

# Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

## We Had Something Real But Didn't Handle It Right

### 631

Chapter 631 A House Full of Laughter

+9 Pearls

Before anyone could continue speaking, a sudden howl erupted from the little cradle beside the bed.

“Waaah!”

The cry rang through the chamber loud and forceful, so full of energy that everyone turned at once toward the source of the noise.

A moment earlier, Phoenix had been sleeping peacefully beneath his blankets, but now his tiny face had gone bright red as he cried with all the outrage his little body could manage. His fists waved furiously through the air while his legs kicked beneath the swaddling clothes in obvious protest.

The sight made Marissa laugh immediately.

“Well now, it sounds like Phoenix heard his grandaunt promising gifts only for his sister and decided he'd been terribly wronged.”

The entire room burst into laughter.

Elsbeth laughed so hard she nearly jostled Poppy in her arms and quickly steadied the baby again, though the smile on her face only widened.

“All right, all right, you greedy little lordling,” she said fondly. “I will buy gifts for you too. I'll even get you twice as many. Happy now?”

Strangely

enough, the moment those words were spoken, Phoenix's cries genuinely began to quiet. The furious wailing softened into little hiccuping snuffles, as though he truly understood her promise.

That only made everyone laugh harder.

For a while, the chamber filled completely with warm laughter and lively chatter beneath the golden glow of the hearthfire.

Later that evening, Warren and his family arrived to visit as well.

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Since Warren was a man, it would have been improper for him to enter Elowen's private chamber, so he remained outside speaking with Cassian in one of the manor's sitting rooms instead.

Meanwhile, Elowen and Rowena had not seen each other in quite some time, and naturally they had endless things to discuss.

Rowena sat beside the bed on a cushioned stool while asking one concerned question after another. She wanted to know whether the birth had gone smoothly, whether the babies were feeding well, whether they slept soundly through the night, and whether the wet nurses arranged by the manor were reliable enough.

Elowen answered everything patiently.

Elara stood quietly behind her mother the entire time, sneaking glance after glance toward Elowen.

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Chapter 631 A House Full of Laughter

After staring at her for a while, she eventually could not resist leaning over to peek at the twins resting *in* their cradle as well.

Because she adored Elowen so much, she found herself loving the babies more and more the longer she looked at them.

As the conversation continued, Rowena eventually brought up the recent upheaval at court.

“Now that Alaric has fallen, the Garrett family wasn’t spared either” she said quietly. “I heard several investigations led back to them. Galen has already been stripped of his position and confined to his estate while awaiting punishment. As for Daphne, she’s still locked away in the Secluded Wing, so there’s no one left who can help her now.”

A faint smile rested on Elowen’s face.

From the very beginning, the only person she had truly wanted revenge against was Daphne. As for the Garrett family, she had never deliberately spent much effort targeting them.

After all, she had understood one thing clearly from the start.

Once Alaric fell, everyone tied to him would inevitably collapse alongside him.

At that moment, Elara gave a satisfied little huff after overhearing the conversation.

“Daphne deserves every bit of this,” she declared. “She spent years targeting Your Grace at every turn, and then she even shamelessly pretended to be Azure. Everything happening to her now is entirely her own fault.”

Elowen merely smiled without responding.

But Rowena shook her head gently before lowering her voice.

“Your Grace, I mentioned this once before. Hatred rarely appears without a reason. If someone despises another person deeply enough to destroy them no matter the cost, then there’s usually something behind it. Daphne’s obsession with opposing you must have started somewhere.”

Elara muttered under her breath, “Some people are simply rotten inside. Why should cruelty need a reason?”

Yet Rowena’s words quietly settled into Elowen’s thoughts.

Everything has a reason.

Then why had Daphne hated her so much?

As far as Elowen remembered, the two of them had once been incredibly close.

When had things begun to change?

And why?

That afternoon, another round of rewards arrived from the palace,

Seven or eight large cedar chests were carried grandly into Duskmoor Manor by royal attendants.

When the lids were opened, the courtyard filled with fine velvets, embroidered fabrics, silverware and ornaments, restorative tonics, rare herbs, and every sort of luxury one could imagine.

Quinn personally another

Afterward palace

delivered the decree with an enormous smile on his face, offering one blessing after another before taking his leave.

and Cassian changed clothes, brought Poppy and Phoenix with them, and entered to thank Theodric in person.

He had surprised well during the audience.

He lay once in front of Theodric. They simply slept quietly in their blankets while he leaned contentedly with obvious delight.

"Looks exactly like you did as a child," Theodric said to Cassian with a grin while gesturing toward Honesty, "it's almost unsettling."

Cassian lifted a brow. "Your Majesty still remembers what I looked like back then?"

Theodric snorted with amusement.

"Of course I remember. I practically helped raise you. I even changed your swaddling cloths myself."

Cassian paused for half a second before laughing softly.

"If Your Majesty misses those days so much, you're welcome to help with Poppy and Phoenix too."

Theodric stared at him for a beat.

Then he burst out laughing.

“Oh, get out of here.”

He refused to continue entertaining Cassian after that and instead turned toward Poppy with obvious affection.

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“This little one takes after the duchess,” he said approvingly. “She’s going to grow into a remarkable beauty someday. When the time comes, I’ll personally choose an excellent marriage for her.”

Cassian gave a lazy smile. “Naturally. Your Majesty is already famous as the Emperor of Arranged Marriages.”

That instantly made Theodric laugh again.

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good mood, he waved his hand generously at

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Chapter 634–A–House Full of Laughter

+5 Pears

“Bring more rewards, he ordered. “The duchess endured childbirth and added new heirs to the royal family. She deserves to be richly rewarded.”

Elowen looked up in surprise, wanting to say that the palace had already sent far too many gifts and that His Majesty truly need not trouble himself further.

But before she could speak, Cassian had already bowed respectfully.

“Thank you for Your Majesty’s generosity.”

Elowen could only follow his lead and offer thanks as well.

On the carriage ride back to Duskmoor Manor, Cassian smiled faintly and explained, “The royal treasury **is** still healthy enough, and my brother rarely finds himself in this good a mood lately. If he wants to reward us, then we simply accept it. Besides, the birth of royal children is supposed to be celebrated grandly. It reassures the people and lifts spirits across the realm.”

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### Chapter 632 The Secluded Wing

Understanding dawned on Elowen immediately, and she lowered her voice with a small smile.

“Perfect. Then we’ll save everything and spend it when we travel someday.”

Cassian smiled softly and gave a quiet hum of agreement.

The palace had already arranged for the rewards to be delivered directly to Duskmoor Manor, while Elowen and Cassian headed toward their carriage together.

The ornate carriage waited only a short distance away beneath the fading evening sky when Elowen suddenly slowed her steps, as though something had just occurred to her.

Cassian glanced toward her immediately. “What is it?”

Her expression turned slightly serious. “Cassian, there’s somewhere I want to go first.”

He studied her calmly. “Where?”

“The Secluded Wing.”

Cassian did not ask why.

He simply nodded once. “All right. I’ll go with you.”

They had arrived at the palace earlier in two separate carriages. Poppy and Phoenix had ridden in one under the care of Gerda and Edith, while Elowen and Cassian shared the other.

Cassian gestured for the two attendants to approach.

“You may take the children back to Duskmoor Manor first,” he instructed. “The duchess and I need to attend to something before we return.”

The two women lowered themselves respectfully before climbing into the carriage with the twins and departing ahead of them.

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Meanwhile, Cassian accompanied Elowen into the second carriage and instructed the coachman to head toward the Secluded Wing.

By then, evening had nearly settled over the palace.

The sun had already sunk behind the distant stone walls, leaving only streaks of crimson and dark gold spread across the western sky while the fading light reflected dimly against the palace rooftops.

After glancing outside for a moment, Elowen leaned back quietly against the cushioned carriage wall while replaying Rowena’s earlier words in her mind.

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Chapter 632 The Secluded Wing

There is no hatred without reason.

+5 Pearls

If someone hated another person enough to destroy them at any cost, then there had to be something buried underneath it all.

So what about Daphne?

They had once been incredibly close.

When had everything started changing?

And why?

Was it because of Alaric?

No. That explanation never truly felt right.

Daphne may have appeared devoted to Alaric, but whether in this life or the last, her feelings had never seemed deep enough to explain such consuming hatred.

There had to be something else.

Now that Alaric had fallen, the Garrett family had collapsed alongside him. Galen had lost his office, the family itself was being investigated, and Daphne had been confined to the Secluded Wing without any hope left.

She would not survive there for long.

Before Daphne died, Elowen wanted answers.

The Secluded Wing sat in the most isolated northwestern corner of the palace grounds.

As the carriage traveled farther into that abandoned section of the royal compound, the scenery gradually became bleak and desolate.

Paint peeled from the old walls in faded strips, exposing dull gray stone beneath, while the air carried the damp smell of decaying timber and mold.

Even the wind seemed sluggish there, as though exhaustion itself lingered over the entire place.

Outside the entrance sat an elderly matron wearing a faded brown wool dress. She had been dozing beside the doorway until the sound of carriage wheels startled her awake.

The moment she looked up and saw Cassian helping Elowen down from the carriage, she hurried to her feet and dusted herself off frantically before bowing over and over again with an eager smile.

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Chapter 632 The Secluded Wing

+5 Pearls

“Your Grace,” she said quickly. “What brings you to a place like this? The whole wing is miserable and unlucky besides. Half the women inside have lost their minds. It’s hardly suitable for you.”

Elowen asked only one question.

“Is Daphne inside?”

The matron had barely begun nodding when an enraged scream suddenly echoed from somewhere deeper inside the building.

“You’re lying!”

The voice sounded like Daphne’s, yet at the same time almost unrecognizable.

It was shrill, vicious, nearly hysterical.

A loud crash followed immediately afterward, as though someone had smashed a bowl against the stone floor.

Then another woman cried out in pain.

“Let go of me! I didn’t invent it! Everyone outside is saying Prince Alaric is finished, and the Garrett family is doomed too...”

“You’re lying! You’re lying!”

Daphne’s voice turned even sharper and more frenzied.

“Say that again and I’ll kill you! So what if Prince Alaric lost everything? Nothing’s going to happen to the Garrett family! My father and brother would never abandon me. Who are you to curse my family like that?!”

Only then did Elowen fully recognize the voice.

It truly was Daphne.

She turned slightly toward the matron beside her.

“Is she always like this?”

The woman’s eager smile stiffened awkwardly before she hurriedly forced it back into place.

“She... she still believes she’s the former crown princess,” the matron explained nervously. “She keeps insisting her father and brother will rescue her eventually. And she has a terrible temper. The moment anyone says something she dislikes, she lashes out immediately. The orders from above were only to confine her here. No one gave permission to punish her more severely, so we servants don’t dare push too far. After all... she used to be the crown princess. Who knows

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Chapter 632 The Secluded Wing

what might happen someday...”

She left the sentence unfinished, but Elowen understood perfectly well.

The servants assigned to the Secluded Wing were among the most calculating people in the palace, but they were also the most cautious.

Daphne may have fallen from power, but as long as she remained alive and had not officially been sentenced to death, no one dared guarantee she would never rise again.

Because of that uncertainty, they avoided offending her completely.

The matron edged closer and lowered her voice flatteringly.

“Your Grace, if she’s offended you in any way, I can go discipline her immediately. Honestly, that madwoman has been impossible for ages now. I’ve wanted to teach her a lesson for a long time.”

The matron had already heard the rumors spreading throughout the palace.

Now that Alaric had fallen, the most favored people before Theodric were undoubtedly the Duke and Duchess of Duskmoor.

Especially now that the duchess had just given birth to royal heirs.

Elowen already possessed status and honor before the twins were born, but after delivering children tied directly to the royal bloodline, her position had risen even higher than before.

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Awakening Love Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 633

### Chapter 633 Old Wounds

The matrons immediately understood what this visit could mean.

If they managed to earn even a little favor from the Duchess of Duskmoor because of it, that alone would be worth more than months of careful service.

But Elowen simply shook her head and answered without unnecessary explanation. "I'll go in myself."

The attendant faltered before quickly stepping forward in alarm. "Your Grace, perhaps that isn't wise. Lady Daph d has become unstable these past days. She lashes out at everyone

around her, an

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ctively moved to stop Elowen from entering.

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d her had turned thin with winter frost.

and lowered her head at once. "Yes, Your Grace."

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e archway into the Secluded Wing.

and narrow, enclosed by towering walls of gray stone that head to only a thin strip of darkness. Wind drifted through the ent of damp earth, stirring the dead weeds growing between the eneath her boots.

been piled carelessly along the walls for so long that everything had

ken stool missing one leg lay overturned near the corner beside rotting basins.

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Chapter 633 Old Wounds

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+5 Pearls

Elowen stopped outside the entrance.

Broken ceramic shards covered the floor near the doorway, likely smashed only moments ago.

Inside, Daphne sat eating supper.

Though calling it supper was generous.

A rough wooden bowl of oatmeal sat beside a small plate of pickled turnips beneath the weak glow of an iron oil lamp, its unsteady flame flickering from a poorly trimmed wick.

At the sound of footsteps, Daphne frowned impatiently and looked up.

The moment she saw Elowen standing at the doorway, her entire expression froze.

For several long seconds, she simply stared.

Elowen studied her quietly in return.

Daphne had not spent very long inside the Secluded Wing, yet she already looked almost ruined. Her cheeks had hollowed sharply, her eyes sat deep beneath bruised shadows, and her skin carried the unhealthy pallor of someone slowly being drained hollow day after day.

As Elowen looked at her, a strange sense of familiarity surfaced unexpectedly.

She thought about it carefully for a moment before finally understanding why.

It reminded her of herself in her previous life.

Back when she had endured years inside the Crown Prince's Wing, worn down little by little until even the woman reflected in the mirror had looked just as lifeless and desolate as Daphne did now.

"And what exactly are you here for?" Daphne sneered at last, her voice roughened into something sharp and unpleasant. "Come enjoy the sight of me falling apart?"

Elowen remained standing at the doorway without moving.

The chamber was dark except for that single oil lamp burning near the table, the weak flame sputtering unevenly and throwing shifting shadows across Daphne's face.

Fragments of broken crockery still littered the floor nearby, with water spilled across the stones.

A young servant girl cowered in the corner clutching her reddened throat, trembling hard enough that her shoulders shook visibly. Judging from the marks around her neck, Daphne had clearly attacked her only moments earlier.

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### Chapter 633 Old Wounds

Elowen did not recognize the girl.

After one brief glance, she looked back toward Daphne instead.

“There’s something I’ve wondered about for a very long time,” Elowen said calmly. “No matter how much I thought about it, I could never understand why you hated me so deeply”

Daphne let out a short mocking laugh.

“Hate doesn’t need a reason.”

Her gaze turned sharp with bitterness.

“I didn’t like you. I couldn’t stand seeing everyone praise you all the time, so yes, I made your life difficult on purpose. I wanted you miserable.” She lifted her chin defiantly. “What’s wrong with that?”

Elowen gave a small nod.

“Then I suppose there’s nothing left to talk about.”

She turned and started toward the door.

But before she could leave, Daphne suddenly called after her in panic.

“Wait!”

Elowen did not stop entirely, though her pace slowed slightly.

Seeing herself ignored so completely, Daphne became visibly flustered. She slammed her spoon onto the table with a loud crack before hurrying several steps forward.

“Why are you leaving already?”

Her voice tightened with frustration.

“I can tell you why I hated you, but you have to help me with something too.”

That finally drew a soft laugh from Elowen.

She stopped and slowly turned back toward Daphne, her expression calm enough to make the other woman feel even more humiliated.

“Daphne, I was curious about your reasons, but that doesn’t mean I need them badly enough to bargain for them.” Her tone remained perfectly even. “You’re the one asking me for help, yet you’re still trying to negotiate with me like you have leverage.”

Her gaze drifted briefly toward the untouched plate of pickled vegetables on the table.

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Chapter 633 Old Wounds

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“You should focus on eating your supper instead.”

Then she turned to leave again.

Heat rushed immediately into Daphne’s face.

The words were painfully direct, but there was nothing she could say to refute them.

Ever since being cast into the Secluded Wing, she had lost every trace of the status and pride she once relied on. She had nothing left worth bargaining with.

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begging now.

nearly reach the doorway, Daphne finally abandoned what little dignity she had don't remember anymore, do you?" she called out hoarsely. "Back then... when that from the neighboring estate humiliated me."

slowly turned back.

dim light, Daphne's expression looked twisted by years of resentment.

member," Elowen answered quietly.

the time, Galen had still served under Clement at Hale Manor.

Daphne had been very young then, and the son of a neighboring household had repeatedly harassed and violated her.

After Elowen learned what happened, she personally brought people to confront him, beating the young man so severely he could not leave his bed for weeks afterward. She had even forced the family to abandon Vanelle entirely in disgrace.

"You were the one being harmed," Elowen said calmly. "I helped you."

"Helped me?"

Daphne laughed again, but the sound came out more broken than mocking.

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on on her face twisted with old humiliation.

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Chapter 633 Old Wounds

“When my parents found out what happened, they blamed me instead,” she said hoarsely. “They said I’d disgraced the family and brought shame onto the household. I wasn’t like you, Elowen. When you caused trouble, your family praised you for being brave.”

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## 634

Chapter 634 The Truth She Hated

Elowen’s frown deepened.

“Then the people you should resent are your parents, not me.”

Daphne’s eyes instantly sharpened.

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“But that wasn’t even the worst part.” Her voice rose with emotion. “Afterward, the story spread through Vanelle. People whispered about me everywhere. My father’s colleagues heard about it, their wives heard about it, their children heard about it, and suddenly everyone was gossiping behind my back like I was the disgrace instead of the man who hurt me.”

Elowen froze slightly.

“What are you talking about?”

Daphne stared at her coldly.

“If you didn’t tell people, then why do you think my father suddenly left Hale Manor?” she demanded. “Serving under General Hale was a respected position. He left because he couldn’t bear the humiliation anymore.”

Her voice trembled with years of resentment.

“That’s why I hated you. Why did someone like you get admired by everyone around you while I was the one suffering? I was the victim, but my parents blamed me and the entire city laughed at me.” Her breathing became uneven. “I wanted to take everything from you. I wanted you miserable the same way I was.”

She stared at Elowen with reddened eyes.

“My father resigned and took an appointment outside the capital for several years. By the time we returned, most people in Vanelle had already forgotten what happened.” Her voice lowered bitterly. “But I never forgot. I remembered how you pretended to help me while secretly ruining my life afterward.”

Elowen looked at her quietly.

“I never told anyone about what happened to you.”

Daphne laughed coldly without hesitation.

“You expect me to believe that?” Her eyes filled with hostility again. “Can you swear it? Can you swear on your children’s lives?”

Elowen’s expression did not change.

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Chapter 634 The Truth She Hated

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“Daphne, if I had truly wanted to expose that story, I could’ve done it years ago.” Her voice remained calm and steady. “When you were living in the Crown Prince’s Wing, the two of us fought constantly. If I’d wanted revenge badly enough, I could have destroyed your reputation completely by revealing the truth. You never would’ve remained Crown Princess after that.”

Daphne’s mocking expression slowly stiffened.

“But I never used it against you,” Elowen continued. “Because I never considered what happened to you shameful. The disgrace belonged to the man who harmed you, not to you.”

The room fell silent.

For the first time, uncertainty appeared in Daphne’s eyes.

Elowen had remembered.

Which also meant Elowen had possessed this secret all along.

After the two of them openly turned against each other, Elowen could easily have weaponized the story and ruined her completely.

But she never did.

She never had.

And if she had not done it then...

Then perhaps she truly had not done it back then either.

Daphne’s pupils slowly widened.

“No...” she whispered faintly. “It wasn’t you?”

Elowen did not answer.

Panic gradually surfaced across Daphne’s face as she staggered backward.

“If it wasn’t you, then who was it?” she muttered in confusion. “Who told everyone?”

Everything she had believed for years suddenly felt unstable.

Back then, after people began whispering behind her back and mocking her openly, she had convinced herself there were only a few people who knew the truth besides the man who hurt

her.

Only Elowen’s family knew.

So it had to be Elowen.

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Chapter 634 The Truth She Hated

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That certainty became the root of all her hatred toward Hale family.

But now...

Daphne stood frozen in place while her thoughts descended into chaos.

All those years of resentment, all those nights spent crying into her blankets until dawn, suddenly felt directionless.

“Hm.”

Cassian, who had remained silent the entire time, finally glanced sideways toward her.

“So you’re the girl who let someone grope her in exchange for candied fruit?”

Daphne’s eyes widened instantly.

“How... how do you know that?”

Cassian answered with complete indifference.

“Alaric mentioned it once.”

Daphne froze.

Alaric?

Cassian’s tone remained flat and emotionless.

“He brought it up casually at the palace years ago, apparently thinking it was amusing. I didn’t pay much attention to it at the time, and he probably forgot about it himself soon afterward.”

At that moment, Daphne suddenly remembered something.

The rumors had not spread immediately after Elowen stood up for her.

It happened nearly three months later.

And during that period, Elowen had already left Vanelle with her mother and brother to visit her grandfather in the countryside.

By the time they returned near winter's end, the gossip had already circulated through the capital for months.

It really had not been Elowen.

Back then, Daphne had hidden herself inside the house after the incident, too ashamed to go

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out.

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Meanwhile, Alaric had visited the Garrett household several times simply because she had once been one of Elowen's few close friends.

At some point, she must have tearfully confided part of the story to him.

She had believed someone as elegant and noble as Alaric would naturally protect her secret.

Instead, he had turned it into gossip.

If he had told Cassian, then he had almost certainly told countless others too.

No wonder so many people in Vanelle knew.

The color slowly drained from Daphne's face.

"It was... him..." she whispered hoarsely. "Alaric..."

Elowen remained silent.

“He told everyone...” Daphne’s body swayed unsteadily. “When he came to see me, I thought he was being kind...”

At last, tears spilled uncontrollably from her eyes.

She looked toward Elowen, crying harder with every word.

“I hated

you for so many years. I fought you constantly. I plotted against you. I hurt you because I thought you ruined my life.” Her voice broke completely. “But it was him. It was Alaric all along.”

Elowen simply looked at her quietly.

She did not comfort Daphne.

And truthfully, she did not find her particularly pitiful either.

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Chapter 635 One Final Favor

Honestly, the truly pitiful one here had always been Elowen.

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45 Pearls

She had helped Daphne out of genuine kindness, only to be repaid with suspicion, resentment, and schemes meant to ruin her life. Back in the days of the Crown

Prince's Wing, when Elowen had suffered such a miserable fate, Daphne could never fully wash her hands of it.

"Alaric..." Daphne's voice came out rough and unsteady, as though the name itself scraped painfully against her throat.

The hatred in her eyes deepened little by little until it became something frighteningly clear.

"Destroying me wasn't enough for you," she said through clenched teeth. "You dragged my father and my brother down with you too. Alaric, you deserve to die. You really do."

Elowen watched her quietly, her expression shifting ever so slightly as a thought suddenly crossed her mind.

Daphne's hatred toward her had come from misunderstanding.

But the hatred she carried toward Alaric?

That part was real.

And if Daphne truly wanted Alaric dead...

Elowen finally spoke, her tone calm and almost gentle.

"There was a time when I truly thought of you as family," she said while meeting Daphne's reddened eyes steadily. "I wanted to protect you and make sure you lived peacefully and happily. Even later, after you kept turning against me and plotting against me over and over again, I still never genuinely hated you."

Daphne slowly lifted her head to look at her.

"I came here today because I wanted to understand why," Elowen continued softly. "And now I finally do."

The instant those words settled between them, Daphne suddenly lunged forward and reached desperately toward Elowen's wrist.

She never came close.

Cassian had remained beside Elowen from the beginning, and from the moment Daphne lowered herself before them earlier, he had never once relaxed his guard around her.

Before Daphne could touch Elowen at all, he stepped forward smoothly and blocked her

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completely, his tall frame shielding Elowen behind him with effortless instinct.

Daphne grabbed nothing but empty air.

For a moment, she froze there awkwardly with her arm still stretched out before finally seeming to realize what she had done.

Then, with a heavy thud, she dropped fully onto the cold stone floor before them.

43 Pearls

“I know I was wrong,” she choked out as tears mixed with dust across her face. “Everything I did to you was wrong. I know that now. But I’m begging you... please... just help me one last time.”

Elowen leaned slightly around Cassian’s shoulder so she could look at her properly.

“What exactly are you asking me for?”

Daphne’s fingers curled tightly enough to turn pale.

“I want Your Grace to help me one final time,” she whispered desperately. “Just once.”

Elowen did not answer immediately.

Instead, she stood there quietly looking down at Daphne as though weighing the request carefully in her mind.

The silence stretched painfully long.

So long that despair slowly began settling across Daphne’s face.

Then at last, Elowen spoke.

“Alright.”

Daphne jerked her head upward instantly.

Tears still clung to her face, but for the briefest moment, hope lit her eyes again.

By the time they left the Secluded Wing, darkness had already settled fully across the palace grounds.

Cassian helped Elowen into the carriage before climbing in after her, and once the thick curtains were drawn shut against the cold evening air, the carriage began rolling steadily toward the palace gates beneath rows of iron lanterns flickering in the night.

Elowen shifted closer until she could comfortably lean against Cassian’s shoulder, finally releasing a long breath as though something inside her had loosened at last.

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Cassian glanced down at her lazily.

“Well now,” he murmured with amusement in his voice, “what exactly are you plotting this time, Ella?”

His shoulder was broad and warm beneath her cheek, comfortable enough that she had no intention of moving away.

“I’m helping someone,” she replied without the slightest guilt. “That hardly makes me wicked. I’m obviously a very good person.”

Cassian let out a low laugh.

“Of course you are. The most kindhearted woman in all of Vanelle.”

That finally made Elowen laugh too.

By the time they returned to Duskmoor Manor, the entire estate had gone dark beneath the late evening sky.

Cassian changed clothes and headed toward the front wing of the manor shortly afterward.

Lately, far too many rewards and ceremonial gifts had arrived from every direction, and the estate vaults were already packed full. The old storerooms no longer had enough space, so he needed to inspect the inventory personally and arrange another secure chamber for storage.

Meanwhile, Elowen returned directly to Stillwater Court.

The moment she stepped inside, she instructed Mira quietly, “Bring Nina and Nikki here together.”

Mira bowed and left immediately.

Not long afterward, the two girls came hurrying into the room hand in hand, both slightly breathless from running all the way across the estate.

They looked nervous.

But excited too.

The instant they saw Elowen sitting there safely, both girls stopped at once and exchanged uncertain glances, neither daring to speak first.

Elowen smiled and beckoned them closer.

“Come here.”

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Chapter 635 One Final Favor

Only then did they shuffle over obediently and stand before her.

Looking at the pair standing there timidly like frightened little sparrows, Elowen could not help laughing softly.

“Why are you two acting so formal with me all of a sudden?”

Lirien finally looked up.

“Ella... are you really alright?” she asked quietly. “We were terrified that day.”

Beside her, Nikki nodded so hard she nearly bounced.

Elowen smiled gently.

“I’m perfectly fine. The babies were simply ready to come into the world. None of it had anything to do with the two of you, so stop blaming yourselves. You didn’t upset me into labor.”

Lirien blinked uncertainly.

“Really?”

“Really.”

Then Elowen turned toward Nikki with a smile.

“I used the nickname the two of you came up with. Poppy. It’s beautiful, and I love it.”

The girls instantly lit up.

“Seriously?” Lirien gasped, nearly bouncing where she stood. “You actually used it?”

Nikki’s cheeks flushed bright red with excitement.

“I knew Your Grace would like it!”

Elowen nodded with a laugh.

The two girls immediately squealed and hugged each other while hopping excitedly in place. Watching them, Elowen smiled warmly before asking, “Would you like to see the babies?”

Both girls nodded so quickly their faces turned pink.

Elowen led them toward the cradle nearby, where the twins lay sleeping peacefully side by side beneath soft wool blankets.

## 636

### Chapter 636 A Debt Paid in Blood

The two girls immediately leaned over the cradle from opposite sides, their eyes sparkling as they stared at the sleeping infants.

With their heads nearly pressed together, they whispered excitedly back and forth while trying not to wake the babies, one moment insisting the little boy's nose was especially handsome and the next declaring the baby girl's mouth looked exactly like Elowen's.

Watching their lively chatter and youthful excitement, Elowen found herself smiling the entire time.

After observing them quietly for a while, she finally motioned for Mira to come closer.

Mira stepped forward at once and bent slightly beside her chair.

Elowen lowered her voice.

"Have people keep a close watch on everything happening inside the palace," she said calmly. "Especially anything involving Alaric."

"Yes, Your Grace."

Mira accepted the order immediately.

Elowen rested one arm against the embroidered cushion beside her while continuing to watch the girls by the cradle, then added with a smile, "The two of you should stay for supper tonight. It'll be livelier that way."

The girls instantly burst into delighted cheers.

Less than two days later, Theodric's final judgment regarding Alaric was officially announced.

Selling noble titles for profit, building political factions for personal gain, framing loyal officials, and manipulating the court qualification trials, every accusation was backed by undeniable evidence.

Because Alaric was still his son, Theodric spared his life in the end, though he stripped him of all royal status and reduced him to a commoner.

Even so, royal blood could not simply be cast out of the palace entirely.

After confessing to his crimes, Alaric was ordered confined within the Royal House Council for the remainder of his life. He was forbidden from stepping outside its gates and would no longer be attended by servants.

After hearing Mira's report, Elowen showed almost no reaction at all.

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Instead, she simply asked, "When are they moving him?"

"Today," Mira replied. "By now, he should already be on his way out of the inner prison."

Elowen gave a small nod.

"If he's a commoner now," she said lightly, "then there's no reason to waste so many guards escorting him around. The palace has more important matters to handle."

That afternoon, Alaric was being escorted across the palace grounds toward the Royal House Council by two members of the King's Guard.

Even now, he refused to give up.

"Come on," he pleaded while trying to bargain with them along the way. "Just let me see His Majesty one more time. Do me this favor, and I'll repay you later."

Neither guard acknowledged him.

Alaric gritted his teeth before trying again.

“Fine. Then at least let me see Elowen. There are things I’ve started realizing lately that don’t make sense, and I need answers from her.”

He was the one who had been reborn.

So why had everything still fallen apart step by step?

Lately, a terrible suspicion had begun taking root in his mind.

What if I’m not the only one who remembers another lifetime?

One of the guards frowned.

“Who?”

“Elowen!” Alaric snapped impatiently. “Don’t tell me you idiots don’t know who I mean. The Duchess of Duskmoor!”

The two guards exchanged glances before one finally nodded in realization.

“Oh. You mean Her Grace.”

Then his expression turned cold.

“You’re a commoner now. What gives you the right to speak Her Grace’s name so casually?”

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Chapter 636 A Debt Paid in Blood

Alaric froze completely.

A commoner?

I’m a commoner now.

He could not even speak Elowen’s name anymore?

Those ungrateful bastards.

Humiliation and fury surged through him instantly, and just as he opened his mouth to lash out at the guards, a figure suddenly rushed out from the shadows ahead and charged directly toward him.

Everything happened far too fast.

Before either guard could react, the figure had already reached him.

Loose hair hung wildly around a gaunt face.

The person looked almost ghostlike.

“Alaric!”

The scream rang through the palace road sharp enough to startle birds from the nearby trees, sending them scattering frantically into the darkening sky.

Alaric instinctively looked up.

Sunlight spilled from behind the figure, forcing him to narrow his eyes, but even so, he recognized the face immediately.

Thin almost to the bone. Cheekbones jutting sharply and eyes blazing with terrifying hatred.

Daphne.

His lips parted instinctively, ready to say her name. But before he could speak, cold steel flashed suddenly in the sunlight.

Then came agony.

A violent pain tore through his abdomen.

Alaric’s entire body stiffened.

Slowly, almost mechanically, he lowered his head and saw the dagger buried deep in his

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pier o3o A Debt Paid in Blood

The hilt was dark gray, while most of the blade had already disappeared into flesh, leaving onl a short length of steel visible outside his body.

His mouth moved soundlessly.

“You...”

Daphne clearly had little experience using a blade. The first strike had not gone deep enough.

The instant she realized it, she clenched her teeth and shoved the dagger farther inward with all her strength until only the handle remained visible.

Alaric stared at the weapon before looking back at her in utter disbelief.

“Why would you...?”

“It’s all because of you!”

Daphne still gripped the dagger tightly while glaring at him with bloodshot eyes full of absolute hatred.

“This happened because of you! All of it!”

“I...” Cold sweat poured down Alaric’s forehead from the pain. “What did I...?”

“You still dare ask me that?!”

Daphne screamed the words before violently wrenching the dagger back out.

The blade tore free along with a spray of warm blood.

Alaric’s body convulsed so hard he nearly collapsed.

But Daphne did not stop. Almost immediately, she raised the dagger again and drove it viciously into his chest.

Everything had happened far too quickly.

Alaric staggered violently, his mind unable to process any of it.

Partly because he had never imagined Daphne could be capable of something this ruthless.

Whether in his previous life or this one, the Daphne he remembered had always been a sheltered noblewoman raised in luxury. Since when had she ever dared stab someone?

And partly because this was the royal palace itself.

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The grounds were crawling with guards. How could Daphne possibly dare attack him here?

Only then did the two guards finally react.

One seized each of Daphne's arms before slamming her down hard against the stone road beneath them.

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 637

Chapter 637 Blood on the Palace Road

But it was obviously too late.

+5 Pears

Blood kept pouring from the wound in Alaric's abdomen, soaking through layer after layer of fabric until a dark crimson stain spread rapidly across his clothes. The pain in his chest twisted harder with every breath he took, sharp enough to leave his vision swimming. His legs finally gave out beneath him, and he crashed heavily onto the cold stone roadway outside the royal residence.

Daphne was still pinned to the ground by the King's Guard, her cheek pressed against the rough pavement, yet she strained desperately to lift her head high enough to look at him.

The moment their eyes met, the hatred in her face only grew stronger.

She spat toward him viciously.

“I was blind back then! If I’d known from the beginning that it was you, I never would’ve agreed to marry into the Crown Prince’s Wing! You disgust me. Everything about you disgusts me!” Her voice rose into something shrill and furious. “You deserved to lose every single thing you had! And Ella loving you when you were younger? That’ll always be the greatest humiliation of her life!”

The instant he heard Ella’s name, something inside Alaric’s chest clenched violently.

He stared at Daphne with bloodshot eyes. “You saw Ella?”

Daphne let out a harsh laugh full of mockery. “What if I did? What if I didn’t? Either way, you’re never seeing her again, Alaric. Save your regrets for your next life.”

By the time she finished speaking, she was laughing openly now, loud and almost hysterical, the sound echoing all along the palace road beneath the afternoon sky.

The noise grated against Alaric’s skull, but he no longer had enough strength left to stop her.

Everything hurt.

Cold sweat slid down the side of his face and mixed with the blood staining his clothes while his breathing turned increasingly ragged.

He looked once toward the wildly laughing Daphne, then toward the long empty roadway stretching between the palace walls.

Finally, his gaze settled on the two guards restraining her.

Neither of them!

Their

remotely shocked.

d and detached, and neither moved to interfere further, as

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## Chapter 637 Blood on the Palace Road

+5 Pearls

though they had expected this exact scene from the very beginning. It almost felt as if none of it mattered to them at all.

A chill slowly crept through Alaric's mind.

Something about today felt wrong.

The more he thought about it, the stranger everything became.

Daphne had been locked away in the Secluded Wing.

That place might have been isolated, but it was still guarded day and night, so how had she escaped?

And where had she gotten a knife?

Most importantly, how had she known he would pass through this road at this exact time?

How had she managed to avoid everyone else, wait here for him, and stab him twice before anyone intervened?

A terrible realization suddenly slammed into him.

This was all planned. Someone wants me dead.

Alaric's pupils tightened violently. Who?

Then Daphne's earlier words echoed through his mind once more.

Ella loving me back then... Was that really the greatest humiliation of her life?

Ella... Was it really her? Does she actually hate me that much?

The shrill sound of Daphne's laughter and cursing gradually faded from his ears until all he could hear instead was Elowen's voice.

The first time they met, she had stood beneath the spring sunlight with soft eyes and a sweet smile while saying gently, "My name's Elowen, but everyone calls me Ella. You can call me that too. What about you? What's your name?"

Later, after she dragged him out from beneath the path of a runaway carriage along the crowded street, she had clearly been bruised and hurting herself, yet she still grinned brightly at him before nodding with playful confidence. "Alright then. If that's how it is, you're responsible for me from now on."

And in another lifetime, she had sat waiting for him inside the Crown Prince's chambers dressed in crimson bridal silk while candlelight flickered around the room. When he lifted the veil from her face, she had looked up shyly and called him softly, "My husband."

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Chapter 637 Blood on the Palace Road

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But later, she stopped smiling.

Her face became pale and painfully thin, so fragile she looked as though the slightest wind might carry her away.

Yet when she stood before him that final time, her expression had been terrifyingly calm.

"Alaric," she had said quietly, "let's end this marriage. I'll give you and Daphne what you want. In return, let me go too."

But those voices already felt impossibly far away now, as though separated from him by layers and layers of heavy fog no matter how hard he tried to reach them.

When was the last time he saw Elowen?

What had she said to him then?

Alaric could not remember at all. All he knew was that Elowen hated him now.

She hated him enough to want him dead.

And yet, even now, he still desperately wanted to ask her something.

He wanted to ask whether she had truly loved him once. Whether those years they shared had ever meant anything to her at all.

He also wanted to ask whether she remembered their previous life too.

Did she remember everything that happened?

Did she know how deeply he regretted losing her afterward? But he would never have the

chance to ask.

Alaric slowly fell backward onto the stone roadway, staring blankly up at the sky overhead.

The heavens above were brilliantly blue without a single cloud in sight. Warm sunlight spilled down across his face, across his blood-soaked clothes, and across the jeweled hilt of the dagger buried in his chest.

Yet his vision continued growing blurrier and blurrier.

He could no longer tell whether it was because death was finally approaching... or because he was crying.

Not long after midday, Elowen had only just fallen asleep when a loud crying fit suddenly pulled her awake.

The sound came from the neighboring nursery chamber, bright and powerful enough that she

Chapter 637 Blood on the Palace Road

immediately recognized it as Phoenix.

For some reason, the little boy had woken up in tears and was currently screaming with impressive determination, each cry louder than the last.

Elowen lay there listening for a while, but when it became clear nobody was calming him anytime soon, she let out a soft sigh and slowly pushed herself upright. After slipping a robe over her shoulders, she padded toward the door in her slippers.

Just as she reached for the handle, a woman's soft voice drifted in from outside.

"Your Grace... maybe he simply doesn't like sleeping alone tonight. If you stayed with him for a

le and held him, perhaps he'd settle down..."

oice sounded hesitant and sweet, carrying a careful sort of gentleness.

en recognized it immediately.

elonged to Lenora, the wet nurse she had personally selected for the manor.

Before giving birth, Elowen had carefully interviewed several wet nurses herself.

Lenora had been one of them.

She was only in her early twenties, with delicate features and naturally gentle eyes that made her look fragile enough to stir sympathy at first glance.

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 638

### Chapter 638 What She Wanted

At the time, Elowen had nearly refused to keep her because she seemed too young and inexperienced.

But Lenora had lowered herself before her with tears trembling in her eyes while explaining that her husband had died young. Her older brother had once served in the army as well and never returned home from battle. After losing both men, she had been left entirely alone and survived only by taking laundry from wealthy households.

Then, only a month earlier, she had given birth herself, but the child did not survive.

With nowhere else to go, she heard Duskmoor Manor was searching for wet nurses and came hoping for work.

By pure coincidence, Lenora's brother had once served beneath Elowen's father.

That campaign had been brutal, and he never made it home alive.

Because of that connection, Elowen's heart softened.

She thought that at the very least, she should help the sister of one of her father's fallen soldiers if she could.

But listening to the conversation outside now, something about the atmosphere felt distinctly off.

Elowen stayed quietly behind the door without making a sound.

Then Cassian's voice came from outside, unexpectedly cold.

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"If he doesn't want to sleep alone, then let him cry himself tired. And if he's too loud, carry him farther down the hall."

Lenora clearly froze for a moment before speaking again in disbelief. "But Your Grace... that's the young heir. He's your eldest son."

Cassian's tone only grew colder.

"And inside this room is my only duchess."

Without giving her another chance to continue, he added flatly, "Your responsibility is to care for the young heir. You don't need to report every little thing to me."

Footsteps approached immediately afterward.

A moment later, the chamber door opened.

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Chapter 638 What She Wanted.

+5 Pearls

Elowen stood there inside the room and found herself facing Cassian's icy expression directly.

She blinked slowly.

The instant Cassian saw her standing there, the frost in his face melted away almost immediately. He closed the door behind him before walking over toward her.

“Did he wake you?” he asked softly.

Elowen nodded.

Cassian reached out naturally and tucked the loose strands of hair beside her cheek behind her ear. “It’s alright. I already had someone handle it.”

Elowen burst into laughter despite herself. “That’s your son you’re talking about. The way you said that made it sound like you were ordering soldiers to drag him off somewhere.”

Cassian laughed quietly too, the corners of his lips lifting slightly.

After a brief pause, he added, “We should dismiss that wet nurse.”

Elowen had already been thinking the same thing.

“Mhm.” She nodded thoughtfully. “Still, make sure she’s paid half a month’s wages before she leaves. That’s for her brother’s sake.”

Cassian nodded as though visibly relieved.

Outside, Phoenix’s crying gradually faded away, most likely because one of the other wet nurses had gone to soothe him.

Cassian barely paid attention to it. Instead, he took Elowen’s hand and guided her farther inside the room.

“I originally planned to wait until you woke up before telling you this,” he said quietly. “Alaric is dead.”

Elowen froze.

Cassian continued holding her hand, but for a brief moment, it felt as though something inside her chest had been struck softly but unexpectedly hard.

Dead? Alaric’s dead?

After several long seconds, she finally asked quietly, “How?”

Cassian answered in the same calm tone. “Daphne escaped from the Secluded Wing and stabbed him to death along one of the palace roads.”

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Chapter 638 What She Wanted

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Elowen fell silent once again.

She had expected to feel something once it was finally over, perhaps relief, perhaps satisfaction, perhaps even the quiet certainty that a grudge carried for half a lifetime had at last been laid to rest, yet instead there was only an unexpected emptiness sitting heavily in her chest.

Instead, her thoughts remained startlingly calm, almost as though she had merely heard ordinary household news about the weather or tonight’s supper.

After a long silence, she finally spoke.

“Cassian... I suddenly feel like I don’t recognize myself anymore.”

He looked at her in confusion. “What do you mean?”

Elowen pressed her lips together before answering slowly.

“When I visited Daphne in the Secluded Wing that day, I originally just wanted to understand why she hated me so much. It should’ve been a very simple conversation. But then she told me Alaric had spread word about what happened to her and ruined not only her reputation, but her parents’ and brother’s as well.”

Her gaze lowered slightly.

“And the moment she said that, an idea suddenly came to me. I deliberately told her I had always considered her a friend and that I’d never truly hated her.” She paused briefly. “At the time, I wanted to see whether she would try to take revenge on Alaric.”

Cassian remained quiet and listened patiently.

“She reacted exactly the way I expected,” Elowen continued softly. “She begged me to let her out. So I bribed the older servant overseeing the Secluded Wing and arranged for her to slip away to a tavern for drinks while Daphne escaped. Then I had someone leak Alaric’s route to her.” Her voice lowered further. “I also had someone leave a knife where she could find it.”

After hearing everything, Cassian merely lifted a brow slightly.

“And that makes you frightening?”

Elowen nodded slowly, her brows knitting together. “A little.” She hesitated before continuing. “I’ve schemed against people before. I’ve done plenty of things over the years. But this feels different.”

Her voice became even quieter.

“This time, I never touched him myself. I only nudged things in a certain direction... and someone died because of it.”

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Chapter 638 What She Wanted.

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Cassian stepped closer until he stood directly in front of her.

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45 Pearls

Earlier, Hugh had already warned him that pregnancy and childbirth often affected a woman emotionally, making her more sensitive and prone to overthinking things she normally would have handled calmly.

Ella’s current guilt came partly from her naturally gentle heart, but also from everything she had just endured physically.

So instead of lecturing her, he spoke softly.

“My sweet Ella, that isn’t cruelty. It’s intelligence.” His gaze remained fixed on hers. “If someone wants revenge or wants to protect what matters to them, they have to know when to act decisively.”

a

slowly looked up at him.

an was already watching her quietly, his eyes deep and impossibly gentle.

After taking a slow breath, Elo

Naturally, he asked, “Wha

Elowen fell silent for to say the words alo

uddenly said, “Cassian... there’s still one more thing I want.”

ents, as though carefully deciding whether she truly wanted

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 639

Chapter 639 A Visit to the Palace

67

45 Pearls

Then Elowen heard herself speak, her voice quiet enough that it almost blended into the crackling fire, yet every word landed with startling clarity.

“I want Alaric’s head.”

The room fell silent for a heartbeat after the words left her mouth, and even Elowen herself paused slightly, suddenly realizing just how ruthless that sounded once spoken aloud.

Cassian, however, looked entirely unbothered.

“All right,” he said calmly, as though she had merely requested a change to tomorrow’s dinner menu. “Then we’ll take his head.”

No matter how dangerous the subject became, his tone remained unhurried and composed, steady enough to make even murder sound ordinary.

Then, after agreeing so casually to something so grim, he asked in the same even voice, “Do you still want to rest for a while?”

Elowen stared at him before letting out a helpless laugh and shaking her head.

“There’s no chance I’m sleeping now.”

A faint smile appeared in Cassian’s eyes.

“Fair enough.” He rose from the sofa and offered her his hand. “Then go change. We’re heading to the palace.”

That caught her completely off guard.

“The palace?” She blinked at him. “What are we going there for?”

Cassian reached over and brushed his thumb gently along her cheek, his touch warm against her skin.

“Alaric’s dead,” he replied matter-of-factly. “So naturally, we should go see my brother, offer condolences, and play the part of concerned family members.” A trace of amusement flickered through his gaze. “And while we’re there, we should also make sure everything is arranged properly so that Daphne remains the only culprit in this matter. Alaric’s death can’t be connected to anyone else.”

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By the time Cassian and Elowen arrived at the royal residence and made their way Theodric’s private study, the atmosphere throughout the corridor already felt heavy enough to choke on.

Outside the chamber doors, Quin looked deeply miserable.

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A Visit to the Pala

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The lines between his brows were pulled so tightly together that Elowen suspected the poor man had been standing there suffering for quite some time already. The moment he spotted Cassian and Elowen approaching, relief flashed briefly across his face before fading again almost immediately.

He hurried forward and lowered his voice.

“Your Grace... why did you come at a time like this?”

Cassian did not slow his pace. “I’m here to see my brother.

Quin instinctively glanced toward the tightly shut doors behind him before leaning closer and lowering his voice even further.

His Majesty’s in a terrible mood right now. He just sent the Ministry of Rites away before

ey’d even finished speaking.”

owen understood at once.

No matter how many crimes Alaric had committed, and no matter how thoroughly he had disgraced himself afterward, he was still Theodric’s own son.

More importantly, he had once been the heir to the throne.

Stripping him of his title had been a matter of law.

Allowing him to remain under royal protection afterward had been a matter of blood.

Now that Alaric was dead, Theodric was bound to grieve no matter what had happened between them.

That was simply human nature.

Cassian asked calmly, “What happened?”

Quin had barely opened his mouth when the sharp crash of breaking porcelain exploded from inside the study.

A cup had clearly shattered against the floor.

The next

every

's furious voice thundered through the doors loudly enough for

rice now? The warm water's gone cold! Get in here

e sounded far too intense for something as minor as water. It was obvious

2/5

he had been holding fury inside for hours and finally found the smallest excuse to unleash it

Quin looked as though he wanted to disappear on the spot.

After smoothing out his robes with the expression of a man preparing for execution, he drew in a breath and started toward the doors.

Before he could enter, Cassian stopped him with one hand.

"Lord Jett, wait."

Quin hesitated. "Your Grace?"

"I'll go in first," Cassian said calmly. "You can take the opportunity to have fresh water prepared."

Quin looked uncertain. "But His Majesty's temper right now..."

Cassian's expression remained perfectly relaxed. "I'm only going in to calm him down a little."

Quin stared at him for a moment before finally nodding with visible gratitude. "Right... yes. Thank you, Your Grace."

Without another word, Cassian pushed open the heavy doors himself before stepping aside to let Elowen enter first.

The atmosphere inside the royal study felt suffocating.

Theodric sat behind the carved oak desk with a face dark enough to rival the storm clouds gathering outside. Broken porcelain littered the floor beside him, and spilled water had soaked into the patterned stone beneath the desk.

The moment he heard footsteps, he looked up sharply.

“What are you two doing here?” he demanded irritably. “I didn’t summon either of you, and there’s no need to come offering formal gratitude today.”

Compared to the fury they had heard through the doors moments ago, his tone had softened somewhat, though his mood was clearly still terrible.

Cassian stopped before the desk and inclined his head respectfully.

“We heard Prince Alaric was attacked, so we came to check on Your Majesty.”

Theodric’s brows tightened immediately.

“There’s no prince anymore.”

After a brief pause, his gaze drifted toward the reports spread across the desk, and exhaustion

3/5

-placed part of the anger in his expression.

“And it wasn’t an attack,” he added quietly. “He’s dead.”

Cassian looked appropriately startled, as though hearing the news for the very first time

“Dead?” His expression darkened. “That suddenly?”

Then he frowned slightly.

“Whatever crimes Alaric committed, he was still part of Valebourne family.” Cassian’s tone turned more serious. “Your Majesty should still investigate this properly.”

Theodric lifted his gaze and studied him carefully, suspicion lingering beneath the surface mpression neither you nor Elowen cared much for him.”

“I was

brother’s gaze calmly.

what happened later, he was still my nephew, and more importantly, Your Majesty. His hand settled naturally against

up

with from childhood. Wholly.” His voice softened slightly and your feelings far better about Your Majesty.”

women stood quietly beside

Theodric listened, and his

gaze shifted from

Several moments

“There’s her. She leans

against Owen’s back. “And for Ella, Alaric was somewhat opened afterward doesn’t erase that history at Ella and I have children ourselves, we did. That’s why we came today. We were

with eyes, looking gentle and composed. The tension in his expression gradually eased. He then before returning to Cassian again.

He leaned back heavily into his chair and let out a tired sigh.

to investigate.” He rubbed at his brow. “Daphne was responsible. The Crown Prince’s Wing and found out her family had been

he lost his office, and the Garrett family could barely remain in

how she managed to slip out and find an opportunity.” He sounded already questioned her briefly.”

He thoughtfully before replying in a calm, measured voice.

He investigated the details carefully, Your Majesty. How she escaped the Secluded not close enough to Alaric to kill him, who might’ve helped her along the way...” He said slightly. “Every part of it deserves a proper inquiry.”

## 640

### Chapter 640 Shadows in the Study

Standing beside him, Elowen quietly thought that Cassian's acting had become alarmingly convincing lately.

He could stand there speaking those righteous, dignified words with a perfectly straight face and not blink once.

And somehow he still liked calling her a fox.

He said it with such calm detachment that one might almost forget he was a young man himself, and not nearly as harmless as he liked to appear, especially when he was so dangerously good at pretending otherwise.

Theodric nodded slowly, looking as though he had genuinely accepted the advice.

"I'll question her again later tonight."

Cassian continued in the same steady tone. "Your Majesty shouldn't grieve too heavily. Alaric may

be gone, but Caelan is still here, and he's always been a capable young man."

Theodric gave a quiet hum of agreement, his expression easing slightly.

"Caelan may be younger, but he's always been steadier than Alaric."

After another pause, he sighed.

"The real problem now is that the boy still hasn't married, and that's becoming increasingly troublesome,"

As he spoke, his gaze shifted toward Elowen.

“You spend more time among the noble families than I do these days. Do any suitable young ladies come to mind? If a good match can be arranged sooner rather than later, I’d feel more at ease.”

Elowen lifted her gaze calmly.

“You’ve asked me too suddenly, Your Majesty. There are certainly many accomplished young ladies in Vanelle, but a prince’s marriage deserves careful consideration.” A polite smile touched her lips. “Allow me some time to think it over properly, and I’ll give Your Majesty an answer later.”

Theodric appeared fairly satisfied with that response.

“Very well. When you return, I’ll have Elira join us so we can discuss it together.”

Judging from the improvement in his expression, Elowen could tell his mood had recovered

considerably.

So perhaps having multiple sons did have its advantages after all.

Losing one still hurt.

But not enough to destroy him entirely when there were others capable of taking his place.

The three of them continued speaking for a while before Theodric suddenly remembered something else.

“Oh, right. The Ministry of Rites will send over formal name selections for Phoenix and Popp tomorrow.” For the first time all afternoon, an actual trace of warmth appeared in his face. “Look through them carefully and let me know which ones you prefer.”

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mention

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“I’m exh

chosen, Ella and I will bring them to the palace personally to  
n finally coaxed a faint smile from Theodric.  
d his mouth, but compared  
ose two little troublemake older generation.”  
s bitterness beneath the  
softly. “I wouldn’t  
oment, hurried  
oung woma  
temper from earlier, it was a  
d quietly. “They’re far less  
screamed through most of lunch today.”  
echoed through the corridor outside.  
ght through the heavy silence inside the study. “Father, ave to investigate this  
properly!”  
moment she recognized the voice.  
ged to calm down, and now his expression darkened all over  
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#### Chapter 640 Shadows in the Study

Outside the doors, Quin’s anxious voice could be heard trying desperately to stop someone.

“Your Highness, His Majesty ordered that no visitors be admitted today...”

“No visitors?”

Another furious voice cut sharply through the corridor before Quin could finish.

It belonged to Lady Delphine.

“His own son was murdered in broad daylight along a royal passage, and he plans to lock himself away in here instead of finding the people responsible?” Her voice shook violently with rage. “My family’s been destroyed, the Crown Prince is dead, and still he can’t see that someone has been plotting against us from the shadows?” Then her tone turned cold. “Lord Jett, this doesn’t concern you. Step aside.”

A second later she snapped sharply, “Maerwyn.”

The study doors flew open immediately afterward.

Maerwyn rushed inside first, her expression frantic, tears still clinging to her lashes while several strands of hair had fallen loose around her face from hurrying there so quickly.

“Father...”

The moment her gaze landed on Elowen standing inside the room, however, she froze.

A flash of unmistakable happiness lit her eyes before embarrassment quickly followed once she realized how disheveled she probably looked.

Almost instinctively, she lowered her gaze and smoothed the loose strands of hair near her forehead.

Theodric’s expression turned even colder.

“What exactly do you think you’re doing barging in here?”

Before Maerwyn could answer, Lady Delphine stepped into the room behind her daughter and spoke coldly.

“We came because the Crown Prince died unjustly.”

Elowen looked toward her quietly.

It had not been very long since they last met, yet the former queen already looked dramatically

older.

Silver threaded through her hair now, fine lines marked the corners of her eyes, and the elegant

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dignity she once carried so effortlessly had been replaced entirely by exhaustion, grief, and a kind of suppressed desperation that bordered on madness.

The moment she entered the room, her eyes locked directly onto Cassian and Elowen like sharpened blades.

“There hasn’t been a Crown Prince in Avenlor for quite some time,” Theodric replied icily.

His expression looked dark enough to summon thunder.

“I never summoned either of you.” His voice lowered dangerously. “Do you understand the offense of forcing your way into my study without permission?”

The authority in his tone was enough to make the room feel colder.

Maerwyn struggled to maintain her composure as she lowered herself into a deep formal curtsy.

“Father, I know I’ve broken protocol, but my brother...” Tears spilled freely down her cheeks once again. “He died unfairly.”

Lady Delphine, however, remained standing behind her daughter without bowing at all.

She simply stared directly at Cassian and Elowen for several long seconds before suddenly speaking.

“It was you.”

Cassian’s expression did not change.

Lady Delphine stepped forward, fury twisting her face.

“You’re the ones who killed Alaric.”

Elowen stood quietly beside Cassian with lowered eyes and said nothing.

Theodric’s voice cracked sharply through the room. “Isla, watch your tongue!”

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess