

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

We Had Something Real But Didn't Handle It Right

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Elowen sat quietly for a moment, still trying to process everything she had just heard.

So her grandparents had once been young enough to throw everything away for love.

And apparently, they had been far wilder than she ever would have imagined.

Valessa watched her reaction with a faint smile before continuing, "About a year later, your grandmother left Nordia alongside your grandfather. She gave up her position as the Oracle, abandoned everything she had there, and walked away from Nordia without even taking the ceremonial seal with her.

The amusement in her expression slowly faded, replaced instead by a quiet sort of nostalgia as she added. "After that, there was never another Oracle Ogu in Nordia."

Beside her, Flowira let out a soft sigh.

Ever since she was little, she had only heard scattered stories about the legendary Oracle. By the time she was born, Ogu already felt more like a myth than a real person.

“At first, nobody in Nordia thought much of it,” Valessa continued while idly turning the stem of her wine goblet between her fingers. “People figured life would carry on the same way it always had. The Oracle was gone, so what? But not long afterward, the entire realm descended into chaos. Every clan leader wanted the throne for himself, but none of them could unite the tribes under one banner. One month they were swearing loyalty to each other over feast tables, and the next they were riding into battle against former allies. The wars dragged on for nearly ten years.”

Outside the pavilion, the evening breeze drifted through the estate gardens, carrying the scent of fresh soil and rosemary from the kitchen plots nearby.

Valessa’s tone remained calm and measured.

“My brother and I believe it was during those years that your grandmother married your grandfather and gave birth to your mother. Then your mother grew up, met your father, and eventually had you.”

Her gaze settled steadily on Elowen’s face.

“The reason we discovered your existence at all was because Nordia and Avenlor were at war. News travels quickly through soldiers, merchants, and noble courts. Once my brother temporarily secured the title of king, he immediately sent people south. Part of it was to ensure your safety and return the ceremonial seal to you. But there was another reason as well.”

She paused briefly before continuing.

“My brother believes every kingdom needs faith to hold it together. Not fairy tales or empty superstition, but something people genuinely believe in. Something strong enough to unite an entire realm beneath a single purpose. In his eyes, the reason Nordia fell into ten years of bloodshed was because the Oracle disappeared.”

Elowen listened quietly without interrupting.

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“The Oracle may never have possessed the divine powers the old stories claim she had.” Valessa said evenly. “Truthfully, perhaps the gods themselves do not exist at all. But as long as the Oracle stood among

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people, they carried reverence in their hearts. They knew fear. They knew restraint. Even Zachary and Flowira were like that growing up. They were constantly causing trouble as children, but the moment someone warned them the Oracle would disapprove, they immediately behaved themselves. The people of Nordia are no different.”

At last, Elowen understood.

Nordia’s royal authority and spiritual authority had always been deeply intertwined. As long as the people maintained their devotion to the God, the rulers could preserve order across the realm far more easily.

After a thoughtful pause, Elowen said quietly, “So the king hopes Nordia can have an Oracle again.”

“Your Grace truly is clever.” Valessa answered her directly without the slightest attempt at denial.

That answer only made the weight in Elowen’s chest grow heavier.

For some reason, the ceremonial seal resting inside her carved dressing chest suddenly felt unbearably hot in her memory.

It was not merely an heirloom left behind by her grandmother.

It was proof of the Oracle’s bloodline, passed down through generations.

And she was her grandmother’s only granddaughter.

Her mother’s only daughter.

The only remaining person who could inherit that legacy.

Nordia needed an Oracle. Which meant they needed Elowen. But the more she thought about it, the more lost she felt.

She knew almost nothing about Nordia. She had never seen those endless grasslands with her own eyes. never learned the language spoken there, and knew nothing about how the people lived.

Most importantly, she had absolutely no idea how someone was supposed to become an Oracle in the first place.

Valessa seemed to notice the unease slowly settling over her expression, because her voice softened slightly.

“Still, Your Grace doesn’t need to worry yourself sick over this.

Elowen looked up at her.

“My brother has no intention of forcing you into anything,” Valessa explained patiently. “He only hopes you’ll seriously consider the matter. If possible, he would like Your Grace to spend some time in Nordia, walk those lands yourself, and meet the people face-to-face. If, after all that, you still have no wish to become the Oracle, then my brother will find another path forward. He has always believed people should choose their own fate.”

Elowen lowered her eyes briefly before nodding. “That seems fair.”

Just then, the sound of approaching footsteps echoed through the stone corridor outside.

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Valessa reacted first. She glanced toward the entrance, and the moment she saw who was walking toward them, her expression froze for a heartbeat.

Cassian was striding down the gallery from the far side of the manor with the sleeves of his liner shirt rolled neatly to his forearms and a dark kitchen apron tied securely around his waist. The fitted cut of his clothes emphasized the lean strength of his frame so clearly that the line of his waist looked distractingly sharp beneath the warm glow of the iron wall lamps.

Valessa stared at him for several long seconds before remembering she probably ought to blink.

This was exactly the kind of husband she had always wanted.

A man who could lead armies into battle, dismantle ministers in court debates, and still return home to cook supper himself.

Unable to stop herself, she sneaked a glance toward Elowen.

I completely understand why she married him.

Thankfully, that thought remained firmly inside her head.

Elowen's face brightened immediately when she saw Cassian approaching. "Come on. Let's head inside before the pastries get cold."

Valessa answered quickly while doing her absolute best to bury all the wildly inappropriate thoughts racing through her mind.

The group soon moved together into the dining hall.

The long table had already been prepared with cutlery, several small side dishes, and a large serving platter piled high with the pastries.

Every pastry had been folded by hand and arranged neatly across the platter.

Cassian spent so much time cooking these days that his skills had improved dramatically, and tonight's pastries were especially good. By the end of the meal, Valessa had somehow finished two entire bowls before finally realizing how much she had eaten.

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