

# Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

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

### 641

Chapter 641 A Blade Turned Inward

“I’m not lying!”

Lady Delphine’s voice suddenly rose sharp.

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“Your Majesty, just think about it carefully for a moment. Alaric was being held inside the Royal House Council, and Daphne was locked away in the Secluded Wing. Two people under guard somehow managed to cross paths at exactly the right moment? How is that even possible? And Daphne is just a noblewoman. Where would she get a blade? How would she know the exact route they were escorting Alaric through the palace grounds?”

The more she spoke, the more frantic she became until even her hands had started shaking uncontrollably beneath the embroidered sleeves of her gown.

“Someone arranged this. Someone deliberately released Daphne, deliberately gave her a weapon, deliberately made sure she knew where Alaric would be. Whoever planned it wanted to use Daphne’s hand to kill him!”

Theodric did not answer immediately.

Instead, Lady Delphine suddenly whipped around and fixed her gaze directly onto Elowen.

“I heard,” she said through clenched teeth, “that before Daphne attacked Alaric, the Duchess of Duskmoor went to the Secluded Wing.”

At those words, Maerwyn abruptly lifted her head.

Tears still streaked her face as she stared toward Elowen in stunned disbelief, looking as though she could barely process what she had just heard.

Elowen slowly raised her eyes.

Her gaze brushed briefly across Maerwyn's tearful face before settling calmly on Lady Delphine, her expression still and quiet as deep water.

Only then did she turn toward Theodric and lower herself into a graceful formal curtsy, speaking evenly.

"Your Majesty. Lady Delphine. Some time ago, I did visit the Secluded Wing once. I went because I wanted to ask Daphne why she had spent so many years turning herself against me."

Lady Delphine let out a cold laugh.

"You personally went all the way there just to ask questions?" she snapped. "You're the Duchess of Duskmoor. If you wanted answers, you could've sent a servant."

Elowen's expression never changed.

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9:14 Mon, Jun 1

Chapter 641 A Blade Turned Inward

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"Daphne and I grew up together," she said quietly. "I couldn't understand why her resentment toward me had grown so deep. It was something I wanted to ask her myself."

"Oh, enough with the pretty excuses."

Lady Delphine's voice turned shrill again.

"You went to the Secluded Wing. You met with Daphne. Then immediately afterward she appeared and murdered Alaric. You expect anyone to believe that kind of coincidence?"

Elowen simply looked at her.

The woman standing there now looked nothing like the elegant empress who had once ruled the inner court with flawless dignity and perfect composure.

Whether in this life or the last, this was the first time Elowen had ever seen her unravel like this.

Back then, Lady Delphine had once criticized her for lacking the poise expected of a crown princess, insisting that a future queen should remain graceful no matter what happened and should never lose control over something as trivial as a husband's indifference or another woman entering the household.

And now?

Now that the blade had finally turned toward her own child, she could no longer maintain that same elegance either.

People never truly understood pain until they were the ones bleeding.

"You've said enough."

Before Elowen needed to defend herself further, Theodric finally spoke, his voice carrying unmistakable irritation.

"Daphne committed murder, and somehow you're trying to pin responsibility on Elowen?" His expression darkened visibly. "This is becoming ridiculous."

"But Your Majesty..."

Theodric cut her off before she could continue.

"They came here today specifically to comfort me and urge me to investigate the matter thoroughly. If they were truly involved, why would they willingly place themselves in front of me like this?"

Lady Delphine froze.

Chapter 641 A Blade Turned Inward

Her lips moved slightly, but for several moments no words came out.

Finally, she shook her head frantically.

“No... no, that’s exactly why they did it. Your Majesty, they’re trying to lower your suspicions.”

Theodric watched her in silence, his expression unreadable.

Beside her, Maerwyn hesitated before cautiously reaching for Lady Delphine’s hand.

“Mother,” she whispered shakily, “the Duchess of Duskmoor... she really isn’t that kind of person. Please calm down...”

Lady Delphine violently shook her off.

“The Duchess of Duskmoor again?” she snapped bitterly. “That’s all you ever talk about lately. Just because you’ve read a few of her romances, you think you understand her now? You think she actually cares about you?”

Maerwyn looked stunned.

She glanced helplessly toward her mother before instinctively turning back toward Elowen.

Elowen stood there without avoiding her gaze, her expression carrying neither anger nor triumph, only a quiet sadness that somehow hurt more.

Cassian remained beside her the entire time, silently reaching over to clasp her hand in his

own.

Lady Delphine’s voice cracked sharply with grief and hatred.

“Maerwyn, wake up already. She hates your brother, and she hates you too. Alaric is dead now, and sooner or later, you’ll be next.”

“Enough!”

Theodric’s voice thundered through the chamber.

“Leave.”

“Your Majesty...” Lady Delphine’s voice shook violently now, already raw from screaming.

“I said leave.”

This time, unmistakable anger cut through every word.

Lady Delphine finally fell silent.

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Chapter 641 A Blade Turned Inward

Tears streamed uncontrollably down her face, and despite himself, Theodric’s expression softened slightly at the sight.

“You should all return to your quarters for now,” he said more quietly. “I’ll personally handle Alaric’s matter.”

Lady Delphine slowly closed her eyes.

She clearly understood there was no use arguing further.

After wiping away her tears, she turned and walked toward the doors without another word.

Maerwyn hurried after her through tears, but Lady Delphine never once acknowledged her.

Only after reaching the doorway did she suddenly stop and turn back toward Elowen one final time.

As though sensing it, Elowen lifted her eyes to meet hers.

The hatred in Lady Delphine’s gaze was so intense it almost felt tangible, tangled together with despair, unwillingness, and something dangerously close to madness.

Yet in the end, she still said nothing.

She simply turned away and strode out of the royal study.

At last, silence settled back over the chamber.

Theodric looked utterly exhausted now as he leaned heavily against the carved chair behind him and pressed one hand to his brow.

“You should both head back as well,” he said hoarsely.

Cassian and Elowen lowered themselves into formal bows before quietly withdrawing together. Outside the palace gates, their carriage was already waiting beneath the fading afternoon light. Cassian helped Elowen into the carriage first before climbing in after her, and soon the horses were carrying them steadily back toward Duskmoor Manor through the capital streets.

One of the narrow carriage windows had been left partially open, allowing streaks of golden sunlight and the distant sounds of the city to drift softly inside.

Elowen leaned against Cassian’s shoulder while listening to the rhythmic sound of iron horseshoes striking the cobbled roads outside.

But despi

surrounding her, her thoughts refused to settle.

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Chapter 641 A Blade Turned inward

After a long silence, she finally frowned slightly and asked in a quieter voice. “The way Lady Delphine reacted back there... she clearly isn’t planning to let Alaric’s death go. If that’s the case, would trying to take his head now be too risky?”

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## Chapter 642 What Comes After

“It won’t be.”

Cassian drew her more securely into his arms so she could rest comfortably against him before answering in the same calm, measured tone he always used whenever she was anxious.

“Colton is getting old, and the Baker family no longer has anyone capable enough to properly inherit his influence. After everything that’s happened, he was forced to retreat and surrender a considerable amount of political power just to preserve the family itself. That may have saved the Bakers from immediate ruin, but it also exposed a massive amount of influence for everyone else to fight over.”

Cassian continued evenly, “The old noble houses and the newer factions rising have been waiting years for an opportunity like this. Even if we did absolutely nothing, they’d still tear apart the Baker family’s remaining influence piece by piece. Right now, the Bakers are far too busy protecting themselves to waste energy worrying about Lady Delphine.”

Elowen tilted her head slightly against his shoulder and looked up at him, her eyes unconsciously tracing the clean line of his jaw as he spoke.

“As for the palace,” Cassian added, “Lady Delphine lost control over the inner court long ago. Elira has spent years quietly replacing her people, removing anyone loyal to Lady Delphine from important posts and filling those positions with her own attendants instead. These days, Elira’s word carries far more weight inside the royal residence than Lady Delphine’s ever will again.”

Only then did some of the tension in Elowen’s expression finally ease.

Cassian gently smoothed a strand of hair behind her ear before continuing, “Some situations only look dangerous from the outside. His Majesty will absolutely order an investigation into Alaric’s death, but I already arranged for everyone involved to place the blame entirely on Daphne.”

Elowen listened quietly.

“Daphne already felt guilty toward you to begin with,” he said. “Now her family has collapsed, everything around her has fallen apart, and she’s nearly lost the will to keep living at all. When they question her about Alaric’s murder, she’ll admit to everything without resistance. Whatever they accuse her of, she’ll accept it. No one’s going to look any deeper.”

Elowen gave a small nod, though a trace of uncertainty still lingered in her eyes.

“But what about Alaric’s head?”

Cassian lowered his gaze toward her and met her bright, expectant eyes.

A faint smile tugged at the corners of his mouth before he reached up and gently touched her

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I’ll bring it to you”

Elowen continued looking at him quietly.

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“Alaric is no longer Crown Prince,” Cassian said calmly. “He’s already been stripped of royal status entirely, so he no longer qualifies for burial within the royal crypts. Still, His Majesty probably show him some mercy for old times sake and bury him at the ridge in the north instead. Taking his head afterward wouldn’t be difficult”

Elowen blinked once before suddenly asking, “So we sneak over there after dark?”

Cassian let out a low laugh.

The sound stayed warm and quiet in his chest, and Elowen could feel the faint vibration of it where she rested against him.

“That’s definitely an option,” he admitted with amusement while tightening his arm around her slightly, “although digging up a grave sounds like a lot more work than necessary.”

After considering it seriously, Elowen reluctantly agreed.

Cassian continued patiently, “Right now, Alaric’s body is still being kept inside the palace crypts. His Majesty intends to wait until the investigation is complete before arranging the burial. But the weather’s getting warmer, and the body can’t remain there for long. Once the inquiry wraps up, the King’s Guard will most likely escort him out of the palace themselves.”

At that, Elowen’s eyes immediately brightened.

“The commander of the King’s Guard is Draven,” she said. “He used to serve under you.”

And from what she remembered, Draven also seemed unusually interested in Scarlet.

If they asked him for help, there was a very good chance he would agree.

Cassian smiled approvingly. “Ella’s clever.”

Elowen wrinkled her nose slightly. “I honestly feel like I’ve gotten slower lately.”

The amusement in Cassian’s eyes deepened instantly.

“A little,” he admitted shamelessly. “You’re definitely not as sharp as you used to be.”

Elowen immediately widened her eyes at him.

Laughing softly, Cassian reached over and gently rubbed her cheek with his thumb.

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Chapter 642 What Comes After

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“That’s because you just gave birth to two children,” he said patiently. “Your body still hasn’t recovered completely, and you’ve been exhausted for weeks. Of course your mind isn’t moving as quickly as before.”

Hearing that made Elowen feel noticeably better.

She relaxed against him again and gave a quiet hum of agreement.

Cassian rested his chin lightly against her hair before continuing, “Because Alaric died while in the custody of the King’s Guard, His Majesty is definitely going to investigate every detail thoroughly. We should wait until the situation settles down before approaching Draven.”

Elowen nodded obediently to show she understood.

The carriage continued moving steadily forward while silence gradually settled around them

once more.

Resting against Cassian’s chest while listening to the slow rhythm of his heartbeat, Elowen soon began growing sleepy again.

By the time the carriage finally stopped outside Duskmoor Manor, she was already drifting at the edge of sleep.

Originally, Cassian had no intention of waking her.

But the carriage had barely jolted to a halt before Elowen startled awake on her own.

“Are we home already?” she mumbled while rubbing at her eyes.

Cassian lifted the carriage curtain slightly and glanced outside.

“Not inside yet.”

Elowen looked confused. “Then why did we stop?”

The corner of Cassian’s mouth curved faintly upward.

“The horses got nervous when they saw someone standing outside.”

That only confused her more.

What kind of person could possibly frighten the Duke of Duskmoor's carriage horses?

Cassian did not explain immediately.

Instead, he raised his voice toward the guards outside.

“Let him in.”

Chapter 642 What Comes After

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Elowen still had not fully processed what he meant until the carriage finally rolled through the gates and came to a complete stop within the manor courtyard.

Cassian stepped down first before turning back and offering her his hand.

Elowen caught hold of his fingers and carefully climbed down after him.

The afternoon sun was dazzlingly bright, forcing her to narrow her eyes the moment she stepped onto the stone pavement.

And almost immediately, she noticed the man standing not far away.

It was difficult not to notice him.

He

like a fortress wall, broad-shouldered and towering enough to stand out instantly yone nearby.

the horses got startled.

wore dark navy riding leathers, and simply standing there made him look as solid movable as a mountain.

ead of waiting beneath the shaded colonnade like everyone else, he remained standing ectly beneath the blazing sun with two ornate gift boxes hanging from each hand.

thin layer of sweat covered his forehead, yet he stood perfectly motionless as though he did not even feel the heat.

Elowen did not recognize him.

But almost immediately, a rough guess formed in her mind about who he probably was.

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His eyes moved across the attendants standing nearby as though searching for someone specific. When he failed to find the person he wanted to see, disappointment flickered openly across his face before he quickly suppressed it again.

Elowen noticed everything.

The smile lingering in her eyes deepened almost imperceptibly.

“You rarely get a moment to himself.” she said warmly. “Since you’ve already come all this way, why not stay for a glass of mulled wine before heading back? The manor recently received several excellent casks

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9:56 am Pppp.

Chapter 643 The Commander’s Visit

from the southern vineyards.

Draven’s eyes brightened immediately.

He already looked prepared to follow them farther inside before abruptly catching himself halfway through the motion.

Then, almost instinctively, he turned toward Cassian first.

The hesitation in his expression could not have been more obvious if he had spoken aloud.

Can I actually stay?

5 Pearls

Cassian stared at him for a second before letting out a quiet laugh through his nose. “My wife already invited you. Stop standing there like an idiot and sit down.”

Relief swept visibly across Draven’s face.

“Thank you, Your Grace,” he said quickly, bowing again with obvious sincerity.

Elowen hid her amusement before turning slightly toward Anson.

“Mira and Cora are occupied putting away the gifts, and the hall’s short on hands right now. Go to the study and ask Scarlet to come help serve wine.”

Anson bowed immediately and hurried off.

Soon afterward, the group moved together into the guest hall.

Elowen settled beside Cassian at the head of the room while Draven took the seat below them.

The chair itself was perfectly ordinary, yet somehow the moment he sat down, it looked almost too small beneath his size.

Fortunately, he had come wearing fitted dark training clothes instead of ceremonial armor, because had he arrived fully armed, the poor chair likely would not have survived him at all.

Once seated, Draven kept his back perfectly straight, both hands resting stiffly atop his knees as though he scarcely dared move.

Watching him, Elowen suddenly found herself remembering her older brother years ago.

The first time Julian accompanied the family to formally request his future wife’s hand in marriage. Elowen had gone with him.

Back then, the fearless young general who could command soldiers across a battlefield without blinking had sat in his future in-laws’ drawing room looking painfully restrained, shoulders rigid, eyes fixed straight ahead, barely even touching the wine placed before him.

Draven looked exactly the same now.

Like an anxious future son-in-law trying desperately not to embarrass himself.

9:56 am Pppp

Chapter 648 The Commander's Visit

The comparison nearly made Elowen laugh.

Then Cassian spoke without warning,

“Alaric was attacked under your watch. Did that situation affect you much?”

The abruptness of the question startled Bowen enough that she instinctively turned toward him.

+5 Pearls

She knew perfectly well that her husband rarely feared saying exactly what he thought, but hearing him mention Alaric so directly still caught her slightly off guard.

Then again, Draven

one of Cassian's own men before entering the King's Guard.

He remained so

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There was b

Draven

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rprised by the question and answered steadily. “His Majesty already

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1. "Then you..."

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atly toward Draven. "I realized this is this year?"

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estion. "Then surely you at least keep a companion or

Never. I've spent nearly all my years in military service and never of that."

ow unusual that sounded.

in seated beside her.

hadn't he been

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Chapter 643 The Commander's Visit

The thought amused her enough that she abandoned the subject entirely.

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45 Pearls

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9:56 am P Ppp.

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 644

Chapter 644 Scarlet

Perhaps it truly was some strange military tradition.

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Seeing Elowen fall quiet, Draven seemed to mistake her silence for disapproval, and his expression tightened almost immediately before he hurried to explain himself.

“It isn’t that I dislike women or marriage, Your Grace,” he said earnestly. “And I certainly don’t have some scandalous obsession with another man’s wife.”

That nearly made Elowen laugh outright.

Draven, meanwhile, continued speaking with painful sincerity, entirely unaware of how blunt he sounded.

“I served under the Duke of Duskmoor for years before transferring into the King’s Guard, and between military duties and palace assignments, I simply never had the time to think seriously about marriage. Before I realized it, several years had already passed.”

Elowen nodded thoughtfully. “I imagine your family pressures you constantly about settling down.”

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“They do,” Draven admitted honestly. “But I’m not willing to marry simply for the sake of it. If I don’t meet someone I genuinely like and respect, I’d rather stay unmarried than force myself into it.”

That answer earned clear approval from Elowen. In that regard, he and Cassian truly were alike.

Cassian had clearly set an example for every soldier beneath him. At the same time, Draven’s meaning was obvious.

He genuinely liked Scarlet.

More importantly, he already considered her someone suitable for a future beside him.

When Elowen remained silent for a moment too long, Draven seemed to grow anxious that she disapproved of him completely.

deeply

Without hesitation, he suddenly rose to his feet and bowed deeply again.

“Your Grace, I don’t have any bad habits,” he said with complete seriousness. “During festivals or military gatherings, I may share a few drinks with the other officers, but I never drink excessively, and outside those occasions I rarely touch wine at all. I don’t gamble either, and I’ve never spent time in brothels or disreputable taverns. The rules within the King’s Guard are strict, and I’ve always conducted myself carefully.”

The more he spoke, the more solemn his expression became.

“Most of my military salary over the years has been saved untouched for marriage someday. I calculated everything recently, and together with the rewards granted by His Majesty, I should have enough to purchase a respectable townhouse in Vanelle.”

Elowen listened quietly.

Draven truly was straightforward to an almost unbelievable degree.

Chapter 644 Scarlet

The man was practically presenting his household accounts.

“My parents are both alive and in good health,” he continued earnestly “My grandmother still lives with us as well, though she’s quite elderly now. I also have a younger brother and sister. My brother is nineteen and already serving in the military, while my sister is fifteen and not yet promised to anyone. We aren’t an especially wealthy family, but we live comfortably enough, and there are no serious burdens within the household.”

The more Elowen heard, the more satisfied she became.

If Scarlet truly married into a family like this, her future would likely be stable and peaceful.

Just then, footsteps sounded outside the hall.

Elowen lifted her eyes.

Scarlet entered carrying a tray in both hands, her gaze lowered while she walked steadily into the room.

She wore a soft lavender gown today, elegant without appearing overly ornate, and her hair had been arranged neatly beneath delicate pearl pins. A faint touch of rose powder warmed her complexion, making her look both graceful and radiant.

Then Elowen glanced toward Draven.

As expected, the man had gone completely still.

He stared at Scarlet so intently that he almost looked rooted to the spot.

The sight nearly made Elowen laugh.

“Commander, please, have a seat first,” she said gently. “This mulled wine was only recently delivered to the manor, and the spices came from one of the finest winter shipments out of Southvale.”

Scarlet paused briefly after hearing his name and instinctively glanced toward him before lowering her eyes again almost immediately.

Only then did Draven react.

“Oh. Right.”

He sat back down rather stiffly.

Elowen smiled faintly. “Scarlet, serve the commander first.”

“Yes, Your Grace.”

Scarlet stepped forward gracefully and began pouring his wine.

Draven simply could not stop himself from glancing sideways at her.

The porcelain cup rested delicately in her hand, and against the pale glaze, her fingers looked slender and elegant, the faint blush at her fingertips warmer and lovelier than polished ivory.

9:56 am P p pp

Chapter 644 Scarlet

45 Paaris

For several long seconds, he stared openly.

Then Scarlet’s soft voice sounded beside him.

“Commander, your cup.

The cup settled onto the side table beside him with a quiet click.

Once she finished, Scarlet immediately turned and crossed toward Elowen and Cassian instead.

Draven watched silently.

She leaned gracefully while pouring wine for the couple seated above him, every movement calm, elegant, and perfectly proper.

There was absolutely nothing to criticize.

Yet throughout the entire process, she never once turned back toward him.

A strange heaviness settled slowly in Draven’s chest.

It wasn’t shyness.

Nor was it playful distance.

Scarlet genuinely seemed unwilling to grow closer to him. As though some invisible wall stood firmly between them.

That realization left him unexpectedly disappointed. He lowered his eyes toward the untouched wine beside him.

The liquid released a rich fragrance into the air, unmistakably excellent wine.

Yet somehow, it no longer smelled nearly as sweet as he'd imagined.

After finishing her duties, Scarlet carefully returned the wine to the tray before stepping back and bowing respectfully.

"If Your Grace has no further need of me, I'll take my leave."

Elowen studied her quietly for a moment. She had already noticed something was wrong.

Still, she chose not to stop her and simply nodded instead.

Scarlet turned and walked from the hall.

Her figure remained graceful and upright the entire way out, though there was unmistakable tension in the quickness of her steps, as though she were forcing herself not to linger.

For a brief moment after she disappeared beyond the doorway, the room felt strangely empty.

Draven remained seated motionlessly, his eyes fixed toward the entrance long after she was gone.

9:57 am P p pp

Chapter 644 Searlet

+3 Pearls

Finally, he let out a faint laugh filled with self-mockery,

Then he picked up the up beside him and drank deeply.

The wine truly was excellent.

Smooth at first taste, with lingering sweetness afterward.

What a shame.

Draven slowly lowered the cup before rising once more and bowing respectfully toward Cassian and Elowen.

“Your Grace. I still have duties waiting for me, so I should return now.”

Elowen understood immediately that he had already grasped Scarlet’s feelings and chose not to stop him.

“Of course,” she said softly with a nod.

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Awakening-Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 645

Chapter 645 The Fear She Carried

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Elowen turned slightly toward the servant waiting nearby and gave a quiet instruction, “Anson, walk Commander Hall out.”

Draven immediately waved the offer away before Anson could even move. “Your Grace is too kind, but there’s really no need. It’s not far, and I know the roads back well enough.”

After speaking, he clasped a fist over his chest in farewell, then strode out of the Great Hall without lingering.

The moment he left, the hopeful energy Elowen had been holding onto seemed to disappear with him.

at there for a while staring down at the untouched winebeside her, disappointed enough that she nly had no appetite for it anymore. Even so, the fresh scent still drifted warmly through the room. uld not bear to waste it. In the end, she reluctantly picked up the cup and drank another few fuls anyway.

en, Cassian had already risen to his feet.

two of them left the Great Hall together and slowly made their way back toward the main residence through the stone corridors of Duskmoor Manor.

Elowen's expression remained troubled the entire walk back. "I truly thought it would work," she admitted with a sigh. "Draven seems reliable, and it's obvious he cares about Scarlet. I kept thinking that if the two of them married, it really would've turned into something wonderful."

Cassian glanced at her sideways, amusement flickering through his eyes. "When it comes to arranging marriages, nobody in the world can compete with my imperial brother."

The remark instantly reminded Elowen of Theodric's increasingly ridiculous title, the Emperor of Arranged Marriages, and despite her disappointment, she burst out laughing.

The laughter cleared her thoughts considerably.

As she replayed Scarlet's behavior from earlier in her mind, Elowen slowly began realizing something important. Scarlet's reaction had not looked like rejection at all. The deliberate distance, the careful avoidance, the way she kept forcing herself to stay detached... none of that felt like dislike.

It felt like hiding.

She's not avoiding him because she doesn't care. She's afraid of something.

Perhaps Scarlet still felt too indebted to Elowen for rescuing her years ago and could not bring herself to leave Duskmoor Manor yet.

Whatever the reason, Elowen decided she needed to ask her directly.

Cassian headed off to see the children while Elowen turned instead toward the study.

Inside, Scarlet

her toes wh

the tall bookshelves with her back facing the doorway, stretching onto

many volumes onto one of the upper shelves.

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## Chapter 645 The Fear She Carried

She seemed completely distracted by her own thoughts because she never even noticed Elowen enter the room.

Elowen crossed quietly toward the writing desk before sitting down in the chair beside it. Then she called gently, "Scarlet."

Scarlet startled hard enough that the books nearly slipped from her hands.

The moment she turned and saw Elowen sitting there, she froze briefly before quickly lowering her gaze again. "Does Your Grace need the ledgers? I can bring them right away."

"There's no hurry about the ledgers today," Elowen said softly. "I actually wanted to talk to you."

let pressed her lips together before obediently setting the books aside and walking over.

she stopped in front of Elowen, however, she lowered her head and remained completely silent.

ven studied her quietly for a moment before finally asking, "You don't like Commander Hall?"

om where she sat, she could clearly see Scarlet's lashes trembling.

Along silence passed before Scarlet answered in a subdued voice. "It's not that I dislike him. Commander Hall is... a very good man. He's respected, capable, well-born, and trusted by His Majesty himself. He commands the King's Guard, and everyone knows he has a brilliant future ahead of him."

Elowen continued gently, "Then why turn him away? Scarlet, surely you understand why he came today. He brought gifts, spoke openly about his household, and made his intentions very clear. From what I saw, he genuinely wants to marry you properly."

It should have been happy news.

Yet the moment Elowen said it aloud, Scarlet only lowered her head further.

Elowen's voice softened with sincere affection. "Scarlet, you're a wonderful girl. Truly. I honestly believe you deserve a good marriage like this. You've stayed beside me for years now, and I care about you deeply. If you choose to marry one day, you won't need to worry about anything at all because I'll prepare your dowry personally and make certain you leave this manor with every bit of dignity you deserve." Her tone grew even gentler after that. "And if one day the Hall family mistreats you, or if Draven changes his heart, then you come back to me immediately. His Grace and I will stand behind you no matter what."

Only then did Scarlet finally raise her head.

Her eyes had already gone red from holding back tears for so long, moisture trembling visibly along her lashes despite how desperately she tried to endure it.

The gratitude and emotion in her expression were unmistakable.

So wa

forced out the words in a strained whisper. "But.. Your Grace... I'm not

9:57 am Pppp.

Chapter 645 The Fear She Carried

Elowen blinked. "What do you mean?"

+5 Pearls

The next instant, Scarlet abruptly lowered herself to the floor before her, shoulders shaking as years of suppressed pain finally broke apart all at once.

"Your Grace... Tears streamed down her face uncontrollably now, her voice trembling harder with every word. "Back then... I worked in a tavern entertaining noblemen and wealthy guests. I poured wine for them, played music for them, smiled when they wanted smiling, and sat beside them while they drank themselves senseless..." Her breathing hitched painfully. "I was nothing more than something they paid to look at and enjoy."

Elowen's brows slowly drew together.

Of course she knew.

After all, she herself had brought Scarlet out of that place years ago.

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But because Elowen had never once cared about Scarlet's background, she had unknowingly overlooked how deeply Scarlet herself still suffered because of it.

Scarlet remained lowered before her, tears falling steadily across the stone floor while her voice shook more violently with every sentence.

"How could someone like me ever deserve a man like Commander Hall? He commands the King's Guard. He serves beside His Majesty himself. Everyone at court admires him." Her hands clenched tightly in her skirts. "If he ever learned the truth about my past, he'd be disgusted. Even if he somehow didn't care..." She swallowed hard before continuing. "What about his family? No respectable household would ever willingly welcome a woman like me into their name. I'd bring shame onto them. People would gossip behind their backs forever."

She wiped at her tears helplessly. "And besides... many of Commander Hall's fellow officers may have seen me before. Some of them were guests at that tavern back then. They know exactly what kind of place it was. If they found out he married me..." Her voice finally began breaking apart completely. "What would they say about him afterward? They'd mock him for the rest of his life, and I..." She shook her head weakly through tears. "I couldn't bear that."

The further she spoke, the quieter her voice became.

By the end, only broken sobs remained.

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9:57 am PPPP

Awakening+ove fieborn to Be His Duchess

# 646

Chapter 646 Another Road Forward

Scarlet remained there on the floor with her head lowered, her thin frame trembling faintly while tears slipped endlessly from her face and darkened the stone beneath her knees.

Watching her like that made Elowen's chest ache painfully.

But at last, she finally understood the source of Scarlet's fear.

To Elowen, those years had always seemed like nothing more than cruel circumstances forced upon a helpless girl with nowhere else to go.

To Scarlet, however, those memories had become scars too deep to heal and too shameful to ever expose beneath the light.

Elowen frowned softly before rising from her chair and crossing the room.

Then, without the slightest hesitation, she lowered herself directly in front of Scarlet.

The posture was completely improper for a duchess.

At that moment, though, Elowen could not care less about propriety.

She reached out gently, lifting Scarlet's tear-stained face between her hands before brushing away the tears with her thumb. "Sweet Scarlet," she murmured softly, "don't cry anymore."

Scarlet looked up at her through wet lashes.

Guilt slowly surfaced in Elowen's expression. "This is my fault. I didn't think carefully enough about your feelings. I only kept thinking that Draven was a good man, that the two of you suited each other, and that it could become a beautiful marriage. In my heart, your past never mattered, so I foolishly assumed it wouldn't matter to you either." Her voice softened further after that. "I never stopped to realize how much pain you were still carrying because of it."

Scarlet shook her head weakly.

But Elowen continued looking directly into her eyes. "Scarlet, none of that was your choice. The world failed you long before you ever failed yourself. You survived the only way you could, and there's no shame in surviving." Her fingers tightened gently around Scarlet's hand. "Those years should never become the reason you're denied happiness. You deserve happiness just as much as anyone else."

Scarlet had only just barely managed to stop crying moments earlier, yet the instant she heard those words, fresh tears spilled down her face all over again.

For years, she had convinced herself that she was not truly suffering.

Back then at the tavern, she poured wine, played music, endured humiliation, smiled through mockery, and swallowed every ounce of contempt thrown her way simply because surviving mattered more than

with difficult life became, at least she remained alive.

9:57 am PPPP

Chapter 646 Another Road Forward

She had always believed she could endure it.

Until now.

+5 Pearls

Until this moment, when the graceful Duchess of Duskmoor crouched before her without the slightest trace of disgust, holding her trembling hands while gently telling her that she had done nothing wrong and still deserved happiness.

The grief Scarlet had buried for years suddenly split open inside her chest.

Every humiliation she had endured, every tear she had hidden away, every lonely night she survived by forcing herself not to break apart came flooding back all at once.

This time, the tears refused to stop.

Lowen hurriedly took out a handkerchief and wiped at Scarlet's face, but there were too many tears. The cloth became soaked almost immediately.

He turned the fabric and tried again.

That side dampened just as quickly.

Scarlet's cheeks looked as though they had been caught beneath an endless storm that simply would not

pass.

Even so, Elowen never grew impatient.

She simply remained crouched there beside her, wiping away the tears over and over while soothing her gently, almost as though comforting a frightened child.

“All right now. Don’t cry anymore. If you don’t want to marry, then we won’t talk about marriage again. And if one day you do want it, then we’ll wait until you feel ready.” Her voice remained warm and steady throughout. “If Draven truly cares for you and chooses to wait, then perhaps the two of you will still find your way back to each other someday. And if he doesn’t...” A faint smile touched her lips. “Then there are plenty of good men left in this world.”

Scarlet nodded shakily.

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Elowen brushed another tear from her cheek before continuing softly, “And if you’re afraid people will look down on your past, then we’ll simply make sure they have no choice except to look up to you instead.”

Scarlet blinked through tears, staring at her in confusion.

Elowen smiled faintly. “Do you remember something I told you before? I said I had an important task that I wanted only you to help me with one day.”

Scarlet froze briefly before nodding. “I remember.”

Back then, Elowen had only said she would explain properly once the matters currently occupying her

were r

time had come.

9:57 am P p p p

Chapter 646 Another Road Forward

Alaric was dead.

+5 Pearls:

Cassian had promised he would place that enemy’s head before her one day, and Elowen trusted him completely.

That meant she could finally begin turning her attention toward other things.

Looking at Scarlet seriously now, Elowen spoke with quiet determination. “This idea first came to me the day I met you and Nikki. I’ve always hated seeing innocent women forced into places like those taverns simply to survive, but I also understand that most women in this world are given very few choices. Sometimes they endure terrible things because feeding themselves is the only thing that matters.” Her gaze softened after that. “So I started wondering whether there might be another road. Not only for you, but for countless other women too. A way to survive without placing their entire lives in the hands of men.”

Scarlet stared at her blankly. “A way... without depending on men?”

She repeated the words slowly, sounding as though she almost understood them yet could hardly believe such a thing might truly exist.

Elowen smiled. “Of course. Women are capable of far more than marriage and childrearing.”

Scarlet hesitated before asking quietly, “Then... what kind of road is it?”

Instead of answering directly, Elowen tilted her head slightly. “Tell me something first. What do you think you’re best at?”

Scarlet thought uncertainly for a moment before answering carefully, “Maybe... remembering things?”

Elowen’s smile brightened immediately. “Exactly. You have an excellent memory. And Seren is wonderful with herbs and flowers. Rosaline handles affairs carefully and understands people better than most stewards. Nikki brightens every room she enters because she’s cheerful and fearless.” She squeezed Scarlet’s hand lightly. “Every woman has talents of her own. Every woman has something valuable she can do.”

Scarlet stared at her silently, as though no one had ever said such things to her before.

“That’s why,” Elowen continued, “I want to open a shop in Vanelle.

“A shop?” Scarlet asked blankly. “Selling what?”

Elowen straightened slightly, her expression turning serious. “On the surface, it’ll appear to be part bookshop and part weaving house. But the real purpose behind it

is much larger than that.” Her eyes gleamed faintly beneath the afternoon light pouring through the windows. “I want women to have the chance to earn their own living.”

Scarlet still looked overwhelmed, so Elowen patiently explained further.

“The bookshop can grow from Finn’s current business. Stories need copying, editing, binding, and selling.. Women are naturally careful with detailed work, and once they learn their letters properly, copying manuscripts and assembling books becomes entirely manageable. As for the weaving house, embroidery and textile work are already skills many women possess.”

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Chapter 646 Another Road Forward

+5 Pearls

She paused before continuing more firmly. “I want to hire women in large numbers, especially women with nowhere else to go. I want to teach them skills, pay them fairly, and offer them another way to survive.” A thoughtful smile touched her lips afterward. “And it won’t stop with copying books and embroidery either.”

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Awakening Love Reborn to Be His Duchess

# 647

Chapter 647 Silverloom Exchange

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“For example, someone with a good memory like yours could learn bookkeeping, inventory records, or managing store accounts, Blowen said, her tone calm and practical as she spoke through the possibilities she had clearly considered many times before. “And women with stronger nerves or sharper instincts could work the front rooms of a business, oversee staff, deal with customers, even negotiate trade arrangements. Everybody’s suited to different kinds of work, which means everybody deserves a different way forward.”

Scarlet’s chest tightened unexpectedly at the words.

Elowen continued before she could respond.

“And if some of them eventually want to start small businesses of their own, I can lend them enough to rent a market stall or a small storefront somewhere in Vanelle. Once they begin earning properly, they can repay me gradually over time.”

Scarlet stared at her for a moment before murmuring almost absentmindedly, “That sounds almost like... a lending house.”

Elowen smiled faintly and nodded.

“A little, I suppose. Except I don’t plan on charging them interest.”

Scarlet’s eyes reddened all over again.

This time, though, it had nothing to do with sadness.

It was something warmer than that.

“I’ve actually been planning this for a long while now,” Elowen admitted. “I even came up with a name already. Silverloom Exchange.”

As she said it, her gaze lifted toward Scarlet, bright and steady in a way that made Scarlet’s breath catch.

“And there’s something even more important,” Elowen added gently. “I want you to oversee it for me.”

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Scarlet froze.

“Me?” she asked in disbelief, looking genuinely shaken by the suggestion. “Your Grace... manage it? But I’ve never handled anything like that before.”

Elowen laughed softly.

“You’d never worked in a ducal household before coming to Duskmoor Manor either, and yet you mastered every responsibility I gave you faster than half the people born into noble service. You notice details other people miss, and your memory’s excellent. If I place Silverloom Exchange in your hands, I’ll be able to trust it completely.”

Then she leaned a little closer, amusement warming her voice.

“And this isn’t some tiny errand either. You’d be managing a great many people. If things go

well, you

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Chapter 647 Silverloom Exchange

+5+ earls

ught even end up handling overseas trade someday. At that point, who knows? Maybe Draven won’t even be worthy of you anymore.”

Scarlet burst out laughing despite herself, and the ache she had carried inside her chest all afternoon slowly began dissolving beneath Elowen’s teasing.

Yet even while laughing, tears still slipped helplessly down her cheeks.

Only this time, she was smiling through them.

Elowen watched her for a moment and understood immediately that the heaviness buried inside Scarlet’s heart had finally loosened considerably, so she reached over and gently patted the back of her hand.

“All right, enough tears,” she said warmly. “Later tonight I’ll discuss everything properly with Cassian. Once we settle the details, he can bring the matter before His Majesty, and after that we’ll move forward step by step. In the meantime, think carefully about whether this is something you truly want. And if it isn’t, you don’t have to force yourself into accepting it.”

Scarlet nodded quickly before wiping at her eyes.

Outside the windows, the afternoon sunlight streamed across the chamber in broad golden bands.

Scarlet remained standing there within the light, her entire figure softened beneath the pale glow.

And for the first time in years, she suddenly felt as though the suffering she had endured no longer weighed quite so heavily on her shoulders.

The burdens she had carried silently for so long seemed to loosen little by little beneath that warmth until

they no longer felt like stones pressing against her chest.

Instead, they drifted away like smoke fading into open air.

Later that evening, after washing and changing for bed, Elowen curled comfortably against Cassian beneath the blankets and finally told him about Scarlet's worries.

Cassian reclined against the headboard with one arm loosely around her waist while his fingers absently combed through her hair as he listened.

When she finished, he gave a thoughtful hum.

"So that's what's been troubling her," he murmured. "She's ashamed of where she came from."

Elowen sighed softly.

"There's definitely some of that. But honestly, I've never understood why men spend fortunes chasing pleasure in places like the Velvet Lantern, only to turn around and look down on the women trapped there afterward.

She paused briefly, genuine regret surfacing in her expression.

"The sad part is that Scarlet has no intention of telling anyone about her past, which means Draven will

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## Chapter 647 Silverloom Exchange

+5 Pearls

probably never know the truth. Poor man. He's clearly serious about her. I imagine this is going to hurt him for quite a while."

Then, after another moment of thought, she slowly exhaled.

"Although maybe it's for the best. There's every chance Draven might've judged her for it too once he learned the truth. Scarlet deserves better than that. And honestly, even if she never marries at all, she'll still do perfectly fine on her own. She's capable enough for that."

Not long afterward, Elowen began explaining her plans for Silverloom Exchange in greater detail.

Cassian listened with obvious admiration.

"Silverloom E

nge is a good name," he said sincerely.

"Right?" Ele

She shi

into h

"B

mediately brightened.

stomach against his chest, speaking more animatedly now that she had fully launched

carlet everything yet. My actual plan is for Silverloom Exchange to produce luxury ough to be offered directly to His Majesty. If I want his support, then naturally I need to on to care about the business in the first place."

med as she continued.

to the royal weaving houses before this. Aveylor only has two major textile bureaus connected the Crown. One is the southern weaving house, and the other

belongs to the Ministry of the orks here in Vanelle. Both are large operations, but they've been producing the same styles for he patterns are repetitive, the craftsmanship never changes, and nobody's willing to create

g new anymore. That means Silverloom Exchange has to produce fabrics elegant enough to rival maybe even surpass them entirely. If we can do that, His Majesty will be far more willing to support ca openly."

shifted slightly closer against him before continuing.

And the noblewomen of Vanelle spend absurd amounts on silks, embroidered gowns, and inported brics anyway. If the ladies of the capital fall in love with Silverloom Exchange, they gladly spend ortunes there. Once that happens, the business won't just survive. It'll establish itself properly."

Cassian slowly lifted a brow, amusement flickering across his face.

"You really are clever," he said. "You already knew plenty of people would object the moment women started stepping into trade and earning money independently, so you deliberately tied the interests of the nobility to your success too. Once the court and aristocracy begin benefiting from it themselves, they'll defend it for you."

Elowen smiled with obvious satisfaction.

Watching her like that softened

Cassian immediately, and he reached over to lightly

pinch her cheek between

"The only issue now

So tell me, my clever Ella, are you planning to

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Chapter 647 Silverloom Exchange

hire experienced weavers?"

-5 Pearls:

Elowen's check was still caught between his fingers, leaving her words slightly muffled when she answered.

"My aunt's from Rivenshire," she protested. "The best textile masters in all of Avenlor come from there. When the time comes, I'll ask her to help me recruit them."

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PPPP

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 648

Chapter 648 The Children's Names

Cassian laughed quietly at that.

"A moment ago you were insisting you weren't clever," he said with amusement lingering in his voice. "N look at you planning half the kingdom's trade network."

Elowen laughed too before burrowing closer against him, her voice softening into something faintly coaxing.

still nowhere near as clever as Your Grace. Once Silverloom Exchange is established, there'll be th the Ministry of the King's Works, the Treasury Office, and probably half the royal court the end, won't I still need the Duke of Duskmoor to speak with His Majesty for me?"

wered his gaze toward her, smiling openly now.

Her Grace can rest easy," he replied in mock solemnity. "This humble servant will handle everything erly and make sure the Lady of Grace and Virtue isn't disappointed."

owen laughed so hard at that she ne

sed entirely against his chest.

ing near the windows entertaining Poppy and Phoenix

The next morning, after breakfast when Bran entered to announce

“Your Grace, the Deputy Minister has proposed names for the

So the names had final

Cassian lounged

matters.

arrived. He says he comes under His Majesty’s orders with

and, looking entirely too relaxed for a discussion involving royal

“After that, do casually

the Minister

office, the Ministry of Rites appointed someone new,” he explained. “The man from a respected scholarly family. Before this, he worked under me and had some involvement with the Vanelle Royal Weaving Bureau.”

Immediately.

be more convenient.”

ward the doorway.

meet him in the Great Hall.”

Γ

and, Elowen and Cassian arrived together at the Great Hall, where Leander was already

to be around twenty-seven

raised in a deeply scholarly

red blue official robe

fit him impeccably

with refined features and the composed bearing

he stood with effortless posture beneath

marking his civil rank.

There, they only emphasized the

9:57 am P ppp.

Chapter 648 The Children's Names

quiet elegance and restrained scholarly air about him.

+5 Pearls

At the announcement of their arrival, Leander adjusted his outer coat neatly before stepping forward with measured calm, the polished feather of his boots catching briefly beneath the hem of his robes as he approached.

Stopping before them, he lowered himself into a formal bow.

“Leander of the Ministry of Rites greets Your Grace and Her Grace.”

Cassian lifted a hand casually.

“No need to stand on ceremony.”

Leander straightened smoothly.

From her seat above, Elowen studied him briefly.

#

He did indeed look young, but the scholarly temperament about him felt entirely genuine, the kind that only came from years spent buried in books and lectures. Standing there in silence, he looked almost like one of those carefully commissioned noble portraits where every detail had been painted with deliberate precision.

Leander spoke calmly and professionally.

“By His Majesty’s command, the Ministry of Rites prepared three names for a son and three for a daughter, all brought today for Your Grace and Her Grace to

review. If none prove satisfactory, please say so freely and I'll return with revised selections immediately.”

Then he added respectfully, “His Majesty also instructed us personally that the children’s names are of great importance, and that Your Grace and Her Grace must be fully pleased before anything is finalized.”

Elowen nodded pleasantly.

“Let me see them.”

Leander inclined his head before signaling toward the attendants waiting near the doorway.

r

The two officials accompanying him stepped forward carrying trays draped in crimson velvet. Resting atop each tray were three gilded parchment cards with names written carefully in elegant script.

The attendants approached with measured steps before stopping respectfully before Elowen and lifting the trays for her inspection.

Elowen lowered her gaze toward the names.

There were six names in total, three for a boy and three for a girl, each one written with meticulous care: Andy, Cody, and Caius for sons, while Evelyn, Emily, and Rosalie had been chosen for daughters.

She silently repeated the names twice in her mind before turning toward Cassian for his thoughts.

Cassian smiled lazily.

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Chapter 648 The Children’s Names

“You should choose, Ella. Anything you pick, I’ll like.”

Elowen shot him a mildly exasperated look.

Below them, Leander kept his eyes lowered respectfully, though inwardly he could not help feeling surprised.

Pearls

Even the naming of his own children had apparently been left entirely in the duchess's hands. Cassian had barely looked at the list at all and offered no opinion of his own.

The stories claiming the Duke of Duskmoor adored his wife beyond reason clearly had not been exaggerated.

Elowen rested her fingertips lightly against two of the gilded cards.

“Emily... Caius...”

She tapped each name softly before lifting her head toward Cassian again, smiling with curved eyes.

“I think Poppy should be Emily, and Phoenix should be Caius.”

Cassian's expression warmed immediately.

“They're beautiful names,” he said without hesitation. “You chose well.”

Elowen smiled.

“The Ministry of Rites chose well too.”

And from that moment onward, she and Cassian's children finally had formal names of their own.

Caius Valebourne. Emily Valebourne.

Elowen lifted her gaze toward Leander below.

“We've decided. Caius for our son, and Emily for our daughter

Leander bowed respectfully once more.

Γ

“I'll return to the palace and report the decision to His Majesty immediately. Once the names receive formal approval, I'll personally deliver the official documents to Duskmoor Manor.”

Elowen nodded before asking casually, as though the thought had only just occurred to her.

“Leander, I heard that while serving under the Ministry of the King’s Works, you handled matters connected to the Royal Weaving Bureau?”

Leander blinked slightly, clearly caught off guard that the duchess would suddenly ask about that of all things.

It

↑ shift

end

enter

9:58 am P PPP.

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 649

Chapter 649 A Worthwhile Visit

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Before coming to Daskmoor Manor, Leander had assumed this would be a simple errand. At most, he expected to deliver the proposed names, listen to a few comments from the Duchess of Duskmooor, and then quietly leave. Never once had he imagined she would begin asking about his earlier work with the Ministry of the King’s Works.

Then again, after thinking it over, the questions were not entirely surprising.

The Royal Weaving Bureau supplied silks, brocades, ceremonial velvets, and court garments for the royal household. A duchess like Elowen naturally would have an interest in fine fabrics and elegant craftsmanship.

Perhaps she merely wanted to know what styles were currently fashionable in Vanelle.

The thought crossed his mind quietly, though none of it showed on his face. His expression settled smoothly back into calm professionalism as he answered, “Your Grace is correct. I spent several years assisting the Ministry of the King’s Works, and during that time I was involved in a number of affairs connected to the Royal Weaving Bureau in Vanelle.”

上

As he spoke, Scarlet entered carrying fresh coffee.

Leander heard the soft approach of footsteps and glanced over instinctively. The moment he saw her, his attention lingered without meaning to.

She wore a pale lavender gown layered beneath a fitted short jacket of the same shade. The fabric itself was plain and unremarkable, but her figure carried the clothing with effortless grace, turning something simple into something unexpectedly elegant.

Scarlet stepped beside the table and turned slightly as she lowered the tray.

From that angle, Leander saw her clearly for the first time.

Her hair had been gathered into a simple twisted knot secured with nothing more than a slim silver pin. Tiny pearl earrings rested beneath her ears, delicate as drops of cream.

Her features were soft and refined, with a graceful nose and smooth jawline that suited her calm expression perfectly.

One hand steadied the lid of the cup while the other tilted it carefully, allowing warm amber coffee to pour into the waiting cups. Steam drifted upward between her slender pale fingers, and for a brief moment the entire scene looked almost unreal, like something painted onto parchment,

Elowen’s voice broke the silence gently.

“I’ve recently been thinking about a few matters involving textiles and weaving, so I was wondering whether Leander might be willing to advise me on a few things.”

Leander came back to himself a beat later and inclined his head respectfully.

“If Your Grace has need of me, I’ll gladly help however I can.”

It

9:58 am pppp

## Chapter 649 A Worthwhile Visit

Elowen rested one hand lightly against the arm of her chair. “What exactly did you oversee while working at the bureau?”

Leander answered carefully, “I once served as deputy overseer there for a time. Most of my responsibilities involved managing yearly production quotas and coordinating the bureau’s daily operations. Nothing particularly glamorous, honestly. It was mostly a matter of passing orders along and making sure the different workshops stayed organized.”

Elowen’s interest visibly sharpened. “Yearly production quotas? Roughly how much cloth does the bureau produce in a normal year?”

“That depends on the court’s needs,” Leander explained. “During ordinary years, production usually stays around five thousand bolts. But when the royal household is preparing for major ceremonies such as weddings, jubilees, or coronation feasts, the numbers can easily double.”

He paused briefly before continuing.

“The bureau alone doesn’t have enough craftsmen to handle that kind of demand, so during especially busy years part of the work is distributed to private weaving houses throughout the kingdom. The crown supplies the silk and dyes, while the workshops are paid according to completed production.”

Elowen listened attentively and nodded thoughtfully before asking another question.

“And how many craftsmen currently work under the bureau?”

Leander considered for a moment. “At its height, the Vanelle bureau operated more than three hundred looms and employed over a thousand craftsmen. But over the past few years, His Majesty has encouraged restraint throughout the court, so expenses have been reduced and several divisions were dissolved.”

He continued steadily, “At present there are probably around two hundred looms remaining, along with seven or eight hundred craftsmen. The workers are divided according to duty. One division focuses on fabrics intended for the royal household itself, while another produces ceremonial cloths used for noble rewards and official gifts. Each workshop handles its own responsibilities separately.”

“Seven or eight hundred...” Elowen repeated softly, as though carefully weighing the number in her mind. Then she asked, “Where do these craftsmen come from? Are they trained by the crown?”

[

“Most belong to hereditary trades,” Leander replied. “The skills are passed from one generation to the next within the same families. Occasionally the bureau recruits especially talented artisans from private guilds or village workshops, but those cases are relatively rare.”

He spoke more easily now that the topic had turned fully professional.

“Each craftsman specializes in something different. Some focus solely on weaving, others on dyeing, others on embroidery patterns or decorative detailing. The work is divided very precisely.”

Elowen listened quietly until he finished before continuing again.

“And who decides the designs?”

“The Royal Household Office approves the primary concepts first,” Leander explained. “After that, the bureau refines the patterns and prepares the full production drafts for the craftsmen. Fabrics intended for

alt

9:58 am P p p p

Chapter 649 A Worthwhile Visit

5 Pearls

the royal residence go through especially strict review. Sometimes the designs are revised repeatedly before His Majesty finally approves them.”

A faint smile crossed his face.”

“When His Majesty happens to be in a particularly good mood, he’ll occasionally suggest color pairings himself. Though honestly, the bureau’s designs have grown somewhat repetitive in recent years. The same motifs keep appearing over and over again. Crowns, gryphons, ivy scrollwork, heraldic crests. There’s very little that feels genuinely fresh anymore.”

That part, Elowen already knew.

She had seen enough pieces produced by the Royal Weaving Bureau to understand exactly what he meant.

At the same time, however, Leander had begun realizing something else.

The Duchess of Duskmoor clearly was not asking these questions out of simple curiosity about fashionable fabrics.

Yet just as the thought crossed his mind, Elowen smiled lightly and set the matter aside as though the conversation had merely been casual.

“I was only asking out of interest, though I appreciate Leander taking the time to explain everything so thoroughly. You’ve been very helpful today.”

As she spoke, she lifted her cup.

The gesture made her meaning perfectly clear.

Leander immediately rose to his feet and bowed respectfully.

“Then I’ll take my leave now, Your Grace.”

Cassian gave a quiet acknowledgment while Elowen nodded with a polite smile.

Leander stepped backward before turning toward the doorway though just before leaving, he glanced once more toward Scarlet.

The look lasted only an instant before he withdrew it naturally and left the hall without another word.

The Great Hall quieted after his departure.

Elowen lowered her cup and leaned back comfortably against the chair with a long breath.

Cassian watched her with amusement flickering in his eyes. “Well?”

Elowen stretched her arms lazily across the carved armrests, looking thoroughly satisfied with herself.

“Today was only a simple conversation, and the questions themselves were easy enough, but I still learned quite a bit. Once Your Grace reports everything to His

Majesty and he gives permission for me to proceed, I'll finally be able to start asking about the more detailed workings of the bureau.”

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

## 650

### Chapter 650 A Dangerous Smile

Then, as though suddenly remembering something, Elowen turned toward Scarlet with a teasing smile.

“And once that happens, Scarlet will have plenty of chances to spend time with Leander too.”

Hearing her name, Scarlet immediately looked up and answered with complete seriousness, “Whatever Your Grace asks of me, I'll do it properly.”

She sounded so solemn that it almost resembled a knight pledging loyalty before battle.

Elowen arched a playful brow at her, warmth and mischief mixing openly in her expression.

Scarlet immediately flushed faintly pink.

Watching the silent exchange between the two women, Cassian suddenly spoke from beside them.

“Ella, I'll head to the royal residence shortly.”

Elowen turned toward him at once.

Cassian continued calmly, “I'll report the matter to His Majesty personally, and I'll speak with Draven while I'm there.”

At the mention of Draven's name, something shifted briefly in Scarlet's expression. Her lashes trembled once before she quickly regained composure.

Elowen noticed the reaction clearly but chose not to say anything about it.

Instead, she simply nodded. "All right."

Cassian continued staring at her.

Elowen stared back in confusion.

The two remained like that for several long moments, one watching expectantly while the other looked increasingly puzzled.

Eventually, Elowen gave in first.

"Why do you keep looking at me like that?"

Cassian answered with complete composure, "You smiled at Scarlet just now."

Elowen blinked.

Then he added calmly, "And you raised your eyebrow at her too."

Elowen fell silent.

Honestly, was he really jealous over something that small?

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Chapter 650 Bangerous Smile

+5 Pearls

"You're already a father," she muttered under her breath, both exasperated and amused at the same time.

Even so, the corners of her lips curled upward affectionately, and she deliberately lifted her brow at him in the exact same teasing way she had done with Scarlet.

Only then did Cassian finally look satisfied.

He picked up his cup and took a slow drink as though he had just won something important.

Later that evening, Cassian made a trip to the royal residence.

as not remotely worried while he was gone.

the Duke of Duskmoo handled something personally, failure simply was not part of the

ough, less than an hour later, Cassian returned.

he time he stepped back into the ater the vegetable beds beside the

Hearing approaching footsteps with unmistakable satisfaction

owen was standing in

the

courtyard watching servants

ead and immediately spotted Cassian walking toward her

Elowen lowered

gaze

Cassian stopped beside granted a property in three connected co drying silk threa to make travel

Elowen's

"That

C

getables again and asked casually, "So? How did it go?"

"His Majesty approved the Silverloom Exchange and specifically rict for your use. The estate originally belonged to the crown. It has ps, storehouses and an open yard in the back large enough for n't especially large, but it's well arranged and close enough to the city

tened.

cted."

esty originally intended to assign two officials from the Ministry of the King's mentioned that Leander visited today and that you'd questioned him extensively ience."

his lips.

ander handled every question well, so His Majesty decided to place him directly under from now on. Anything involving the ministry can simply go through him."

sincerely. "His Majesty really does treat you well."

nded unconcerned. "We're brothers. That's normal."

n understood perfectly well

e this had been earne

world could stand b

not nearly so simple.

and bloodshed. Not every pair of brothers

9:58 am P ppp.

Chapter 650 Bangerous Smile

+5 Pearls

Elowen reached for Cassian's hand and slowly led him back inside. Once they entered the room, she lowered her voice slightly

"Did you speak with Draven? What did he say?"

Cassian answered quietly, "He seemed distracted, but he agreed."

That distraction most likely had something to do with Scarlet. Elowen did not ask further.

Instead, she quietly relaxed.

Which meant that once Theodric finished investigating Alaric's death, arrangements would naturally be made to dispose of the body.

And when that happened, Draven would handle the matter personally.

At last, she would finally get Alaric's head.

Just then, the nursemaids entered carrying the twins.

The babies had only recently finished feeding and were still wide awake, their eyes wandering curiously around the room while their tiny mouths moved now and then in soft, adorable little motions.

After several days of proper care, both children had already become noticeably fairer, and their delicate features were gradually beginning to show.

One of the nursemaids stepped closer with a smile.

"They were fussing nonstop a moment ago, but the instant they heard they were coming to see Your Grace, they settled down right away."

Elowen watched them quietly for a moment before her expression softened completely.

"Come here. Let me hold her."

The nursemaid carefully brought Emily forward.

Elowen gently gathered her daughter into her arms and supported the tiny body carefully against her elbow before lowering her head to study her,

Emily stared up at her with wide eyes, almost as though she were trying to recognize her face.

Elowen leaned down and brushed her cheek gently against the baby's soft little face.

"My sweet Poppy. My precious Emily. I'm your mother."

As though she truly understood the words, Emily suddenly broke into a gummy smile.

The expression was so soft and sweet that Elowen immediately felt her heart melt.

Nearby, Caius watched the entire exchange from his nursemaid's arins and immediately started making loud protesting noises as though unwilling to be ignored.

9:58 am P p pp

Chapter 658 Dangerous Smile

+5 Pearls

Still holding Emily, Elowen looked over at her son and deliberately copied the same gentle tone.

“My sweet Phoenix. Mytle Carus. I’m your mother too.”

The moment Caius looked at her, he immediately burst into delighted giggles. He laughed so enthusiastically that several drops of drool slipped out afterward.

Elowen laughed helplessly at the sight.

Watching from beside her, Cassian leaned closer and copied Elowen’s tone with perfect seriousness.

“Caius, I’m your father.”

Caius froze instantly.

His round eyes widened dramatically while his tiny mouth trembled downward.

Then, without warning, he burst into loud, heartbroken sobbing.

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9:58 am P p p p

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess