Behind her, the door opened quietly. Gerda turned at once and curtsied. "Your Grace." Cassian stood in the doorway, his gaze fixed on Elowen outside. He watched her scoop up a handful of snow and fling it at Mira. Mira was ready for her. She quickly packed a snowball and threw it right back. Elowen ducked, but it burst above her collar anyway. Snow spilled down the back of her neck, making her gasp at the cold- then laugh out loud. For Cassian, the whole world softened around her. He had never liked winter before.

Now, with Elowen in is life, even the coldest day felt warm. Beside him, Gerda said anxiously, "Your Grace, maybe you should say something to her? I'm afraid she'll slip, or catch a chill." He only smiled, his eyes never leaving Elowen. 2.4K 2/2 川 12:28 Mon, Apr admin

Chapter 335 Winter Games 林家15% 日 Finished Cassian glanced at Elowen, indulgence in his voice. "It's ine. Let her play as long as she wants. She knows her limits. And you're all here watching her. The guards are posted. Nothing will happen." With that, he turned and headed at an easy pace toward the kitchen. While Elowen played in the snow, he started planning. He would make a bowl of oatmeal to warm her through, timed to be ready when she came back inside. After a few steps, he remembered something, stopped, and looked back.

"Gerda, one more thing." "Sure." "Fill a bedwarmer and wrap it in a thick blanket for Ella. She'll want something warm for her hands when she comes in." Outside, Elowen ran and leaped through the snow, her nose red from the cold, her spirits untouched. She crouched down and tried to build a tiny snowman. But the snow was too loose and powdery. No matter how hard she pressed, it wouldn't hold together. Mira, fretting nearby, soon crouched beside her. The two of them bent their heads together and worked seriously, scooping and pressing snow that refused to cooperate.

That was what Cassian saw when he came out of the kitchen. He didn't step in right away. He leaned against a pillar and quietly watched them. Elowen tried a few more times, all to no effect. She puffed out her cheeks in frustration, and she looked so adorably childish that Cassian's heart softened. He was just about to walk over when he saw her suddenly think of something.

Carefully, she reached out and began drawing lines in the snow. At first, Cassian couldn't tell what it was. Then the shape slowly came into focus. His expression darkened. It was a horse.

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Its white coat nearly blended into the snow, but Cassian recognized it right away. It was Ember. Her beloved Ember, Mira saw it too, and the smile on her face faded. Only Elowen still wore a faint smile. She reached out and gently stroked the horse's head, as tenderly as if it were real. "Your Grace..." Mira bit her lip. "I'm hungry," Elowen said, cutting her off. She lifted her face with a bright smile no one could quite read. "Let's go have breakfast." Mira hesitated, then nodded quietly. ||| O 1/3 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 335 Winter Games The moment Elowen stood, she saw Cassian.

林家 15% Finished Her smile widened at once. Gathering up her skirts, she ran through the snow toward him. Cassian stepped forward to meet her and caught her easily in his arms. He lowered his head. Snowflakes clung to her thick lashes, not yet melted. Her nose and cheeks were red with cold. Carefully, he brushed the snow from her hair and shoulders, his voice soft. "Have enough fun?" Elowen nodded. "The snow's too fresh. It won't pack, so you can't make a snowman. But snowball fights are fun." Cassian handed her the bedwarmer. "Gerda prepared this for you. Warm your hands." "Thank you.

"Thank you too, Gerda!" Elowen took it obediently. Warmth spread through her fingers and up her arms. She let out a soft sigh. "So warm..." Only then did she realize how numb her hands and feet had become. She stamped her feet lightly and shivered. Cassian pulled up the hood of her cloak and tucked the silver fox fur more snugly around her face. "Are you hungry? I made some oatmeal." Elowen nodded eagerly. Inside, the house was so warm it was easy to forget it was winter at all. Cassian ladled out a bowl of steaming oatmeal and set it in front of Elowen.

Elowen wrapped both hands around the bowl and ate in small spoonfuls. Heat spread through her body and chased away the last of the chill. After a few bites, she looked up, eyes bright with

mischief. "Cassian, once the snow gets thicker later, will you make a snowman with me?" He nodded. "Of course." Satisfied, she lowered her head and kept eating. After a quiet moment, Cassian said softly, "When spring comes... what would you think about getting a new pony?" Her spoon stopped halfway to her mouth. Ever since Ember died, neither of them had spoken about it.

In their spare moments, they grumbled about Alaric instead, talking about how to make him pay- and when they let themselves imagine it, maybe even strip him of the crown prince's title. But this was the first time either of them had spoken of Ember aloud. Elowen looked at him. Her voice was small. "You saw what I drew in the snow?" "I did," Cassian said quietly. "I know you never stopped thinking about her." || O 2/3 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 335 Winter Games

Elowen lowered her eyes. "She was my favorite. I'll never forget her. But..." 林 15% Finished
She twisted her spoon, face solemn.

"I won't get another pony. Ember was one of a kind. No matter how beautiful the next one is, it wouldn't be her. If I found another horse just to make myself feel better, Ember would be heartbroken if she knew. And I don't want that" Cassian felt his chest tighten. "...All right." Just then, Bran came in from outside. "Your Grace." Cassian looked over. "What is it?" "Message from the palace. Her Highness the Crown Princess invited the Nordan princess to the Crown Prince's Wing." 。 2.4K 3/3 admin

Chapter 336 The Nordan Visitor Cassian lifted a brow. Elowen made a small sound of surprise. "Daphne?" What is she up to now? 15% Finished At the Crown Prince's Wing, the Nordan princess's carriage arrived nearly an hour late, moving so slowly it felt deliberate. Flowira stepped

down wrapped in silver fox fur, one hand pressed to her temple, her impatience and exhaustion plain on her face. Daphne had been waiting so long she was nearly frozen through. Even so, she forced a polite smile and stepped forward. "Your Highness." Flowira's heavy-lidded eyes lifted.

She replied in a stream of Nordian, her tone lazy, but sharp enough to cut. Daphne didn't understand a word. Luckily, on Iris's advice, she had arranged for an interpreter fluent in Nordian. The interpreter stepped forward. "Her Highness says she doesn't speak Avenlor." That gave Daphne pause. If the princess didn't speak the language, how had she and Elowen chatted at the royal banquet not long ago? But there was no time to dwell on it. Daphne had a purpose today. She turned slightly.

"Tell her this: she is the Nordian princess, here perhaps to strengthen relations between Nordia and Avenlor. His Majesty and Her Majesty both expect me to spend time with her. Since it's snowing, I invited her here for drinks and to enjoy the garden view." The interpreter relayed every word. Flowira listened and gave a careless answer. "Hmm." She wandered into the warm inner sitting room, her gale drifting over the room with bored indifference. The brazier burned brightly, and in one corner a pot of ambergris smoked, its sweet, heavy scent filling the air. Flowira wrinkled her nose.

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"Smells awful." It was only two words, but the bluntness was merciless. The palace servants in the room all went stiff. Daphne's smile twitched and nearly slipped. She snapped at the maid beside her. "What's wrong with you? Take it out!" The servants hurried to remove the fragrance burner, Someone opened a window to let in fresh air. Little by little, the thick sweetness faded, replaced by the cold, clean scent of winter outside. Flowira's expression relaxed.

She dropped into an armchair without ceremony, not waiting for Daphne's ||| O 1/2 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 336 The Nordian Visitor pleasantries before making herself completely at home. × a.15%90 Finished Daphne seethed. These Nordians, even their princesses, had no manners at all. Still, she swallowed her temper and put on her polished diplomatic smile. "You have a bold spirit, Your Highness. It's a privilege to meet you." Water was brought. Flowira barely acknowledged Daphne. She sniffed the cup and didn't bother hiding her dislike.

Daphne noticed and bristled inwardly, but pressed on, going straight to the point. "Perhaps you don't know this, but the one who was originally meant to marry into the Crown Prince's Wing was the Duchess of Duskmoor. She and His Highness grew up together. They were childhood sweethearts. But at the wedding feast, she suddenly changed her mind and said her heart belonged to someone else. His Majesty took pity on her sincerity and allowed her to marry the Duke instead." Flowira, bored until then, finally looked up when she heard the words Duchess of Duskmoor.

She listened to the end, then narrowed her eyes at Daphne. "So you and she are close?" Daphne didn't know what the princess was really asking, so she answered carefully. "Close? Not really. We don't see much of each other these days." She paused, studying Flowira's expression, then added, "But we aren't strangers either. We grew up together. And now she's become my... aunt by marriage." The official translated. Flowira stopped tapping her chin and looked Daphne straight in the eye. Then she spoke two quick, cutting lines in Nordian. The interpreter was visibly sweating.

"Her Highness says 'Then you must be terrible at making friends. You grew up together and still aren't close?'" The words hit like a slap. Daphne's smile barely held. "...Or maybe the problem is

her, not me." Flowira laughed, a short and disdainful sound. Through the interpreter, her reply came back mercilessly. "You think we haven't heard of the Duke of Duskmooor? With his temper, even in a forced royal marriage, if his wife were that awful he would've thrown her out by now. The way he looked at her at the banque the way he protected her, anyone could see he's infatuated.

If there's a problem, it isn't her. Figure out who it is." Daphne's fingers curled so tightly inside her sleeves that her nails bit into her palms. She already hated the Nordian princess. The woman's tongue was a knife, and every strike landed true. 2.4K < admin

Chapter 337 Dangerous Games 15% Finished But Daphne had plans for Elowen, and the Nordian princess might be the perfect partner. She forced down her irritation and pulled a smile across her face, though it looked more strained than pleasant. Just as she was about to speak, Flowira suddenly set down her cup with a hard clack. She stood, her tall figure casting a shadow across the room. "I'm leaving." Daphne blinked, caught off guard. "Already?" Flowira rubbed the back of her neck, uninterested. "Nothing here is worth my time. The way you people talk in circles gives me a headache.

I'd rather go take a nap." She really turned and started for the door. Seeing her chance slipping away, Daphne forgot decorum, raised her voice, and hurried to block the exit. "Your Highness, please wait! I... I have something to ask you!" Flowira paused at the threshold and looked back over one shoulder. "What now?" Daphne took a breath and blurted it out. "I heard you have feelings for the Duke of Duskmooor-and that you hate his wife?" Flowira's indifferent expression shifted. Now that is interesting. But who had said she hated the Duchess? The truth was, she rather liked her.

She had even complimented her at the banquet. Anyone who knew Flowira knew kindness was rare from her. Usually she was insulting someone or mocking them. Perhaps she hadn't fully grasped the finer shades of Avenlor's language and had been misunderstood. After thinking it over, Flowira turned and walked back inside, though she didn't sit at first. She stood over Daphne, looking down at her. "Who told you that?" Daphne dodged the question. "That's why I invited you here. I wanted to hear it from you." Flowira raised a brow, then sat again and idly drummed her fingers on the table.

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Daphne arranged her face into something pleading. "The truth is, I don't like her either. She's caused me trouble. If you dislike her and truly care for the Duke, I'm willing to help you. We could replace her-with you as the new Duchess," Flowira's brow lifted higher. Her tone stretched out on purpose. "Oh?" Thinking she had finally struck the right note, Daphne lowed herself a sly smile. "They've been married over half a year and she still isn't pregnant. The Duke stl can't stand, and she hasn't helped him recover. Doesn't that count as neglect?

Her whole family is gone oo-she has no influence at court. With a wife like that, it should be easy to find an excuse to get rid of her Flowira looked at Daphne for a long moment, her expression unreadable. 1/2 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 337 Dangerous Games At last, her fingers went still. "I'll think about it." 15% Finished Daphne was anxious, but she didn't dare push harder. She offered her most agreeable smile. "Of course. If you have anything to say, just send word." Flowira gave a vague nod, rose, and walked out.

Daphne personally escorted her to the outer doors and watched the tall figure climb into the carriage and disappear down the snow-bright road. Iris stepped close, lightly taking Daphne's arm as she murmured, "My lady, you really shouldn't have shown all your cards just now. If she

knows exactly what we want, she'll have too much leverage over us. That leaves us in a dangerous position, always reacting instead of acting." Daphne jerked her arm away. "Nordians are direct. They hate backroom schemes. They'll appreciate my honesty and trust me more for it. That's how things get done!" The more she spoke, the more convinced she became. She watched Flowira's carriage retreat, confidence humming inside her. "Just wait. She'll come crawling back soon enough." The snow began falling harder again. Daphne scowled and muttered, "It never ends." Meanwhile, when Flowira returned to the guest residence, the wind and snow rattled against the windows. She lingered under the eaves, watching the storm for a while, until the cold finally drove her inside. No servants were nearby. She went straight to the hearth and bent to warm her hands over the fire.

By the window, Zachary sat reading in the gray light reflected off the snow. He lowered his book. His voice was light and smooth. "You really shouldn't have accepted the invitation to the Crown Prince's Wing." Flowira-or rather, the real Zachary-kept his hands out toward the heat. Since they were alone, he didn't bother with the feminine voice anymore. His own was deeper, lazy but clear. "There was nothing else to do. Besides, nobody figured it out." The real Flowira's expression grew serious. "It was still risky. We came here for two reasons: to secure a treaty and to help Elowen.

Trading places gives us freedom to act, but if anyone discovers the truth, we'll have a mess on our hands," 2.4K 。 2 2/2 admin

Chapter 338 Twin Secrets. The fire crackled, warm and steady. Flowira and Zachary were twins, so alike they looked like mirror images of each other. 15%! Finished The same deep-set eyes. The same straight nose. The same dark, curling hair. The same green eyes passed down from

their mother. Unless you knew them well, you would never tell them part. But if their faces were alike, their temperaments were nothing alike at all. Zachary was sly and irreverent. Flowira was steady and cautious.

From childhood, Zachary had secretly loved the swirl and shimmer of fine skirts, and he had no patience for books or lessons. Flowira, meanwhile, loved to read. So they had become the perfect team, trading places whenever it suited them, with only their mother knowing the truth. And this embassy to Avenlor-vital for peace at the border and Nordia's trade-needed Flowira in charge. If Zachary had been left to handle it, everything would have gone off the rails. So after some planning, they had switched roles again.

Now warmed through, Zachary stepped back from the fire and sprawled into a more comfortable position. "She is a complete idiot. She'd never notice." Flowira's brow shifted only slightly. "So? What did she want today?" "She wants to use me against Elowen." Stretching out on the couch, Zachary began reenacting the scene, copying Daphne's gestures with uncanny accuracy. Flowira listened in silence, her frown deepening. "Daphne can't be allowed to get what she wants," she said at last. "And Elowen needs to know." At that, Zachary's laziness vanished. He sat upright, eye gleaming with mischief.

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"Should I go tell her myself?" "No." Flowira's answer was immediate, stern and firm. "Not right away. If you leave the palace and then immediately appear at Duskmoor Manor, someone will notice. And if word gets back to the Crown Prince's Wing, Daphne will realize you're not as clueless as you look. Daphne may be stupid, but her mother has survived in the palace for years. She isn't someone to underestimate." She added, "Besides, that isn't the real reason you want to see her, Don't forget what your actual intentions are," Zachary grinned. "I just like her."

And honestly, the Duke of Duskmoor isn't good enough for her." Flowira's face remained calm.

"Really? Because even you wouldn't be good enough. Neither of us is of royal III O 1/2 12:28

Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 338 Twin Secrets blood, and we don't truly belong at court." 林家 15%

Finished They should never have become Nordia's heirs in the first place. That had been the work of fate and a chain of accidents. Zachary gave a soft laugh. "Flowira, you're always brutal "I'm truthful," Flowira said.

Then, after thinking a moment, she added, "In a few days, I'll come up with an excuse to visit Duskmoor Manor." "I'm coming too," Zachary said at once. Flowira's expression hardened.

"Absolutely not." He started to object, but Flowira cut him off, her voice dropping until it carried a weight that filled the room. "If you insist, and news of your recklessness reaches Nordia, she won't be pleased." At the mention of her, the mocking look disappeared from Zachary's face. He fell silent and leaned back stiffly against the couch.

After a while, he muttered, "Then you go." For two straight days, snow kept falling over Vanelle.

At Duskmoor Manor, the underground heating chased away every trace of cold, and the air carried the faint scent of calming incense. After lunch, Elowen lay curled on the couch in thick furs like a sleepy kitten. Cassian sat at the edge of it, carefully massaging her calves and feet.

Hugh had insisted on it-pregnancy drained her energy badly, so Cassian had made it part of his daily routine. His hands, hardened by years of swordplay and reins, were rough and strong.

But when he touched her, they were astonishingly gentle. Elowen nearly purred with pleasure, her eyes drifting shut. After a few minutes, she murmured, "We'll be at court for the Christmas Day, but everyone here should celebrate properly too. We need to make sure there's enough money for it. Every servant, no matter their rank, should get a share of good food, and a bonus

too. And the ones who've really done well-like the steward who saved us so much on supplies, or the guards who stood out-they should get extra." Cassian smiled. "Ella, you're more generous than any noble in Avenlor.

Rich ministers, royal relatives-none of them give like you do," Elowen wrinkled her nose.

"That's what my mother and sister-in-law always did at home. My sister-in-law said if you want loyalty, treat people like people. Share what you have. Then they'll do more for you willingly,"

2.4K 2/2 O admin

Chapter 339 Uninvited Guest 15% 位 Finished "Whatever you say," Cassian told her. "My money is yours. Spend it however you like." His hands kept working over her legs, easing wave after wave of tension out of her body. Pregnancy made her drowsier than usual. Now she yawned. "I think I'll nap for a while..." Her words trailed off as sleep started to pull her under. Then footsteps sounded outside, crunching over the packed snow in the courtyard. In the quiet, the sound was especially clear. Anson's voice came from outside the study.

"Your Grace the fourth prince of Nordia is here to see you." Elowen forced her eyes open, still hazy with sleep. Cassian's hands paused at her ankle. "You sleep. I'll deal with it." But then Anson added from the doorway, "Your Grace, the prince said... it doesn't matter whether you're there, but Her Grace must see him." Cassian went still. Elowen burst out laughing, and the last of her sleepiness vanished. "I guess I should go, then." She pushed herself up. Cassian lifted a brow. "Not tired anymore?" Elowen grinned. "Didn't you say their real purpose here is to make peace?"

I'm a general's daughter. I know what war costs. If peace is possible, missing one nap is nothing. If it means people can sleep easier at night, that's worth a little sacrifice." Cassian's eyes

softened. "All right." He helped her into slippers and a cloak, and together they went to the front parlor, where Zachary was waiting. Water had already been prepared, steam curling from cups. Zachary hadn't sat down. He stood near the side of the bom, quietly admiring a jagged stone ornament set on the table. When he heard the sound of Cassian's wheelchair and Owen's footsteps, he turned.

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He bowed first, his Avenlor language flawless and exact. Your Grace. Forgive the intrusion."

Today, Zachary wore a deep-blue Nordian coat trimmed with fox fur at the collar and cuffs.

Elowen pushed Cassian into the room and nodded. "There's no need for ceremony." She got straight to it. "May I ask what brings you here to lay?" Zachary only smiled, his gaze flicking briefly to Cassian. 1/3 O < - 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 339 Uninvited Guest The meaning was obvious—there were things he would rather say in private. Cassian bristled. Am I expected to leave?

15% Finished He was the Duke of Duskmoor. No one had ever dared ask him to step out. If anyone left a room, it was because he told them to. Elowen smiled gently. "My husband and I are one. Whatever you want to say, you can say in front of him." Cassian couldn't stop the satisfied curve of his mouth. Zachary paused for a moment. He had heard the Duke had caused Nordia a great deal of trouble in the past. But... His gaze drifted to the wheelchair. He had heard that story too—that Cassian had been crippled on the southwestern front and lain unconscious for months.

Now he had been stripped of command and pushed far from the center of power. For a man like Cassian, who spent most of his days in quiet seclusion, he hardly seemed like much of a threat. With that thought, Zachary allowed himself a faint smile. "Very well." Elowen gestured toward the chair across from her. "Your Highness, please sit. Have some water." Zachary took the seat

and lifted the warm cup, taking a small sip. The heat spread through him, clearing the last of the chill from the winter air.

"Wheelchair or the armchair?" At the head of the room, Elowen had leaned closer to Cassian, lowering her voice as she asked. Zachary glanced up through the faint curl of steam rising from his cup. Cassian's expression was as indifferent as ever. "The chair's fine." Elowen nodded.

"Water?" Cassian shook his head. "No. I'll just sit and talk," "Alright." She reached down and adjusted the blanket resting across his legs, smoothing it carefully before stepping back. Zachary watched the quiet exchange without comment. A faint crease formed between his brows. Cassian was the Duke of Duskmoor.

Yet Elowen attended to him herself, as though such small things naturally fell to her. Once she finished, Elowen returned to her seat. O 2/3 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 339 Uninvited Guest Zachary slowly set his cup down and spoke at last. \$. 15% Finished "Your Grace, perhaps you've heard. A few days ago, the Crown Princess invited my sister Flowira to the Crown Prince's Wing." Elowen had known about it already, but she still let a flicker of surprise show on her face. "Really? I hadn't heard." Zachary inclined his head. "It's true." He looked directly at her.

"When Flowira returned, she told me about their conversation. The Crown Princess does not seem particularly fond of you." He paused, watching her reaction. "In fact, she hinted that she would be willing to help arrange a marriage alliance. Her idea was that Flowira could replace you as the Duchess of Duskmoor." 合 2.4K M 3/3 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 admin

Chapter 340 You're Special 15% Finished The parlor went still for a moment, with only the soft cackle of the fire filling the silence. Elowen wasn't surprised. The moment she heard Daphne had

invited the Nordan princess into the Crown Prince's Wing, she'd guessed it had something to do with her. Daphne hated her now, and Elowen knew that would only deepen with time. Not that she intended to let Daphne off easy. She was only waiting for the right chance to move. And now Daphne had practically delivered herself right into Elowen's hands.

Elowen lowered her eyes with practiced hesitation and gave a quiet sigh. "You really came all this way to tell me this, Your Highness." Then she paused, as if a thought had just occurred to her. "Though I am curious. Why tell me yourself?" Across from her, Zachary met her gaze, calm and direct "Because you're special." The word threw Elowen off. She stared at him, not quite sure she'd heard right. "Special?" A trace of amusement flickered in Zachary's eyes. Then his tone shifted. "Flowira likes you." Cassian looked up sharply. Elowen just stared. "What?" Likes me?

The last time they'd spoken, at the welcoming banquet, Flowira had been anything but friendly. Zachary seemed to read her confusion. He smiled faintly. "Flowira's Avenlorian isn't very good. Sometimes what she means doesn't come out right." Elowen felt a laugh tug at her lips. "At the banquet, the princess told me I wasn't good enough for the Duke of Duskmoor." Zachary smiled. "Nordia's language works differently than ours. By our customs, what she actually meant was that the Duke isn't good enough for you." Elowen lifted a brow, remembering something else.

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"She also told me to be careful, or a cold wind might snap me in half." He chuckled. "In Nordia, telling someone to be careful usually means concern, not a threat. Their standards are different from ours. They don't think pale and delicate is beautiful. They admire strength, health, riding, archery, Flowira wasn't trying to scare you. She was telling you to take care of yourself." Elowen

nodded slowly as the new meaning settled in. "I see." "That's why I said she likes you," Zachary said. Elowen was still turning that over when Cassian let out a short, humorless laugh.

How many rivals is she supposed to have? It is bad enough guarding against men. Now women too? Zachary ignored him and kept his attention on Elowen, Flowira and I talked it over. We decided you should have a warning. The Crown Princess won't let this go. You should know now, so you have time to prepare." O 1/2 12:28 Mon, Apr 13 fo Chapter 340 You're Special 15% Finished He sounded sincere, and Elowen believed he meant it. But he and Flowira were Nordians, and no matter how honest someone seemed, trusting too quickly could still be dangerous.

People could talk for hours and still hide what mattered most. "You don't have to trust me right away," Zachary said. "We're not leaving anytime soon. The Christmas is coming, and there'll be a family gathering, yes? You and the Duke will attend His Majesty's banquet?" Elowen nodded. "We will." He smiled, unhurried. "Then you have time. Watch what we do, and decide after that. As for today, I only have one question." "Go ahead," Elowen said smoothly. He looked straight at her. "The Crown Princess-what do you want done with her?

Should she die, or would being driven out of the Crown Prince's Wing be enough" The question caught Elowen off guard. He said it like he truly could-and would-do whatever she asked. She kept her distance and answered with a polite smile. She's young. People that age still have a lot to learn, and sometimes they say and do foolish things. I appreciate the offer, Your Highness, but I hope you'll forgive a little youthful recklessness." Zachary studied her for a moment.

"Understood. But I'll say it again. If you ever need us, send word. We'll be at the inn." Elowen didn't answer directly.

Zachary rose to leave, and she asked Anson to see him out. Once the parlor was quiet again, Elowen finally let herself relax against the chair. "Finally. Now I can take a nap." Cassian answered with a muffled grunt. She glanced at him with a slight frown. His jaw was tight, his expression unreadable, but after living with him this long, Elowen could tell he was in a bad mood. She said nothing. She simply pushed his wheelchair out in silence. Neither of them spoke as they headed back to their room.

In the soft lamplight, Cassian's gaze rested on the window lattice, his thoughts clearly elsewhere. Elowen took off her heavy cloak, hung it up, and then, oh impulse, gathered up her layered skirts and climbed into his lap, facing him. 2.4K 2/2 J| O admin