

# Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 351 Laughter Finished Cassian hadn't thought much about happiness since his mother died. Only now, hearing Elowen say aloud, did Cassian feel a quiet warmth spread through his chest. He realized that what really mattered wasn't the fancy royal banquets, or the endless echoing palace halls. No, what he truly missed were the little, unpolished rituals of an ordinary home. And for the first time in years, he felt genuinely content. "Well?" Elowen's eyes sparkled, challenging and hopeful "Cassian, are we doing this together or not?" He didn't even hesitate.

"Of course." They left the warmth of the bed, dressed quickly, and went to the study. Elowen spread a sheet of gilded parchment across the desk, practically glowing with excitement. She uncorked the inkwell, dipped a quill, and began to write. Cassian raised an eyebrow. "You want me to do the writing?" She replied instantly, "Your handwriting's gorgeous!" He only nodded, picked up a quill, and let the ink glide across the parchment. A moment later, the letters emerged—bold and deliberate, the strokes firm and balanced, as steady as a fortress wall. Elowen leaned over his shoulder, grinning.

"See? I told you! I've seen the finest handwriting in all of Vanelle, and none of it comes close to yours. Next to this, theirs looks like a child's first attempt at holding a pen." Cassian tried to keep his expression neutral, but the corners of his mouth still twitched despite himself. Of course, he would never admit she had pleased him. Elowen dipped the quill again, satisfied the ink was just right. She set the inkwell aside, leaning closer to admire the writing. That was when she got careless. Her fingertip slid straight across the still-wet ink, smearing the line into a dark blot.

She gasped and looked down at her stained finger. Cassian noticed immediately. Without thinking, he caught her wrist, his voice warm and low. "You've gotten ink all over yourself." He only meant to wipe it away, but a spark of mischief flashed in Elowen's eyes. Before he could react, she twisted in his grasp and, quick as lightning, dragged her inky finger straight across his cheekbone. A bold black streak now marked Cassian's face, stark against his sharp features. Elowen burst out laughing and darted away before he could retaliate. For a moment Cassian simply stared, too surprised to move.

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1/3 12:30 Mon, Apr Chapter 351 Laughter 15% Finished Then he caught her easily, as though he had expected it all along, pinning her gently between the heavy writing desk and his chest. "Was that on purpose?" His voice dropped low, dark amusement flickering in his eyes as he took in the lingering flush of her laughter. "I suppose I'll have to punish you." He reached for the quill and spun it lightly between his fingers, clearly plotting revenge. Elowen shrieked and twisted away, laughing even as she protested. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Cassian, don't you dare draw on my face!" He only grinned.

"Sorry isn't good enough, I'm afraid." Elowen braced a hand against his arm and rolled her eyes. "So what's it going to stake?" He leaned closer, mischief glinting in his gaze. "Kiss me." Elowen blinked. "That's it? That's way too easy." She rose onto her toes and planted a quick kiss at the corner of his mouth. "There-" But she never finished the word. Cassian had already abandoned the quill and pulled her into a deeper kiss, slow and unhurried, stealing the breath from her lungs and every thought from her mind.

It was a long minute before he let her go, leaving her blushing and a little dazed. With ink still streaked across his face, he just murmured, "Guess I ought to wash up." Elowen nodded, still

smiling. While Cassian went to wash the ink, Elowen pulled out another stack of scarlet paper to make decorations for the windows. She hadn't changed her style since childhood. Every year she cut the same design, an eight-pointed star, simple but delicate. Cassian returned a moment later, face freshly washed. He paused in the doorway.

"What are you making now?" "Decorations!" Elowen held up the newest star between her fingers.

"Well? What do you think, Cassian? Pretty, right?" "Very." He didn't hesitate. "Mind if I try?"

She grinned and handed him the scissors. "What should I make?" Cassian asked, turning the sheet of red paper in his elegant hands. "Anything you like. I'm not expecting anything complicated," Elowen teased, resting her chin on her palm. "You're a beginner, after all." He frowned slightly in concentration.

His fingers moved with quiet precision, the only sound the soft snip of the scissors and the faint rustle of falling paper. 2/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 351 Laughter A moment later he unfolded it. A heron emerged from the paper. Its neck curved gracefully, wings etched with delicate detail. Elowen's jaw dropped. "Cassian! Are you sure you've never done this before? That's incredible!" He gave a small, satisfied smile. "First time." "Then how-?" He shrugged lightly.

"If I'm going to be your husband, I ought to be good at something." Elowen laughed, her cheeks turning pink at the quiet pride in his voice. Cassian glanced up at her. "Want me to make another?" "A horse!" Elowen said immediately. He didn't hesitate. 林家15%位 Finished When he unfolded the paper this time, a galloping stallion sprang from the scarlet sheet, its mane flying. It looked exactly like the horse from her childhood, the beloved Ember. And there was more. On its back rode a tiny girl, twin braids streaming behind her, skirts fluttering as if caught in the wind.

Even her laughter seemed captured in the delicate cut lines. "How did you know to put me there?" Elowen asked, staring at it in astonishment. She held the paper as though it were the rarest treasure in the world. Then she pressed it against her chest, her blush spreading all the way to the tips of her ears. "Cassian," she murmured, "I swear... I fall for you more every single day."

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Chapter 352 A Promise In Candlelight 15% Finished Something gentle flickered in Cassian's eyes, the tension at the corners of his mouth easing. "Then love me for the rest of your life."

Elowen didn't hesitate for even a heartbeat. She nodded bright and utterly sincere. Meanwhile, Alaric was already awake before dawn. Though he remained confined to his residence by royal decree, tradition was not easily ignored. On the Christmas eve, the royal family always gathered for the grand feast, and the Crown Prince's presence was expected.

And tonight, after days without seeing Elowen, he would finally see her again. Just the thought made his pulse quicken. "Your Highness." Tristan stepped forward with a formal bow. "Your consort is waiting outside. She asked if you might join her in making decorations for the festival." Alaric didn't even glance up from the table before him. "Tell her to return to her chambers."

Tristan paused, the hesitation barely noticeable. "Your Highness, these past days she has braved the cold and snow to attend on Her Majesty. Whenever Her Majesty has felt unwell, she's been there at once.

Her Majesty has praised her several times." Alaric's expression darkened. "If you admire her that much, Tristan," he said coldly, "perhaps I should arrange for you to marry her." "Of course not, Your Highness." Tristan bowed even lower. Alaric let out a sharp breath. "She will never deserve to be Crown Princess in my eyes Send her away." He was already dreading the evening banquet.

Sitting beside Daphne for hours would be a torment he could barely endure. At the moment, even looking at her felt like too much, "Yes, Your Highness." Tristan withdrew quietly.

drawn together Alaric remained seated, brows as his thoughts churned. The Nordan delegation would attend the feast tonight as well. Yet their faces, their manners, everything about them differed from what he remembered from his previous life. Still, that was hardly surprising. 1/4  
12:30 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 352 A Promise In Candlelight 15% Finished Ever since he had been given this second chance, events had begun drifting away from the path he once knew. No matter. He was destined for the throne. Sooner or later, everyone would bow to him.

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But first he needed to convince Theodric that he had changed. Only then would his confinement end. Once free again, he could reclaim everything that had once been his. Perhaps even Elowen. Even if she now stood beside the Duke of Duskmoor. Lost in his calculations, Alaric barely noticed as afternoon faded into dusk. Alaric arrived early at the Lyndor Hall for the feast. He noticed Cassian and Elowen the moment they entered together. His breath caught. Her gown was a deep crimson, rich as the glow of winter hearths.

Gold embroidery curled across the fabric in elegant patterns, catching the torchlight whenever she moved. A dark blue mantle lay over her shoulders, its borders worked with delicate stitching, and strands of pearls with small gold pendants shimmered faintly with each step. A slender circlet of jewels rested against her brow, its stones sparkling softly against her fair skin. At her side, Cassian sat in a finely crafted wheeled chair of dark carved wood. He wore midnight blue trimmed with gold, a broad belt fastened at his waist.

Over his shoulders hung a cloak of black fox fur that sharpened the cool lines of his face, lending him an austere, distant grace. Together they were impossible to overlook. Crimson beside shadowed black, warmth beside winter. Every eye in the hall turned toward them. They look perfect together. Perfect. The thought slammed into Alaric with painful force. Watching them was almost unbearable, His fingers tightened around his wine goblet until the metal bit into his palm.

"How striking uncle Cassian and his wife look together," Daphne murmured beside him, her voice soft with something that almost sounded like admiration. Alaric's jaw tightened. "Ella wants nothing to do with him," he muttered under his breath. "She's still untouched." "You've said that before," Daphne replied calmly, "You don't believe me?" ||| O L 2/4 12:30 Mon, Apr 13  
Chapter 352 A Promise In Candlelight Finished A faint smile curved her lips. Her expression remained hild, but something calculating flickered in her eyes. "Oh, I believe you." Tonight, however, she had plans of her own.

"Don't overstep," Alaric said quietly. The warmth vanished from his face, leaving his gaze cold and hard. "I need my father's approval tonight. If you cause trouble- He held her with a stare sharp enough to freeze the air between them. "You know what will happen." A chill crept along Daphne's spine, though her smile never faltered. "Of course, Your Highness," she said gently. "I only wish to make things easier for you." Alaric turned his gaze away, his mouth set in a thin line. "You'd better." Cassian and Elowen had barely taken their places when the feast began in earnest.

Elira presided over the arrangements with calm assurance, offering gentle instructions to the attendants. At the high table sat Theodric. The king surveyed the hall with evident satisfaction.

His family, his lords, his trusted advisers, and even the Nordian envoys were gathered beneath one roof. Torchlight flickered across the banners of Avenlor that hung from the rafters. Raising his goblet, Theodric's voice carried easily across the chamber. "Tonight we gather as one house, as families should at the turning of the year.

And seeing the two of you- Cassian and Elowen-so devoted to one another gladdens my heart." His gaze rested warmly upon them. "You honor this family, Come. Let us drink to it." A toast from the king was no small distinction. Cassian and Elowen both lifted their goblets low, Theodric drained his wine in a Elowen hesitated, single hearty Their Their cups met the king's with a light chime of silver. clarly pleased. She was carrying a child now, and wine was the last thing she should be drinking. She searched for a graceful way to decline, but Cassian moved first.

3/4 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 @ 10 Chapter 352 A Promise In Candlelight Finished He gently took the goblet from her hand and raised both cups with a respectful incline of his head. "Your Majesty, Elowen has not been feeling well this evening. If it pleases you, I will drink on her behalf." Theodric's smile only broadened. "No need to press the matter," he said warmly. "The goo will behind the gesture is more than enough." 2.4K 414 1 admin

hapter 353 Swords Dance "Thank you, Your Majesty." 林家15%目 Finished Cassian moved with effortless composure, lifting the two cups one after the other and emptying them smoothly, his motions as fluid as flowing water. Seated beside Theodric, Isla watched the entire exchange. A gentle, almost motherly smile appeared on her carefully maintained face. "Cassian is truly attentive to your duchess. It is quite enviable," she said warmly. "Come to think of it, it has been

nearly half a year since Cassian and the duchess were wed, has it not?" Elowen kept a polite smile on her face.

"Your Majesty, it has indeed been almost six months." Isla nodded with a pleasant smile. Her gaze drifted, almost casually, toward Elowen's still-flat stomach. Her tone grew even softer.

"How quickly time passes. Still, Duskmoo Manor must feel rather quiet with so few in the household. If the manor were blessed with a child soon, that would truly be joyous news." From the Crown Prince's table below, Daphne suddenly spoke. "Half a year of marriage and still no sign of a child. Aunt Elowen, could it be that your health is... troubled in some way?" The hall fell silent for a brief moment.

Alaric's brows tightened with displeasure as he shot her a look. But Daphne had already thrown caution aside. "Please don't misunderstand me, Aunt Elowen. I mean no offense. An heir is important, after all. There is no need to feel embarrassed about such matters. I heard His Grace invited Doctor Dray to reside at Duskmoo Manor. Presumably that was to help restore the duchess's health. But one physician may not be enough. Corwin, the royal physician in the palace, is renowned for women's ailments.

Perhaps he should also visit Duskmoo Manor to assist with your treatment?" Earlier, she had spent a full five dollars paying member of the Baker family to investigate matters at Duskmoo Manor. They had tracked down a cook who served in Elowen's residence and questioned her carefully. From the woman, they learned that the Duke of Duskmoo dearly wanted a child, yet the duchess had not conceived. That was why Hugh had been invited to stay at the manor. After hearing that, Daphne drew her own conclusion. There could be nothing wrong with Elowen's health.

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If he had not conceived, it could only mean one thing. She refused to share a bed with Cassian..

In her heart, Elowen must still be thinking about Alaric. "There is no need," Elowen said, her smile carrying a faint hint of strain. "My health is perfectly fine." 1/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 09

Chapter 353 Swords Dance | 070 Finished At that moment, Isla spoke leisurely. "In truth, Elowen is still young. These matters cannot be rushed. But the palace recently brought in several new attendants. They are healthy girls with strong constitutions.

If two were sent to Duskmoor Manor, they might help ease the duchess's burden and bring heirs to the royal line sooner." The two women played their parts perfectly, their word falling in smooth succession. Elowen rose from her seat and inclined her head respectfully toward Isla before speaking in a steady voice. "Your Majesty, please forgive my refusal. The Hale family does not permit its daughters to share a household with concubines.

The palace attendants may be admirable, but I cannot accept them." From nearby, Elira added gently, "Her Majesty's kindness toward Elowen's future heirs is admirable. Still, tonight is the feast, a celebration of reunion and joy. Is this really the time to discuss such matters?" "Elira, I'm afraid you misunderstand," Isla replied with a smile. "Reunion is a joy, yes. But the royal line flourishing is an even greater joy. Besides, welcoming good fortune on Christmas Eve is an auspicious sign.

If two blessings arrived at once, would that not show the royal house's enduring prosperity?" She turned to Theodric with a smile. "Your Majesty, wouldn't you agree?" Theodric's smile faded slightly. His gaze lingered on Isla for a moment, his eyes unreadable. When he spoke, his tone left no room for argument. "That is enough. Tonight's family banquet is for reunion. We will speak of nothing else. As for taking additional women into the household, that can be discussed

another time." Isla had served beside him for many years. She could easily tell that his mood had turned sour.

The smile on her face remained unchanged as she inclined her head obediently. "Yes, Your Majesty." Theodric shifted his gaze elsewhere. "Let us enjoy the performances." The moment he spoke, the sound of flutes and zithers rose once more. Dancers dressed in vibrant silks entered in graceful procession, their movements flowing with the music. Soon, Lyndor Hall was once again filled with the clink of cups and lively conversation. Alaric's expression darkened. He turned toward Daphne and spoke in a low voice. "You did that on purpose, didn't you?

You were trying to make things difficult for her." Daphne felt a flicker of unease but forced herself to remain calm. "Your Highness, why would you say such a thing? I merely supported Her Majesty's suggestion with a few words. Her Majesty's health has not been good, and the authority to oversee the palace has already been handed to Lady Elira. If I do not speak on Her Majesty's behalf, would she not feel hurt?" "Her Majesty?" A cold, cutting laugh slipped from between Alaric's teeth. His sharp gaze swept over Daphne's carefully painted face.

2/3 12:30 Mon, Apr Apr 13 Chapter 353 Swor Swords Dance Finished "Daphne, that is my mother. Not yours." Daphne's face changed instantly. The words struck like a slap. But Alaric finished. was not His eyes narrowed dangerously, his tone merciless. "You a Crown Princess in name are only. Even if beave yourself, you stir trouble again or make things difficult for Ella, you you dare will answer a peaceful end to me first." is not guaranteed. If Daphne's face turned ghostly pale. Her fingers clenched inside her sleeves, nails digging so hard into her palm broke that they nearly the skin.

She opened her mouth, wanting to defend herself. But under Alaric's icy, contempt-filled humiliation, gaze, every word died in her throat. She lowered her eyes in Alaric had already looked away, away, as if even glancing at her was distasteful. 2.4K admin

Chapter 354 Prince's Toast Alaric drew a slow breath and steadied himself. 15% Finished He adjusted his robes, rose from his seat, and lifted his wine cup before offering a formal salute toward the imperial throne. "Father." Theodric looked down at him from above. Alaric raised his head, his voice clear and resonant. 241 44 < "Tonight's banquet has gathered many distinguished guests within Lyndor Hall. Music and dance fill the palace with celebration, and envoys from Nordia have traveled a great distance to join the occasion.

Seeing such a scene fills me with pride." He paused briefly, admiration appearing naturally on his face. "In recent years, under Father's wise governance, Avenler has enjoyed favorable seasons and lasting peace. The people live in prosperity, and the realm stands strong. Your Majesty's authority reaches far beyond our borders, drawing nations from across the world to pay tribute. Even Nordia now sends envoys seeking friendship and alliance. Such a flourishing age exists only because of Father's tireless dedication to the kingdom." He raised his cup high.

"I firmly believe that under Father's leadership, Avenlor will continue to prosper and stand strong for generations. The people of the realm will live forever in peace and stability. Though I am unworthy, I offer this cup to wish Father enduring health and blessings. And I offer it to our great kingdom, may its glory last for ten thousand generations!" The speech rang with grand momentum. Listening from her seat, Elowen thought privately that it contained little of substance. It was, essentially, an extravagant display of flattery. But Theodric clearly enjoyed it.

When he looked at Alaric, a satisfied smile appeared on his face. The resemblance between Theodric and Cassian suddenly struck Elowen. The two brothers were remarkably alike. Both of them enjoyed praise. Whenever Elowen complimented Cassian a little, the corners of his mouth nearly stretched to his ears, and now Theodric, after hearing only a few flattering words from Alaric, was already in high spirits. Besides, tonight was Christmas Eve. On such a joyful occasion, auspicious words were always welcome, "Good! Well said!" Theodric laughed heartily and lifted his golden cup.

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"For Alaric to possess such insight pleases me greatly. Prosperity for the realm and peace for the people are precisely what I desire. Come, all of you. Drink with me and Alaric. Let us toast to Avenlor's enduring strength!" The assembled officials immediately echoed in unison. "We offer our congratulations to Your Majesty and His Highness!" The hall burst into lively celebration. Amid the chorus of praise, Alaric drained his cup in a single swallow. He knew the performance had worked.

林命 15%期 Finished Avenlor stand strong forever!" a faint curve forming at the corner of Once the Christmas passed, his period of confinement would naturally come to an end. "Sit." Theodric said with a smile. "Thank you, Father." Before sitting down, Alaric's gaze drifted toward Elowen. When Theodric had called for everyone to drink, Cassian had remained seated in his wheelchair. Elowen, however, had risen. As she moved to sit again, Cassian turned slightly and naturally steadied her arm. Elowen did not resist. After settling back into her seat, she even turned toward him with a small smile.

The sight struck Alaric like a spark landing on dry timber. Jealousy exploded through him in an instant. That smile used to belong to him. What right does Cassian have to it? Alaric sat down. A

servant refilled his cup. He tilted his head back and drained it in one swallow. The wine burned down his throat, and his mind cooled slightly. Elowen could never truly care about Cassian. With so many eyes on them, she simply has no choice but to put on a show, playing the part of a devoted wife. It doesn't matter. I've already pleased Father tonight.

Soon enough, Elowen will leave Cassian, that broken man, behind and come back to me. After another round of wine, the performance of music and dance began to draw to a close, The melodies softened, then faded entirely as the dancers bowed and withdrew. For a brief moment, the hall fell into unexpected silence Theodric frowned slightly and was about to speak. 2/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 354 Prince's Toast At that moment, Byron, Nordia's deputy envoy, rose from his seat and offered a respectful bow. Finished "Your Majesty, please allow me to report.

Our Fifth Princess of Nordia, Flowira, wishes to present a sword dance to entertain Your Majesty and the honored guests. Daphne's head snapped up. This is it. The real highlight of the evening. "Oh?" Theodric sounded intrigued. "Flowira can perform a sword dance?" Byron replied, "Nordians excel in riding and archery, as well as the blade. But tonight is a night of celebration. Princess Flowira sets aside the battlefield's seel and turns it into a dance, as a wish for lasting peace and friendship between our two realms." Theodric nodded with interest.

"Excellent." The palace musicians fell silent, replaced by the deep rhythm of drums that rose gradually through the hall. With each beat echoing against the marble floor, Flowir stepped into Lyndor Hall. She had clearly prepared carefully for the occasion. Her attire carried the bold character of Nordian fashion Her upper garment was fitted and tailored from deep red brocade. Below, layered trousers and flowing panels of embroidered silk formed a sweeping skirt, the fabric stitched with silver and gold threads that depicted wolves racing across the plains.

Her long hair was braided into several narrow plaits adorned with turquoise and silver ornaments, all gathered high behind her head, leaving her forehead clear and proud. Flowira held an ornate curved blade in both hands. The sheath glittered with red and blue gemstones. She stopped before the imperial dais. Without drawing attention to the gesture, she cast a quick glance toward the Duchess of Duskmoor seated nearby.

Then she placed her right hand over her chest and bowed deeply according to Nordan custom, her movement crisp and powerful, without a trace of the delicate softness expected of most noblewomen. 2.4K 3/3 admin

Chapter 355 A Blade In The Hall 会 15% Finished Flowira lifted her chin and spoke a short sentence in Nordan, her voice low but clear. Byron translated smoothly, his voice carrying across the hall. "Princess Flowira says this humble blade dance is offered to entertain His Majesty and honor the banquet." Cassian raised one brow and let out a quiet, indifferent chuckle. Elowen leaned closer and whispered, "What is it?" Cassian murmured back, "What she actually said, word for word, was that the dance is dedicated to the Emperor of Avenlor and the Duchess of Duskmoor." Elowen blinked.

That includes me too? Cassian rested his fingers along the armrest of his wheelchair, tapping idly. "Prince Zachary was right after all. His little sister seems quite fond of you." Elowen considered that for a moment. "Well, there are quite a few people who like me." Cassian glanced at her. Elowen tilted her head. "But I only like you." Cassian's lips curved. He reached out and gently touched her cheek. "I know." Satisfied, Elowen turned her attention back to the performance. The sword dance was unlike the graceful court dances people were used to seeing.

It demanded tremendous strength and precision from the performer Yet Flowira's execution was unexpectedly impressive. She lacked some of the soft flexibility of traditional dancers, but her posture was tall and steady, every movement sharp and powerful. Her steps opened wide across the floor, brimming with explosive energy. She spun, struck, and parried in fluid succession. At times the curved blade flashed like a streak of silver lightning, at others it swooped like a hawk diving for prey.

The spectacle held the entire hall captive, People watched without blinking, quiet awe of astonishment rising from the crowd. Then, at the height of the performance, Flowira suddenly spun in a beautiful turn. The curved blade swept forward with the motion, its cold edge glinting beneath the lights, The tip of the blade pointed straight at Cassian. The change came so suddenly that no one reacted in time, Gasps erupted across the hall. Beside him, Elowen startled and instinctively leaned forward, clearly intending to shield Cassian.

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1/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 @O Chapter 355 A Blade In The Hall 15% Finished Flowira noticed the movement immediately. A flicker of displeasure crossed her face. Cassian, however, remained completely calm. He sat in his wheelchair as if nothing had happened, his expression unchanged, not even the slightest twitch of his brow. But when he saw Elowen trying to protect him, a faint smile of amusement tugged at his lips. Among the guests below, Daphne had been watching the entire scene closely.

When the blade pointed toward the Duke of Duskmoor she was first startled, then her eyes lit up with excitement. Just as she suspected. Princess Flowira truly had feelings for him. Of all the people the blade could have pointed at, it had to be Cassian. Such a bold and straightforward confession. It perfectly matched the rough, fearless customs of those Nordin warriors. If that

was the case, everything would unfold even more smoothly. After casting one last glance at Elowen, Flowira drew the blade back in a smooth motion and finished the dance in a clean, decisive stance.

Despite the intense performance, her breathing remained steady. Her face showed no sign of strain, not even a trace of sweat. Holding the blade across her chest, she spoke another sentence in Nordian toward Theodric. Byron translated again. "Princess Flowira says the sword dance has concluded. She hopes Your Majesty enjoyed it." "Excellent. Truly excellent!" Theodric clapped his hands with a hearty laugh, admiration shining in his eyes. "This dance blends strength and grace in a way rarely seen.

It carries the bold spirit of the northern lands yet still preserves the elegance of true performance, I must say, today has opened my eyes. You deserve a reward." Flowira bowed again. Isla smiled lightly and spoke in a teasing tone. "Both of them are Fifth Princesses, yet ours could never perform a sword dance like that." Maerwyn, who had been quietly eating pastries to pass the time, suddenly heard her title mentioned and looked up in confusion. Isla turned back to Flowira, her expression warm. "Tell me, Fifth Princess.

In Nordia, have you already been promised in marriage to someone?" Flowira remained silent. 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 0 fa Chapter 355 A Blade In The Hall. 15% Finished Byron answered in her place. "Your Majesty, our king treasures Princess Flowira dearly. No marriage arrangement has yet been made for her." Isla nodded thoughtfully. "That ends me of something." Daphne seized the moment and spoke with a bright smile. "Not long ago, Princess Flowira visited the Crown Prince's Wing several times. We are close in age and spoke quite well together.

During one of those visits, Princess Flowira confided that she already has someone she admires." Isla glanced at her. "Oh? Someone she admires? In Nordia?" Daphne shook her head solemnly. "Not in Nordia. In Avenlor. In fact, he happens to be right here in Vanelle." Now even Theodric looked intrigued. "And who might that be? If the two truly care for each other, I can grant the marriage today. Such a union would fulfill the princess's wish and strengthen the ties between Nordia and Avenlor. A perfect outcome for both sides." Daphne nodded eagerly. "Your Majesty speaks wisely.

That is exactly my thought." Theodric asked, "So who is this man?" Daphne's smile deepened.

"Someone Your Majesty knows quite well." "Someone I know?" Theodric scanned the hall.

"Yes," Daphne said gently. "The man Princess Flowira admires... is none other than the Duke of Duskmoor." The hall erupted in shock. Cassian remained utterly unmoved. Elowen, meanwhile, widened her eyes in convincing surprise. 2.4K 月1 3/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 O admin

Chapter 356 A Dangerous Proposal 零15% Finished Even Theodric looked startled. His brows knit together. Did Princess Flowira truly tell you this herself?" Daphne answered calmly, "If she had not said it to me personally, how would I dare spread such a claim? That would be deceiving the throne." Elowen spoke then, her voice sounding hesitant and strained. "Your Highness... are you certain the princess meant affection? Could it not simply be admiration?" Daphne shot her a glance. Already nervous?

The moment she heard someone liked Cassian, Elowen was afraid her place as Duchess might be threatened. But Daphne had no intention of letting her brush this aside. She drew a breath and said with a tight smile, "Have you forgotten? The Duke of Duskmoor is renowned for his military victories, especially his triumphs against Nordia. The princess grew up hearing countless

tales of his bravery. Naturally, she admired him long before arriving here." She continued smoothly, "When the Nordian delegation first arrived in Vanelle, it was the Duke of Duskmoor who welcomed them at the city gates.

That was when the princess first saw him. She was captivated at first sight." Elowen frowned. "But the princess does not speak Avenlor's court language very well. Perhaps there was some misunderstanding." Theodric nodded slightly. Daphne gave a soft scoff. "The princess may not speak the language, but I invited an official from the Ministry of Rites to assist us. He translated our conversation word for word. There were witnesses present. None of this could possibly be fabricated." Elowen seemed ready to say more. But Daphne did not give her the chance.

Turning to Theodric, she said earnestly, "Your Majesty, Nordia and Avenlor truly wish to establish lasting ties, then marriage is the best path. If Princess Flowira were to marry the Duke of Duskmoor, our two nations would become family, Such an alliance would benefit the people, strengthen the realm, and secure peace for generations." The idea sounded appealing, yet Theodric's remained furrowed. brow Daphne knew exactly what he was thinking and smiled reassuringly. "It is true that the Duke already has a duchess. However, the princess herself told me she does not mind her rank.

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She is willing to serve as a secondary consort and remain by His Grace's side." Theodric fell silent for a moment, his fingers tapping lightly against the armrest of the throne. Then his gaze shifted to Flowira. "Fifth Princess," he said, "is what the Crown Princess claims true?" 1/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 356 A Dangerous Proposal Flowira looked confused. 81 . 15% ] Finished Daphne smiled politely. "Your Majesty, perhaps you forgot. The princess does not understand our language. She likely cannot follow your question." She turned to Byron.

"Perhaps you could explain." Byron glanced at her briefly. "It is true that the princess visited the Crown Prince's Wing twice," he said carefully. "However... regarding her supposed affection for the Duke of Duskmoor..." He hesitated, choosing his words with caution. "I have accompanied the princess often, yet I have never personally heard her speak of such feelings." Isla's brows drew together slightly. After years of navigating palace intrigues, her instincts were sharp. At this moment, she clearly sensed that something unusual was unfolding. She offered a gentle smile.

"In my view, this is most likely a misunderstanding. The Duke of Duskmoor is famous for his victories. Women across the realm admire him. It is only natural for a young princess to feel admiration for a great hero." She continued lightly, "And as for the Crown Princess, her concern for the peace between our nations speaks highly of her sense of duty. Such goodwill deserves recognition. I suppose I must prepare a generous reward for her tonight." With those words, she gracefully provided a way for the situation to settle. Theodric nodded slightly, clearly willing to let the matter end there.

But Daphne was far from satisfied. An opportunity like this rarely appeared. If she allowed it to slip away now, she might never again see Elowen put in such an awkward position. Her nails dug into her palm as she steadied herself. "Your Majesty, please allow me to explain further," she insisted. "This is not a misunderstanding. The princess's feelings are delicate matters of the heart. Naturally she would not discuss them with a male envoy. It is perfectly understandable that he would not know." Isla's eyes darkened slightly with displeasure. But Daphne had already committed herself.

She rose from her seat and walked directly toward the throne, Stopping before it, she bowed deeply with flawless respect. "Your Majesty.I speak today at great risk." She lifted her head, her gaze burning with conviction. "My proposal that Princess Flowira marry the Duke of Duskmoor as a secondary consort is not only because she admires him. It is also out of sincere concern for the royal family and for His Grace himself." 2/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 356 A Dangerous Proposal Her eyes flicked toward Cassian.

15% Finished "The Duchess of Duskmoor has been married into the household for nearly half a year. Yet His Grace's injured leg shows no sign of recovery. He still requires a wheelchair whenever he moves about." She spoke slowly and deliberately. "Does that not suggest that the duchess's care for him has been... insufficient?" Theodric's expression hardened. His voice carried unmistakable authority. "Cassian's condition is treated by royal physicians. Elown's is young and not trained in medicine. What could she possibly do about such an illness?" "And besides." Lyra suddenly lifted her head.

At twelve years old, her voice was bright and clear. "Didn't Aunt say earlier that she doesn't want to share her home with other women?" she said innocently. "Then why is the Crown Princess trying so hard to send another wife to the Duke?" She tilted her head thoughtfully. "That Nordan princess looked very skilled with that blade. If she and little Aunt ended up fighting, who would Uncle Cassian help?" 2.4K 1 admin

Chapter 357 A Thunderous Claim 1.15% 前 Finished Lyra tilted her head, blinking those clear, guileless eyes she looked toward Theodric. "Father, isn't that right?" Elira clicked her tongue lightly, feigning a scolding tone "Don't talk nonsense." Lyra pouted, muttering under her breath, "But it's true. The childish remark made the atmosphere momentarily awkward, almost comical.

By sheer accident, it also pulled Elowen out of the corner she had been pushed into. Theodric's brows knit tighter. His gaze sharpened as it swept toward Daphne.

He was not ignorant of the old tensions between the Garrett family and the Hale family, nor of the petty rivalry between Daphne and Elowen. At this moment, the suspicion forming in his mind had already settled into near certainty. Looking down from the dais, his voice turned cold, heavy with the pressure of a coming storm. "Crown Princess. Did you come here tonight intending to make things difficult for the Duchess of Duskmoo?" Daphne's heart lurched wildly. She hurriedly shook her head. "Your Majesty, I would never dare.

That was not my intention at all..." Theodric ignored her defense entirely. His gaze slid past her and landed directly on "Was this your idea?" Alaric froze for a split second before jumping to his feet. He bowed deeply. Alaric. ng "Father, please see clearly. I knew nothing of this matter I would never presume such a thing." Inside, he was cursing furiously. That idiot Daphne! Why bring this up now? Not only had she put Elowen in an impossible position, she had dragged him straight into the mess as well. "How very convenient," Theodric said wit a cold snort.

His voice was not loud, yet the entire hall felt the weight of it pressing down like thunderclouds. Why would the Crown P "If this was not done with your approval, why would the Crown Princess dare to behave so boldly in my presence?" When a ruler's anger ignites, even the air in the room seems to tighten. could The vast hall fell into dead silence. One have heard a pin drop. Cold sweat beaded along Alaric's temples. He wanted to explain, yet he truly had no idea why Daphne had suddenly started this confrontation tonight. The words aught in his throat.

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In the end, he could only lower his head further.. 1/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 o 林会 15% 日 Chapter 357 A Thunderous Claim Finished Daphne felt that crushing pressure as well. It was as though a mountain had settled onto her shoulders. Cold sweat soaked through her back as her legs gave out beneath her. She dropped to the floor with a heavy thud. Fighting down her terror, her voice trembled. "Your Majesty, please calm your anger. This matter, this was entirely my own idea. It has absolutely nothing to do with His Highness." Theodric said nothing. Pressing her forehead to the floor, Daphne continued.

"Elowen and I grew up together. We were once as close as sisters. How could I deliberately make things difficult for her? His Grace's injured leg aside, the Duke still has no heir. The sages once said that among the greatest failings of a family is leaving no descendants. I am not asking for the Duke and Duchess to separate. I only thought that if Princess Flowira were welcomed into Duskmoor Manor as a secondary consort, she might soon give His Grace a child and continue the bloodline.

That would be a blessing for the royal family and for the realm itself." Her voice grew steadier as she continued. "I am only thinking of the royal bloodline. In truth, I'm thinking of the Duchess as well. If she remains childless for too long, people will inevitably accuse her of jealousy and say she lacks virtue. That reputation would follow her forever." Every word landed squarely on the matter that had long weighed on Theodric's mind. For a royal family, heirs were no small matter. Cassian was the brother Theodric trusted most, yet he was no longer young and still had no children.

It had always been a quiet worry in Theodric's heart. The hall fell into brief silence. Seeing that the ruler had not immediately objected, Daphne pressed on. "And besides, if what Lyra said

earlier is true, then the fault lies with the Duchess. What man in this world, especially one of royal blood, has only one wife? Your Majesty has Her Majesty the Empress, Lady Elira, and many other consorts in the palace. Her Majesty has always been gracious and broad-minded.

As a daughter-in-law of the royal house, how can the Duchess of Dusk hoo be so narrow-hearted that she cannot tolerate even one secondary consort?" Elowen listened to the entire speech and smiled faintly, Daphne had already dug the pit herself. Now it was time for her to fall into it. Elowen rose and offered a respectful bow toward Theodic. Her eyes were bright and steady. "Your Majesty, I'm afraid I cannot agree to this." ||| O 2/3 12:30 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 357 A Thunderous Claim Finished Theodic slowly turned his gaze toward her.

His eyes were deep and unreadable, carrying the unmistakable scrutiny of a ruler. Daphne let out a soft sigh. "Aunt Elowen, I just explained the situation very clearly. Why are you still so stubborn? Welcoming Princess Flowira into the manor as a secondary consort would benefit His Grace, the royal family, and even you. Everything I've said comes from sincere concern for your sake." On the surface she looked sorrowful. Inside, she was almost giddy with anticipation. She had already tied the matter of taking another wife to the interests of the realm. Yet Elowen still refused outright.

After tonight, the label of jealousy would cling to her no matter what. ver recover, A woman's reputation was priceless in this world. Once was stained, Elowen would and even Hale Manor behind her would share the disgrace. The thought sent a twisted thrill racing through Daphne Elowen's expression did not change. She spoke calmly, His Grace is not without an heir." Daphne sneered inwardly. To avoid accepting another woman into the manor, Elowen had even

resorted to such an absurd excuse. Theodric's brows lifted slightly. "What do you mean by that?" 2.4K 1 3/3 admin

Chapter 358 The Unexpected News Daphne spoke first, her voice deliberately laced with surprise. 14%8 Finished "Surely the Duchess isn't claiming she secretly arranged for one of His Grace's attendants to share his bed, and that woman is already expecting?" Elowen did not even glance at her. She met Theodric's gaze calmly and spoke each word with absolute clarity. "Your Majesty, I am carrying His Grace's child." The words exploded through the hall like a thunderclap Alaric reacted the most violently. His head snapped up, his eyes locking onto Elowen's still-flat abdomen.

Shock flooded his face. She's... pregnant? Pregnant with Cassian's child? Which means... They've already shared a bed. The mere thought of that closeness, skin against skin, made the world spin around him. Pain twisted through his chest. He had never even touched Elowen's hand. Yet Cassian had already... "How is that possible!" Daphne cried out in shock, forgetting her composure entirely. Elowen slowly turned her gaze toward her. "Crown Princess, your reaction is rather puzzling. His Grace and I were joined in marriage by Your Majesty's own decree.

We are husband and wife in every rightful sense. If I am carrying his child, that is the most natural thing in the world. Why would it be impossible? Daphne choked on the question. Color rushed to her cheeks. "You... you're only saying this to stop Princess Flowira from entering the manor as a consort..." "So you believe," Elowen continued calmly, "that I would lie to Your Majesty about pregnancy simply to prevent another woman from entering the manor?" In truth,

that was exactly what Daphne suspected. But hearing it spoken aloud by Elowen somehow made the accusation sound far more dangerous.

Suppressing the strange unease creeping into her chest, Daphne forced a steady tone, "Aunt Elowen exaggerates. I would never dare think such a disrespectful thing. However, this matter III O r 1/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 14%0 Chapter 358 The Unexpected News Finished concerns the royal bloodline. It is only proper to be cautious. I believe it would be best to summon a royal physician and confirm the matter, simply for everyone's peace of mind." The moment the words left her mouth, she caught the brief flicker of hesitation in Elowen's eyes. So she really was bluffing. Joy surged through Daphne.

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She seized the moment and raised her voice, issuing orders before anyone else could speak.

"Guards. Go to the Royal Medical Hall immediately and bring the physician on duty here at once." She was so eager to expose Elowen's supposed lie that she completely failed to notice the sudden darkness settling over Theodric's expression on the throne. Elowen, however, was not surprised at all. Of course Theodric was displeased. At this grand banquet, with envoys from every corner of the realm present, the Crown Princess had begun issuing orders without waiting for his command.

Where did that leave the authority of the throne? What should have been a joyous evening had been turned into chaos. No ruler would be pleased. Isla noticed Theodric's displeasure immediately. Inside, she was cursing Daphne for being a fool. Yet worried that Daphne might drag the Crown Prince down with her, she quickly stepped in to smooth things over. "Daphne, that's enough. The Duchess of Duskmoor is known for her virtue and dignity. She would never lie about something as serious as an heir. Your behavior is extremely improper.

Apologize to the Duchess at once." But Daphne had already been carried away by her own momentum. She lifted her head stubbornly and looked straight at Isl. "Your Majesty, it is precisely because this matter is so serious that I dare not be careless. Whether the Duchess is truly expecting concerns His Grace's heir. Summoning a physician to verify the matter is the most responsible course. If the Duchess truly is with child, I will accept whatever punishment Your Majesty sees fit." Isla opened her mouth to respond. Before she could speak, a cold laugh came from the throne, "Summon him."

Theodric finally spoke. Each word sounded as if it had been forced out between clenched teeth.. "Since the Crown Princess insists, bring the physician. Bring him here and let him examine her thoroughly." 2/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 a Chapter 358 The Unexpected News The moment she heard that tone, Isla's heart sank. Theodric was truly angry. This matter would not end easily tonight. At this point... she could only hope that Elowen was not actually pregnant. Finished If Daphne were punished, that was one thing. But if the matter implicated Alaric as well, the consequences could be disastrous.

Daphne, completely unaware of the storm about to descend upon her, stared fixedly at Elowen. Elowen very cooperatively allowed a trace of unease to appear on her face. Watching her, Daphne became even more certain. Elowen, you're finished. Moments later, an elderly physician with white-streaked hair hurried into the hall carrying a medicine case. He had barely stepped inside when Daphne impatiently pointed toward Elowen. "Corwin. Good, you're here. Go examine the Duchess of Duskmoor immediately.

Be thorough." Corwin had served in the palace for many years and understood court etiquette perfectly. He ignored Daphne's order entirely, giving her only a brief glance before walking

steadily toward the dais. Lowering himself respectfully, he bowed deeply. "Your Majesty, Your Majesty," he said to Theodric and Isla. Theodric's face remained dark as stone. "Go. Examine the Duchess of Duskmoor carefully." "Yes, Your Majesty," Corwin rose and approached the seats where Cassian and Elowen were sitting. He bowed respectfully to them both. "Your Grace." Cassian's expression remained unreadable.

He lifted his chin slightly. "Go ahead." 13 2.4K admin

Chapter 359 Hidden Truth "Yes." 14% Finished Corwin inclined his head respectfully. He gently took Elowen's wrist in his hand, his fingers resting over her pulse as he closed his eyes for a moment, concentrating with the quiet focus of long practice. For a moment, the entire hall fell into a suffocating silence. Across the chamber, Alaric stared fixedly at Corwin's expression, his heart pounding with a single frantic plea. Please... not pregnant. Please don't let her be pregnant. Elowen belonged to him. How could she possibly carry another man's child?

After a long moment, Corwin's brows shifted slightly. Slowly, he withdrew his hand. Seeing the grave look on his face, the smile tugging at Daphne's lips nearly broke free. "Your Grace," she said with feigned gentleness, "sometimes a lady's monthly cycle can be irregular, or a stomach illness may cause symptoms that resemble morning sickness. Many women mistake such discomfort for pregnancy. It happens often enough." She paused, her tone turning righteous. "But what truly matters is this. As the principal wife, one must place her husband's heirs above all else.

Welcoming additional wives into the household and ensuring the family line continues. That is the true path of virtue." No one responded. Corwin turned, his steps steady as he returned before the throne. Bowing deeply once more, his voice rang clearly through the hall. "Congratulations,

Your Majesty. Congratulations, Your Grace. The Duchess of Duskmoor is indeed with child. Judging from the pulse, the pregnancy has already passed two months." Alaric froze. His mind went blank, the words echoing in his ears. Elowen...is pregnant. She's carrying another man's child. So...

they really have shared a marriage bed. The realization hit him like a blow to the chest.

Unbidden, vivid images flooded Alaric's mind. Candlelight dim behind heavy bed curtains.

Elowen beneath Cassian, soft and yielding in his arms. Crack, A sharp sound split the air. The white jade goblet in Alaric's hand shattered under the force of his grip. 1/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 00 Chapter 359 Hidden Truth Fragments bit into his palm. Dark blood mingled with the spilled wine as it ran down his fingers. Beside him, the palace maid Iris gasped softly and hurried to wipe his hand with a silk cloth.

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"That's impossible!" Daphne suddenly shrieked, her voice shrill as she glared at Corwin.

"Corwin! Are you certain? How could she possibly be pregnant?!" At the throne, Theodric frowned in displeasure. Finished Corwin ignored her entirely. Facing the throne with unwavering composure, he spoke with firm respect. "Your Grace's pulse is strong and steady. The signs are unmistakable. The Duchess of Duskmoor is with child." He paused briefly. "When Her Majesty carried His Highness, it was I who attended her as well." Daphne's vision swam.

She staggered back two steps, her legs suddenly unsteady. Only two words echoed through her mind. It's over. Suppressing his irritation toward Daphne for the moment, Theodric slowly exhaled. "Your medical skill is one I trust." His gaze shifted to Cassian and Elowen, and he forced a faint smile. "This is wonderful news. Originally I planned to give each of you a red

envelope tonight. Now it seems I must prepare another one for the young heir as well." Elowen smiled brightly. "Thank you for Your Majesty's kindness." Isla reacted quickly as well.

A warm, motherly smile spread across her face as she spoke in a gently reproachful tone. "You child. Such joyful news, yet you kept it hidden from everyone. To reveal it so suddenly tonight truly startled us all. We are family. If you were expecting, you should have said so earlier and allowed everyone to share in the happiness." Her voice was soft, but the implication was clear. Elowen's silence had caused tonight's chaos.

"That was my decision." 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 @O Chapter 359 Hidden Truth 林家 14% 自

Finished Cassian spoke coolly, cutting off Isla's probing with ease The smile on Isla's face stiffened. Cassian continued calmly, "Doctor Dray advised that the early months of a pregnancy are often uncertain. It is best to wait until that time has safely passed." Cassian's tone remained calm. "This is my first child. Naturally I chose to be cautious.

I meant to wait until the pregnancy was secure before coming to inform Your Majesty, so that we would not celebrate too soon." His gaze shifted toward Daphne, his tone turning colder "What I did not anticipate was the Crown Princess taking such keen interest in the private affairs of my household. She seemed quite eager to arrange another wife for me." He glanced briefly at Elowen. "My duchess remembered my wishes. I have no intention of taking concubines. One marriage for life is enough for me. But tonight we were pushed into a corner.

She had no choice but to reveal the pregnancy." Under his gaze, Daphne felt a chill crawl through her spine. "I... I only meant well," she stammered. "It was all for the sake of harmony between our two nations..." "Harmony between nations?" Cassian cut her off coldly. "Sending a princess from an allied kingdom into a prince's household as a secondary wife. Does the Crown

Princess truly believe such diplomacy is honorable?" Turning toward the throne, his voice deepened. "Your Majesty.

If Avenlor's Fifth Princess were sent to Nordia only to become another man's secondary wife, how would you respond? What would the court say? Would that strengthen relations between our nations, or would it insult Avenlor's dignity and invite conflict?" Daphne's face turned pale. Cassian continued mercilessly. "Furthermore, whether Princess Flowira truly holds affection for me remains uncertain. The princess does not speak our language well, and even the deputy envoy appears unclear about the matter. The truth is still far from established," 13 2.4K 3/3 admin

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Chapter 360 Truth Revealed Panic surged through Daphne's chest. "Your Majesty! I would never dare deceive the throne!" Theodric remained silent, his expression cold. Growing desperate, Daphne turned toward Flowira, who had remained quiet the entire time. "Fifth Princess! Say something! Tell them the truth!" Flowira tilted her head, looking thoroughly confused. "Your Majesty." At that moment, Zachary rose calmly from his seat. 林命 14%售 Finished He offered a formal Nordian salute toward the throne, neither humble nor arrogant.

When he spoke, his Avenlor speech was clear and fluent. "Your Majesty of Avenlor. My younger sister Flowira has practiced martial training since childhood. She is straightforward by nature and deeply admires true warriors." He inclined his head slightly toward Cassian. "The Duke of Duskmoor's reputation is renowned across the land. His military achievements are well known. My sister has heard of them often and does indeed admire Your Grace. That much is true." Hearing this, Daphne finally released a long breath. Her eyes reddened slightly with relief. At least Zachary was supporting her.

But Zachary had not finished speaking. He lowered his head a little further. "Flowira did accept the Crown Princess's invitation to visit the Crown Prince's Wing twice. After returning, she told me about the conversations they had." He continued evenly, "Both times, the Crown Princess mentioned the Duchess of Duskmoor. However, my sister's grasp of Avenlor speech is rather poor. She only understood fragments of what was said." Daphne froze. A sense of dread crept into her chest. Zachary's voice remained calm.

"Just now, the Crown Princess claimed that Flowira eagerly wished to marry the Duke of Duskmoor as a secondary wife. That is something I have never heard by sister say," He looked toward Cassian again. "She admires Your Grace, yes. But only in the way one warrior respects another. There has never been the slightest hint of romantic attachment." He paused. 1/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 00 Chapter 360 Truth Revealed Finished "Furthermore, our father has never discussed a marriage alliance between our nations. Nordia sincerely hopes for lasting friendship with Avenlor.

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But as Your Grace rightly said, a princess of Nordia is of royal blood. She would never be sent abroad as another man secondary wife. Such a proposal would not be proper diplomacy."

Daphne's hands trembled violently. "You... you..." "Still," Zachary added calmly, "it would be best to confirm the matter directly." He turned toward Flowira and exchanged a few words with her in the Nordian language. Afterward, he bowed once more toward the throne. "Your Majesty. Flowira says she never told the Crown Princess that she wished to marry the Duke of Duskmoor." He continued.

"She also says the Crown Princess seemed dissatisfied with the Duchess of Duskmoor, even openly irritated by her. Several times, the Crown Princess suggested that Flowira replace the

duchess." Flowira had refused, Zachary explained, saying she did not understand such matters. "The Crown Princess replied that everything could be arranged on her behalf." "You... you're lying!" Daphne's eyes turned bloodshot. Theodric's expression had darkened to a frightening degree. Suppressing his anger, he issued a cold command. "The Crown Princess is unwell.

Escort her away to rest." Two senior attendants immediately stepped forward to support Daphne. But suddenly, Daphne wrenched herself free, as if some desperate strength had surged through her. "Father! Mother!" she cried hoarsely. "I was framed! Elowen set this trap for me today!" A deep weariness flickered across Theodric's face. He rubbed his throbbing temple. Cassian let out a low laugh.

"Crown Princess, you truly are remarkable." His tone remained even, but every word cut like a blade "First you insisted that Princess Flowira was deeply in love with me and eager to become my secondary wife. Then you accused my duchess of failing to produce an heir and being unworthy of her position, even suggesting she was jealous and petty." He stepped forward slightly. 2/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 o Chapter 360 Truth Revealed 14% Finished "Now that the truth has come to light and your scheme has collapsed, you claim that my duchess was the one plotting against you?" His gaze hardened.

"Must all reason in this world bend to the will of the Crown Princess? When you fail to bully someone successfully, you simply accuse the victim instead?" At that moment, Elira sighed softly. "Now that it's mentioned, I find myself puzzled as well." She spoke gently. "The Crown Princess insists she was plotted against by the Duchess of Duskmoor. Yet tonight the duchess has done nothing but respond to accusations placed upon her. Everyone present has seen that clearly." Her tone remained mild.

"If this were truly the duchess's scheme, how could she possibly predict that the Crown Princess would bring up the matter of taking another wife? Or foresee that the Crown Princess would question her ability to bear children?" She shook her head slightly. "That would require quite an extraordinary power of foresight." "I... I..." Daphne stood there trembling, utterly speechless. Her chest rose and fell violently as her mind spun into chaos. She knew. She was finished. Improper conduct before the throne. Slandering a royal aunt. Deceiving the emperor. Damaging foreign relations.

Any one of these crimes alone could destroy her. Driven by overwhelming terror, she bit down hard on her lip until she tasted blood. Then suddenly, a thought struck her. Her head snapped up as she cried hoarsely. "It must have been arranged by the Duchess of Duskmoor and the Nordian envoys! They worked together and deliberately misled me! I'm innocent!" At this, Roderic, Nordia's chief envoy, let out a mocking laugh. In slightly clumsy Avenlor speech, he remarked, "Listen to that. Apparently blaming her own people isn't enough.

Now she wants to drag us into it too," The blunt remark reached Theodric's ears. His remaining patience finally snapped. "I didn't... Your Majesty,.. I only did it for Avenlor... for the royal family..." Daphne continued pleading desperately, her voice thin and trembling as it filled the hall. "Enough!" 3/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 360 Truth Revealed 2.4K admin

Chapter 361 Fallen Crown Theodric's hand slammed hard against the table. 14% Finished The sharp crack echoed through the hall, and the pressure of imperial authority seemed to crash down over everyone present. Daphne's voice died instantly. Inside the hall, everyone, including Isla and Elira, hurried to rise from their seats. One after another, they bowed deeply toward Theodric. Theodric's voice was icy. "One moment you claim the Duchess of Duskmoor schemed against

you. The next, you say she conspired with the envoys from Nordia." His eyes were sharp with anger.

"And yet the Duchess of Duskmoor has never even met the Nordan envoys before tonight. How exactly were they supposed to plot against you?" His tone turned harsher. "Meanwhile, you invited Princess Flowira to the Crown Prince's Wing again and again for private conversations."

Daphne's face turned ghostly pale. "And another thing." Theodric narrowed his eyes dangerously. "Explain this to me. What exactly do you possess that anyone would want to gain from plotting against you?"

Why would the Duchess of Duskmoor or the Nordan envoys go through the trouble of scheming against you?" Daphne opened her mouth. "Because..." Because Elowen's horse had died. And she had been involved. Because Elowen and she had long since become bitter enemies. Because Elowen still loved the Crown Prince... But the words stuck in her throat. If Elowen truly loved Alaric, then why had she shared a bed with Cassian? Why was she now carrying Cassian's child? No matter how she tried to explain it, the argument simply would not hold. Where had things gone wrong? Daphne's mind spun in confusion.

For the life of her, she could not figure it out. Suddenly, Roderic spoke, "Perhaps the Crown Princess simply looks down on Nordia," he said lightly. "After all, in her eyes, Fifth Princess is apparently only worthy of becoming a secondary wife." Daphne froze. Theodric ground his teeth. Hearing such words spoken by a Nordan envoy was a humiliation beyond. 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 361 Fallen Crown words. He drew a slow breath, forcing his tone into something resembling diplomacy. Finished "My apologies to Prince Roderic, Prince Zachary, Princess Flowira, and the vice envoy.

It is a disgrace within my own household that such a vile creature has caused rouble tonight and nearly damaged the friendship between our nations. I hope this small matter will not affect the bond between Avenlor and Nordia." Roderic's lips curved with faint amusement, clearly about to respond. But Zachary spoke first, his tone respectful. "Your Majesty is too gracious. Nordia has always wished for lasting friendship with Avenlor. That has never changed.

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I trust that tonight Your Majesty's clear judgment and fairness will swiftly remove those who seek to stir trouble." "That is only proper." Theodric inclined his head slightly Then he looked down coldly at Daphne. "Daphne Garrett," he said sharply. "You claim everything you've done was for Avenlor and the royal house. Yet your words and actions have undermined the stability of the realm, damaged foreign relations, and sown discord within the royal family." His gaze darkened.

"You manipulated a Nordian princess, falsely accused the Duchess of Duskmoor, and even dared to deceive the throne itself. Your crimes are unforgivable." He paused briefly, then glanced toward Alaric beside her. His expression hardened further. "And you. You are master of the Crown Prince's Wing, yet you cannot even control your own wife. You allowed her to behave like this before the throne and create such a disgraceful spectacle. Tell me, Alaric, what kind of Crown Prince are you?" Alaric barely had time to process the revelation about Elowen and Cassian sharing a bed.

Panic surged through him. Inside, he was already cursing Daphne as a complete idiot. Why is she suddenly stepping forward tonight and saying something like that? Alaric lowered his head deeply toward the floor. "I've failed in oversight and discipline within my household," he said, his voice trembling. "I beg Father to punish me severely," Theodric let out a cold laugh. "Oh, I

fully intend to." His gaze returned to Daphne, icy and merciless. "Hear my decree. "The Crown Princess, Daphne Garrett, has shown grave moral failure and reckless conduct.

She has falsely accused a royal duchess, deceived the throne, and nearly caused a diplomatic disaster. ||| O 2/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 @o Chapter 361 Fallen Crown 14% Finished "From this day forward, she is stripped of her title as Crown Princess and reduced to commoner status. "She will be confined to the Secluded Wing for the rest of her life. "She will not leave it unless carried out in death." Elowen blinked slightly. She had known Daphne would be punished. But even she had not expected it to be this severe. A hint of surprise crossed her face as she glanced sideways.

Daphne's pupils shrank violently. Her entire body suddenly went limp, collapsing to the floor. Still unwilling to give up, she sucked in a desperate breath and raised her head, pleading frantically. "Your Majesty, you can't do this to me! I am the Crown Prince's lawful wife! I'm your daughter-in-law!" The words daughter-in-law sounded filthy to Theodric He spoke slowly, each word sharp. "From today onward you are not." Daphne's mind spiraled into panic. With nowhere left to turn, she scrambled across the floor toward Isla, nearly crawling as she went. "Mother... Your Majesty...

please save me! Please, Your Majesty!" Isla's heart jumped violently. Tonight's plan had already failed disastrously. Losing Daphne alone was acceptable. But she could not allow herself or Alaric to be dragged down with her. Her jaw tightened. "What are you all standing there for?" she snapped. "Take her away immediately!" "Yes, Your Majesty." The palace matrons understood at once. One stepped forward and clamped a hand firmly over Daphne's mouth. Together they dragged her out of the hall. Daphne struggled desperately, twisting and thrashing. But she could not break free.

In utter despair, she turned her head and glared at Elowen. Her eyes burned with furious hatred and unwilling surrender. Elowen felt the stare. She lifted her gaze and met it calmly. What was Daphne unwilling to accept? Everything that had happened tonight was the result of her own actions. Elowen raised a hand and gently rested it over her still-late stomach. dragged her dragged wiftly ||| r 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 361 Fallen Crown She thought silently. Such a clever little one. Already helping me take revenge before you're even born. Another thought followed. Merry Chirtsmas, Ember.

2.4K admin

Chapter 362 Last Gift This is the last gift I'll ever give you. Elowen let her gaze drift across the hall once more before it settled on Alaric. You're not getting away with this either. Alaric seemed to feel the weight of her stare and turned toward her. His eyes were filled with a deep, unmistakable pain, the kind that might have stirred sympathy in someone else. Elowen only rolled her eyes and looked away, unwilling to waste another moment on him. He really does love putting on a show. 4% Finished.

With the matter of the Crown Prince's Wing finally resolved, much of the anger in Theodric's chest had eased. His gaze moved slowly over the gathered nobles and ministers who still held their deep bows before the throne. When he spoke again, his voice had softened slightly, though exhaustion lingered beneath "Rise, all of you. This is a night meant for reunion and celebration. There is no need to remain so tense and spoil the occasion." "Thank you, Your Majesty." The hall answered in unison. One by one, the nobles and officials straightened and returned to their seats.

Even so, the mood within the hall could no longer return to its earlier ease. The celebration continued, but the laughter and conversation now carried a careful restraint. By the time the banquet finally came to an end, the moon had already climbed high above the palace towers. Theodric rose first from his seat. Isla followed closely behind. "Your Majesty," she began softly. Theodric did not even glance back. "What is it? Have you come to plead for the Crown Prince?" A flicker of unease crossed Isla's heart, though her expression remained poised and dignified. "Your Majesty misunderstands.

Tonight is the gathering and as Empress it is only proper that I remain by Your Majesty's side," Theodric gave no response. Isla let out a soft sigh, then continued with gentle patience, "Your Majesty's wisdom surely sees that tonight's matter was entirely the doing of Daphne, Alaric has always been a straightforward child. He knew nothing of it. After his earlier mistake, Your Majesty has already confined him to the Crown Prince's Wing for quite some time, and he has come to understand his fault.

What happened tonight was merely the result of Daphne's reckless actions dragging him into the matter "The Crown Prince may have known nothing about tonight," Theodric said suddenly, 1/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 362 Last Gift Then he turned his head slightly and looked at her. "But what about you, Isla? Did you know nothing either Isla froze for a brief moment. "During tonight's banquet, you and Daphne were practically echoing one another's words," Theodric continued coldly.

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"Did you truly believe I could not see through it?" "Your Majesty, I..." 14% 1 Finished "And your Baker family," Theodric added, his eyes narrowing. "These past weeks you have grown remarkably close with the Garrett household, with Daphne, and with the entire Garrett family.

Do you imagine that I have not noticed?" His voice lowered, carrying a quiet warning. Fear spread instantly across Isla's face. "I would never dare." Theodric let out a cold laugh and turned away. "You will not attend me tonight. I will spend the evening in Elira's palace." Isla no longer dared to speak.

She could only watch as Theodric walked away, his figure gradually disappearing down the long corridor beyond the hall. Daphne. At that moment, Isla wished she could kill that foolish woman herself. Even so, she understood the truth of what had happened tonight. Daphne had indeed been foolish, but she had also clearly stepped straight into a carefully prepared trap. Elowen. Isla's gaze darkened. She had underestimated that young woman. Theodric had always trusted Cassian deeply. More than once he had spoken openly of how he would not object if the crown someday passed to Cassian instead.

It was only the court ministers who had protested, insisting that Cassian had no heir and that a ruler without descendants would threaten the stability of the realm. Yet now Elowen was carrying Cassian's child. If that child were born safely into the world, then the future of the throne might very well shift into the hands of that couple. And there was still the matter of Cassian's legs. 2/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 362 Last Gift 14% Finished If Cassian were ever to discover the truth behind what had happened to them, the Baker family would undoubtedly face his full wrath.

Isla clenched her teeth. She could not afford to sit still and wait for disaster to arrive. By the time Elowen and Cassian returned to Duskmoor Manor, the night had grown quite late. Even so, the manor remained brightly lit, lanterns glowing warmly beneath the eaves and along the stone paths. Festive decorations hung throughout the courtyards, reminding everyone that it was still

the night of the celebration. Gerda then stepped forward to greet "Your Grace," she said respectfully to Elowen, "Martha has been waiting here for you." Elowen looked slightly surprised.

When she entered Stillwater Court, she immediately saw the plump cook standing nearby. The moment Martha noticed Elowen and Cassian, she quickly wiped her hands on her apron and bowed respectfully. "Greetings, Your Grace." Elowen smiled faintly at her. "It's Christmas Eve. Why didn't you return home to celebrate with your family? I gave everyone leave today." Among the servants of Duskmoor Manor, some had no families left and were bound to the household for life, such as Anson, Mira, Cora, and Gerda. Others worked under ordinary service contracts.

The kitchen staff, including Martha, belonged to this group, which meant they were free to return home once their duties were finished. Because it was Christmas Eve, Elowen had granted leave to many of them. In her mind, a holiday meant for family reunions should be spent with loved ones whenever possible, and she was more than happy to make that possible for them. Martha scratched the back of her head and gave a slightly embarrassed smile. "I felt a little uneasy staying home, Your Grace.

I was worried I might not have handled the matter properly." She was referring to what had happened earlier that evening. A few days before, Martha had suddenly asked to see Elwen and explained everything in careful detail. "Your Grace, there's a neighbor from my hometown who now works in the kitchen at the Baker estate. Around noon today she came looking for me and asked whether I might want to earn a bit of extra money.

She said someone outside greatly admired the Duchess of Duskmoor and was willing to pay five dollars just to hear about Your Grace's recent situation." Elowen had found the wording rather

amusing. 3/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 0 Chapter 362 Last Gift "That is certainly a clever way of putting it." Instead of asking questions directly, they had disguised the request as admiration. Though the price itself seemed rather stingy. Only five dollars? 林完14% Finished 脂材 "My monthly wages from Your Grace are already three dollars," Martha had said proudly at the time.

"And not long ago His Grace praised my bread dough and rewarded me with fifty dollars." Her face had been bright with satisfaction. "Fifty dollars could support my entire family for years. Compared to that, five coins truly isn't worth my attention." Hearing those words, Elowen had looked at her with clear approval in her eyes. 2.4K 4/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 a Awakening Love:

Reborn to Be His Du admin

Chapter 363 Night 14% Finished "She asked me about it again," Martha said. "I wasn't sure what Your Grace intended, so I didn't turn her down right away. I told her I spend most of my time stuck in the small kitchen and don't really know what's going on with Your Grace's household, so I couldn't promise anything. I said I needed to come back and ask first." She paused, then added, "She was quite generous though. She gave me one dollar up front.

Said if I handled things well, she'd give me the remaining four." As she spoke, Martha pulled a dollar from her pocket and held it out with both hands, offering it to Elowen. Elowen smiled. "Keep it," she said lightly. "A dollars isn't nothing. No reason to turn down money that's already in your hands." Martha looked a little embarrassed, but she tucked the money back into her pocket anyway. "Then... if she asks again," she said cautiously, "what should I tell her?" Elowen replied calmly, "Just tell her this. His Grace values heirs greatly and hopes for a child soon.

That's why he invited Doctor Dray to stay at the manor for a while. But despite all that, there's been no news from me. His Grace has been... rather displeased about it." Martha nodded and

repeated the explanation exactly as instructed. The story eventually reached the Garrett family, and Daphne believed every word. Together with the quiet cooperation from Zachary and Flowira, Daphne was slowly guided step by step into the trap. And tonight, in front of Theodric, the royal family, and the gathered nobles, she had finally made her move against Elowen.

Everything had unfolded exactly as planned. Now Elowen looked at Martha with a gentle smile. "Everything went smoothly tonight. That's thanks to you handling things so carefully." Only then did Martha finally breathe out in relief. Elowen added, "Go see Mira later and collect ten dollars." Martha froze, She immediately began waving her hands in alarm. "No no, that won't do! Your Grace already gave us money and food for the gifts. I'm more than satisfied! How could I possibly accept another ten dollars? That's far too much!". Elowen laughed softly.

"If it weren't for you, tonight's plan wouldn't have gone early as smoothly. You did well. This is your reward." 1/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 @ Chapter 363 Night She paused, the smile in her eyes turning even warmer 14% Finished "Besides, I heard your son is preparing for the royal examinations next spring. That must place quite a burden on the household. When he earns a position one day, remind him to serve with honesty and keep the people in his heart." Martha's cheeks flushed. Her eyes suddenly stung with heat. She had never imagined in her life that she would serve someone so gentle and kind.

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With a mistress like this, doing her work carefully was only natural. Even if it meant giving her life, she would do it willingly. Martha wiped her eyes. "I'll listen to Your Grace in everything! Whatever you say, I'll do it! From now on, if Your Grace wants anything to eat, just tell me!" Elowen chuckled. "All right. Go home and celebrate. Your family must be waiting for you. I wish you all a happy holiday and good fortune." Martha answered with an eager "Yes!" and

thanked her again and again before leaving happily. Watching her go, Elowen felt her mood brighten as well.

When she turned around, she saw Cassian standing quietly in the doorway. At the sight of him, her heart softened instantly. "Your Grace," she asked gently, "what brings you here?" Cassian stepped inside. "To take my wife to bed." With his long stride, he crossed the room in only a few steps and stopped in front of her. His voice was warm and low. 3 "Finished with everything?" Elowen nodded obediently. Cassian extended his hand, and she naturally placed hers in his. Hand in hand, they walked back toward their chambers.

Lanterns hung beneath the corridor eaves, their warm glow stretching along the walkway, filling the manor with quiet festivity, Elowen spoke casually as they walked. "There was something that surprised me a little tonight Cassian glanced at her. "Because His Majesty stripped Daphne of the Crown Princess title on the spot?" Elowen nodded. Cassian smiled faintly, 2/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 363 Night 14% Finished 3 "It's not really that surprising. Tonight wasn't just the royal family and court officials present. The Nordan envoys were there as well.

If Daphne had only targeted you, she might have received nothing more than a reprimand. But she dragged the Nordan Fifth Princess into it." He paused. "That made the matter far more serious. Theodric dislikes war and has been trying to establish peaceful ties with Nordia. Daphne stirred up trouble in front of their envoys. It's only natural that he lost his temper and punished her harshly." Understanding dawned on Elowen's face. "So that's why." "And the matter isn't over yet," Cassian continued. "Daphne has been stripped of her title and confined to the Secluded Wing.

The Garrett family won't escape the consequences either." Elowen tilted her head. "Will Galen lose his position?" "Not for now," Cassian said. "The court needs officials at the moment. Galen may be mediocre, but he handles routine affairs steadily enough. There isn't an immediate replacement for him. Theodric will likely just issue a warning." "Oh." Disappointment flickered across Elowen's face. "However," Cassian said, giving her fingers a light squeeze, "the royal examinations will be held next spring.

When that time comes, new men will enter the court, and Galen's position will become far less secure." He paused slightly before continuing. "Besides, even if Galen can't be dismissed right away, his son Cedric is a fool by nature, and a lecher to boot. Now that Daphne is no longer the Crown Princess, his prospects are finished. His life is as good as ruined." He smiled faintly, "Besides, Galen might keep his post for now, but his son Cedric Garrett is a fool. A lecher too.

Now that Daphne is no longer Crown Princess, his prospects are nished," At the Garrett residence, Galen, Seline, and Cedric were spending Christmas Eve together. Cedric kept thinking about the soft, delicate concubines waiting in his own courtyard. He could barely sit still. "We've already finished the dinner," he said impatiently I should head back now." Seline shot him a glare. "Sit down." 3/4 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 363 Night Finished Galen spoke sternly, "Your sister said there would be good news tonight and told us to wait. You're her older brother.

Where do you think you're going?" 2.4K 1 AIA admin

Chapter 364 Shattered Dreams Cedric let out a cold laugh. 4% Finished "What good news could she possibly have? She doesn't even have Alaric's favor in the Crown Prince's Wing." Galen frowned. "You have the nerve to mock your sister? You offended Cassian before and lost your position. If your sister hadn't married into the Crown Prince's Wing and the Baker family hadn't

supported you, do you think you'd even have work now?" Cedric grew w even more irritated. "I never asked her to help me." "Enough," Seline snapped. Then her expression brightened again, pride impossible to hide.

you "Now that Daphne has become Crown Princess, our family finally has a future. All those people who used to look down on us now treat me with the utmost respect. In my opinion, our household today is even more impressive than the Hale manor ever was." At the mention of the Hale family, Galen also looked pleased. "Of course it is." It was Christmas Eve, and he had drunk a bit too much. Thoughts he normally kept to himself began slipping freely from his mouth. "I said it years ago. The Hale family were all fools. What future does a military family really have?

When there's war, they're useful, so Theodric showers them with rewards. But once the wars end, they'll be discarded like worn-out tools." He snorted. "They didn't even make it that far. They died before that day came. I warned them before. In battle, you only need to put on a show. Let the foot soldiers charge first. If they die, so be it. Why should commanders rush to the front lines themselves? But they wouldn't listen. One after another, they died faster than the last. If you ask me, they had it coming." Seline listened with a smile. Cedric had his own thoughts on the matter.

"Father, if things hadn't happened like that, Julian wouldn't have died so early. But honestly, I was glad he did." He chuckled. "His wife had a fine figure and a pretty face. I even thought that once Julian died, I might take her as a concubine. Who knew she'd lose the baby and die not long after." He shook his head. "Bad luck, I suppose." Seline snorted. 1/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 364 Shattered Dreams 会14%創 Finished "Her family may have a good background, but she was

still a widow. A woman who's lost her husband is hardly suitable. Why would you marry someone like that?

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Who knows, she might even bring bad fortune." Cedric shrugged. "That's why I said I'd only take her as a concubine." Seline glared at him. "Why don't you think about finding a proper wife? You're not getting any younger, and you still haven't settled down." Galen laughed heartily. noble lady in "What's the rush? When the time comes, we'll have his sister arrange it. We'll pick a prop Vanelle. His sister is Crown Princess now and will be queen in the future. With that status, what kind of bride couldn't we find?" Seline nodded happily.

"That's true." The family sat together, basking in visions of a bright future. Just then, a servant hurried in. "My lord, my lady, someone from the palace has arrived!" Galen didn't notice the panic in the servant's expression He stood with a grin. "Has the Crown Princess sent news?" The servant shook his head. "No..." Galen's smile remained. "Then it must be a reward from the palace." He turned to his wife and son. "Come. Let's receive the decree together." Seline and Cedric followed him outside. The moment they stepped through the gate, they ran into Quin.

Galen hurried forward with a broad smile and clasped his hands in greeting. "Lord Jett, what brings you here so late at night? You shouldn't have troubled yourself to come personally." Quin's expression remained calm. "His Majesty has issued an order that must be delivered tonight." Galen nodded eagerly. "My daughter has always served His Majesty, Her Majesty, and His Highness with the utmost devotion. It's only her duty." Meanwhile, Seline kept glancing behind Quin. "Hm? Lod Jett, why didn't you bring any rewards?" "Rewards?" Quin's tone lifted slightly.

The corner of his mouth curled, but the expression was pure mockery. "Lord Garrett, Lady Garrett. The Crown Princess offended her superiors and showed grave misconduct. She has already been stripped of her title and confined to the Secluded Wing. She will never leave it alive." III O < 2/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 @o Chapter 364 Shattered Dreams He paused. "With matters like that, where would any reward come from?" The words struck her like a sudden thunderclap. Galen froze. The smile on his face stiffened instantly. Finished He clung to a thin thread of hope, thinking he must have misheard.

"W-what? Stripped of the title? That... that's impossible!" He stepped forward unconsciously, his voice trembling There must be some mistake. My daughter... she's the Crown Princess!" Quin lifted his eyelids slightly. "Lord Garrett, this decree was issued personally by His Majesty. Are you questioning His Majesty's judgment?" Galen shuddered. Cold sweat soaked through his inner robe as he bowed hurriedly. "Of course not. His Majesty is wise and just..." Behind him, Seline's legs had already gone weak. She would have collapsed if the maid beside her hadn't been holding her up.

Cedric, however, let out a scornful snort. "I knew we couldn't rely on her. Just a little girl who thought marrying into the Crown Prince's Wing meant she'd suddenly risen above everyone else. No sense of rules, no brains, and now she's dragged the whole family down with her." He scoffed. "Useless." 2.4K 3/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 admin

Chapter 365 A Shattered House Quin's gaze shifted slowly onto him. 4%1 Finished Seline suddenly snapped back to her senses. Forgetting all decorum, she rushed forward two steps, tears streaming down her face. "Lord Jett! My daughter... my Daphne is still so young. How can she bear being locked away in that cold place all alone? And during the Christmas of all times...

Please, I beg you, let us see her, just once..." Quin remained unmoved. "His Majesty has given strict orders. Without permission from His Majesty, no one is allowed to visit the deposed Crown Princess, Daphne." "Just once!

Even once is impossible?" Seline's voice cracked with desperation, her body nearly collapsing to the floor. Cedric could not bear to watch any longer. He stepped forward, positioning himself in front of his mother. "Lord Jett, that's a little too harsh, don't you think? They're mother and daughter. Blood ties like that don't disappear. Why not do me a favor. Let my mother go in and see my sister once. At least it would give them a proper farewell." At those words, Quin paused. Then he chuckled.

Cedric assumed his speech had worked and was about to press further when Quin spoke again, his tone slow and almost amused. "Your favor?" Quin looked him up and down. "Forgive my poor eyesight, but exactly how much is your 'favor' worth in front of His Majesty?" Cedric's face flushed red and green in turns. He had strutted through Vanelle his whole life. Never once had anyone humiliated him so bluntly. His pride shattered, anger surged up. "Quin! You're nothing but a palace attendant, yet you dare speak to me like that? I hold an official post at court!" Quin's voice stayed calm.

"An official post? You mean that idle position you once held at the Court of Provisions?" He continued evenly, "That position existed only because Daphne pleaded with Her Majesty, and Her Majesty asked the lord to arrange it for you, Now that Daphne has been stripped of her title, naturally your post no longer exists." "What?! You say it's gone and it's gone?" 1/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 0 Chapter 365 A Shattered House Cedric froze like he'd been struck by lightning. A moment later fury exploded across his face. 补气 14% 意 Finished The blood rushed to his head.

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In his rage he even forgave that Quin served directly under Theodric. He raised his hand as if to strike. Quin stood where he was, not moving. A cold glint flashed briefly through his eyes.

"Unfilial fool! Stop this at once!" Galen Garrett nearly lost his soul in fright. His face turned ashen as he shouted sharply. "Hold him down!" The nearby servants finally reacted. They rushed forward together and pinned Cedric to the ground with chaotic urgency. Quin watched the farce with a cold expression. His voice was quiet. "Cedric, this order came directly from His Majesty." He paused briefly.

"And His Majesty also said that from this day forward, you are never to be appointed to any office in the kingdom again. Even if you wished to sell yourself into palace service as a servant, you would not be accepted." Cedric went completely still. Quin then turned toward Galen Garrett. "Lord Garrett, you are a court official. Surely you understand that His Majesty's command cannot be defied." Galen's face looked pale. He bowed low against the ground. "Yes... I humbly accept Your Majesty's decree. Long live Your Majesty... Long live Your Majesty..." Quin said nothing further and walked away.

The moment he left, the servants released Cedric. Cedric jumped to his feet, still furious, shouting toward the doorway. "Who does he think he is! Acting like he's better than me!" Smack! Galen used every ounce of strength he had and slapped Cedric hard across the face. The blow sent him staggering sideways. A vivid handprint immediately appeared across his cheek. Galen pointed at him, his whole body shaking with rage. His voice came out hoarse. "You idiot! And you dare look down on your sister?"

"If it weren't for your sister maneuvering through the Crown Prince's Wing all those years, do you think you could have strutted through Vanelle like a lord? Someone would have broken your

legs and thrown you out of the capital long ago! "I prided myself on my judgment all my life. How did I end up with a son as useless as you!" 2/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 365 A Shattered House 14% Finished Seline cried out in distress. She rushed forward and wrapped her arms around Cedric protectively. "My lord! Why would you hit him like that? Cedric is our only son! The Garrett family's bloodline depends on him!" "Son? What good is a son like this!" Galen staggered backward two steps. In that instant he seemed to age ten years. His voice dropped into a hollow murmur. "With the disaster he's caused... the Garrett family's future is finished..." Seline clung to Cedric like a drowning person grabbing the last piece of driftwood. "But... but you still hold your office, my lord! His Majesty only ordered us to remain confined at home to reflect. He didn't strip you of your position!" Her voice grew more urgent. "That means His Majesty still values you.

The court still needs you!" Galen froze. A faint spark of hope slowly returned to his eyes. "Yes... yes! His Majesty didn't dismiss me. The court still needs me!" Seline nodded quickly. "That's right, my lord. As long as the foundation remains, everything can be rebuilt. If your position still stands, the Garrett family still has a chance to rise again. The next morning, at Duskmoor Manor, Elowen woke to the steady rhythm of Cassian's breathing beside her. She didn't hurry to get up. Instead she propped her head on her arm and studied her still-sleeping husband without restraint. Soft morning light rested across his face. His brow line was strikingly defined, his nose straight and high, his lips shaped with quiet precision. The clean line of his jaw flowed smoothly into his neck. Every contour seemed almost perfectly sculpted. 19 2.4K admin

Chapter 366: Warm Beginnings

Asleep, Cassian's usual commanding demeanor seemed to fade, leaving his features relaxed and remarkably handsome. The longer Elowen gazed at him, the more warmth filled her chest. She couldn't resist and gently brushed her fingers against his cheek, as if testing if he would wake. His eyes slowly opened, and upon seeing her face, a faint smile appeared on his lips. "You're awake," he murmured, his voice still rough from sleep, resonating in the quiet warmth of the room.

Caught staring, Elowen's cheeks instantly flushed, creating soft blooms on her face. She nodded slightly, her response barely audible. "Mm." Cassian observed her with amusement dancing in his eyes. "And what were you doing just now?" he inquired, his tone gentle yet curious.

Embarrassed, Elowen lowered her head, hiding her warm face against his shoulder, her voice soft and muffled. "I was looking at you." Cassian didn't let it go easily.

"And why were you looking at me?" A quiet chuckle escaped Elowen's lips as she buried her face even deeper into him, as if hoping the blankets could engulf her embarrassment. "Because you're too handsome." Cassian paused, clearly taken aback by her response. Then, a deep, warm laugh rumbled from his chest, filling the room. Leaning down, he placed a tender kiss on the top of her head, his voice laced with unmistakable affection.

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"If that's the reason, then I suppose this face was truly meant for you." Elowen remained nestled against his shoulder for a while, the blush on her cheeks gradually fading. When she raised her head again, a faint blush still lingered, her bright eyes shining in the soft winter light filtering through the curtains. With a softened voice, she said, "Cassian, Merry Christmas."

Among the royal houses of Avenlor, Christmas was always celebrated with extraordinary splendor. The palace gleamed with jewels, tables adorned with delicacies, and festivities continued late into the night. Yet, amidst all the grandeur, warmth was scarce. In previous years, after returning from the royal feast, Cassian often found himself in the vast, silent halls of Duskmoor Manor, feeling a subtle emptiness. The manor, vast and quiet, seemed no different during the holiday season.

However, this year felt entirely new. Cassian felt a quiet warmth spreading through his chest, a contentment he rarely experienced. With his hand resting gently on Elowen's waist, he spoke affectionately, "Ella, a Merry Christmas to you as well." His palm moved to her abdomen, still flat beneath the quilt. "And to our child." After a pause, he locked eyes with her, his warmth deepening.

"But above all, I want your happiness." Elowen's laughter bubbled softly, unable to contain her joy. She leaned back into his embrace, finding solace in his arms. They lingered beneath the winter quilts, relishing the calm of the morning with no obligations. Eventually, Elowen's stomach rumbled noticeably, breaking the serene atmosphere. Horrified, she covered her stomach, hoping to silence it. Cassian raised an eyebrow, amusement twinkling in his eyes. "Are you hungry?"

"Just a little," Elowen admitted, puzzled by her sudden hunger despite eating a lot the day before. Cassian chuckled softly. "Well, you are providing for two now." Elowen smiled, acknowledging the truth in his words. Cassian got out of bed, ensuring she was snug in the quilt, and decided to prepare a special breakfast for her as it was Christmas morning.

As Cassian stepped out, he noticed Anson, Mira, and Cora whispering outside. When questioned, Mira explained about an urgent letter from Lady Elspeth. Cassian instructed them to deliver it to Elowen, knowing it would bring her joy. Inside, Elowen lay comfortably in warm quilts, the room cozy and fragrant. She absentmindedly caressed her abdomen, her mind drifting aimlessly in the peaceful ambiance.

Chapter 367 A Dying Regret She paused for a moment. Finished. "Lydia was utterly stunned," Elowen said. "Aunt wrote that she just stood there, her face drained of all color. Then it was like regret finally hit her all at once. In the freezing cold, she suddenly collapsed on the spot. After that, she fell gravely ill." Cassian listened quietly. There was little surprise on his face. "She went to great lengths to marry the Marquess of Havenstead in the first place," he said calmly. "All because she wanted the comfort and luxury of the marquess's household.

What she never expected was that the estate was already hollow inside. The one person who truly held the purse strings was the very aunt she'd spent years pushing aside." He paused. "And she managed to thoroughly offend the one person who could have saved her." "Exactly!" Elowen nodded vigorously in agreement. "And it only got worse," she continued. "When she tried to frame Aunt before, she actually took poison herself to make the scheme believable. They treated her in time, but the toxins never fully left her body. Her health was already fragile.

When this illness struck, it became extremely dangerous." She leaned slightly forward as she spoke. "At first, the Marquess of Havenstead still hired physicians for her and kept her alive with medicine. But those remedies had to be taken every single day, and the dollars were draining away like water through a cracked barrel. Money going out, none coming in. Before long, the estate's accounts were completely empty." She looked at Cassian. "Can you guess what the

marques did next?" Cassian already had a good idea, but he played along. "What did he do?" Elowen gave a soft snort.

"He simply stopped paying for Lydia's medicine," The answer did not surprise Cassian at all. Elowen continued, "To save his own reputation, he even told people that Lydia had lost the will to live. He claimed she refused treatment and no longer wished to take any medicine." She shook her head. "In the end, it was Nina who couldn't bear to watch her mother suffer like that. The poor child secretly ran to Aunt's residence and begged her to save Lydia's life." Cassian glanced sideways at her. "Aunt must have gone Elowen nodded. "She did.

Aunt wrote that she never truly liked Lydia, and their past grievances weren't something she could 1/3 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 367 A Dying Regret 念 14% Finished easily forget. But in that moment, it was still a life hanging in the balance. She simply couldn't bring herself to turn away." Her voice softened. "And Nina is such a little thing. She was crying so hard, begging over and over. Aunt said she couldn't bear the thought of such a young child losing her mother." Cassian nodded slightly. "Aunt has always been like that. Sharp-tongued on the surface, but soft-hearted underneath.

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She looks decisive, yet she cares deeply about the people around her." Elowen sighed quietly.

"But she still arrived too late. Lyia had gone without medicine for far too long. By the time Aunt got there, Lydia was already at death's door." She paused briefly. "Aunt said Lydia regained consciousness for a short while before she died. Almost like a last flicker of light. She held Aunt's hand and cried while she spoke... words of regret, more or less." Cassian raised a brow slightly. "Oh?" Elowen continued, "Lydia said she had always loved that kind of carefree, luxurious life.

She knew it wasn't right. She knew it was vanity. But she couldn't stop wanting it. She also said she had Nina to think about. In her mind, the more wealth she had, the better life she could give her daughter. Because of that, she lost her way and did everything she could to break Aunt and the Marquess apart. She forced herself into the role of marchioness." Elowen lowered her gaze slightly. "But later, she slowly realized how foolish she had been. The Marquess of Havenstead was nothing special. Just a handsome face. In truth, he was selfish and calculating, always weighing his own interests.

Not someone worth entrusting your life to." She exhaled softly. "But by then, it was already too late. There was no way to turn back." She said quietly, recounting the letter, "Lydia said the only thing left in her heart was guilt. She held Aunt's hand and begged her to take Nina in. She didn't ask for anything else. She only hoped Aunt would let Nina study and grow up understanding the world... so that one day she wouldn't make the same mistakes." As she spoke, a faint heaviness settled in Elowen's heart "Aunt wrote that she felt a little sad at the time," she said softly.

"She used to take some satisfaction in Lydia's downfall. She thought Lydia deserved it. But when she saw Lydia crying like that in her final moments... she realized she couldn't hate her anymore." Elowen frowned slightly, "To be honest, reading that part of the letter made me feel a little sad too." Cassian scooped a small bowl of oatmeal for her. His voice remained steady and warm. "That's because both you and Aunt are kind-hearted," he said.

"Even if Lydia did wrong in the past, when faced with life and death, you still feel compassion for other woman walking the same fragile path." He looked at her calmly. "That empathy is precisely what makes you both admirable." After a brief pause, he asked, "What else did Aunt write 2/3 C 12:32 Mon, Apr 13 @fo Chapter 367 A Dying Regret Elowen's mood lightened

slightly as she continued. 14% Finished "She also mentioned her two sons. At first they complained about her insistence on leaving the marriage. They said she was already older, and the marquess had always indulged her in everything.

They thought she was being unreasonable." Elowen's lips curled faintly. year, there "Aunt didn't take that well. She immediately cut off all their spending money. By the end of the were too many expenses piling up. They couldn't hold out any longer, so they went back and apologized." When Elowen read that part of the letter, she came to a very simple conclusion about life. In this world, especially for women, the most important thing was to have money of their own. came confidence. With Her aunt's life had proven that lesson again and again.

"Aunt," she continued, "also wrote that when she first took Nina in, she didn't grow attached. She simply treated it like caring for a small animal. She made sure Nina had pretty clothes and good food, nothing more. But one day, Rivenshire was hit by a terrible storm. Nina was still very young and frightened. She hid under the blankets, shaking." Elowen smiled faintly. "Aunt heard about it and softened. She stayed with Nina that night. After that, they grew much closer. Aunt said it feels as though she's gained a daughter of her own. She even praised Nina for being thoughtful and sweet.

She truly likes the girl." 2.4K 3/3 admin

Chapter 368 A Letter Home Cassian nodded slightly. "That's a good thing. Aunt has always wanted a daughter She thinks daughters are more caring." "Exactly." Then Elowen remembered the final part of the letter Her voice became lighter. 林家14% Finished "Aunt also told me she bought a house for me in Rivenshire. It's a three-courtyard residence, beautifully arranged with

elegant gardens. And it's right next to her own home. She said whenever I feel like spending some time in Rivenshire, I can stay there." Cassian listened patiently until she finished.

After a moment of silence, something occurred to him. "So," he said slowly, "after all the things Aunt wrote in that letter... she didn't mention me even once?" Elowen froze. She quickly replayed the contents of the letter in her mind. It seems... he might be right. For a moment she wondered if she had simply forgotten something. She pulled the letter from her pocket and handed it to him. "Why don't you check yourself? Maybe I remembered wrong." Cassian took the pages and read through them from beginning to end. Very good. His name truly wasn't there.

The letter even began simply with "For Ella". As for Cassian, there wasn't a single word about him. Elowen noticed the slightly complicated expression on his face. She scooted closer, wrapped her arms around his, and rubbed her cheek affectionately against his shoulder. Her voice turned soft and coaxing. "Oh, come on. You belong to me, which means Aunt belongs to me too. If she dotes on me, that means she cares about you as well," She nudged him playfully. "Don't dwell on it. Finish your breakfast before the oatmeal gets cold." Cassian hadn't been upset to begin with.

He only found the situation rather amusing. Now, seeing her soft and affectionate attempts to comfort him, his mood improved even further. He reached out and gently touched her cheek.

After breakfast, Elowen went straight into the study and began writing a reply to her aunt, She wrote about everything. From the everyday matters at Duskmoor Manor before the Christmas, to Daphne's attempt to cause trouble during the palace banquet on Christmas Eve and the punishment she received afterward. O < 1/3 12:32 Mon, Apr Chapter 368 A Letter Home And finally, her pregnancy.

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One event after another filled the pages. Finished Before she knew it, she had already written three full sheets. By the end she realized she was running out of space, so her handwriting grew smaller and more crowded. When she finally signed her name, the signature barely squeezed into the tiny corner at the edge of the paper. At last, she sealed the letter, ready to send it. As she stood up from the desk, her gaze accidentally drifted toward a small hidden compartment in the bookshelf. Inside lay the new story she had finished writing. She had already chosen both the title and her pen name.

Everything was prepared. The only thing missing was a bookshop willing to copy and sell it. Elowen thought about it. It was still the holiday season. Most of the bookshops in Vanelle were probably closed for the holiday. Better to wait until the celebrations ended before worrying about it. She handed the letter to Anson. "Make sure this is sent out as quickly as possible." Anson acknowledged the order and left. Elowen was just about to head to Cassian's study. When she had work to keep her busy, it wasn't so noticeable.

But the moment she finished everything and had nothing left to do, she always found herself thinking about Cassian. Wanting to be near him. She found the feeling strange. But she liked it. Just as she lifted her head, Cassian stepped into the study. The pale winter sunlight rested on his shoulders, outlining his tall, elegant figure. He carried a tray in his hands. On it sat a jade-glazed bowl, faint white steam curling up from the rim. Elowen's expression brightened immediately, her voice turning sweet. "What brings you here?" Cassian walked over and placed the tray gently on the desk.

"I brewed your tonic," he said. "I thought you might be finishing your letter around now, so I brought it to you," Elowen's eyes curved with delight. "Cassian, you're so thoughtful." Cassian's

lips lifted into a clear smile. He picked up the owl and carefully turned it toward her, "I know you hate the taste of the tonic. Like always, I brought some candied plums for you." ||| O Γ 2/3  
12:32 Mon, Apr 13 01 Chapter 368 A Letter Home Elowen beamed. "You're the best. You think of everything for me." The smile on Cassian's face widened even further.

"...I feel like a loyal hound." A cool, slightly helpless voice suddenly drifted from the doorway. Elowen turned at the sound and finally noticed someone leaning against the doorframe. She blinked in surprise. "Doctor Dray? When did you get here? I didn't even see you." Hugh sighed. "I was standing beside His Grace the entire time. We came together." Elowen gave an embarrassed laugh. "I honestly didn't notice. Sorry." Her apology sounded so sincere and gentle that Hugh found it difficult to stay annoyed. Elowen took the bowl with both hands.

14% Finished Cassian knew she disliked drinking it while it was too hot, so as usual he had let it cool before bringing it over. Now the temperature was perfect. Warm enough to hold comfortably. Elowen drank half the bowl. The bitterness immediately twisted her face into a miserable expression, forcing her to stop. The moment she opened her mouth, Cassian placed a piece of candied plums between her lips. "Your Grace." Bran stepped into the study and reported, "Someone has arrived." Cassian didn't even raise his eyes. "Who?" 2.4K 3/3 ||| admin

#### Chapter 369: Nordan Visit

Bran lowered his voice. "Envoys from Nordia," he said. A faint crease appeared between Cassian's brows. Elowen, after finishing the candied plum, smiled lightly and said, "Let them in." In a little while, the Nordan siblings, Zachary and Flowira, entered. They were dressed as ordinary townsfolk from Vanelle, wearing men's riding clothes to conceal their distinctive curls and green eyes, marking their foreign heritage.

"Your Grace," Zachary and Flowira greeted as they stepped into the study. Elowen, sipping her tonic, lifted her eyes and warmly smiled at them. Cassian, however, noticed the siblings' unusual gesture. When paying respects to a ducal couple, the duke's title should come first, but Zachary and Flowira reversed the order.

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Cassian gestured towards the seats, saying, "Have a seat," but the siblings remained standing until Elowen kindly urged them to sit. Only then did they respond and take their seats, acknowledging her with a grateful, "Thank you, Your Grace." Cassian observed the interaction, feeling a strange sensation in his chest.

He found himself pondering whether, in the eyes of the Nordians or in Nordia itself, Elowen held significant status. Cassian said nothing about it. Elowen asked, "Why have you come in the middle of the day?" The incident at the Christmas Eve banquet had been a joint scheme between them. If news spread that the Nordan envoys had visited Duskmoor Manor, it could arouse suspicion.

Mira's voice interrupted Elowen's thoughts, bringing her a letter from Lady Elspeth of Rivenshire. Delighted, Elowen sat up, eager to read the message. Meanwhile, Cassian casually mentioned the letter during their breakfast, prompting Elowen to share its contents.

Zachary, growing serious, offered Nordia's loyalty and assistance to Elowen. Cassian inquired about their allegiance, hinting at Elowen's mysterious grandfather. Zachary remained discreet, alluding to undisclosed information. Elowen, intrigued, questioned Zachary about her grandfather's past assistance in Nordia. Zachary acknowledged the aid but hinted at deeper reasons for their support.

Elowen pressed for the truth, but Zachary evaded, promising to reveal more when the time was right. Patiently, she awaited his explanation, as Zachary requested a little more time before unveiling the complete truth.

Chapter 370 A Chance Encounter "Your Grace." At that moment Anson stepped inside from outside. He had just returned from sending out Elowen's letter. 14% Finished "Lieutenant Wrenner has arrived with his wife and daughter," he reported. "They say they've come to offer greetings." Zachary understood immediately and rose to his feet. "In that case, since Your Grace has guests arriving, my sister and I will take our leave." "All right," Elowen said with a smile. "I won't see you out Travel safely." Zachary led Flowira away the same way they had entered.

Around that same time, Lieutenant Wrenner and his family arrived at the manor. Elara walked behind her parents with her head lowered. Her steps were unsteady, as if her thoughts were somewhere far away. She had spent the Christmas at the nearby estate. Being so close to Cassian had secretly filled her with joy. In Tales of Luminara, the author Azure had once written something she treated like sacred truth. Azure wrote, If you love someone with enough persistence, the clouds will part eventually, and the moon will appear. But early that morning, news spread from the palace.

Something had happened during the Christmas Eve banquet. First, the Crown Princess had been stripped of her title. Second, the Duchess of Duskmoor was expecting a child. The news struck Elara like a thunderclap. With an heir on the way, Elowen's position at Duskmoor Manor would only become more secure. And her own love... Didn't that mean it had no future at all? Today was the Christmas day. Elara followed her parent to Duskmoor Manor to offer greetings, her heart cold and hollow. She couldn't even force a smile. She would never marry Cassian.

And from now on, she would probably never love anyone this deeply again, Lost in thought, she accidentally stepped on a smooth pebble beneath her shoe. Her balance slipped, A startled cry caught in her throat as her body tipped backward. She was certain she was about to fall hard. But suddenly an arm caught her firmly at the back. "Careful, miss." The voice was clear and pleasant. Still shaken, Elara lifted her eyes. 1/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 130 Chapter 370 A Chance Encounter They met a pair of deep green eyes.

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Finished The person holding her was a young gentleman dressed in a pale silver robe, a gray traveling cloak draped over his shoulders. His features were refined and luminous, the kind of beauty that drew attention instantly. at once. Once she steadied herself, he released b He stepped back two paces, leaving a proper distance between them, his manners impeccable. Elara felt as if something had slammed straight into her chest. Heat crept onto her cheeks. She lowered her lashes, her voice barely audible. "Th... thank you." Zachary smiled gently. "It was nothing.

Please don't worry about it." With that, he turned and walked away. Elara stood there with flushed cheeks, unable to resist watching his retreating figure for several moments. Her love... It seemed to have returned. Hugh heard that more guests had arrived and decided not to linger. He picked up the medicine bowl and left. Elowen had finished the medicine, though several candied plums remained on the small dish. They were honey-preserved plums, plump and pleasantly sweet with just a hint of tartness. She couldn't resist and ate them slowly, one after another.

"Your Grace, congratulations!" The voice arrived before the man himself. Lieutenant Wrenner strode in with booming laughter. "I heard the wo news that the Duchess is expecting. Our whole family came to offer Elowen looked puzzled. How did Lieutenant Wrenner hear about my pregnancy so quickly? Cassian asked, "You've already heard?" congratulations!" Warren

laughed. "I think half of Vanelle already knows." Cassian's eyes narrowed slightly. "And who told you?" The lieutenant scratched his head. "That part I can't quite remember..." Rowena proved more reliable.

She smiled and explained "This morning we went to the church to offer prayers. On the way we ran into Adrian Baker. He mentioned it." "Adrian Baker?" Cassian repeated quietly, tapping his finger lightly against the table. 213 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 @O Chapter 370 A Chance Encounter Finished "Yes," Rowena continued. "The youngest cousin of Her Majesty. I hear he currently serves at the Ministry of Rites." Elowen tilted her head and looked at Cassian. Cassian was already looking at her. Their expressions were nearly identical, each carrying a trace of something subtle and complicated.

Warren, oblivious, continued cheerfully. "At first I thought the Duchess must be resting after yesterday's banquet and suggested we visit later. But my wife insisted that good news should be congratulated as soon as possible, so here we are." Elowen smiled. "You're very thoughtful, Mrs. Wrenner." "We came in such a rush we didn't have time to prepare anything grand," Warren said, giving a sheepish grin. "But this morning we did ask the church for a blessing charm, and we brought along an old mountain ginseng root. It may not be rare, but...

it's offered with a sincere heart." He presented both items to Elowen. Given Cassian's rank, Duskmoor Manor lacked for nothing. But sincerity mattered most. Elowen accepted the gifts with a smile. "I like them very much. Please, sit. Let's talk for a while! Cora soon brought coffee along with several delicate pastries. As Elowen watched, she noticed Elara lifting her cup and taking small sips. Yet her gaze kept drifting toward the doorway outside. The gesture surprised Elowen. In the past, Elara's eyes had always found Cassian whenever she had the chance.

"Your Grace," Rowena asked politely, "how many months along are you now?" 。 2.4K M

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