

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 371 Whispered Worries Rowena's gaze Finished drifted down to Elowen's midsection as she asked softly, "At a glance, you can't tell at all." Elowen replied, "It hasn't even been three months yet." Rowena blinked in surprise. "Still that early?" Elowen let out a quiet sigh. "Last night I really had no choice. The former Crown Princess kept pressing and provoking me. I had to reveal the pregnancy." Rowena caught the key point immediately.

"The former Crown Princess?" Tilting her head, Elowen said, "Didn't Adrian mention it At the banquet in the palace last night, Daphne offended His Majesty. She's already been stripped of her title as Crown Princess and confined to the Secluded Wing." Rowena's brows knit together.

"That... I hadn't heard." At that moment, footsteps sounded outside the door. Bran walked straight in and bowed respectfully. "Your Grace, Your Grace. Lord Jett has arrived." Cassian inclined his head slightly.

"Show him in." When Quin entered, four well-dressed matrons followed behind him, their expressions composed and respectful. Several servants and maids remained outside the doorway. Quin stepped forward and bowed. "Greetings to Your Grace." Elowen asked, "Lord Jett, why have you brought so many people?" Quin smiled as he answered, "Last night, when His Majesty learned that Your Grace is expecting, he was overjoyed. In his excitement, he remembered to grant gold and jewels, but forgot about these matters.

It wasn't until this morning, when Her Majesty went to pay her respects and mentioned it, that His Majesty realized he ought to send capable attendants to care for Your Grace." A flicker passed through Elowen's thoughts. "Were these people chosen by Her Majesty?" Quin replied,

"Her Majesty does not currently oversee the inner palace, but she recommended a few. Beatrice and Margery have both served several princes and princesses before. There are also a few honest and steady maids. Lady Elira, who now holds the Queens Privy Seal, recommended several as well.

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As for the rest, I selected them according to His Majesty's instructions." As he spoke, Quin presented a carefully recorded roster Elowen accepted it with a gentle smile, "You've worked hard, Lord Jett, Please be sure to convey my thanks to His Majesty, Her Majesty, and Lady Elira." Quin nodded cheerfully. "Of course." Holding the roster in her hand, Elowen thought silently There are so many different people backing them. Untanglingll of that would be a real headache. Warren spoke up beside them with admiration. "His Majesty truly keeps Your Grace in his thoughts.

And 1/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 371 Whispered Worries Her Majesty is so gracious and virtuous." Finished Elowen's mind turned over the W Whether she is trul being gracious or has other motives... that remains to be seen. After offering a few more instructions, Quin took his leave and returned to the palace to report. For the moment, Elowen could not determine the background of these new servants, so she simply instructed Gerda to take them away and arrange quarters first. Cassian knew that Elowen and Rowena had once been close.

Wishing to give them some private time to talk about matters of the inner chambers, he called to Warren and steered him toward the study. Elowen glanced sideways at Elara. In the past, Elara would have found every possible excuse to follow them to the study, just to steal another glimpse of Cassian. Yet today she did not even lift her head. And it did not look like she was pretending.

How strange. Had the Christmas truly changed Elara's nature? "Your Grace, there's something I should tell you." Rowena spoke gently. Elowen turned toward her.

"What is it?" "To be honest, my husband and Adrian are barely acquaintances. They've hardly seen each other in years. Yet today Adrian was unusually enthusiastic, pulling him aside to talk for quite a while. The conversation circled around and eventually came to Your Grace. He even mentioned your pregnancy. At the time I was happy to hear it, of course. But afterward, the more I thought about it, the stranger it seemed. It almost felt as though Adrian intentionally wanted us to know." Elowen paused. "Afterward we stopped by the church and overheard several people talking.

A few of them were discussing Your Grace's pregnancy as well. The news spread far too quickly. That's why I thought it best to come tell you right away, so I brought my husband with me." At that, Elowen laughed softly. "Lieutenant Wrenner clearly didn't think that far ahead. You're the observant one." At the mention of her husband, Rowena's expression turned faintly disdainful, "He's hopelessly simple. Otherwise, how could he have been captured by the Nordians and held there for so many years? That man...

someone could cheat him blind and he'd probably still thank them for it." She shook her head with a sigh. "Sometimes I even think that living as foolishly as he does might actually make life rather carefree." 111 O < 2/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 371 Whispered Worries Elowen could not help laughing. Rowena was still just as clever and amusing as ever. "Enough about him." this finished Rowena turned serious again and looked at Elowen with concern. "We just saw Lord Jett. If the queen persuaded His Majesty to send all these attendants to serve you, will soon become common knowledge.

When that happens, Duskmoor Manor and Your Grace may appear d and favored, but in truth you'll become the focus of everyone's attention." She lowered her voice slightly. "Your Grace, you must be careful from now on. Your Grace has always been kind. You never resented my daughter's admiration for His Grace. Instead, you've shown patience and consideration. I'm deeply grateful for that. The three of us were able to spend the Christmas in Vanelle thanks to Your Grace's generosity." 2.4K ' | ' 3/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 D admin

Chapter 372 Quiet Sisterhood Finished Rowena's gaze softened with affection. "Forgive me for speaking boldly, but although you are the Duchess of Duskmoor, in my heart you feel more like a younger sister. As women, we both know how difficult pregnancy and childbirth can be. When I gave birth to Elara, I truly came close to death. Even now, remembering it still frightens me." Her voice grew gentle. "I sincerely hope everything goes smoothly for you. I hope nothing goes wrong." Elowen felt warmth spread through her chest.

Sometimes she felt incredibly fortunate to have been given a second chance at life, one that allowed her to meet so many good people. Cassian, Elspeth and Rowena. She nodded earnestly. "I'll remember. I'll be careful." The two of them chatted a while longer about the palace banquet the previous night, especially about how Daphne had brought ruin upon herself. When Rowena heard the full story, she sighed. "I heard you and she grew up together. Even if you weren't the closest of friends, there should have been some affection between you.

Why was she so determined to frame you?" Elowen thought for a moment. "She seems to hate me." Rowena frowned slightly. "Hatred usually has a reason! Tilting her head, Elowen realized she truly did not know why Daphne hated her. She had overlooked that question before. She only remembered that in her previous life, on one occasion Daphne had stared at her coldly and said

something strange. Daphne had said, "If Weren't for you, I wouldn't have become like this." But when Elowen searched her own conscience, she had always treated Daphne sincerely.

Whenever possible, she had either helped her or protected her, What had she done wrong to make Daphne despise he so much? She could nonfigure it out. And in the end, she decided not to dwell on it. Sometimes love and hatred did not need a clear reason "Oh, right Elowen changed the subjan." "Miss Wrenner seems different today, Much more well-behaved than usual."

Rowena glanced athen dinughter, then blinked in surprise. It really is true. Elara held her cup inboth hands, hom diddicute checks flushed a soft pink. "I...

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I'm always well-behaved." O 1/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 130 d Chapter 372 Quiet Sisterhood. Rowena replied honestly, "You've clearly misunderstood yourself." Elara's cheeks reddened even more, and she refused to peak to her mother anymore. 14% Finished Gathering her courage, she looked at Elowen. "Your Grace... before we arrivedl nordlary, did someone else visit the manor?" Elowen paused. Before Warren's family arrived at Duskmoor Manor, the only visitors had been Zachary and Flowira. But their visit had been secret, and Elowen had no intention of revealing it. Elara's eyes grew more eager.

"Your Grace, could you tell me who he was?" Elowen suddenly remembered something her sister-in-law had once told her. When someone kept asking questions you did not want to answer, the best response was to ask ome in return. So Elowen smiled gently and asked, "Why do you ask so suddenly, Miss Wrenner?" Elara froze, then lowered her gaze shyly. "I... I..."

"You child," Rowena said, clearly catching on. "You sound like a girl who's just fallen in love." She paused, then added thoughtfully, "No, not just. More like for the second time." Elara hurried to deny it.

"I'm not!" Rowena asked sharply, "Is it one of the two men we saw when we entered the manor?"

Elara blinked in confusion. Two men? She only remembered one. The man who had helped steady her with a considerate hand, his voice calm and pleasant, his face strikingly handsome. Apparently she had been so focused on him that she completely ignored the other. Rowena recalled the moment. "I only glanced briefly, but both of them were very handsome. One was tall and broad-shouldered. The other was slimmer.

The slimmer one was the one who helped you, wasn't he?" Elara's heart began racing under the questioning. She turned her head away and muttered, "Mother, please stop asking..." Elowen quietly achieved her goal, hiding her satisfaction. She lifted her cup and took a leisurely sip. "Well, if you don't want to say, then we'll leave it at that, Rowena stood up as she spoke, "Your Grace, I've said what I came to say. We should head back." Elowen quickly raised her head and offered, "You're leaving already?

Why not stay and have lunch with us?" |||| O 2/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 @ 1 Chapter 372 Quiet

Sisterhood Finished Rowena smiled and declined gently. "It wouldn't be proper for our whole family to dine here. Besides, last night my husband cooked an entire feast. If we leave it sitting there, it will spoil and have to be thrown away. That would be such a waste." Elowen could not insist, so she nodded. "All right." Rowena headed toward the study to call her husband. Elowen stood as well. "I'll come with you." After Warren's family departed, only Elowen and Cassian remained in the study.

Cassian was still seated at his desk in his wheelchair, a faint smile in his eyes. "Ella," he said softly. "Come here." Elowen walked closer. She was about to sit on the chair beside him when

Cassian reached out, caught her gently by the wrist, and pulled her down onto his lap. 2.4K 3/3 1
admin

Chapter 373 Borrowed Strength Elowen lowered her gaze to look at him. 14% Finished Cassian wore an innocent expression and tapped his own leg. "Some of the people sent here are spies for Her Majesty and Lady Elira. I have to pretend I can't walk properly." Elowen tilted her head.

"And how exactly are those two things connected?" But she did not linger on the question. A playful smile curved across her face. "Still, Cassian, even if you weren't pretending, if you wanted me sitting on your lap, I'd gladly do it." A quiet satisfaction warmed Cassian's chest.

He leaned forward and kissed her lips. The kiss left a faint blush on Elowen's cheeks. She rested her arms around his shoulders. "...Actually, Mrs. Wrenner said something similar earlier "Hm?" "She said Adrian deliberately told her about my pregnancy." Elowen spoke thoughtfully. "I think the Baker family knows Elara likes you. They probably believe jealousy might drive her to harm me or the child I'm carrying. And it seems they didn't only tell them. Now the entire city of Vanelle knows." "She's always been perceptive," Cassian said simply.

"Far more so than Lieutenant Wrenner." He paused before adding, "The Baker family and Her Majesty act as one. This was her decision." Elowen was not surprised. "Of course. She can't sit by and watch the Crown Princes Wing be suppressed forever. Only if her son becomes king can she become the Dowager Queen." Cassian nodded. "Exactly." "I have to admit," Elowen said, "it's a clever move. She earns praise in front of His Majesty and, at the same time, places watchers right here in our household." Elowen had received two groups of visitors today and was beginning to feel the strain.

As she spoke, she leaned forward and rested against Cassian's shoulder. Cassian immediately turned his head toward her. "Tired?" "Just a little," Elowen murmured, "Then rest," Cassian said softly, "Ella." Elowen frowned slightly. "But those people from the palace still need to be assigned their duties." "I'll handle it," Cassian said easily. "But I'm the Duchess here," Elowen muttered. "The household is my responsibility. If I hand it all over to you, wouldn't that be improper?" Cassian thought for a moment.

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"Then I'll wear your clothes." 1/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 373 Borrowed Strength 14%

Finished Elowen burst into laughter at that. Leaning against his shoulder, she brushed her cheek lightly against his neck. Cassian carried a faint scent of soap, mixed with the gentle fragrance of the resin incense that often burned in their chambers. Beneath it lingered something distinctly his own, crisp and cool, like snow melting under the first breath of spring. Elowen liked it very much. She could not resist taking a slow, deep breath. After a moment's pause, she inhaled again. Cassian chuckled.

"Do I really smell that good?" "Not exactly." Elowen laughed under her breath. "I'm stealing your energy." Cassian blinked. A crooked smile tugged at one corner of his mouth. "No wonder I suddenly feel tired." He lowered his head slightly, his voice soft and teasing. "I suppose I should take some back." Then he kissed her. Elowen's eyes curved with quiet happiness. She wrapped her arms around Cassian's neck and kissed him back. It was a long while before they finally pulled apart. Cassian brushed his nose lightly against her cheek. He liked her far too much to resist.

He kissed the corner of her mouth again. "Hungry?" he asked gently. "Lunch will be soon. I'll cook something for you." Elowen tilted her head. "But Your Grace is supposed to be limping

right now. Wouldn't cooking expose the act?" Cassian looked unconcerned. "Even a cripple can cook." Elowen laughed. "No need. You've been cooking for me lately, but we do have Martha in the kitchen. We pay her well. If she never gets to do any work, she'll feel uneasy. And she's an excellent cook. I really like her food." She added, "I heard she came early this morning.

It's the first day of the Christmas." Cassian's lips curved slightly. "That's because you're easy to like. She's fond of you as er Duchess and worried you might go hungry." Elowen flushed faintly at the praise. Before she could say anything, hurried footsteps suddenly echoed from outside.

"Your Grace! Your Grace, something's wrong!" Mira's voice came breathless from beyond the door. "Martha and Beatrice are arguing in the kitchen!"

2/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 o Chapter 373
Borrowed Strength 21 14% Finished Elowen froze. Beatrice?

If she remembered correctly, Beatrice had only arrived oday with Quin. She had also been recommended by Isla. And she is already arguing with someone in the household? Elowen frowned. A flicker of anger passed through Cassian's eyes. His voice turned cold. "A servant wouldn't dare cause trouble on her first day here without someone behind her." Elowen understood immediately. She stood up. "I'll go take a look." Cassian moved as if to follow, but Elowen shook her head gently. "I'll see what's happening first.

If I can't handle something this small, then I don't deserve to be your Duchess." She paused, then added with a small smile. "And if I can't manage it, I'll secretly send Anson to fetch you as reinforcements. When that happens, Cassian, you must come save me." The corner of Cassian's mouth lifted. He squeezed her fingers lightly. "Deal." Elowen left with Mira, heading toward the kitchen. 2.4K M admin

Chapter 374 Kitchen Clash On the way, Elowen asked, "What happened? Why are they arguing?" 14% Finished Mira explained honestly, "It was nearly lunchtime. Martha came today, even though it's the first day of the year, just to cook for Your Grace. She was preparing the meal when Beatrice showed up and said from now on she would be responsible for Your Grace's food. She told Martha to assist her. "Martha said Your Grace never gave such an order and that Beatrice must be imagining things. Besides, she just arrived and doesn't even know what you like to eat. Martha told her to leave.

"Beatrice said she came from the palace and was acting under palace orders. After that... they started arguing." Mira sighed. "They kept getting louder. I thought they might come to blows. That would be a terrible way to start the day, so I hurried to find you." As they approached the kitchen, a shrill voice rang out. "Her Grace is carrying a royal heir now. She must be treated with the utmost care! And you dare serve her this kind of crude food?" Beatrice's voice dripped with disdain. "I served Her Majesty in the palace. Even His Highness the Crown Prince was raised under my care!

And you, a backwater peasant woman, think you can challenge me here?" Martha's face flushed red with anger. "I've worked in the kitchens of Duskmoor Manor for over ten years! I started in the main kitchen, and when this smaller kitchen was built for the household here, I was transferred over. I've been responsible for the Duchess's meals ever since. I know better than you what she likes and what she doesn't!" She snorted. "Crude food? Have you never eaten noodles before? Did your parents never eat noodles?

Even Her Majesty, the Crown Prince, or His Majesty himself would eat a bowl of noodles!"

"You dare talk back?" Beatrice was furious, her voice rising sharply. "The Duchess is young and

doesn't know better. And servants like you take advantage of that ignorance! Today I'll teach you what proper discipline looks like!" As she spoke, she raised her arm to slap Martha, Martha stood her ground without moving. She even lifted her chin slightly, as if daring Beatrice to try. Just as Beatrice's hand was about to come down, Elowen's voice sounded calmly.

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"Beatrice." Her voice was not loud, yet the noisy kitchen fell silent once. Elowen walked forward slowly. She was not dressed extravagantly today. She wore a warm crimson silk gown trimmed with white fox fur III O < 1/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 374 Kitchen Clash along the collar and cuffs, the soft fur making her fair complexion appear even more luminous. 14% Finished Perhaps because of the pregnancy, or simply because she had been eating well lately, her face looked a little fuller than before. The softness gave her a gentle nobility.

Her hair was styled in an elegant knot, adorned with a single gold-and-kingfisher hair ornament shaped like drifting clouds. A pair of pearl earrings swayed lightly at her ears. She looked warm, composed, and dignified. At the sight of her, Martha immediately straightened with renewed confidence. Beatrice, however, showed no restraint. She smoothed her skirts and spoke with absolute self-assurance. "Your Grace, you arrived just in time! I was disciplining these servants who don't understand proper rules." Elowen glanced sideways. Beatrice pointed at Martha.

"Your Grace is with child, yet this old woman dares serve you noodles! Such coarse food could harm you!" Elowen's expression cooled. "So noodles are considered coarse food? Then I suppose I'm coarse as well. And so is the Duke of Duskmoor." Beatrice froze. "W-what?" Elowen replied evenly, "I was the one who told Martha that the Duke and I wanted noodles for lunch." Beatrice's expression shifted slightly, though she still tried to maintain her authority. "Your Grace, you are

carrying not only the Duke's child, but a child of the royal bloodline. Your meals must be handled with the utmost care.

How could you eat something like noodles? You're still young and don't know better, but this woman should have advised you otherwise. Instead she encouraged it. That kind of malicious negligence deserves a beating before she's sold off." Martha's fists tightened nervously. Elowen, however, spoke without emotion. "Very well. Let's follow your suggestion." Beatrice's face lit up. She was just about to order someone to drag Martha away. Then Elowen continued calmly, "After disciplining Martha, the next ones to punish would be the people who wanted to eat them.

That would be me and the Dule." She looked directly at Beatrice, "So tell me, Beatrice, Should the Duke and I stand while receiving your lecture, or would you prefer we bow?" Beatrice froze, The mere image of the Duke of Duskmoor standing, or worse, bowing his head while she lectured him made her legs turn weak. She nearly collapsed on the spot. ||| O < 2/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 @ Chapter 374 Kitchen Clash Her voice trembled. "Y-Your Grace... what do you you mean?" 14% Finished Elowen let out a cold laugh. "Haven't you already made very decision for this household?

Why ask me?" Strangely, Beatrice suddenly saw something of Cassian in Elowen. She continued calmly, each word precise. "I said I wanted noodles. You said no, called them crude and claimed I was too young to understand what's proper. I hadn't even decided how to handle the situation, yet you were already planning punishments and sales." Elowen's gaze sharpened as she looked at her. "It seems that starting today, Duskmoor Manor is no longer under my authority." Her voice turned icy.

"Perhaps I should ask the Duke to report to His Majesty and have the title of Duke of Duskmoor handed over to you as well?" 。 2.4K III O 3/3 admin

Chapter 375 Establishing Authority Beatrice stood there speechless, her face shifting between pale and flushed. 14% Finished The moment Elowen finished speaking, Beatrice's composure finally collapsed. Her legs gave out beneath her, and she dropped heavily to the ground. "I would never dare. I truly would never dare," she stammered, her voice shaking. Elowen let out a soft, cold laugh and said nothing more. Gerda quietly carried a chair out beneath the corridor and set it down. A thick cushion had been placed on the seat. Elowen settled into it with composed ease.

Gerda handed her an enameled hand warmer. Elowen held it in both hands, sitting there with an expression so calm it seemed almost indifferent. To Beatrice, however, that calm felt like a blade suspended above her head. Her heart pounded in panic. Before coming to Duskmoor Manor, Isla had told her that as someone who had served long within the palace, she could carry herself with authority. The duchess was inexperienced, the queen had said, and there would be many matters she did not yet understand. Beatrice should guide her when necessary.

But Beatrice had never imagined that this seemingly gentle and timid young duchess would possess such a sharp mind. In only a few sentences, Elowen had twisted the situation until Beatrice herself sounded like a rebellious servant who dared challenge her mistress. Now Beatrice could not tell what Elowen intended. Is she going to punish me harshly? Cold sweat gradually soaked through her clothes. Just as despair began creeping in, Elowen finally spoke again. "It appears the title still belongs to the Duke of Duskmoor," she said calmly.

"And this household is still under my authority." Beatrice did not dare utter a word of protest.

"Yes, Your Grace. You are absolutely right," she said hurriedly, her voice trembling. Seated comfortably, Elowen looked down at her. Seeing that Beatrice had finally corrected her attitude, Elowen's tone softened slightly. "I know you served Her Majesty for many years, and you were once the wet nurse to His Highness. Someone with your experience must be capable and reliable. Having lived in the palace for so long, you surely understand better than anyone the importance of rank and order.

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What may be said and what must never be said. What duties belong to you and what do not.

These things should already be very clear to you." ||| O Γ 1/3 12:33 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 375

Establishing Authority. Her gaze remained steady. Finished "Since today is your first day here, I can understand that concern may have made you overstep. I will not pursue the matter any further. But from this day forward, you must remember the rules more carefully.

Otherwise, if trouble arises, would that not reflect poorly on Her Majesty as well?" Beatrice had survived more than a decade navigating palace politics. She immediately understood the meaning behind those words. The young duchess had struck with both firmness and mercy. She had reprimanded her, yet also offered a way to retreat with dignity. Though resentment lingered in her heart, Beatrice could not help admiring the young woman's control. "All right," Elowen said at last, withdrawing her gaze. "Martha, prepare a bowl of noodles for me.

As for the others who arrived from the palace today, have them come here. I would like to see everyone." Not long afterward, the courtyard filled with people. Stewards, servants, attendants, and maids stood neatly arranged. Gerda brought over a register and handed it to Elowen. Elowen opened it and scanned the contents. Only their names had been recorded. There was no mention

of where they had previously served. Without that information, it would be impossible to know whose influence they truly belonged to. That made Elowen uneasy. She closed the book slowly and spoke with calm composure.

"Beatrice reminded me earlier that she once served Her Majesty. Among the rest of you, some previously attended Lady Elira, while others even served His Majesty directly. Compared to the palace, life at Duskmoor Manor must feel rather modest. I'm sure this change is not easy for you." The group quickly responded. "Your Grace is too kind." "There is no hardship at all." "To serve Your Grace is our honor," Elowen smiled gently, "Since you serve me sincerely, I would not treat you unfairly. Life at the manor differs from palace service in many ways, especially when it comes to wages.

According to the rules, your stipends will still be issued by the palace. However, collecting them will now require a few additional steps." She lifted the register slightly, "I must first report the number of staff to the palace. Once the funds are released, they will be distributed ||| O < 2/3
12:33 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 375 Establishing Authority 14% Finished through my office. I have also heard that each palace residence offers different stipends depending on the duties assigned.

So today, each of you must state clearly where you previously served, which noble household you attended, what your responsibilities were, and how much you were paid." The servants exchanged uneasy glances. A young maid standing near the front suddenly raised her head and offered Elowen a flattering smile. "Your Grace, wouldn't it make more sense to assign duties first?" Elowen's smile remained faint as she looked at her. Something in that quiet gaze made the

girl's heart tighten. Elowen spoke gently, "What is your name?" The maid lowered her eyes slightly. "My name is Seren" Elowen nodded.

"Very well. Since you spoke first, you may lead the others. Go to Cora and Anson and report your information for registration." Only a few calm sentences, yet they carried both grace and authority. In truth, she displayed more command than some nobles within the palace. Seren dared not argue further and obediently stepped forward. Cora and Anson had already prepared a table with ink and paper. Edith stood nearby watching the proceedings. Having once served Selene and later followed Cassian for many years, she immediately understood Elowen's intention. Her face turned stern.

"Each of you will report truthfully," she said coldly. "If anyone lies, conceals information, or falsifies their record, and it is discovered later by His Grace or Her Grace, the matter will be reported directly to His Majesty. At that point, the punishment will not be light. Her words carried unmistakable weight. The warning worked immediately. Elowen gave Edith an approving glance. This quiet steward rarely spoke or showed emotion. Yet when the moment demanded it, she proved extraordinarily useful.. 2.4K O 3/3 admin

Chapter 376 A Quiet Victory Finished Elowen leaned back comfortably in the chair, cradling the warm hand heater while enjoying the sunlight. By the time the last servant finished registering their information, the warmth had soaked through her skirts and spread across her legs. The gentle heat made her slightly drowsy. She drew her feet back and said with a bright smile, "Since everyone has finished registering, you may take a rest for now. Once I've decided your assignments, I will inform you." With that, she rose to her feet. She was starving. Time to find Cassian and have lunch together.

And while she was at it, she could report her little victory and see how he would praise her. Meanwhile, in the study. When Elowen returned, Martha had already delivered two steaming bowls of noodle soup. Elowen had told her earlier that she preferred not to eat in the dining hall today. Noodles were simple enough to enjoy in the study. Martha's cooking was excellent. The noodles were perfectly even in thickness, floating in a clear, fragrant broth. Bright green vegetables rested on top alongside several thin slices of braised meat.

Because the soup was still too hot, Elowen did not start eating immediately. Instead she happily explained everything to Cassian. She described how she had used Beatrice as an example to establish authority, and how she cleverly created the wage registration so the palace servants would reveal their backgrounds. A hint of pride colored her voice. Mira and Cora stood nearby, both struggling to hide their smiles. Mira had followed Elowen since childhood and had witnessed the many changes in her life. Watching her now brought back memories of the past.

Whenever Elowen accomplished something as a girl, she would run to tell her parents, bursting with excitement and waving her arms as she spoke, They would praise her warmly. And Elowen would remain happy for the entire day. Now the same scene seemed to repeat itself. Her parents were gone. But there was now a duke in their place. Thinking of this, Mira suddenly felt her eyes sting with emotion, Cassian listened patiently, the amusement in his eyes growing deeper with every sentence.

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12:34 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 376 A Quiet Victory Finished When Elowen explained how she had used the wage records to uncover everyone's background, he nodded with clear approval. After finishing, Elowen looked at him expectantly, her eyes bright. Cassian smiled. "Ella, that was clever. You didn't raise your voice, you didn't punish anyone, and somehow the entire courtyard

ended up exactly where you wanted it." Elowen's smile turned sweet. She was just about to ask what reward she might receive Cassian spoke first.. "You handled the matter beautifully.

Such success deserves a proper reward." His voice softened. "Tell me, Ella. What would you like?" Elowen froze for a moment. Her heart suddenly softened like melting snow. Sometimes she felt childish, always wanting recognition whenever she accomplished something. Yet she could never help herself. Cassian, however, never found it annoying. He always played along. He understood her. Being cherished this way, feeling someone truly understood her heart, made happiness tremble all the way to her fingertips.

"You may ask for anything," Cassian murmured gently." would give you whatever you wish." Instead of answering, Elowen suddenly opened her arms and leaned forward, wrapping them around him and burying her face in the curve of his shoulder. Cassian lowered his gaze. "What is it?" Elowen's voice was soft. "A hug. That's the reward I want Cassian chuckled quietly and rested his hand against he back.

After holding her for a while, Elowen lifted her head, "But I still haven't assigned duties to the palace servants I don't really have experience with that." Cassian answered gently, "That is not difficult. Since we do not yet know them well, and since you are carrying a child, they should not be placed in sensitive positions. Continue letting Mira, Cora, Gerda, and Edith attend to you personally," He continued calmly.

Г 2/4 12:34 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 376 A Quiet Victory ¼ ¼ 14% Finished "As for those sent from the palace, assign them roles that appear important but hold little authority and rarely require direct contact with you. Positions such as household supervisors, etiquette instructors, or attendants for the study and reception hall would work. The male servants can oversee the

carriage stables or inventory of artworks and antiques." Elowen's eyes lit up in realization. She wriggled out of his arms and sat upright, even trying to stand. Cassian caught her arm gently.

"Where are you going?" Elowen answered seriously, "I'm afraid I'll forget. I need to write this down." Cassian laughed. "There's no hurry. Eat lunch first. Afterward you can take a nap. You can deal with it later." Elowen considered this. "You're right!" She touched the bowl and found the temperature perfect. Without hesitation she picked up her fork and began eating. Meanwhile, back in the courtyard. After Elowen left, the servants gradually dispersed. "Seren! Seren!" Seren had just started walking away when someone called her name. She stopped as someone gently slipped an arm around hers.

"I've heard people say before that Seren is the most beautiful maid in the palace. Now that I've seen you myself, I can tell it's true. When everyone was standing together earlier, Her Grace noticed only you and even asked your name." The speaker was Alyssa, a maid who had served in Isla's palace residence. Everyone in the palace knew that Isla and Elira had been locked in a quiet rivalry for years. During her time serving Elira, Seren had often heard people criticize Isla's household behind closed doors. Because of that, she instinctively felt some distance toward Alyssa.

She gently pulled her arm free. "What exactly are you trying to say?" Seren asked. Alyssa's smile remained bright as she continued walking beside her. "I'm simply saying you are truly lovely. Those wide eyes that fair complexion. Anyone who didn't know better would think you were a noble young lady from a wealthy family rather than a palace attendant." 3/4 12:34 Mon, Apr 13

Awakening Love Reborn to Be His Duchess admin

Chapter 377 Whispers in the Servants Quarters Seren had been praised for her looks since she was young. Hearing Alyssa say such things now, she could not help lifting a hand to touch her own face. Alyssa watched the small gesture carefully and caught every shift in her expression. After a moment, she sighed. "Still," she said thoughtfully, "I doubt the Duchess will keep you close by her side." Seren blinked. "Why not?" "Because you're too pretty," Alyssa replied, tilting her head.

"If you were the Duchess, would you keep a young, beautiful maid right beside you every day?" Seren immediately understood what she meant. Her expression darkened. Lowering her voice, Alyssa continued, "The Duke of Duskmoor is still in his prime. The Duchess is with child now, so she cannot always attend to him. If His Grace needs... comfort, the most convenient choice would naturally be someone serving nearby. And if the girl happens to be beautiful, well, it wouldn't be impossible for His Grace to take a liking to her." Her voice softened, almost dreamy.

"A favored companion within a ducal household can live far more comfortably than many respectable wives outside." She sighed again, long and wistful. "Unfortunately, I'm not much to look at. His Grace would never notice me. But you're different. You stand out in any crowd." She squeezed Seren's hand lightly. "If you ever rise to become one of the Duke's favored ladies, don't forget about me. I don't ask for much. Just let me serve you closely, and I'll be satisfied." Seren tried to sound modest.

"That's not something that happens so easily." But the corner of her mouth lifted before she could stop it. Alyssa's smile widened. She patted Seren's hand. "Fortune favors those who know how to seize their chance. Look at what happened today with Beatrice. Only the Duchess came to handle it. The Duke never even appeared. That tells you something about how much attention

he gives her" Seren fell silent, clearly considering the thought. "And besides," Alyssa added with a knowing grin, "the Duchess may be beautiful, but she doesn't have your spark. Who knows?"

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Maybe His Grace prefers someone vely like you." Seren's cheeks flushed red. "You're talking nonsense..." "How is that nonsense?" O 1/3 12:34 Mon, Apr 13 @ Chapter 377 Whispers in the Servants' Quarters Alyssa leaned close and whispered into her ear. Finished "Still, dear sister, His Grace uses a wheelchair. When the moment comes, you'll have to rely on your own charm." Seren's face turned completely scarlet. The two women chatted and laughed as they walked back toward the servants' quarters. Alyssa did not stay in that room.

After saying goodbye at the doorway, she returned to her own chamber. Seren stepped inside and went straight to the vanity table. She sat down and studied her reflection in the mirror. The longer she looked, the more convinced she became that she truly was beautiful. But... does the Duke even like me? "Why were you walking back with Alyssa?" Her older sister Rosaline was tidying the room and noticed something unusual right away. Seren and Rosaline were sisters by blood. Years ago they had both been sent into palace service and had worked in Elira's household.

Still staring into the mirror, Seren answered vaguely, "Nothing important. Just chatting."

Rosaline frowned slightly. "That girl Alyssa is not what she seems," she said. "She flatters people to their faces, praising them as if they were perfect. Then she turns around and mocks them behind their backs. Whatever she told you, treat it like a joke and nothing more. Otherwise you'll end up being used." Seren frowned in annoyance. "You think everyone is scheming." Rosaline sighed. "I'm your sister. I'm not trying to harm you."

We were sent here from the palace, which puts us in a very delicate position. If anything goes wrong, the Duke's household won't keep us, and the palace certainly won't take us back. We might not even keep our lives." She paused, lowering her voice, "And think about the connections involved. Her Majesty and Lady Elira have their own relationship. Beatrice is one of Her Majesty's trusted attendants, and Alyssa happens to be Beatrice's niece. Do you really think someone like that is simple?" Seren's patience snapped. "She didn't say anything like that.

She only said I'm pretty." Rosaline immediately sensed something. "She praised your looks? Don't tell me she was encouraging you to compete with the Duchess for His Grace's favor."

Seren froze. That hesitation was answer enough. 2/3 12:34 Mon, Apr 13 O @ Chapter 377

Whispers in the Servants' Quarters Rosaline felt a surge of frustration. 4% 02 Finished "You foolish girl. There are countless beautiful women the world, and the Duchess herself is extraordinary.

Even if you are pretty, do you truly believe you could surpass her?" She continued sharply, "And beauty is the least valuable quality a woman can have. Compare your background to hers. She is the daughter of a great general. Compare your abilities. Didn't you see how capable she was earlier today? She may be young, but she knows exactly how to handle people. How could you possibly outmaneuver someone like that?" Rosaline shook her head. "When she asked your name earlier, it wasn't because she liked you. She was warning you for breaking etiquette.

And you didn't even understand that." Seren tried to defend herself. "I never said I wanted to compete with her. I just think being one of the Duke's companions wouldn't be so bad. At least I'd never have to worry about food or clothes again, and someone would even serve me." "You actually want that?" Rosaline laughed in disbelief. "Didn't you hear what the Duchess said on

Christmas Eve? She refuses to share her household with other women. Lady Elira has been trying to build a friendly relationship with her. If you offend the Duchess now, where does that leave Lady Elira?

"Do you have any idea how foolish you sound?" Seren could not take another word. She jumped to her feet so abruptly that the chair legs scraped harshly against the floor. "Fine! You're the clever one! You're the beautiful one too! Happy now?" Her voice rose into a near shout. Her eyes reddened with anger and humiliation. Without even removing her shoes, she threw herself onto the bed and buried under the blankets. 。 2.4K W admin

Chapter 378 A Place in the Study 14% Finished Soon the blankets began to tremble slightly as Seren's muffled sobs filled the room. Rosaline pressed her fingers to her temple with a weary sigh. Her younger sister had always been lovely and hardworking, but far too trusting. She believed whatever people told her. 麻 When Elira announced that someone would be sent to serve at Duskmoor Manor, Rosaline had not dared refuse. Serving Elira was an honor. But she could not leave Seren alone in the palace either. That place would devour someone as naïve as her sister.

So Rosaline bowed before Elira and begged to bring Seren along. Elira had agreed. Now, however, it seemed life in the Duke's household might not be any easier than life in the palace. Elowen originally planned to take a short nap after lunch and then begin assigning duties. But once she fell asleep, she did not wake until evening shadows had already gathered. After getting up, Elowen drank some water. Her mind cleared a little. She turned to Gerda. "The attendants sent from the palace are still waiting in their rooms, right? No trouble from anyone?" Gerda smiled.

"After the way Your Grace handled things earlier, no one would dare cause trouble." Elowen gave a shy smile and set down her cup. "In that case, bring them here. It's time to assign their duties." Gerda bowed. "Yes, Your Grace," A chair had been placed just inside the bedchamber doorway. Elowen sat there with a small hand warmer resting in her arms while the attendants stood in the corridor outside. Her gaze quickly settled on a familiar young face. Earlier that afternoon, this girl had lifted her head to speak rather boldly, which had prompted Elowen to ask her name as a warning.

Now, however, the girl's eyes were noticeably swollen. She had clearly been crying. "You're Seren, correct?" Elowen asked suddenly. Seren lowered her head deeply, unwilling to reveal her eyes. "Yes, Your Grace," she murmured, though her voice was hoarse and thick with the remnants of tears. "Why were you crying?" Elowen asked, 1/3 12:34 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 378 A Place in the Study Seren pressed her lips together, unsure how to answer. 14% Finished After a long moment, she simply sniffed. Before she could speak, another maid stepped forward and bowed deeply. "Your Grace," she said calmly.

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"My name is Rosaline. I am Seren's elder sister. I scolded her earlier today, and she became upset and cried. The fault lies entirely with me." Elowen turned to glance at the register beside her. Both had previously served in Elira's household. Elowen looked up at Rosaline and raised a brow. "And why did you scold her?" Rosaline kept her head lowered. "She offended Your Grace earlier today. Since she was in the wrong, I had no choice but to reprimand her." Elowen nodded. "You're sensible." She smiled lightly. "Stand up.

There's no need to bow over something so small." "Thank you, Your Grace." Rosaline rose. Elowen glanced at Seren again. "Still, swollen eyes won't do. Later you should fetch something

to soothe them." Rosaline bowed again. "Your Grace is too kind. But we are only servants. There's no need for costly remedies. A cool cloth soaked in water will be more than enough."

Elowen nodded thoughtfully. "That works.

I used the same trick when I cried as a child." She studied Rosaline for a moment before continuing, "Since the two of you are sisters and both served in Elira's household before coming here, I see no reason to separate you. From now on, you may both serve in the study." Rosaline froze. A strange warmth spread through her chest. She had been wondering how to request that she and her sister be assigned together. Yet Elowen had offered it before she even asked. Even if it was simply a way of winning loyalty, it struck precisely where Rosaline's worries lay. How could she not feel grateful?

"Thank you, Your Grace." Rosaline dropped to the floor again and bowed deeply. This time the gratitude in her voice was genuine. Elowen was about to tell her to stand when Seren suddenly sniffed and asked quietly, "Will we... be serving in His Grace's study?" Rosaline's expression changed instantly. She whipped her head toward her sister. "Seren! What are you saying?" 213
12:34 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 378 A Place in the Study She quickly bowed again toward Elowen. 14% Finished "Your Grace, please forgive her. She is foolish and spoke without thinking.

If there is any fault, I will bear it with her." Elowen looked from Rosaline's anxious expression to Seren's confused one. She did not seem angry at all. Instead, she smiled gently "Your sister cares for you very much." Seren curled her lips slightly, looking unimpressed. Elowen continued calmly, "Not the Duke's study. Mine. His Grace had it built especially for me. I usually read or manage the estate accounts there." Seren blinked in surprise. "Your Grace... reads books?"

Elowen smiled faintly. "Reading and writing are not privileges reserved for me. Women should study as well.

Understanding the world is important for everyone." 2.4K W 3/3 admin

Chapter 379 New Duties 13%8 Finished After speaking, Elowen glanced briefly at Rosaline before continuing in a calm tone. "Lady Elira must have had her reasons for sending the two of you here. From now on, your sister will be your responsibility." "Yes, Your Grace" Rosaline answered immediately, gratitude filling her voice. Elowen inclined her head slightly. "You may stand." After that brief instruction, she turned her attention elsewhere and began speaking with the other attendants. She no longer spared the sisters another look.

With everyone's duties assigned, the attendants were led away to familiarize themselves with their new posts. Rosaline and Seren were assigned to the study, where Cora guided them through the room and carefully explained its rules. "This is where Her Grace usually reads and writes," Cora said, gesturing toward the large desk near the window. "When she is here working, she does not like interruptions. Whatever you do, keep your voices low and your movements quiet." She opened a cabinet beside the wall. These shelves hold the estate ledgers from previous years.

The cabinet stays locked, and I keep the key. Unless Her Grace gives permission, no one is to open it She pointed next toward a tall bookcase. "The Duchess's favorite books are kept on the third shelf so they are easy to reach. Cora's expression grew a little more serious. "The bookcase is something Her Grace treasures greatly. She usually organizes it herself. Do not move anything unless she instructs you to." Rosaline and Seren both answered obediently, "Understood." By the time the introductions and explanations were finished, evening had already settled across the manor.

One by one, the attendants returned to their rooms to rest. "Seren, Rosaline." A voice called from behind them. Alyssa hurried over to catch up. Rosaline's expression cooled slightly. "Alyssa, did you need something?" Alyssa smiled brightly. "Now that everyone's duties have been assigned, I was curious where you two ended up. I heard you're working in the study. Is it quiet there? Seems like it would be an easy post. Seren was just about to answer when Rosaline spoke first "If you're serving at the Duchess's side, there is no such thing as an easy post," Rosaline said evenly.

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"If you find your duties too tiring, you could always bring it up with Her Grace." 111 O 1/3

12:36 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 379 New Duties For a brief moment, Alyssa's smile stiffened. "It's not that I find it tiring," she replied quickly. "By the way, Seren, your eyes, why are they..." "It's getting late." Rosaline cut her off without hesitation. "We're going back to rest. You should do the same." Finished With that, she took Seren's arm and walked away without looking back.

Alyssa remained where she was, the smile slowly disappearing from her face.

Her brows twisted with quiet frustration as she watched them leave. The second day, Elowen finally stirred awake. Bright daylight was already streaming through the window. Turning her head slightly, she saw Cassian sitting beside the bed in a carved wooden armchair, lazily reading a book. Morning light fell across the sharp lines of his face, casting soft shadows along his cheekbones. When he heard the faint rustle of movement, Cassian lowered the book and looked toward her. A small smile appeared at the corner of his lips.

"You're awake." "Mmm." Elowen's voice came out soft and slightly drawn out with sleepiness.

As she spoke, she stretched lazily beneath the covers. Cassian found the sight dangerously charming. Even something as simple as her stretching made her look irresistibly endearing.

When she finished stretching, Elowen blinked at him and smiled. "Merry Christmas." Cassian paused slightly, one brow lifting in mild confusion. "Ella, Christmas was yesterday," "That still counts," Elowen said with complete seriousness.

"During Christmastide, whenever you see someone you're supposed to wish them a merry Christmas." The reasoning was slightly crooked, yet somehow convincing. Cassian accepted it easily and nodded. "All right then. Merry Christmas." A faint smile touched his lips. "Perfect timing, actually. I'm taking you to the palace today to offer greetings." "Really? That sounds wonderful." Elowen had always loved Christmastide. When she was younger, those visits meant tasting all sorts of festive treats and receiving small purses of Christmas coins.

|| O 2/3 12:36 Mon, Apr 13 @ Chapter 379 New Duties 13% Finished Although every year her mother would collect the coins afterward, insisting she would return them once Elowen was grown. Elowen pushed herself upright against the bed and asked curiously, "Who are we greeting today?" Cassian reached out instinctively and steadied her arm. "His Majesty." Elowen paused, surprise flickering across her face. Paying Christmas respects to His Majesty? In her entire life she had never been involved in anything at such an important level.

Seeing her hesitate, Cassian asked quietly, "You'd rather not go?" "It's not that," Elowen said after a moment, looking troubled. "I simply overslept again today. It's already this late and we're only getting up now. When presenting greetings at court, people usually arrive early to show proper respect. Cassian, you should have woken me sooner." Cassian did not appear concerned in the slightest. "It won't matter," he said gently. "His Majesty knows you're expecting.

If you sleep a little longer, he won't take offense over something like that." Elowen pushed aside the blankets and leaned forward to reach the shoes beside the bed, still muttering her worries.

"That may be true. between brothers, but other people won't see it that way. Now that Isla has announced my pregnancy to the entire court and the palace has sent so many attendants here to serve me, Duskmoor Manor has become the center of everyone's attention. I have no doubt half the court is watching us closely.

If we arrive late to the palace on a day like this, people will start whispering that we've grown arrogant from imperial favor and forgotten proper respect." Cassian bent down and picked up a pair of silk stockings beside the bed. He helped her put them on with steady hands before slipping the embroidered shoes onto her feet. As he listened to her soft stream of worries, he did not feel the slightest hint of impatience. If anything, her concern warmed him more than he cared to admit. 2.4K 3/3 O admin

Chapter 380 The Visit 13% Finished "Are you even listening to me?" Elowen leaned forward to look at him, seeing that he had remained focused on helping her with her shoes. "I'm listening," Cassian said as he looked up. He admitted easily, "You're right. I should have thought of that. Next year I'll wake you earlier." Elowen gave a small huff, satisfied enough to let the matter go. "Then let's hurry and get ready.

We need to reach the palace as soon as possible." Even though they moved quickly, by the time the carriage from Duskmoor Manor reached the palace gates, the morning was already well underway. Cassian continued maintaining the appearance of his injured leg and remained seated in his wheelchair. Elowen guided the chair as they entered the grand audience hall. They offered their greetings toward the dais where Theedric was seated. Cassian spoke first. "I have come with my wife, Elowen Hale, to offer greetings.

I wish Your Majesty health and prosperity in the year ahead." Elowen followed respectfully.

"Elowen offers her greetings as well. May Your Majesty enjoy enduring health and long life."

"Good. Good." Theodric acknowledged them, though his expression did not look particularly lively. Compared with the banquet, he seemed noticeably more tired. Cassian noticed it immediately. "Did Your Majesty sleep poorly last night?" Theodric rubbed his brow and let out a heavy sigh. "Poorly would be an understatement.

I spent the entire night trapped in a ridiculous nightmare." Elowen sat quietly in her chair and stole a curious glance at him. What kind of nightmare has him this shaken? Cassian asked, "What did Your Majesty dream about?" Leaning back in his chair, Theodric spoke slowly. "You know that I arranged your marriage. I also arranged the marriage between the young heir of Falconcrest Manor and Sylvia. And there are several other matches I won't bother listing."

Cassian raised an eyebrow. "Arranging marriages that bring people happiness sounds like a good thing.

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How does that become a nightmare?" Theodric's expression turned complicated, almost irritated.

||| O 1/3 12:36 Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 380 The Visit 13%, Finished "That's what I thought too. But last night I dreamed that centuries from now, people would give me some ridiculous title." He paused. "They called me the Emperor of Arranged Marriages." Cassian looked momentarily stunned. Elowen blinked in confusion. Neither of them reacted immediately.

Theodric continued, clearly frustrated. "Think about it," Theodric continued. "Other rulers leave their names in history.

Their tombs lie in the royal crypt, honored by generations. Some even have statues raised in their memory, or chapels built where people come to pay their respects." He gave a faint snort. "But

me? In that dream I ended up as some sort of ridiculous patron of marriages. People were lining up in front of my statue, praying for me to find them husbands and wives. Tell me honestly.

Does that sound dignified?" The image was so absurd that Elowen found herself momentarily speechless. Yet the more she thought about it, the more it made sense.

Since ascending the throne, Theodric really had arranged quite a remarkable number of marriages. Even among the people she personally knew, several couples owed their unions to him. The title, strangely enough, suited him rather well. The thought made the corners of Elowen's mouth twitch upward. She quickly lowered her head, trying to hide the smile before it became too obvious. At that moment, Cassian chuckled. Elowen almost wanted to whisper that he was being bold. From the dais, Theodric looked down at him. "What are you laughing at? Is it that funny?" Cassian answered honestly. "Yes.

That title is extremely funny." Theodric stared at him. Cassian continued calmly, "Your Majesty, if people pray to you for marriage blessings, how is that a nightmare? A person only lives once. Most people hope to leave some trace behind after they're gone. Being forgotten entirely would be the real nightmare." Theodric paused. Then he rubbed his chin thoughtfully. That argument actually made sense. The gloom on his face slowly faded, replaced by genuine amusement. "You're right. You're absolutely right.

No one understands me better than you do, Cassian." At that moment, Quin entered the hall carrying a tray with freshly warmed mulled wine. The scent of cinnamon and cloves drifted softly through the air. || O 2/3 12:36 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 380 The Visit 13% Finished
Elowen wrapped both hands around the cup, letting the warmth seep into her fingers. The wine was still too hot to drink. Theodric's gaze settled on her. Her complexion looked healthy, and she

had filled out a little compared with before. "It seems you've gained a little weight recently," Theodric said with quiet satisfaction.

"That tells me you've been well looked after." Elowen looked up and answered without thinking. "That's because Cassian..." She stopped halfway through the sentence. Calling him by name had become such a habit that the word slipped out before she realized it. The moment she noticed, she corrected herself quickly. A faint blush rose to her cheeks. "It's because His Grace has taken good care of me." Theodric's smile instantly turned knowing. "So you call him Cas.. hat naturally now." His gaze shifted between the two of them, amusement clear in his eyes.

"It seems the two of you are getting along quite well these days. Good. That pleases me greatly." Cassian answered calmly, "We should thank the Emperor of Arranged Marriages." Theodric burst into laughter. All the earlier frustration vanished at once, and the atmosphere inside the hall relaxed into easy warmth. Elowen secretly glanced at Cassian, her eyes filled with both admiration and quiet amusement. He truly had no hesitation saying things like that. Cassian met her gaze calmly, giving her a steady look that seemed to promise that everything was perfectly under control. 2.4K 3/3 III admin

Chapter 381 A Brother's Quiet Move 13% 99 Finished After waiting patiently until the laughter had mostly faded, Cassian lifted his cup and took a slow sip before speaking again. "Now that I think about it," he said in an even tone, "Ella and I are fortunate to receive such care from my brother. In truth, we should also thank Her Majesty." Theodric seemed to be in excellent spirits and responded casually. "Oh? And why is that?" Cassian set the cup down with unhurried composure.

"I heard that yesterday Your Majesty personally ordered several senior attendants and palace servants to be sent to our residence. It seems the idea originally came from Her Majesty."

Theodric nodded. "That's right. On Christmas Eve I was so furious with that useless woman from the Garrett family that I only remembered to reward the two of you with gold and jewels. It completely slipped my mind that your household is about to welcome a child and will need capable attendants." He chuckled faintly. "Fortunately Isla is thoughtful. She mentioned it at just the right moment.

Otherwise I truly would have been negligent as an elder brother." Cassian inclined his head slightly. "Her Majesty's contributions do not end there." He continued calmly, "I have also heard that news of the Duchess of Duskmoor's pregnancy has already spread across all of Vanelle. It seems Her Majesty wished to share the happy news widely so the people might celebrate along with us." Theodric's brows, which had only just relaxed, slowly drew together again. He was no foolish ruler.

A man who had spent decades at the center of power could hardly fail to understand the meaning behind Cassian's words. His gaze deepened as his fingers tapped lightly against the desk before him. "That arrangement of hers was not mentioned to me earlier." His voice slowed with careful thought. "So those matter were entirely Isla's doing." Cassian nodded lightly. "That would seem to be the case.

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Perhaps after the Crown Princess was stripped of her title and the Crown Prince confined to the Crown Prince's Wing, Her Majesty began to view me with a certain degree of caution." Theodric frowned slightly as he looked toward Cassian "If you feel uneasy about the people sent to your residence, I can issue an order at once and have them recalled. I will select another group with

clean records and trustworthy backgrounds to send instead." Cassian shook his head. "There is no need for Your Majesty to trouble yourself.

Ella has already made suitable arrangements for everyone who arrived from the palace."

Theodric raised his brows with interest. "The duchess arranged it?" III 1/3 12:36 Mon, Apr 13

@D Chapter 381 A Brother's Quiet Move 林家13%息 Finished Cassian's lips curved faintly.

"Yes. The household is entirely under her management now. Everything runs smoothly and in perfect order." Theodric turned toward Elowen, his expression openly approving. "You may be young, but you have remarkable ability." Elowen lowered her gaze with a shy smile. "Your Majesty is too generous with praise.

I merely observed how my mother and my sister-in-law managed their households and learned a few small things from them." Her mother was someone Theodric knew little about beyond the fact that her family name had been Wynne. Her sister-in-law, however, was another matter.

"Your sister-in-law shares the same family background as Elira." Elowen nodded. "Yes."

Theodric spoke without hesitation. "Elira may appear gentle and soft-spoken, yet she governs the palace with considerable skill. It seems that talent runs in the family." He leaned back slightly.

"Tell me, how exactly did you arrange the people sent from the palace?" Elowen hesitated for a moment, unsure how to answer. Cassian calmly spoke in her place. "The attendants sent by Her Majesty and by Lady Elira were assigned to minor posts with little responsibility." Theodric glanced sideways. "And the ones I personally selected?" Cassian replied with complete honesty, "They were given the same arrangement." Elowen blinked. Then she turned and shot Cassian an incredulous glare. Have you completely lost your mind? You might not value your life, but I certainly value mine.

To her surprise, Theodric suddenly burst into loud laughter. Elowen looked up in confusion.

Theodric's expression showed no trace of forced politeness. He was clearly amused and genuinely entertained by the answer. Elowen glanced back at Cassian. He was smiling as well, his eyes resting lightly on her face. "Did that frighten you?"

Chapter 381 A Brother's Quiet Move Elowen nodded slowly, then shook her head again.

Finished Cassian lifted his hand and brushed his thumb lightly across her cheek. "I was joking.

There's nothing to worry about." A moment later, understanding dawned on her. Although

Theodric ruled the empire and Cassian served him, at their core they were still brothers. Cassian could speak far more freely with him than anyone else would dare. Even a remark like that could be treated as a joke. Theodric did not consider it disrespectful. He listened. And he laughed. A quiet feeling of envy stirred in Elowen's heart. She once had a brother too. Most brothers and sisters were probably like this. When they were together they argued and irritated each other endlessly.

Yet once they were apart, the longing only grew stronger. Whenever Elowen quarreled with someone or found herself in trouble, Julian always stood firmly at her side, ready to support her without asking who was right or wrong. If anyone dared to bully her, the tears in Elowen's eyes would barely have time to gather before Julian's spear had already sent the offender sprawling across the ground. Once, in a moment of childish anger, Elowen had declared, "You're the most annoying brother in the world!" Only later did she realize the truth.

Julian had actually been the best brother anyone could ask for. And the only brother she had.

Now she missed him terribly. At the Crown Prince's Wing, the previous day had been the Christmas day. As Crown Prince, Alaric had been required to preside over a long series of

ceremonies and formal greetings. The obligations stretched endlessly until well past midnight. By the time he finally returned to his chambers, exhaustion overtook him almost instantly the moment his head touched the pillow. In his dream, Elowen was still his Crown Princess. 2.4K 川 3/3 admin

Chapter 382 A Dream That Won't Fade Morning light filtered into the chamber. She sat beside the bed and leaned forward gently. "Your Highness." 13% Finished Alaric opened his eyes. The sight before him filled his heart with warmth. Elowen's slender waist curved gracefully beneath her robe, and her fair cheeks held a soft flush that made her look radiant. Her gaze lingered on his face with quiet affection. "Your Highness, it's time to wake up. I prepared breakfast for you. All your favorites." A softness spread through Alaric's chest. He lifted his hand to touch her cheek. "Ella...

I treated you poorly in the past. Let's begin again Yet when his palm met her skin, all he felt was a chilling cold. Elowen's face twisted. In the next instant it transformed into Daphne. She threw back her head and laughed wildly. "What's the use of apologizing now? She's already dead because of you! Begin again? She belongs to the Duke of Duskmoor now. And he's a far better man than you'll ever be." Alaric's anger surged violently. His eyes snapped open.

The familiar canopy above his bed slowly came into focus, and only then did he realize that everything he had just experienced was nothing more than a dream. He pushed himself upright and pressed his fingers against his aching temple. The chamber around him felt cold and empty. The loneliness in his chest only grew heavier. "Someone." Alaric's voice was hoarse as he called out. Tristan, who had been waiting in the outer chamber, immediately entered carrying the

washing basin and other items needed for the morning routine. He set everything down quietly and stood with his head lowered.

After living through a second lifetime, Alaric had become even more suspicious and cautious than before. Matters involving his personal service were now entrusted solely to Tristan. Alaric remained seated at the edge of the bed with his feet hanging down, his expression dark as he waited to be attended. Tristan crouched on the floor and carefully began fitting the prince's boots onto his feet.

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"Today," Alaric said suddenly, breaking the silence, "has any message come from my mother?"

1/3 12:36 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 382 A Dream That Won't Fade Tristan continued working while answering respectfully "Your Highness, nothing has arrived today. However..." His voice faltered slightly. Alaric lowered his gaze sharply. "However what? Speak Finished Tristan drew a steady breath before replying truthfully. The Duke of Duskmoor and the Duchess entered the palace this morning to offer greetings to His Majesty." "Ella?!" The name escaped Alaric before he could stop himself.

He sprang abruptly to his feet. But Tristan's hands had not yet withdrawn. Alaric's step landed directly on Tristan's fingers. A surge of pain shot through Tristan's hand, draining the color from his face. "Your Highness..." Alaric heard none of it. Every thought in his mind was fixed on Elowen. He hurried toward the door without even bothering to put on an outer robe. Alaric strode out of his chamber and reached the entrance of the Crown Prince's Wing, only to have two cold spearheads cross in front of him and block his path "Stand aside.

I am going to greet my father." His expression darkened as he issued the command. The captain of the guards bowed respectfully but did not move an inch. "Your Highness, please forgive us. His Majesty ordered that, aside from the required ceremonies on the first day, Your Highness is still under confinement within the Crown Prince's Wing. Without His Majesty's direct command, you are not permitted to step beyond this residence. We dare not disobey the imperial order." Alaric ground his teeth. "Then go report it immediately.

Tell His Majesty I have urgent business and must request an audience at once." The guards exchanged glances. The captain nodded slightly to one of them, who immediately ran off to deliver the message. Alaric waited outside in the bitter cold wearing only a tin inner robe. The icy wind slipped through the fabric and chilled him to the bone, leaving his face pale from the cold. At last the guard returned. "Now I may leave," Alaric said coldly as he stepped forward. But the guard blocked him once more. "Your Highness, His Majesty's message is this.

There are guests in the palace today, and he cannot receive the Crown Prince. If Your Highness wishes to pay respects, you may do so at dusk." 111 2/3 12:36 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 382 A Dream That Won't Fade "How could dusk possibly work?" Alaric's brows tightened sharply. By the time evening arrived, Elowen would certainly be gone. 13% Finished Yet the guards remained unmoving. Frustration surged through Alaric, but he could not openly defy his father's order. Thinking back, he had clearly pleased Theodric on Christmas Eve with those heartfelt words.

If nothing unexpected happened, the order of confinement would soon be lifted. If that were the case, he should have been able to see Ella today. He desperately wanted to ask her face to face how she could possibly be carrying Cassian's child. Was she forced? Or is there some other

reason behind it? Yet now he could not take a single step outside. In the end, everything traced back to Daphne. Her foolish actions had enraged Theodric and dragged him down with her. A surge of furious resentment erupted in his chest.

Alaric spun around, cold fury radiating from him as he strode toward the courtyard where Daphne had once lived. The residence remained exactly as it had been on the day she was stripped of her title. With so many recent affairs occupying the palace, the attendants there had not yet been reassigned. Some were low-ranking servants sent from the palace. Others were maids who had accompanied Daphne from her family when she married into the Crown Prince's household. Alaric stopped at the gate and swept a dark, dangerous gaze across the courtyard. "Guards!" His voice rang out with fury.

"Drag every single person in this residence outside. Anyone who ever served Daphne. Sell them all off. Leave no one behind." 2.4K 3/3 admin

Chapter 383 A Calculated Plea 13% Finished As the order was spoken, the courtyard erupted into frightened pleas and muffled sobs. Amid the confusion and rising panic, a slender young maid with a pale face suddenly pushed through the crowd. She hurried forward and dropped into a deep bow at Alaric's feet, lowering herself so abruptly that the impact echoed against the stone pavement. "Your Highness, please show mercy. I am Iris, the former Crown Princess's personal attendant." Alaric lowered his gaze. His eyes were cold and distant as they settled on her. "I remember you," he said calmly.

"You and Daphne were always inseparable. With the devotion you showed your mistress, I doubt you stood by quietly while she carried out all those schemes." His eyes narrowed slightly. "Since the two of you were so loyal to each other, I might as well grant your wish. There is no need for

you to be sent to some ordinary household as a servant. I will have you placed in the Velvet Lantern instead. That sort of place should suit you better." Iris stared up in shock. Tears gathered quickly in her wide eyes and spilled down her pale cheeks. "Your Highness must see the truth.

Many of those things happened because I had no choice. I was forced by the former Crown Princess." Her voice trembled as she spoke. Then she seemed to make up her mind about something. She pushed back the fabric around her forearms, and exposed the skin beneath. The marks were ugly and raw. Dark bruises and jagged cuts twisted across her arms, standing out harshly under the thin winter light. Alaric's gaze fell on the wounds. His pupils tightened slightly, though his expression remained controlled. Iris's shoulders trembled as she continued.

"My parents died when I was young, and I have no brothers who could speak for me. My life was destined for service in the palace. The former Crown Princess was my mistress. If she ordered something, how could I refuse? Whenever I hesitated, she would lash out in anger and threaten punishment, sometimes even my life. Someone as lowly as me had no way to resist." She paused, swallowing against the tightness in her throat. "When she insisted on setting a trap for the Duchess of Duskmooor, I tried to speak against it.

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Years ago I once received a small kindness from the Duchess, and have never forgotten it. But when I said so, the former Crown Princess became furious. She accused me of betraying her and forgetting my loyalty, and she forced me to remain in a punishing bow in the courtyard for an entire night" Alaric caught the most important detail immediately. "You've met the Duchess of Duskmooor before?" "Yes, Your Highness." Iris answered. "The former Crown Princess and the Duchess grew up knowing each other.

I served in the Garrett household from childhood so I often accompanied my mistress and saw the Duchess when she was still very young." O 1/3 12.37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 383 A Calculated Plea 13% Finished A faint smile touched her tearful face. "She was still a little girl then. Lively and bright, with cheeks as pale as fresh snow. She talked endlessly all day long, and most of what she said was about Your Highness. If she spoke ten sentences, eight of them would somehow circle back to you. I remember it very dearly." As he listened, a quiet sense of satisfaction stirred in Alaric's chest.

Of course. In those days, Elowen had followed him everywhere like a small shadow, always calling out for him, always trying to catch his attention. She had been impossible to shake. Now, as Alaric looked down at Iris kneeling before him with tear-filled eyes, she seemed far more agreeable than she had moments earlier. His tone softened slightly. "If what you say is true and you were only forced into it then we will leave the matter there.

You may remain in the Crown Prince's Wing and continue serving close at hand." Iris immediately bowed again, pressing her forehead to the cold stone floor again and again in gratitude. "Thank you for Your Highness's mercy. Thank you for sparing me." The repeated bows left her forehead aching from the impact with the hard pavement, though the pain hardly compared with the injuries across her arms. Daphne had always been arrogant and spoiled, but she was not cruel by nature. She had never inflicted wounds like these on the servants who attended her daily.

Those frightening cuts had not come from Daphne at all. The previous night, in a quiet corner where no one would see her, Iris had taken a shard of broken porcelain and carved them into her own skin one by one. She understood perfectly well that once Daphne lost her position, everyone

who had once been close to the former Crown Princess would soon be removed from the Crown Prince's Wing. Within the palace walls, when a powerful figure fell, the followers scattered like birds from a broken tree.

If she wanted to survive, the only safe path was to cut ties with Daphne as quickly and as completely as possible. So Iris had prepared this painful display in advance. She had expected a moment exactly like this. Even so, that alone would not be enough. In truth, Iris had only glimpsed Flowen from afar a handful of times. Any kindness she claimed to have received had never existed. As for Elowen spending her childhood talking constantly about the Crown Prince, that was even more fabricated.

川| O 2/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 383 A Calculated Plea 13% 99 Finished When Elowen had been young she had been restless and full of wild ideas. One day she would chatter about wanting to ride horses, and sometimes she would complain indignantly that her older brother had teased her again. The Crown Prince had never been the only topic in her lively chatter. But Iris had long noticed something else. Alaric cared about Elowen. Perhaps "care" was not the right word. It was closer to an obsession. There had been many small signs over the years.

The final confirmation came during the banquet, when the news of Elowen's pregnancy reached the hall. Iris had been standing nearby at the time. She saw Alaric lose control for a brief moment and crush the wine cup in his hand. From that instant, she knew for certain that the Crown Prince held feelings toward his young royal aunt that went far beyond ordinary family ties. What Iris could not understand was why. If Alaric truly cared for Elowen, why had he never asked Theodric for permission to bring her into the Crown Prince's Wing years ago? 名 2.4K 3/3 admin

Chapter 384 A Clever Servant Finished Questions about royal secrets and tangled affections had nothing to do with someone of Iris's station. All she wanted was to survive. If she could remain in the Crown Prince's Wing and serve carefully, then when her term of service finally ended she would be free to leave the palace. She planned to save as many coins as she could. Once she stepped beyond the palace walls for good, she hoped to buy a small plot of land or perhaps keep a modest shop of her own. Then she would marry an honest man and live the rest of her days in quiet peace.

When Alaric allowed her to remain in service, the tight knot that had been lodged in her chest finally loosened. Cold sweat dampened her back, though she forced herself to keep her posture steady. She had survived. Alaric's voice drifted down from above her again, thoughtful and measured. "I remember that you have always been clever." Iris quickly gathered her composure and lowered her head again in a respectful bow. "Your Highness overpraises me.

I am not especially wise But if there is anything Your Highness wishes to know, I will answer honestly." Alaric raised an eyebrow with mild curiosity. "In that case, tell me something. Since I am confined to the Crown Prince's Wing for the time being, do you know of any way I might regain my freedom sooner?" Iris paused briefly before answering, her voice gentle and careful. "In my humble opinion, Your Highness may not need to hurry to escape this restriction." "Oh?" Alaric said with interest. "Explain." "The order came directly from Your Majesty," Iris said softly.

"Once a royal command is spoken, it cannot simply be withdrawn because someone grows impatient Since Your Highness must remain here for now, it may be wiser to accept the situation calmly. At a time like this, patience carries great value. If Your Highness. spends these days

reading, practicing calligraphy, and conducting yourself with discipline, word of it will eventually reach His Majesty.

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When he learns that Your Highness has not shown resentment but instead devoted yourself to study and reflection, he will surely feel reassured." She glanced up carefully, studying Alaric's expression before continuing. "And besides, Your Highness was confined because of the former Crown Princess's actions. The guilt His Majesty feels may prove more useful than ordinary favor. Once the matter fades from public attention, His Majesty may treat Your Highness even more generously than before." Alaric stood quietly, considering her words.

The more he thought about it, the more reasonable her argument seemed. He crouched slightly, looking at her with renewed interest. O < 1/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 @O Chapter 384 A Clever Servant "You truly are clever. If you had been born a man..." With a mind like this, she might have built a respectable career in government service. 13% Finished Iris lowered her head further. "I would never dare entertain such thoughts. I only wish to serve Your Highness faithfully." Alaric studied her carefully. She was intelligent.

More importantly, since arriving in the Crown Prince's Wing with Daphne, she had always behaved with strict propriety in his presence. She had never once shown the sort of ambition or flirtation that some women used in hopes of gaining favor. That restraint pleased him. He gave a quiet snort and rose to his feet. "Stand up." Iris obeyed at once. After a moment of hesitation, she spoke again, "There is one more thought, Your Highness." Alaric lifted a brow. "Go on."

"Several other princes have now reached adulthood and begun observing affairs within the six ministries.

Some of them have already shown real ability. Meanwhile Lady Elira now oversees many matters within the palace and also has a prince under her care. In addition Your Majesty's younger brother, the Duke of Duskmoor, often attends the royal court and remains close to His Majesty. Surrounded by so many people, His Majesty may not think of the Crown Prince confined in the Crown Prince's Wing for some time. Because of this, someone will need to remind His Majesty of Your Highness's virtues." She did not say more. But the implication was clear. Support from Isla would still be essential.

Alaric gave her a long, thoughtful look. "I understand," he said slowly. "Anything else?" Iris pressed her lips together before speaking again. "There is one small matter." She spoke gently, "The winter air is bitter tonight. Your Highness may wish to put on a cloak. Standing outside in light garments for too long could easily lead to illness." Alaric's brow shifted slightly. He had believed she was clever enough to understand boundaries and had no inappropriate thoughts toward him. But it seemed the women around him were rarely exceptions.

Now she was already worrying about whether he wore a cloak and whether he might fall ill. 111

O 2/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 @ 10 Chapter 384 A Clever Servant His expression cooled. 13% 紐

Finished "Although I have allowed you to remain here in service, you must remember your place. I will never feel affection for you. Your appearance is merely pleasant, not extraordinary. Do not begin to imagine things. that will never belong to you." Iris blinked in confusion. Things that are never going to belong to me? Did that rule change? Am I never getting out of here?

"Remember that." Alaric tossed the words over his shoulder and walked away. Iris stood there for several seconds before the meaning finally sank in. Her eyes widened slightly, and an incredulous expression spread across her face. Damn... does the Crown Prince actually think I

just confessed my feelings for him? The thought sent a quiet chill down her spine. That possibility was far more frightening than anything she had faced earlier. 2.4K admin

Chapter 385 Visitors at the Gate 13% Finished After leaving the palace, Elowen and Cassian returned Duskoor Manor with carriage after carriage filled with the treasures and brocades Theodric had bestowed upon them. Polished boxes, silk bundles, and ornate curios nearly filled the carriage from end to end Inside, a silver brazier burned with fine charcoal thread releasing a steady warmth that gradually became a little too strong in the enclosed space. Elowen felt her cheeks grow flushed from the heat.

She lifted the thick brocade curtain beside the window and leaned slightly toward the opening, letting the cool winter air brush across the lower half of her face. When she looked outside, the sight immediately caught her attention. The avenue ahead was completely jammed with carriages, sedan chairs, and horses. Lamterms bobbed above the crowd while attendants called out directions and drivers argued over space. The entire street looked packed from one end to the other, filled with noise and movement. Curious, Elowen turned to Cassian. "What's over there?" she asked.

"Why are there so many people gathered in one place?" Cassian rested his chin against his hand and answered in a relaxed tone. "That road leads straight to the front gate of our estate." Elowen blinked, her eyes widening a little. "They're all standing there?" Cassian's lips curved in an amused smile. "They're paying visits." Elowen glanced from him back to the window again, astonishment slipping into her voice. "There must be hundreds of them." Cassian chuckled quietly. "To be honest, there have always been plenty of people hoping to visit Duskmoor Manor.

Since the first day, the news of your pregnancy has spread all across Vanell. Now even more people are trying to show up." He shifted slightly, still looking entirely at ease. "The holiday season gives everyone a convenient excuse to call on powerful households and deliver gifts. But I already gave orders. Every visiting card is to be declined, every gift returned, and no one is allowed through the gate." Elowen let out a relieved breath. "That's a good thing. Our residence sits deep in the inner court, far away from the front gate. We can't hear all that noise from here.

Otherwise we'd be listening to that chaos all day and probably wouldn't sleep well at night."

When they returned to Duskmoor Manor, Elowen summoned Cora. "On the way back I noticed a great many people gathered outside the gate these days," Elowen said. "I don't have time to receive them, but it would be rude to simply chase them away." She paused briefly, thinking through the situation. O < 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 D Chapter 385 Visitors at the Gate "The guards posted at the entrance must listen to that commotion day and night.

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And the maids and footmen living in the nearby courtyards probably aren't sleeping well either."

Elowen looked toward Cora. Finished "Make a list of the guards responsible for gate duty and patrols. This month each of them will receive an additional five dollars. As for the maids and footmen stationed near the entrance, give each of them three extra dollars." At that moment Beatrice happened to pass outside the study carrying a stack of freshly laundered garments she intended to register in storage. As she walked past the doorway, the words "three extra dollars" drifted clearly to her ears.

A spark of excitement immediately lit up her expression. She had heard that the Duchess of Duskmoor was generous, but she had not expected another reward so soon after the Christmas. Isla valued frugality and had never distributed money so freely. It seemed their timing for

arriving at Duskmoor Manor had been perfect. Inside the study, Cora asked, "Should the reward only go to the servants assigned near the gate?" Elowen thought for a moment. Since the intention was to show appreciation to the household staff, there was little reason to divide them so strictly.

"Let's make it the same for everyone," she said. "The guards will still receive five dollars, but every maid and footman throughout the estate will receive three additional dollars this month." Her voice carried a soft smile. "Let the whole household share the good fortune of the Christmas and feel appreciated for their hard work during the holiday." Cora nodded, then hesitated. "What about those who came from the palace?" Outside the doorway, Beatrice quickly sharpened her attention and edged a little closer.

Just as Elowen was about to respond, she noticed the faint movement of light in the room and caught sight of half a figure beyond the door from the corner of her eye. There was no mistaking that silhouette. It was Beatrice. A clever idea formed immediately in Elowen's mind. Smiling gently, she answered, "Their wages are paid by the palace. The estate has no authority over that. Any rewards should naturally come from the palace as well. There's no need for us to give them anything." Every word reached Beatrice clearly. Indignation rose inside her chest.

Servants existed to guard their masters' homes and manage household duties. That was simply their responsibility, 111 O 2/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 385 Visitors at the Gate How could people receive extra dollars just because the gate outside had grown noisy? Five dollars. 13% Finished That amount was exactly what she used to receive for an entire month of diligent work in Isla's household. Yet here it was being handed out casually. The Duchess of Duskmoor truly spent money without restraint.

Relying on the wealth of the ducal estate, she seemed to throw money around without the slightest concern. And if rewards were being distributed at all, why were they given only to the servants of the estate and not to those who had come from the palace? The more Beatrice thought about it, the more unreasonable the arrangement seemed. Then another thought occurred to her. Isn't this the perfect chance to pull together the attendants from Lady Elira's residence and the ones assigned by His Majesty, and let that shared resentment bind them to me?

Once that idea appeared, Beatrice's mood improved immediately. She quietly lightened her steps and left without drawing attention. Because their duties were light and Elowen did not yet require their personal service, several of the palace attendants finished their tasks early and gathered beneath a sheltered corridor in the back courtyard. The spot faced the winter sun and was protected from the wind. They sat together doing simple needlework while chatting idly. Beatrice approached wearing a troubled expression. Before she even reached them, she released a series of long sighs.

Dorothea, who had served in Elira's residence and had known Beatrice for years in the palace, never truly got along with her. Without lifting her head, Dorothea asked flatly, "It's the middle of the Christmas celebrations. What exactly are you sighing about?" Beatrice opened her mouth as if she wanted to say something, then deliberately hesitated. "It's nothing," she said at last. "Just a small matter." 2.4K 3/3 III admin

Chapter 386 Seeds of Discontent Dorothea nodded calmly. "If it's nothing, then stop sighing. It sounds rather unlucky during the holidays." Beatrice stared at her in disbelief. 13% A Finished Before she could respond, Lyanna, who had once served near Theodric, spoke with a warm laugh. "Dorothea, don't tease her like that," Lyanna said. Then she turned toward Beatrice with a

friendly smile. "We worked together in the palace for years, and now we've all come to Duskmoor Manor together. If something is bothering you, why not tell us?"

Surely you're not treating us like strangers." Beatrice shot Dorothea a sharp glare. She had never liked that woman. Back in the palace they were constantly at odds, and even here she continued to oppose her. "Go on," Lyanna encouraged. "What happened?" Beatrice sighed again, as if reluctantly giving in. "I'll only say this among ourselves," she said quietly. "You must promise not to repeat it." When Lyanna nodded repeatedly, Beatrice leaned slightly closer and lowered her voice.

"A moment ago I passed by the duchess's study and overheard her giving instructions about rewards for the household." Someone nearby leaned closer with curiosity. "Rewards? What kind of rewards? Are they for everyone?" "If that were the case, I wouldn't feel troubled," Beatrice replied with another sigh. "The duchess said the rewards are only for the servants of Duskmoor Manor. The guards will receive five dollars, and the maids and footmen three extra dollars."

"And those of us who came from the palace?" someone asked quickly. Beatrice shook her head.

"The duchess made it clear that we won't receive a single coin." The group exchanged uneasy glances. Inside, Beatrice felt secretly pleased, though her face remained worried. "It's not that I care about three or five dollars," she said. "I'm only worried for the duchess. She is still young and inexperienced in managing a household. If she keeps rewarding servants so generously and so frequently, won't they all start growing arrogant?" She sighed again. "As for the money itself, it means nothing to me. I simply worry that she might suffer because of it someday." Several attendants nodded along.

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Only Dorothea and Lyanna showed little reaction.. Dorothea let out a short laugh. 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 386 Seeds of Discontent 13% Ü Finished "If you truly didn't care, you wouldn't have repeated 'three or five dollars' twice. Clearly you care very much." Beatrice glared at her. Lyanna quickly stepped in to ease the tension. "The duchess may be young," Lyanna said gently, "but perhaps she simply has a kind heart." Beatrice sighed heavily. "You call it kindness, but perhaps it isn't so simple.

This time the duchess rewarded the entire estate but ignored those of us sent from the palace." Someone asked in surprise, "You mean everyone received the reward except us?" Beatrice nodded. "That's exactly what she meant." The woman frowned. "How can she show such favoritism?" Dorothea laughed again. "You've only worked here a few days, and the duties you were given are the easiest ones in the estate. Yet you're already thinking about rewards? Besides, our wages come from the palace. Why should this estate give us anything?" The woman looked embarrassed and fell silent.

Beatrice let out a faint scoff. "That argument hardly makes sense," she said coolly. "His Majesty and His Grace are brothers. Surely there's no need to draw such strict lines between them." The atmosphere began to grow tense. Lyanna quickly spoke again before the argument could escalate. "Well, the duchess has already made her decision. There's nothing we can do except accept it. It's only three or five dollars after all.

If we continue to do our duties well, opportunities will surely come later." Beatrice sighed once more and muttered quietly, "Who knows if that day ever comes." That evening Elowen sat alone in her study reading. As the sky darkened outside, the lines of text on the page gradually blurred in the fading light. She lifted her head and called for Mira, But Mira was not nearby. The only

person standing outside the door was Seren. Elowen called toward the doorway, "Seren, come in and light the candles," Her voice carried clearly enough that anyone standing there could hear it.

Yet Seren remained perfectly still, pretending not to notice. "Seren?" Elowen called again. Still there was no response. Elowen immediately understood. 213 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 386 Seeds of Discontent. 13% ° Finished Beatrice must have succeeded. She had deliberately arranged for the servants of Duskmoor Manor to receive rewards while excluding the attendants sent from the palace. Three or five dollars might not be a fortune, but it was still money. Once someone quietly stirred resentment behind the scenes, it was only natural that some palace attendants would feel dissatisfied.

Seren was clearly one of them. Elowen did not feel angry. If Seren refused to move, there was no reason to keep calling. She closed the book and rose from her chair, intending to light the candles herself. At that moment footsteps sounded outside the study. Elowen turned her head. Rosaline hurried inside. "Your Grace, please forgive me," Rosaline said quickly. "I was careless. I will light the candles for you right away." Elowen nodded lightly. Rosaline moved with practiced efficiency.

She stepped to the tall candelabrum, picked up the small fire striker resting beside it, and flicked it open. Shielding the tiny flame with her hand, she carefully lit the thick beeswax candles one after another. The wicks caught the flame with faint crackling sounds. Warm light slowly spread across the room, illuminating the entire study. When she finished, Rosaline turned back with an apologetic expression. "That girl Seren can be rather careless," she said.

"The evening darkened so quickly that she probably didn't notice the light fading and forgot to light the candles in time." She lowered her head slightly. "I hope Your Grace will not hold it against her." 。 2.4K M 3/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 admin

Chapter 387 The Trap 13% Finished "It's nothing," Elowen said with a faint smile as she settled back into her chair and returned her attention to the book resting in her hands. Rosaline did not press the matter further. She withdrew quietly from the room, firmly pulling Seren along with her when she stepped into the corridor. Their voices carried faintly through the half-closed door. Rosaline's tone was sharp with irritation. "It's already dark outside, and Her Grace is still reading in the study. How could you not think to bring more candles?"

Haven't you learned even that much?" Seren muttered under her breath, clearly displeased. "She doesn't care about us anyway. Why should we run over there trying to serve her?" Rosaline immediately snapped at her. "Watch what you're saying. She is the Duchess of Duskmoor. You are a servant in this household." What followed sounded like a stern lecture. Their footsteps gradually moved farther down the corridor, and before long their voices faded beyond hearing. Elowen could no longer make out what Rosaline continued saying to her sister.

The following morning, just after Elowen woke, faint voices drifted through the window. Gerda stood outside in the courtyard scolding two young attendants who had come from the palace. From the sound of it, they had carried out their work carelessly and without the attention expected of them. Inside the chamber, Cassian stood behind Elowen, slowly arranging her long hair as he drew a comb through the dark strands. A quiet smile appeared on his face. "You've set quite a few things in motion," he said lightly "When do you intend to reveal the outcome?" Elowen's eyes curved with amusement.

"Very soon." After a brief pause, she added thoughtfully, "Still, there is something worth mentioning. Rosaline, the attendant who came from Lady Elira's household, handles her duties carefully. She has never shown even the slightest complaint, and every task she receives is completed properly." Cassian gave a small nod. "Lady Elira has always been skilled at training people." He then glanced toward the cloak rack nearby. "Ella, which cloak would you like today?" Elowen considered for a moment before answering. "Te amber one.

It gives a more commanding impression." Cassian let out a low chuckle and leaned forward to kiss the corner of her lips. "Ella looks commanding no matter what she wears." Elowen lowered her voice slightly. "Really?" 1/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 387 The Trap Cassian appeared to think for a moment, his gaze deepening with playful intent. "There might be an exception." His tone remained calm. 13% Finished "If you were wearing nothing at all, dignity would probably disappear rather quickly. And if you were dressed in nothing but a silk underlayer, dignity would still be difficult to maintain.

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That would look far too tempting." Elowen's face instantly flushed bright red. She quickly covered his mouth with her hand. "I'm carrying a child," she protested softly. "You are absolutely not allowed to say things like that in front of the baby." After finishing their preparations, the two of them shared breakfast together. When the meal ended, Elowen ordered a chair brought out beneath the covered corridor overlooking the courtyard. She then had all the attendants who had come from the palace summoned before her. When the message reached them, the reaction was far from enthusiastic.

They gathered in loose clusters, slowly making their way toward the courtyard in small groups. Complaints and grumbling rose along the path. "The tasks here are assigned without any thought,

and not a single coin of reward has been given. Back in the palace we were respected members of the household, yet here at Duskmoor Manor we are treated as if we are beneath everyone else. What kind of future does that leave us?" "Exactly. We cannot even get close to the real masters of the house. All we ever do are meaningless errands." "At least Beatrice warned us ahead of time.

Otherwise we would still be working ourselves to exhaustion for nothing." Beatrice walked at the center of the group, surrounded by people speaking with admiration and complaint. Listening to them filled her with quiet satisfaction. This was precisely the outcome she had hoped for. It was also the result Isla had instructed her to achieve. Even so, her outward expression remained humble. "Oh please, don't say things like that," she replied with a soft sigh, waving her hands modestly. "We are all servants in the end. There is no need to thank me.

I simply could not bear watching everyone be treated unfairly." Then she added with an expression of concern. "Still, she is the Duchess of Duskmoor, and we were personally sent here by His Majesty and Her Majesty. We represent the dignity of the palace, Even if Her Grace is young and occasionally overlooks us, we cannot allow the reputation of His Majesty and Her Majesty to suffer, At the very least we must continue carrying out our duties so that appearances remain respectable." Her words sounded thoughtful and balanced, the kind of speech that made her seem considerate and responsible.

||| O Chapter 387 The Trap The surrounding attendants immediately began praising her. "Beatrice truly has a generous heart." 13% . Finished "Not long ago the Duchess embarrassed her in front of everyone, and yet she still speaks so fairly. I cannot help feeling angry on her behalf." "In the future we should stay close to Beatrice. At least she will guide us." The satisfaction in Beatrice's

eyes was almost impossible to conceal. By the time the group finally arrived in the courtyard, their formation had become completely disorganized.

Some stood in scattered clusters while others drifted off to the side. Nothing remained of the orderly arrangement they had shown only a few days earlier. Edith stood behind Elowen, watching the entire scene with a stern expression. Her voice rang out sharply. "You were all trained in the palace, yet look at the attitude you are showing here. The expressions on your faces and the way you carry yourselves. Have you forgotten every rule you were taught?" Toward the back of the group, one of the younger attendants muttered under his breath. "Of course the ones who received money stand tall.

The rest of us have not received a single coin. Hard to look energetic when your stomach is empty." Edith's eyes flashed with anger as her sharp gaze swept across the crowd. "Who said that? Step forward." The courtyard immediately became quiet. At that moment, Elowen spoke gently from her seat, "If you truly have no desire to listen to me, then I will not force you." Her gaze moved calmly across the gathered attendants. Beatrice is here, isn't she?" Beatrice had not expected to be singled out so suddenly Her heart skipped, though she quickly stepped forward and inclined her head.

"I am here, Your Grace." 2.4K 3/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 家13%圆 admin

Chapter 388 Five Dollars Elowen turned slightly toward Cora. "Bring five dollars to Beatrice. This will be her personal reward." The words stunned everyone present. Beatrice stood rooted where she was. The attendants in the courtyard looked at one another in confusion. Cora followed the order without hesitation. She returned moments later carrying the money and

walked directly to Beatrice.. "Congratulations, Beatrice," she said. Beatrice instinctively held out both hands to receive it. The weight of the money in her palms felt heavy and unfamiliar.

She stared at it in confusion, unease slowly creeping into her thoughts. "Your Grace, I..." Elowen did not respond. She rose calmly from her chair "That will be all. You may return to your duties." After speaking, she turned and walked back inside. For a moment the courtyard remained quiet. Then the whispers began. "Wasn't it agreed that none of us from the palace would receive any reward?" "Then why does Beatrice get money while the rest of us receive nothing?"

Five whole dollars too." "If I had not listened to her yesterday, I would have completed my work properly today." "That is exactly right. Gerda just scolded me for neglecting my duties earlier. I even argued back, and Her Grace saw everything." "The Duchess must have been displeased because of that." "Beatrice," someone demanded sharply, "you need to explain this." Beatrice herself looked completely lost. "I truly do not know," she insisted anxiously. Dorothea let out a cold laugh from the side. "Well done. Beatrice.

You stirred everyone up together, and then somehow managed to win Her Grace's favor behind the scenes. Five dollars all for yourself. Even the senior housekeepers of this manor only received three. Looks like the rest of us were nothing more than tools to help you gain favor," "That is not true, I swear it is not," Beatrice felt almost desperate. The money in her hands seemed to burn. Throwing it away would look suspicious, yet keeping it made her look guilty. She had clearly heard Elowen say that those who came from the palace would receive no reward. Everything had been going smoothly.

So why had everything suddenly turned against her? At that moment she felt completely trapped. From the edge of the courtyard, Rosaline quietly watched the scene unfold. 1/3 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 388 Five Dollars 81, 13% Finished The crowd surrounded Beatrice, questioning her one after another while Beatrice clutched the money helplessly, unable to defend herself. Rosaline's gaze shifted toward the closed chamber door where Elowen had disappeared. Admiration quietly filled her eyes. The Duchess of Dusk moor had handled the situation brilliantly.

Five dollars had been enough to sow suspicion among the palace attendants and turn them against each other. Rosaline turned her head, intending to quietly warn Seren to understand the situation clearly and stop following every rumor she heard. But when she looked beside her, Seren was staring toward the far side of the courtyard. Rosaline followed her gaze. Near the small kitchen stood Cassian. He sat in his wheeled chair beside a wooden worktable. Several jars and bowls were arranged in front of him along with baskets of fresh fruit.

From the looks of it, he was preparing preserved fruit himself. Cassian's features were strikingly handsome, and the sharp lines of his profile gave him a distant and formidable presence. Yet while he worked, his gaze remained lowered in quiet concentration, his movements patient and careful. For a moment, the powerful Duke appeared unexpectedly gentle. Seren watched him without blinking, her eyes filled with quiet fascination. Alarm rose instantly in Rosaline's mind. She seized Seren's wrist and spoke in a low, urgent voice. "Seren, listen carefully.

Do not allow foolish fantasies to take root in your mind." Startled by the sudden grip, Seren quickly looked away. What fantasies? I was not thinking anything." "I saw the way you were looking," Rosaline said firmly. "Anyone with eyes can see how deeply devoted the Duke and

Duchess are to one another. There is no place for anyone else between them. If you offend the Duchess, the Duke will never forgive you. And if you dare harbor feelings for the Duke, the Duchess will not spare you either.

If you want to live safely in this household, do not take a step toward your own ruin." Rosaline's grip had tightened without her noticing. Sere winced and pulled her arm back, her face alternating between red and pale. "I understand, all right? Just let go. You are hurting me." Inside the chamber, the charcoal brazier filled the room with comfortable warmth. Elowen, having already arranged everything outside, returned to the cushioned couch beside the window and leaned back comfortably. She picked up the book she had been reading the previous day and opened it again.

Cora poured her a cup of water and said with sincere admiration, "Your Grace handled that perfectly. You noticed Beatrice listening outside the door yesterday and came up with this plan immediately. Judging from what happened today, the result could not have been better." 2/3
12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Chapter 388 Five Dollars ౪ ౪, 13% Finished A faint smile curved at Elowen's lips. "She happened to give me the opportunity herself. That only saved me some effort." From the beginning, she had planned to deal with the attendants sent from the palace.

First, she deliberately assigned them harmless and insignificant tasks. People who were used to influence and importance inside the palace would inevitably grow dissatisfied with such trivial duties. Second, and more importantly, while not every one of them had ulterior motives, most of the attendants sent here had been placed by powerful patrons. And those patrons had not sent them without a purpose. Sooner or later, they would create trouble, whether openly or quietly, and attempt to place obstacles in her path. 2.4K admin

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Chapter 389 A Morning Visitor

Elowen understood the importance of anticipating ahead. If ever faced with resentment or suspicion, she knew she had to act swiftly to redirect it, preventing discord among those causing trouble. Beatrice's timely approach allowed Elowen to deftly maneuver events towards a natural outcome, which proved successful.

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Following the incident, life at Duskmoor Manor settled into a peaceful rhythm. One morning, as Elowen and Cassian shared breakfast, Bran hesitantly entered from outside. His demeanor suggested he had something to say but struggled to find the words, stealing glances at Cassian. Sensing Bran's unease, Cassian inquired, "Is there something on my face?" Bran, flustered, clarified that Lady Aveline had arrived at the manor.

Realizing the reason for Bran's hesitation, Cassian chuckled, "Why would she come to see me?" Bran, seeking guidance, asked if they should welcome Aveline. Cassian, amused, redirected him to Elowen, who gracefully accepted the visit. Elowen, maintaining her composure, instructed Bran to escort Aveline to the Great Hall.

As Elowen rose to meet Aveline, Cassian, noticing her uneaten breakfast, teasingly asked if she was full, to which she replied playfully before assuring him she would return promptly. Cassian, softened by Elowen's gentle tone, agreed to wait, unable to resist her affectionate persuasion.

Elowen's entrance prompted Aveline to rise respectfully, revealing a vulnerable state devoid of her usual adornments. Aveline, visibly fatigued, expressed her distress regarding her son Kaelan's unrequited feelings for Elowen. Despite Kaelan's noble intentions and dedication to his

studies, news of Elowen's pregnancy had devastated him, leading to a severe illness borne out of heartache.

Moved by Aveline's plea for compassion, Elowen agreed to visit Kaelan. Recognizing Kaelan's past courage in aiding Ember, Elowen felt compelled to offer her support. Apologizing for the brief delay due to breakfast, Elowen assured Aveline of her assistance, displaying kindness and empathy in her actions.

Chapter 390 A Visit for Kaelan Elowen gestured toward the cup placed beside Aveline 13%
Finisited "This was sent to me by His Majesty after my last visit to the palace," she said. "It's a warm spiced wine.. Please enjoy it while you wait. I'll return shortly." Aveline agreed immediately. "Of course. Please go ahead, Duchess." Elowen returned to the dining hall and told Cassian everything, explaining why Aveline had come and recounting their conversation word for word. Cassian listened patiently. When she finished speaking, he suddenly said something that seemed unrelated.

"That is not right." Elowen blinked and turned toward him. "What is not right?" Cassian answered calmly, "You said you are not the kind of person people cannot forget. That part is incorrect." One corner of his mouth lifted slightly. "Anyone who meets you tends to remember you for a very long time. It does not matter whether they are men or women." He met her gaze. "I am one of them." Elowen froze for a moment. His serious praise made warmth rise quickly to her cheeks. She pressed her lips together and unconsciously leaned closer to him.

"Then if I go visit Kaelan later," she asked softly, "you will not be upset, will you?" "No," Cassian replied without hesitation. "There is no reason for me to be upset." "That is good."

Elowen's eyes curved into a smile as she sat upright again and picked up her spoon. "Do not worry. I will simply check on his condition and persuade him to focus on recovering.

Once that is done, I will come back right away." Cassian cut a small piece of roast and set it on her plate "Alright," he said calmly, "I will be here waiting for you." Before leaving, Elowen thought for a moment and changed direction, walking toward the courtyard next door where Hugh was temporarily staying, Hugh was sorting medicinal herbs in the courtyard. "Doctor Dray," Elowen said after choosing her words carefully, "a friend of mine has fallen ill. I plan to visit him, but I am a little worried." Hugh lifted his head. "His Grace agreed to this?" Elowen tilted her head slightly.

"Why would he refuse something so minor?" 173 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 Chapter 390 A Visit for Kaelan Hugh shrugged. "Jealous men can be very narrow-minded." Elowen immediately defended Cassian. "His Grace is not like that." Hugh did not argue. "If you say so." He set down the herbs, stood up, and picked up his medical case. "Let us go." Elowen smiled brightly. "Thank you, Doctor Dray." Fit 13% Finished When Aveline saw the young man following behind Elowen with a medical case in hand, hesitation briefly crossed her face. Elowen explained with a friendly smile. "This is Doctor Dray.

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He is currently a guest at Duskmoor Manor. I am sure the physicians in your household are already very capable, but Doctor Dray was personally invited by His Grace to treat difficult illnesses. His methods are quite remarkable. If he examines Kaelan as well, we may have a better chance." Aveline nodded. "If he is someone valued by His Grace, his skill must be exceptional. Thank you for coming with us, Doctor Dray." Not long afterward, their carriage arrived at

Aveline's residence. Kaelan's father had married into the family, so the entire estate was managed directly by Aveline.

She personally led Elowen and Hugh through several courtyards toward Kaelan's residence. The entrance gate was carved from fine hardwood and decorated with intricate reliefs of scholars achieving success and ascending toward glory. A winding path paved with polished stones led to the main building, a graceful two story pavilion with elegant eaves and deep green roof tiles. Above the entrance hung a dark wooden plaque with gilded letters that read Hall of Diligence. Elowen could not help studying it for a moment. The courtyard held even more attendants than Stillwater Court at Duskmoor Manor.

The servants wore matching dark blue garments and moved quietly with lowered gazes. When they communicated, they did so with soft whispers or subtle gestures. The entire courtyard felt so quiet that the only sound came from the wind moving through the bamboo leaves. The atmosphere felt heavy, almost oppressive. Inside the chamber, scrolls celebrating scholarly success hung everywhere. Even the painting beside the bed depicted a revered teacher guiding his students. Kaelan had only just regained consciousness.

A young attendant stood beside the bed carefully feeding him medicine, Kaelan wore loose sleeping robes, and his body looked frighteningly thin, The attendant lifted a spoonful of dark herbal medicine cooled it with a breath, and brought it carefully to Kaelan's lips. 12:37 Mon, Apr 13 O Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Chapter 391 The Weight of Expectations Kaelan struggled to get the words out. "Mother... it isn't his fault..." 13% His face looked pale.

Elowen glanced at him briefly before turning her attention toward the young attendant who had been forced to crouch on the floor. Finished The boy was trembling uncontrollably. The back of his right hand was swollen and bright red, clearly burned. A quiet sigh formed in Elowen's heart. She had a feeling she already understood why Kaelan had fallen ill. Even before Hugh spoke, the answer seemed painfully obvious. Kaelan's weak defense was completely ignored. Aveline brows tightened sharply as she prepared to deal with the servant. "Aveline." Elowen spoke at just the right moment.

Aveline composed herself with visible effort and turned back with an embarrassed smile. "I'm afraid you had to witness such poor discipline, Your Grace. The staff have become terribly careless lately." Kaelan stared in shock. With great effort he lifted his head, disbelief filling his eyes as he looked toward Elowen. Elowen stepped to the side of the bed, her voice gentle.

"Kaelan, your mother said you've been seriously ill. I came to see how you were doing." Kaelan gazed at her blankly. His eyes were bloodshot, his lips trembling slightly, yet no sound came out.

Seeing her son in such a state made Aveline's heart ache She raised a handkerchief and quietly wiped the tears forming at the corners of her eyes. Elowen turned to her. "Aveline, why don't you step outside and rest for a moment? Let Doctor Dray examine Kaelan carefully. I'd also like to speak with him for a little while." Aveline hesitated. Her gaze moved between her son and Elowen. Eventually she nodded. Even as she walked toward the door, she looked back several times, her worry impossible to hide. Once she left, the room finally grew calmer.

A quick-thinking attendant hurried over with a chair lined with a soft cushion and placed it beside the bed for Elowen. Elowen sat down. Her gaze passed over the servant who was still

crouched on the floor, trying to endure the pain in his burned hand. Turning slightly toward Hugh, she said, "Doctor Dray, his hand was burned. Could you give 1/3 admin