

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

We Had Something Real But Didn't Handle It Right

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Chapter 612 Mercy for the Baker Family

Even after dinner ended, Valessa still

Manor, she cast several lingering glances reluctant to leave. Before following Flowira out of Duskmoor

intentions painfully obvious.

Because of her pregnancy, Elowen

toward Cassian, each one carrying enough admiration to make her

ly escorted them as far as the courtyard entrance.

Bran would accompany the guests the

rest of the way.

She stood beneath the stone archway watching Valessa and Flowira disappear along the lantern-lit path, yet even after they were gone, an uneasy feeling continued tugging quietly at her thoughts.

Only when a familiar warmth settled gently across her shoulder did she finally relax.

Cassian had stepped beside her without a sound, one arm sliding naturally around her.

The faint scent of cedarwood and roasted spices lingering on his clothes calmed her almost instantly.

“Come on,” he said softly while guiding her back toward the manor. “You’ve been on your feet long enough already. If you keep standing out here in the cold, you’re going to wear yourself out.”

Elowen nodded obediently and allowed him to lead her inside.

As they walked beneath the covered gallery, she tilted her head toward him with a smile. “The pastries tonight were amazing. Honestly, they tasted even better than the last time you made them.”

Cassian glanced down at her, amusement flickering in his eyes. “So I helped you look good in front of company tonight?”

Elowen laughed immediately. “Very good. I was incredibly proud of you.”

Then something suddenly occurred to her.

“Actually, I’ve decided Valessa can’t come

over for dinner anymore.” She paused before adding with complete seriousness, “And if she does you are absolutely forbidden from cooking.”

Cassian let out a low laugh. “Now that seems a little unfair. What exactly did I do?”

Elowen shot him a meaningful look. “The way she kept staring at you, it honestly looked like she wanted to hide you in her carriage and take you straight back to Nordia.”

The mention of Nordia immediately brought her thoughts back to the conversation from earlier.

Her gaze drifted downward toward the gentle curve of her stomach, and her brows slowly tightened with

worry.

Cassian noticed the change at once.

His expression sharpened slightly as he studied her face. “What’s wrong?”

After a brief pause, his tone cooled further.

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“Did Valessa say something to upset you?”

Elowen quickly shook her head. “No. She was perfectly polite to me”

“Then what’s bothering you?”

She hesitated for several moments before finally looking back up at him.

“Cassian...” Her voice softened slightly. “If we ever had to go to Nordia together someday, would you be willing to?”

He had barely started to answer

“Your Grace.”

footsteps approached quickly from behind them.

Bran’s voice echoed through the

corridor a

as he returned from escorting the guests away,

Elowen and Cassian both stopp

walking and turned toward him.

Bran stepped forward before lowering himself into a respectful bow “Lord Colton has arrived at the manor. He says he has urgent business and wishes to speak with Her Grace personally.”

Elowen instinctively glanced toward Cassian.

At the exact same moment, brows.

Cassian looked down at her with a faint frown already forming between his

She understood immediately what he was thinking.

After a short pause, she said.

to Bran, "Bring him to the main hall."

Bran acknowledged the order and withdrew. Not long afterward, Elowen and Cassian entered the manor's main hall together.

Colton was already waiting there.

The old man leaned

on his cane and every step

he took with his cane as he slowly crossed the chamber floor, his back visibly bent with

effort. Cassian remained composed beside Elowen and showed absolutely no intention of helping him.

In the end, Elowen's softer heart gave in first.

She glanced toward Bran

"Yes, Your Grace."

"Help Lord Colton to a chair."

Bran immediately stepped forward and carefully supported Colton farther into the hall.

Once seated, Colton let out a tired breath before inclining his head toward Elowen. "Your Grace is truly compassionate."

Cassian raised a brow at that. "Interesting. So by comparison, I'm apparently coldhearted and unreasonable?"

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Colton had spent decades surviving court politics, so a little deliberate provocation hardly embarrassed him anymore. Instead, he chuckled calmly.

“If Your Grace insists on putting it that way, then I suppose I must also stand accused of disrespecting a duke inside his own residence.”

Cassian gave a quiet scoff before taking his seat beside Elowen. “Enough circling around the point. Did you come here tonight to beg for mercy?”

Unexpectedly, Colton answered without hesitation.

“Yes.”

The old man slowly turned toward her. “Your Grace may be surpass most people I’ve met in my lifetime. Truthfully, even I cannot compare to you?

young, but your intelligence and composure

Elowen smiled gently, her expression warm without revealing anything beneath the surface. “Lord Colton gives me far too much credit. I’m merely a woman who happened to speak honestly before His Majesty after receiving an imperial summons. That hardly counts as extraordinary.”

Colton lowered his head slightly. “Your Grace is modest. Regardless, I lost this round completely.”

As he spoke, he bowed his head even lower in sincere humility.

“I came here tonight in the hope that Your Grace might show mercy.”

A trace of confusion appeared on Elowen’s face. “I’m afraid I don’t quite understand what Lord Colton means. Prince Alaric committed serious crimes, and

His Majesty judged the matter according to the law. None of this is something I, as a duchess, could interfere with.”

Once the conversation turned serious, Cassian simply sat beside her in silence without interrupting again.

Meanwhile, Colton continued studying Elowen carefully, and the admiration in his eyes deepened further.

She was extraordinarily cautious.

Over the course of his long life, he had met countless intelligent people, yet very few could conceal their true thoughts as flawlessly as she did. Despite understanding everything perfectly, she still managed to present herself as though she knew nothing at all.

A flicker of regret surfaced in his heart.

If only this girl were part of the Baker family instead.

Suppressing the thought, Colton spoke more earnestly than before. “What I mean by mercy is not that I expect Your Grace to spare Prince Alaric.”

At those words, Elowen’s expression shifted slightly.

Colton continued slowly, his voice carrying the exhaustion of old age.

“My life has gone far too smoothly. I married young, raised children, watched the Baker family prosper. passed the court qualification trials, entered government service, and climbed steadily through the ranks

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without ever suffering real hardship. Whenever my children or descendants caused trouble. I steppetion. protect them. Whenever they made mistakes, I

cleaned up the mess myself. Over the years, I shielded dent om more storms than I can even remember anymore.”

er smile crossed his face.

the time, I believed that was simply what fathers and grandfathers were supposed to do

The smile gradually faded

“But now Prince Alaric

Elowen remained

Colton looked

“These da badly

crimes so severe that even I can no longer shield him.”

him to continue.

beneath the candlelight than he had only moments earlier.

distance leaves me breathless, and standing too long makes my back ache so n afterward,” he said quietly. “Years ago, I had already selected my coffin and

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with regret.

now, I realize I devoted too much of myself to politics and far too little to raising my One after another, they grew spoiled beyond repair. The former queen was like that, and eration turned out even worse. All they know how to do is indulge themselves. The ter appears, they panic and beg others to save them because they have neither courage nor their own.”

d briefly before continuing in a weary voice.

o matter what kind of people they became, they are still my blood. They are still descendants of the er family.”

inally, he lifted his eyes toward Elowen once more.

“So all I ask is this. Once Prince Alaric has answered for his crimes, I hope Your Grace will spare the rest of my family from complete

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