

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

We Had Something Real But Didn't Handle It Right

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Chapter 651 The Favorite Parent

Cassian stared at his son for a moment, clearly caught off guard.

Elowen froze briefly too before laughter burst out of her.

Cassian clicked his tongue in amusement. “Ungrateful little brat.”

Still unwilling to admit defeat, he turned to look at Emily instead.

45 Pearls

Emily had been lying quietly in Elowen’s arms with a smile still lingering on her little face, but the instant she saw Cassian leaning closer, her smile visibly stiffened. She forced out the tiniest grin before quickly twisting back toward Elowen, babbling anxiously as though asking her mother to save her.

One of the wet nurses standing nearby could not help laughing softly.

“Caius and Emily both seem much more attached to Her Grace,” she said warmly. “His Grace probably feels too intimidating to them. Little ones scare easily.”

Cassian gave a dissatisfied hum.

That only made Elowen laugh harder, tears gathering at the corners of her eyes.

He had never truly been angry in the first place, and seeing her so delighted quickly made him smile too. Reaching over, he wiped away the moisture near her eyes before teasing lightly, “Careful. Your jaw’s going to hurt later.”

Moisture near her eyes betra

Elowen grinned smugly. "I'm not worried."

Cassian pinched her cheek gently. "You little troublemaker."

The next morning, Elowen woke especially early.

The estate in the southern district had occupied her thoughts all night, and she had barely slept soundly because of it. The sky had only just begun to brighten when she wrapped herself in an outer robe and climbed out of bed.

Cassian was still lying beside her. The moment he sensed movement, he stretched out an arm and pulled Elowen straight back into his embrace before asking lazily, "Why are you up this early?"

Elowen relaxed against him without trying to move away.

"I want to go inspect the estate," she said. "If I leave earlier, I'll have more time to look around carefully."

Cassian gave a quiet hum.

Then Elowen added, "I'm bringing Scarlet with me."

His tone lifted slightly. "Scarlet?"

Elowen nodded.

9:58 am P p pp

pppp.

Chapter 657-The Favorite Parent

+5 Pearls

For one thing, I plan to hand Silverloom Exchange over to Scarlet eventually, so it'll help if she starts learning frow. Besides, Scarlet remembers everything. I'm worried I'll forget something if I go alone."

Cassian suddenly opened his eyes fully before leaning closer to her ear, his voice carrying an obvious hint of fishing for praise.

“You compliment her constantly. Maybe compliment me too.”

Elowen tilted her head toward him, amused. “And what exactly should I praise you for?”

Cassian spoke softly. “I already guessed you’d be eager to inspect the estate today, so I arranged everything ahead of time and asked Leander to accompany you. He knows that area well. Back when he worked under the Deputy of the King’s Works, he visited nearly every estate in the southern district.

Surprise immediately appeared in Elowen’s eyes.

Cassian lifted a brow slightly, his expression practically asking whether her husband was thoughtful enough now.

The look on his face made Elowen laugh again. She shifted closer and kissed the corner of his mouth.

“There. I praised you.”

Her eyes curved brightly as she said sweetly, “You’re the best.”

Only after finally being coaxed into satisfaction did Cassian release her.

Since today’s outing involved inspecting farmland and tenant estates, Elowen kept her appearance simple after washing and dressing.

Sitting before the mirror, she told Mira not to put too many ornaments in her hair.

Mira answered cheerfully before arranging Elowen’s hair neatly and securing it loosely with a hairpin. Then she added only a pair of small emerald earrings as decoration.

Elowen studied herself in the mi

from side to side and looked very

satisfied.

Caius and Emily were still asleep, lying side by side in the small cradle in the next revprí cheeks.

with rosy

little

Elowen walked over quietly and lowered her head to look at them for a moment before brushing their cheeks gently with her fingertips. Only then did she turn and head outside.

“Scarlet, Mira, come with me.”

Mira answered immediately and hurried after her.

Scarlet, however, still remembered something important. “Your Grace, you haven’t had breakfast yet.”

Elowen smiled as she continued toward the entrance.

“I’m too excited about inspecting the estate to eat right now. I’ll eat after I come back.”

9:58 am P PPP.

Chapter 654 The Favorite Parent

Pearls

Scarlet followed behind her, worry obvious in her voice. “But who knows how long that’ll take? Your Grace only recently recovered from childbirth. What if you get hungry?”

Elowen kept walking as she considered it briefly.

“If I get hungry, I can buy something along the street. There are plenty of bakeries and breakfast stalls around Vanelle anyway, and I haven’t eaten outside in quite a while.”

Scarlet still wanted to persuade her further, but before she could continue, Anson walked in from outside and reported, “Your Grace, the carriage is ready.”

The moment Elowen heard that, her excitement visibly rose

She immediately strode toward the entrance.

Scarlet no longer had time to continue persuading her and hurried after her instead.

Mira smiled and tried comforting Scarlet as they walked.

“It’s fine, Scarlet. Missing one meal won’t hurt Her Grace. She’s always been like this. Back at Hale Manor, whenever she got excited about trying something new, she’d forget meals entirely. The General and Lady Hale could never do anything about it either.”

Scarlet could only sigh helplessly.

After passing through the inner gate and around the stone screen wall, the morning sunlight came fully into view.

And beneath the shade of flowers and greenery, part of a dark official robe could already be seen.

The robes of the Ministry of Rites.

Leander had arrived.

Elowen raised her brows slightly before walking over.

After stepping past the broad-leafed plants nearby, she saw Leander standing there properly and respectfully. He had likely come directly from morning court, since he was still dressed in official robes and looked perfectly composed.

The moment he saw Elowen approach, Leander stepped forward and bowed respectfully.

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

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9:58 am P PPP.

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Chapter 652 The Hidden Traitor

Elowen smiled casually and warmly.

+5 Pearls

“There’s no need to be so formal, Leander. You already transferred to the Ministry of Rites, yet you still have to help me handle other matters. must be delaying your official work today.”

Leander straightened calmly.

“Being able to ease Your Grace’s concerns is part of my duty. Besides, His Majesty already assigned me to assist with Silverloom Exchange, so naturally I should do my best.”

Elowen nodded, clearly pleased with his attitude.

Leander’s gaze shifted briefly behind her before pausing on Scarlet and Mira.

“And these two are?”

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Elowen stepped slightly aside while introducing them.

“This is Mira, my personal maid. We grew up together, and she’s one of the people closest to me. hardly do anything without her nearby.”

Mira immediately smiled brightly and bowed.

Then Elowen gestured toward Scarlet.

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can

“And this is Scarlet. The first time you visited the manor, she was the one who brought refreshments.”

Leander’s gaze paused slightly on Scarlet.

Today her hair had been gathered into a simple knot secured with a plain silver pin. She wore no other jewelry and looked clean and understated.

Keeping her eyes lowered, Scarlet curtsied politely toward Leander.

Elowen continued, “Scarlet has an extraordinary memory. Once she sees something, she never forgets it.

to familiarize In the future, I plan to let her oversee Silverloom Exchange, so I brought her along today

herself with the estate first.”

Leander looked briefly surprised and could not help glancing at Scarlet once more.

A memory like that was no ordinary talent.

Scarlet kept her eyes lowered. “Your Grace flatters me.”

“All right,” Elowen said cheerfully. “Enough talking. Let’s go inspect the estate.”

With that, she immediately took the lead and headed toward the entrance.

Scarlet and Mira followed closely behind.

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Chapter 652 The Hidden Traitor

+5 Pearls

Leander walked half a step behind them, his gaze pausing briefly on Scarlet’s back before he lowered his eyes again and followed after them calmly.

Meanwhile, deep within the palace, the sunlight of late spring never quite reached the darker corners.

Inside Isla’s residence, the doors and windows remained half closed, leaving the chamber dim.

Hilda returned from outside looking hesitant and uneasy. She lingered at the doorway for a long while before finally gathering the courage to enter.

Isla sat beside the table with one hand pressed against her forehead, rubbing slowly at her temples.

Hearing movement at the doorway, she looked up with a frown, her voice hoarse and impatient.

“What are you standing there for?”

Hilda forced herself forward.

Isla looked at her and asked, “His Majesty has been investigating the assassination attempt against the Crown Prince these past few days. What did you find out?”

Hilda immediately lowered herself into a deep bow, her voice trembling.

“Please forgive me, My Lady.”

Isla frowned even harder, her voice rising sharply.

“Why are you apologizing? I told you to investigate. Why would I blame you for that?”

Then she snapped, “Speak.”

Cold sweat covered Hilda’s back as she lowered her head carefully.

“His Majesty investigated very thoroughly. The attendants from the Secluded Wing were questioned, as were the King’s Guard on duty and the servants nearby. They all said the same thing. On the day the Crown Prince was attacked, Daphne slipped out of the Secluded Wing alone during the servants’ shift change.”

Isla’s eyes widened instantly.

“What?”

Hilda lowered her voice even further.

“Even Daphne herself said that she originally intended to escape the palace and return home to see her parents. She never expected to encounter His Highness instead. She said she hated the Crown Prince and wanted his life.”

Isla suddenly rose to her feet and swept everything from the table onto the floor.

The dishes shattered loudly.

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9.59 am P P P p

Chapter 659 *he Hidden Traf

They’re covering for him. Every single one of them!”

Her voice turned sharp with fury,

“It has to be Cassian behind this. It has to be hm. He was afraid the Crown Prince would rise again someday and threaten his position, so he wanted the Crown Prince dead, and he arranged everything perfectly afterward.”

Hilda remained lowered on the floor, not daring to say another word.

“It’s all a setup. Every bit of it was planned.”

Tears filled Isla’s eyes as she looked toward the hall entrance.

“His Majesty can’t even see something this obvious. He trusts an outsider, yet refuses to trust his own wife and son? He’s blind. Completely blind.”

Hilda was horrified. “My Lady, please be careful with your words.

Isla let out a cold laugh.

“Careful? What do I still have left to fear? My son is finished, and my title as queen is gone. I have nothing left.”

Hilda felt miserable seeing her in this state.

She had served Isla for many years and had never once seen her so broken and disheveled.

“No...” Isla suddenly muttered through her tears. “Something’s wrong.”

Hilda raised her head carefully, “My Lady, what’s wrong?”

Isla’s eyes sharpened slightly.

“The investigation inside the Crown Prince’s Wing moved too quickly, and they uncovered too much. Unless someone inside exposed everything directly, how could His Majesty have discovered so much so fast?

Hilda froze briefly.

“My Lady means...”

Isla gritted her teeth and said slowly, “There was a traitor beside Alaric.

After thinking for a moment, Hilda suddenly remembered something.

“I heard” she said quietly, “that Tristan, the attendant His Highness trusted most, was the one who revealed everything.

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Chapter 653 A Hidden Target

“Tristan...”

Isla frowned slightly before slowly shaking her head.

“No. It wasn’t only Tristan!

A sharp look entered her eyes as another memory surfaced.

“Wasn’t there also a young maid serving beside Alaric? The girl who originally entered the palace with Daphne...”

Hilda immediately understood. “Do you mean Iris, My Lady?”

At once, a cold gleam flashed through Isla’s eyes. “Yes. Iris.” Her voice sharpened. “Where is she now?”

One of the attendants standing nearby cautiously lifted her head.

“My Lady... not long ago, I believe I saw her serving beside Lady Elira.”

Isla slowly turned toward her.

“What did you just say?”

The maid instantly paled beneath that icy stare and hurried into a deep bow.

“T-two days ago, My Lady, I went to the royal stores to collect a new silver goblet service, and I happened to see one of Lady Elira’s senior attendants there collecting the monthly household stipends. There was another girl following

behind her who looked familiar. I only caught a glimpse, but... I thought it might've been Iris..."

The maid risked a nervous glance upward only to see Isla's expression growing darker by the second. Terrified, she immediately lowered her head again.

"O-of course, perhaps I was mistaken..."

Isla narrowed her eyes slowly.

"You probably weren't."

A cold laugh escaped her lips.

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"Elira and the Duke of Duskmoor have been working together for quite some time now. I've known that perfectly well. Back when the Crown Prince's Wing was investigated, I heard every servant and advisor connected to it was imprisoned except for one person quietly removed beforehand. At the time. I didn't know who it was."

She lifted a hand and brushed away the dampness beneath her eyes, though the mockery in her smile only deepened.

"But now I understand. A maid who entered the palace with Daphne. A servant who stayed beside Alaric.

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Chapter 653 Hidden Target

+5 Fearls

Both her former masters have fallen, yet somehow she alone ends up comfortably serving under Elira without suffering a thing."

No wonder the Crown Prince's Wing collapsed so quickly.

No wonder Cassian managed to uncover so much evidence.

Clearly, Iris had been feeding information to them all along.

And in exchange, the little traitor secured herself a peaceful life.

Seeing the dangerous look settling across Isla's face, Hilda hesitated for a long moment before finally speaking carefully.

"My Lady... the lord believes the family should avoid drawing attention for now and wait for matters to calm down."

"He's old. That's why he's afraid."

Isla's brows tightened sharply, bitterness flashing openly across her face.

"If he'd been capable, my son never would've been forced out of the Crown Prince's Wing, and he certainly wouldn't have died. Now he expects me to stay quiet too? The one who died was my son."

For a moment, even Hilda did not know how to respond.

"Iris."

Isla spoke the name slowly, each syllable dripping with hatred.

"That little snake traded loyalty for comfort and survival. Alaric may be dead, but I'd like to see how she plans to escape now."

Elsewhere in the palace, Iris was warming mulled wine over a small brazier when she suddenly sneezed.

She rubbed her nose with mild confusion.

The weather had been warm lately, especially during the day. Surely she hadn't caught a chill overnight.

After thinking it over for a moment, she decided that probably was not the reason.

Someone's talking about me behind my back again.

She had only just drifted into thought when a sharp voice suddenly rang out behind her.

"So this is where you disappeared to again."

Iris let out a quiet sigh before standing and turning around.

Tamsin strode toward her with irritation written all over her face.

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Chapter 658 A-Hidden Target

5 Pearls

“I told you to stay here and prepare the drinks properly, and instead you’re standing around daydreaming. What exactly is distracting you so much that you can’t focus of serving Lady Elira?”

The skirts of her gown snapped sharply behind her as she walked.

Tamsin was naturally tall and attractive, but the constant tension in her face often made her seem harsh and unpleasant.

Iris lowered her gaze respectfully.

“Tamsin.”

She had been serving under Elira for some time now.

Ever since Elowen arranged for Elira to transfer her out of the Crown Prince’s Wing, Iris had remained here peacefully.

Elira treated her kindly. She never questioned her about the past, never embarrassed her, and simply treated her like any ordinary palace attendant.

And Iris, in return, worked carefully, spoke little, caused no trouble, and quietly kept to herself.

It was the kind of life she once never even dared dream about.

The only unpleasant part was Tamsin.

Ever since Caelan visited one day and singled Iris out for a private conversation in front of the other attendants and matrons, Tamsin had clearly begun holding a grudge.

From then on, she constantly found excuses to make Iris’s life difficult.

Several days earlier, Tamsin claimed she wanted to “teach” Iris proper palace duties and brought her along to collect the monthly stipends from the royal treasury. She even handed the pouch of money over for Iris

to carry.

But after they returned, she suddenly insisted five dollars were missing and accused Iris of stealing them. Elira merely waved the matter away casually, saying it was too small an amount to investigate further.

Still, Tamsin remained dissatisfied and spent days afterward making pointed remarks whenever Iris was nearby.

Iris simply pretended not to hear them.

Today, Tamsin ordered her to prepare drinks again.

The first batch of mulled wine was supposedly too weak. The second overly spiced.

This was already the third attempt.

By now, Iris understood the real reason perfectly well.

Tamsin had feelings for Caelan, yet Caclan clearly treated Iris differently from everyone else, which was

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Chapter 658 Hidden Target

why she targeted her so relentlessly.

Iris had tried explaining herself once before, but Tamsin refused to listen to a single word.

And when living beneath another person’s roof, some things simply had to be endured.

So Iris lowered her head obediently.

“I know I was careless. Please forgive me, Tamsin

+5 Peads

Seeing her act so submissively, Tamsin's expression softened slightly, though she still gave a dismissive sniff.

"If you know you were careless, then focus harder while preparing the drinks."

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She leaned over the steaming pot and carefully inhaled the scent, the tension in her face easing slightly.

Iris asked a

Is this batch acceptable?"

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Chapter 654 The Blossom He Waited For

Tamsin gave a reluctant hum

"It's still not perfect, but Lady Elira wants refreshments immediately, so this will do for now."

Iris lifted her eyes slightly "Then should bring it in?"

Tamsin immediately shot her a sharp glare.

45 Pearls

"What would I need you for? Do you think one tray is enough for the entire reception? Stay here and prepare another bar

ver this one myself."

Iris paused faintly

From the

Fortune

S

ing, Caelan had likely arrived.

re to see him anyway.

pediently. "All right. Whatever you say."

ur place."

ray with obvious satisfaction before

disappeared did Iris sit back down

with another piece of charcoal to the

water began bubbling softly

and she sat on the low stool,

How the duchess is doing

still remember

already

carefully toward the front courtyard.

She filled the kettle with water, and set it over the fire.

It led upward into the warm spring sunlight.

He gazed at the steam without really seeing it.

He smiled slightly.

"Chess of Duskmoor?"

nded from behind her right shoulder.

y toward the sound but found no one there.

me from the opposite direction.

the edge of richly embroidered robes.

pward until she found Carl

the table, lifting the lid from the pot to

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Chapter 654 The Blossom He Waited For

inhale the aroma.

“Now that smells good, he said approvingly before glancing back at her with a smile. “The moment I caught the scent, I knew you made it.”

Iris’s heart tightened instantly.

Pearls

She rose to her feet at once and used the motion of bowing as an excuse to take two subtle steps backward, carefully widening the distance between them.

“Greetings, Your Highness.”

Caelan noticed the retreat immediately.

w

One brow lifted slightly as he replaced the lid and straightened. “Are you afraid of me?”

Iris answered calmly and respectfully.

“You are a prince of the realm, Your Highness. Naturally I should show proper respect.”

Caelan laughed softly.

“You really do know how to talk your way around everything. Every answer sounds flawless. You’re clearly trying to avoid me, and somehow nobody can accuse you of being rude.”

Iris merely pressed her lips together without speaking.

Caelan leaned casually against the stone table, looking/far too relaxed.

“If you’re really this clever, though, how are you still letting yourself get pushed around?”

Iris looked up in confusion, uncertain what he meant.

Caelan continued leisurely.

“When the Duchess of Duskmoor asked my mother to transfer you here, Mother may not have assigned you any important duties, but she certainly never intended for you to spend your days hidden away in the rear courtyard preparing drinks. Earlier, I asked Tamsin where you were. Do you know what she told me?”

Iris silently guessed the answer already.

Most likely that she was lazy, constantly avoiding work, and had disappeared somewhere again.

Caelan continued slowly.

“She said you were always slacking off and impossible to find whenever there was work to do. Then she added that since you were personally brought here by Lady Eira, she didn’t dare criticize you too harshly and could only tolerate your behavior. After that, she invited me to sample the drinks.”

His eyes settled steadily on Iris.

“The moment I tasted it, I knew you were the one who prepared it. I’ve had Tamsin’s mulled wine before, and it’s nowhere near this refined. Even if she practiced for another month, she wouldn’t suddenly

Chapter 654 The Blossom He Waited For

improve this much overnight.”

+5 Fearis

Iris answered quietly, once served in the Crown Prince’s Wing, so naturally my position is sensitive. Tamsin keeps me working in the rear courtyard and away from attention because she’s trying to protect me. I’m very grateful for that consideration.”

She sounded entirely sincere.

Caelan laughed outright.

“You can tell that story to me if you want, but don’t start convincing yourself it’s true too.”

Iris’s lashes trembled faintly.

Meanwhile, Caelan seemed to be in an unusually good mood. Gathering his robes, he sat down directly on the small stool where Iris had been sitting moments earlier.

“You don’t need to worry,” he said casually. “Tamsin’s already been punished.”

Iris froze.

Caelan continued unhurriedly.

“I praised the drinks and asked how she prepared them, but her answers were full of holes. Mother only listened for a few moments before realizing she was taking credit for someone else’s work, so she ordered Tamsin back to her chambers to reflect on her behavior.”

Instead of relief, however, Iris frowned slightly.

He’s only made things worse for me.

Caelan suddenly turned toward her fully.

“Iris, when I invited you to become one of my advisors before, I meant it sincerely. I told you that if you

my

mother's residence." were willing, all you had to do was leave a peach blossom outside

His voice lowered slightly.

"Every single day, I checked those doors myself. I watched the blossoms open, I watched them fall. From late spring into early summer, I waited for that flower from you. But even after the very last peach blossom in the palace had withered away, I never found the one you were supposed to leave."

Iris stayed silent.

Caclan continued quietly.

"Later, when everything happened at the Crown Prince's Wing. I assumed you'd be caught in the disaster too, so I went looking for you. But Mother had already moved faster than I had and transferred you here before I arrived. I never once mentioned you to her before that day. When I finally asked why she had done it, that was when I learned the truth."

His gaze rested steadily on her.

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Chapter 654 The Blossom He Waited For

That was also the day I realized you chose the Duchess of Duskmoor over me."

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Chapter 655 A Third Invitation

+5 Fears

Iris pressed her lips together briefly before lowering her gaze toward the steam curling from the bronze kettle nearby.

"So this is Your Highness's punishment for me?"

The question

seemed to catch Caelan slightly off guard, though after a moment he laughed softly beneath his breath.

“Yeah,” he admitted without much effort. “I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t a little hurt.”

The answer made Iris’s heart skip unexpectedly.

“But setting that aside,” Caelan continued while his expression gradually sharpened with seriousness, “there’s still something I should warn you about out of genuine concern.”

The easy warmth faded from his eyes as he looked directly at her.

“You’re the only person from the Crown Prince’s Wing who managed to walk away untouched. Now that Alaric is dead, Lady Delphine is bound to turn her anger somewhere eventually, and when she does, she’s going to assume you betrayed her long ago. Once that idea settles into her mind, she’ll do everything she can to make you pay for it.”

Then, after a slight pause, he asked once more in an even voice, “Iris, this is the third time I’ve asked you. Will you come serve under me instead? If you do, I can keep you safe.”

Yet Iris still did not hesitate.

She lowered herself into a respectful bow, every movement proper and composed.

“Thank you for Your Highness’s kindness, but I’m far too ordinary to be of any real use.”

Another refusal.

Caelan narrowed his eyes slightly while watching her.

“Iris, aren’t you worried that after being turned down over and over again, I might finally lose my temper? Or that I might decide someone as clever as you is too dangerous to leave alive?”

There was no disguising the threat this time.

Still, Iris only lowered her posture further.

“My life was never mine to begin with. Whether I live or die rests entirely in Your Highness’s hands. But I truly am nothing more than a lowly servant, hardly worth so much attention.”

That answer actually made Caelan laugh.

Is the Duchess of Duskmoor really that remarkable?

Even the old legends only spoke of noble lords making three visits to recruit the advisors they admired.

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Chapter 655 ★ Third Invitation

Was he seriously expected to keep pursuing Iris the same way?

At this point, he could hardly tell whether he was trying to gain a strategist or court a woman.

A faint scoff escaped him.

+ Paars

“Honestly, I may not even need to waste Noe effort myself. Lady Delphine’s influence may be collapsing, but she’s not finished yet. If she decides to come after you, you’re in for a miserable time.”

“Caelan!”

At that exact moment, a bright young voice drifted across the garden paths.

Iris lifted her eyes slightly and saw Lyra peeking out from behind a cluster of flowering shrubs. The young princess wore a pale golden gown trimmed in cream-colored embroidery, and the faint flush lingering on

her cheeks made it obvious she had only recently woken from sleep.

Caclan turned immediately, and the calculating coldness in his expression vanished so naturally that it was almost startling.

“Lyra?” he said with an

Standing nearby, Ire

The warm and manipulative

She found

Lyra hur

“I just

ar

1. e. “Were you looking for me?”

help feeling surprised.

other speaking now seemed entirely different from the composed and

st threatened her moments earlier.

g which version was truly him.

quick light steps before catching hold of his arm.

omplained softly. “Mother said you’d come by earlier, but when I couldn’t find you ome looking myself.”

owed politely.

our Highness.”

er a cheerful smile before turning back toward Caelan with open

excitement.

ed you’d play beetle matches with me this time. Don’t tell me you forgot.”

wered her with endless patience.

ould I forget something I promised a princess? Everything’s already prepared.”

answer instantly delighted Lyra.

remained beside the warming brazier while watching the siblings disappear together through the garden walkway.

Only after they were fully out of sight did she finally withdraw her gaze and look once more toward the pale steam rising slowly into the air.

Chapter 655 A Third Invitation

Truthfully, Caelan's threats barely counted as threats anymore.

Alaric was dead, and among everyone tied to the Crown Prince's Wing Iris alone had emerged safely

untouched.

At this point, it was painfully obvious that she had some connection either to the Duchess of Duskmoor or to Elira. Isla was far too perceptive not to notice that herself.

And based on Iris's understanding of Isla, there was no chance she would simply let the matter go.

Hurting Iris would also be a way of striking back at Elowen and Elira.

That was precisely why Iris had tolerated Tamsin's constant hostility all this time.

Elira's presence there.

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guarded too tightly, secure enough to keep out nearly anyone who did not belong

evening, she would need someone inside willing to cooperate with her.

that opening.

pushed Iris into real danger, whether through punishment or something close to so she finally have a reason to leave the palace naturally and enter the Duchess of use hold without suspicion.

at back down.

e's suffering ahead. But after all these

hile, after finishing her inspection and seen.

the property was even better than

The grounds were spacious, the frames inside were somewhat the estate had been preserved

What pleased her most

The ground the

Several additional editions, from

le more hardship?

she found herself thoroughly pleased with what

the halls neatly arranged, and although the weaving

looms remained sturdy enough to repair and reuse. Overall,

the open land stretching along the western side.

was ideally suited for relocating the bookshop operation.

It could be constructed there for copying manuscripts and printing and hold carved printing blocks and parchment stock safely away

she could hire additional craftsmen and produce far greater numbers of day.

She went back toward the front

entrance, Elowen finally noticed the growing smile and turned toward Mira and Scarlet.

Why not? I think I'm officially past the point of pretending I can wait any longer. Why not Vestmarket for breakfast? I used to eat there all the time, and the food's

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genuinely worth the trip

Mira immediately brightened

“Yes Absolutely! I haven’t been to Westmarket in forever.

Scarlet initially wanted to object Given Nowen’s position as the Duchess of Duskmoor, eating openly in a crowded market district was hardly considered appropriate.

But the obvious excitement on Elowen’s face made the protest die before it reached her lips.

In the end, she simply nodded gently.

Elowen then turned toward Leander and asked politely, “Leander, would you care to join us?”

Truthfully, she only asked out of courtesy, the same kind of casual invitation noble acquaintances exchanged without expecting anyone to accept.

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Chapter 656 Breakfast in Westmarket

Elowen had assumed Leandry would politely decline

After **all**, he was the Deputy Minister of Rites, and someone of his rank hardly seemed likely to follow them into Westmarket for breakfast

What she did not know was that while Leander had always possessed a serious weakness for good food, today his reasons had very little to do with hunger.

Leander was the sort of man who kept little pastries or candied nuts tucked into his coat pockets at all times. Most officials waited until court ended before eating properly, but *he* personally needed something in his stomach early every morning or risked becoming faint halfway through royal proceedings.

In fact, he had already eaten breakfast before arriving today, which meant there was no practical reason at all for him to agree.

And yet, no matter how composed he tried to appear, the edge of his attention kept drifting toward Scarlet

So before he could stop himself, the answer was already leaving his mouth.

“If Your Grace is inviting me personally, I’d be honored to come along”

Elowen blinked at him in visible surprise.

Leander suddenly felt oddly self-conscious beneath her stare and hurried to explain himself.

“It also gives us time to continue discussing the Royal Weaving Bureau and Silverloom Exchange. Earlier at the estate, there were still several details we

didn’t fully

cover.”

At that, Elowen smiled warmly.

“That was exactly what I had in mind.”

And so the group headed together toward Westmarket.

Westmarket was one of the busiest districts in all of Vanelle.

(‘

The broad stone streets were lined tightly with shops selling everything imaginable, from roasted meats and fresh bread to bolts of fabric and imported wares, while painted wooden signs creaked gently overhead in the wind.

Although the morning rush had already begun thinning by the time they arrived, the air still carried the rich scent of broth, baked pastries, and sizzling butter.

Flowen had traveled lightly today, and even her carriage appeared ordinary enough that no one would immediately recognize her as the Duchess of Duskmoor.

Because of that, there was no need to clear the streets or draw attention. To every one around them, they looked no different from another noble household stopping for breakfast.

10:00 am P p pp

Chapter 656 Breakfast in Westmarket

With easy familiarity, Elowen directed the coachman into an older side street tucked deeper within the district.

The little shop itself looked worn with age, its wooden sign faded from years of weather, while outside the entrance an enormous iron pot simmered steadily above the fire. Rich stew rolled and bubbled endlessly beneath drifting clouds of steam.

Once the carriage stopped, Elowen pushed open the carriage door and leaned out with a smile.

“This place has been here for more than a decade,” she told Scarlet. “Their stews are incredible. I used to come here every few days.”

Beside her, Mira nodded enthusiastically, eyes shining.

“She’s absolutely right.”

Scarlet smiled faintly and turned toward the shop.

Then her expression stalled.

At one of the outdoor tables near the entrance sat a familiar figure.

The man wore a slate-blue riding coat fitted neatly at the waist, and even seated, his broad shoulders and powerful frame stood out immediately. A steaming bowl rested in front of him, though he seemed distracted, holding the spoon loosely without actually eating.

The moment Scarlet recognized him, the smile on her face faltered slightly.

It was Draven.

Elowen recognized him a heartbeat later as well. Her own smile faded, and she quietly leaned toward Scarlet.

“It’s all right,” she murmured softly. “We can always eat somewhere else. Westmarket has plenty of good breakfast spots.”

Scarlet felt unexpectedly touched by the consideration and gave a small nod.

But at that exact moment, Draven suddenly turned around.

The instant he caught sight of Scarlet's profile, he froze before surging to his feet so abruptly that the chair behind him tipped sideways with a sharp scrape. Even the bowl on the table rocked violently enough to spill stew across the wood.

After steadying himself, he bowed respectfully toward Elowen, though wisely avoiding directly addressing her as the Duchess of Duskmoor in the middle of a crowded street.

He was not foolish enough to cause that kind of scene.

Since pretending not to notice him was no longer possible, Elowen simply smiled politely.

"So the Commander enjoys this place too?"

10:00 am Pppp.

Chapter 656 Breakfast in Westmarket

Draven nodded at once.

"Yes. The food here's excellent,"

Scarlet remained beside Mira with lowered eyes and an unreadable expression.

Meanwhile, Elowen found the entire situation painfully awkward.

Draven glanced discreetly toward Scarlet before speaking again, though his question remained directed toward Elowen.

"What brings Your Grace to Westmarket this morning?"

"I had business nearby," Elowen answered naturally. "And it's been a long time since I last came here."

Draven's gaze flicked toward Scarlet once more.

"Do Mira and Scarlet enjoy this place too?"

Elowen nodded casually. "I suppose you could say that."

Standing nearby, Leander quietly took in the entire exchange.

And the more he noticed Draven repeatedly sneaking glances toward Scarlet, the more inexplicably irritated he became.

Without drawing obvious attention to it, he shifted half a step forward until he stood neatly between Draven and Scarlet before speaking aloud in an easy tone.

“Since we’re already here, why don’t we sit down longer, there may not be any seats left.”

first? This place is popular enough that if we wait much

Only then did Draven finally focus properly on him.

As fellow officials serving in court, Draven naturally recognized the newly appointed Deputy Minister of Rites. He also knew perfectly well that the man was still unmarried.

Wasn’t he supposed to be the sort who ate before court every morning? Then why was he suddenly following them around Westmarket?

And why had he just happened to place himself directly between Scarlet and everyone else?

Draven studied him carefully, his eyes narrowing almost imperceptibly.

The look carried unmistakable scrutiny and the faint edge of hostility.

At that moment, the shop attendant finally hurried out after finishing his work inside.

“Welcome,” he called brightly. “Are you here for breakfast?”

Elowen smiled politely.

“We are. Is there still room inside?”

10:00 am Ppppp.

Chapter 656 Breakfast in Westmarket

The attendant immediately looked apologetic.

5 Pearls

“You’ve arrived right at the busy hour, unfortunately. Every table indoors is full already. The only seats left are these two tables outside. If you don’t mind sitting a little close together, you’re welcome to them.”

As he spoke, he gestured toward the two wooden tables positioned outside the shop entrance.

12.4K

4

10:00 am PPPP.

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Chapter 657 Rivals at Westmarket

45 Pearls

Draven had already claimed one of them before the others arrived, leaving the second table empty.

Elowen clearly did not think much of it. She simply led Mira and Scarlet over to the remaining seats and settled down naturally.

Leander started forward as well, only for Draven to shift half a step at exactly the right moment and quietly block his path.

Draven inclined his head politely, though there was not much warmth behind it. “Leander.”

Leander returned the courtesy just as calmly. “Commander Hall.”

The two men exchanged a brief look before each withdrew first, neither willing to appear overly confrontational in front of Elowen.

Draven spoke first anyway.

“I was under the impression Leander never attends morning court without breakfast beforehand,” he said evenly. “Court ended less than an hour ago, so I’m curious how you managed to become hungry again **so** quickly.”

Leander showed no sign of annoyance. If anything, his smile became more relaxed.

“Commander Hall misunderstands,” he replied pleasantly. “Today I accompanied Her Grace and Scarlet on important business. After discussing matters for most of the day, it’s only natural I’d need another meal.”

He emphasized Scarlet’s name very deliberately.

Draven’s brows tightened slightly.

“Scarlet has an extraordinary memory,” he said coolly. “Far better than most people. Her Grace trusts her deeply and often brings her along for important matters. She previously entered the palace on Her Grace’s behalf as well, so Scarlet and I have interacted quite a few times.”

Strictly speaking, they had only crossed paths once inside the palace itself.

But afterward he had gone to Duskmoor Manor and seen her there again.

That still counted.

At the very least, certainly more often than Leander had.

Leander let out a soft laugh.

“That makes perfect sense,” he said. “Someone as capable as Scarlet naturally earns Her Grace’s trust. As *for* me, my memory has never been particularly reliable, so if future assignments happen to place Scarlet and me together more often, perhaps I’ll improve through proximity.

Draven immediately found himself choked silent

10:00 am Pppp

Chapter 657 Rivels at Westmarket

These scholars truly fought differently from soldiers.

Every sentence sounded polite while hiding a knife inside it.

+5 means

Leander, clearly satisfied with his victory, smiled openly before offering another courteous nod and calmly sitting himself down at Draven's table as though he belonged there.

He even added warmly, "Commander Hall, you should eat before the stew gets cold."

The remark sounded harmless on the surface, but the look in Leander's eyes made the meaning underneath perfectly clear.

Enjoy it while you still can.

Draven sat there for a moment without managing to think of a proper reply.

For the first time in years, he genuinely regretted spending all his youth training with swords, horses, and military drills instead of reading more books.

If he had studied harder back then, he absolutely could have argued with Leander for several more rounds.

Unfortunately, regret was useless now.

Draven lowered his gaze expressionlessly and continued eating his stew.

Normally, this was his favorite tavern in all of Westmarket, but today the rich stew tasted dull and lifeless in his mouth.

Meanwhile, Leander looked thoroughly delighted.

He had already eaten at home before coming out, but once the tavern servant delivered another bowl of steaming beef stew alongside fresh rye bread, he somehow found his appetite returning immediately.

At the neighboring table, Elowen rested her cheek lightly against one hand while quietly observing the entire exchange from beginning to end.

Naturally, she could tell both Draven and Leander had feelings for Scarlet.

Oddly enough, though, her excitement had nothing to do with trying to decide which man suited Scarlet

better.

Instead, a completely different thought had begun taking shape in her mind.

This is gonna make one hell of a story.

She had written Tomances before.

She had written mutual devotion, gradual affection, careful political maneuvering, and characters clawing their way upward step by step.

But she had never once written a story where several men competed openly for the heroine's attention

10:00 **am** Pppp.

Chapter 657 Rivals at Westmarket

Two men fighting over one woman would already be fascinating enough.

Then again...

Three men might be even more entertaining.

Or four.

The more Elowen thought about it, the brighter her eyes became.

Perfect

oing in the next novel.

+5 Pears

ne finished thinking through possible scenes, she had unknowingly finished an entire bowl of en wiped up the last of the ste

because she was in such a goo

mmediately decided to bring

e tavern only had one serving rrying wooden trays loaded

After dabbing the corner of finished eating herself and

Scarlet, meanwhile, wa

The moment she

She had only

“Well now,

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Her

read until nothing remained.

day’s meal somehow tasted even better than usual.

Cassian to try as well.

he room, and he was currently hurrying between tables

a cloth napkin, Elowen rose to go find him. Mira had only just d behind.

table.

ht sight of Elowen and Mira walking toward the counter.

hen a teasing male voice suddenly sounded nearby.

oice, her entire body went cold

n remarkably sharp, something Elowen often praised as one of her greatest

Velvet Lantern at such a young age meant she remembered every man she had ever
rtain.

nything else, she remembered exactly how she had smiled and flattered them to survive.

aged to Corbin Crowe, son of B

far too small for her to

commander of the city watch.

10:00 **am** P PPP.

Chapter 657 Rivals at Westmarket

+5 Pearls

Corbin staggered forward reeking of wine, his eyes cloudy with drunkenness as he slowly looked Scarlet up and down from head to toe.

Then he grinned broadly

“So it really is you.” His smile widened further “God, I’ve missed you, Scarlet.”

His flushed face carried the sour heaviness of someone who had clearly spent the entire night drinking inside one pleasure hall or another, while the overpowering blend of perfume and alcohol clinging to him made Scarlet instantly nauseous.

Two young noblemen followed behind him moments later.

One tilted his head while staring openly at Scarlet before giving an amused laugh.

“That’s definitely her,” he said. “A few years ago Corbin treated us at Stargazer Pavilion, and she performed there that night. I still remember that song she sang.”

12.4K

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Chapter 658 The Wrong Man to Threaten

The second man rubbed at his eyes before laughing too.

“You’re right. I was there as well. Corbin practically tried to buy her freedom on the spot afterward.”

All three men burst into laughter together.

Scarlet’s face turned pale immediately.

+ Pearls

From the corner of her eye, she could already tell the noise had drawn attention from both Draven and Leander.

Her hands felt ice cold.

Still, she forced herself to remain composed. “You must have mistaken me for someone else,” she said softly.

“Mistaken you?”

Corbin immediately burst out laughing.

“A woman as unforgettable as you?” His drunken grin widened shamelessly. “Even if they burned you *to* ashes, I’d still recognize you. What’s wrong? You’ve climbed into higher circles now, so suddenly you don’t acknowledge old acquaintances any more?”

His gaze dragged greedily across Scarlet’s face.

“But I remember you very clearly.” His voice turned lower and more suggestive. “How about another drink together? Come back to my estate with me tonight.

Scarlet instinctively stepped backward.

Corbin mistook her reaction for flirtation and laughed even harder.

“Well, look at that. A few months apart and now you’re acting shy?” He smirked openly. “Still, I’ve always liked that timid little expression of yours. Drives a man crazy.”

As he spoke, he reached toward her.

But before his hand could touch Scarlet, another hand clamped around his wrist with crushing force.

The grip was so strong Corbin cried out instantly, sobering halfway on the spot.

He jerked his head upward and found himself staring directly into Draven’s cold expression.

Corbin did not recognize him.

“Who the hell are you?” he snapped while wincing in pain. “Let go of me right now. Do you even know who my father is?”

Draven let out a short cold laugh.

Chapter 658 The Wrong Man to Threaten

“I don’t particularly care who your father is.” His voice remained flat.

Then he yanked Corbin backward hard enough to force distance between him and Scarlet.

Corbin’s wrist hurt badly enough that his face twisted, but with his companions standing nearby, pride kept him from backing down.

“What exactly did I do?” he demanded loudly. “I was greeting an old friend. Who do you think you are?” He

tried unsuccessfully to pull his wrist free. “You’d better let go while you still can. My father is Barrett Rowe, commander of the city watch. If you offend me, you won’t survive another week in Vanelle.”

Raven looked completely unmoved.

“Sounds insignificant,”

Corbin nearly choked

Insignificant?

1. “Never heard of him.”

His father held

authority and commanded armed men throughout the city.

How was the

Corbin snapped. “Of course someone like

you

wouldn’t know my father’s

“You **ign**

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n smugly.

1. ch. My father happens to be sworn brothers with Commander Hall of the King's Guard session grew increasingly arrogant. "Maybe you haven't heard of my father, but surely Commander Hall. And if you offend me, then you're offending him too. You won't be able to help afterward."

even actually paused.

✓ could not remember ever gaining a sworn brother named Barrett Crowe.

tely, Corbin completely misunderstood the reaction and immediately became even more with himself.

young noblemen behind him eagerly joined in.

s right," one of them chimed in. "Commander Hall served under the Duke of Duskmoor personally.

if you're ignorant enough not to know Commander Hall, surely you know His Grace.

he second man laughed.

And if somehow you don't know the Duke of Duskmoor either, then you definitely know the Duchess. *Her Grace* is famous throughout Vanell

The first immediately com

too. Haven't you heard

means offending the Duchess of Duskmoor crossed *Her Grace*? First he was thrown into

10:00 am P p p p

Chapter 658 The Wrong Man to Threaten

a pigsty, then his father and brothers lost their positions, and now they're waiting for execution."

The more Corbin listened, the smugger he became.

He tilted his head arrogantly toward Draven.

+5 Pearls

“If you’ve got any sense at all, you’ll think carefully about whether someone like me is beyond your reach.” He tugged uselessly at his trapped wrist again. “Let go of me, bow properly, and apologize. If I’m in a generous mood, maybe I won’t pursue the matter further.”

Despite all his effort, however, Draven’s grip did not loosen in the slightest.

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as with just one song and a smile...”

enly struck him across the face.

ying the full force of years spent training in military camps.

from the blow.

blood appeared at the corner of his mouth, and bright sparks exploded

10:00 am P p p p

659

Chapter 659 A Very Bad Mistake

+5 Pearls

The two young noblemen standing behind Corbin were already frightened out of their minds. They pointed shakily at Draven while stumbling over their words, their voices nearly cracking from panic.

“Y–you actually hit him?! Have you completely lost your mind?!”

“You’ve really done it now. You’re making enemies you can’t afford to make!”

Draven let out a short, humorless laugh before folding his arms across his chest.

“My name is Draven,” he said coolly, his voice carrying the kind of calm that only made him seem more dangerous. “And other than His Majesty and the Duke of Duskmoor, there really isn’t anyone in this kingdom I’m afraid of.”

The two men froze instantly.

For a moment, neither of them seemed capable of processing what they had just heard.

Draven?

Commander Hall from the King’s Guard?

The Draven everyone in Vanelle knows about?

Draven did not bother sparing them another glance. Instead, he turned back toward Corbin, and the more he looked at the man, the more irritated he became.

Scarlet had already been avoiding him lately, which had been frustrating enough on its own. Today had finally given him a chance to see her properly, only for some idiot outsider to appear out of nowhere and start hovering around her.

And to make matters worse, this outsider would apparently continue working alongside Scarlet in *the* future, seeing her every day.

Draven was furious about it.

What made him even angrier was the fact that he had actually lost the argument.

F

The frustration burning in his chest had nowhere to go, and unfortunately for Corbin, he had chosen exactly the wrong moment to provoke him.

Without warning, Draven swung his hand again and slapped Corbin across the opposite side of his face.

This blow landed even harder than the first.

Corbin staggered violently to the side as blood dripped from the corner of his mouth.

Draven stared down at him coldly.

“Tell me something,” he said. “Exactly when did I become sworn brothers with your father?”

Chapter 659 Very Bad Mistake

Corbin’s ears were still ringing too badly to think straight. Half his face had swollen noticeably, and all he managed to produce was a miserable, incoherent noise.

Nearby, Leander calmly picked up the bowl of stew left sitting on the table.

The stew had long since gone cold, and a thin layer of grease floated across the surface.

Without saying a word, he walked over and poured the entire bowl directly over Corbin’s head.

The icy liquid soaked through Corbin’s hair and clothes immediately, making him jolt violently from the cold.

At last, his muddled thoughts cleared.

Corbin looked

“You...”

Drave

then slowly turned toward Draven again, his voice trembling now.

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dn't recognize you," he stammered miserably, his voice already starting to shake a
nd stupid. Please don't take

10:00 am P p p p

Chapter 659 A Very **Bad** Mistake

+5 Hearts

Draven ignored the apology entirely.

Instead, his gaze lowered slowly toward Corbin's right hand.

"Was it this hand," he asked lightly, "that touched Scarlet?"

Corbin's entire body trembled.

"Commander..." he whispered weakly. "What exactly are you planning to do?"

One corner of Draven's mouth lifted faintly.

"Nothing serious."

Corbin had only just begun relaxing when Draven continued calmly, "I'm just going to break it."

Corbin nearly collapsed where he stood.

Tears and snot burst out together as he started begging desperately.

"Commander Hall, please! Please, I know I was wrong! I swear I'll never do it again! You're a generous man, please show mercy just this once! Please don't break my hand!"

By now his legs had gone completely weak. If Draven were not still gripping his wrist, he likely would have crumpled directly onto the street.

Draven remained utterly unmoved and was just about to act when a woman's voice suddenly interrupted from behind them.

"What's going on here?"

Draven's hand stopped immediately.

Elowen had just settled the bill inside the shop and stepped outside carrying a woven hamper filled with the stew she intended to bring back for Cassian.

She had already heard shouting while still indoors, and now that she had approached the crowd, the first thing she did was glance toward Scarlet.

Seeing that Scarlet appeared unharmed, though standing there quietly with her head lowered, Elowen frowned faintly before shifting her gaze toward Draven.

Draven lowered his head respectfully at once.

"Your Grace."

Elowen gave a quiet hum of acknowledgment before looking toward Corbin's swollen and filthy face. Judging from the scene in front of her, she could already guess

most of what had happened, but she still asked calmly, “Would someone care to explain what happened here?”

The two young noblemen behind Corbin finally seemed to recover enough courage to speak again.

10:00 am P P P P

Chapter 659 A Very Bad Mistake

+5 Pearls

“Corbin, don’t worry!” one of them blurted out hurriedly. “Everyone in Vanelle knows the Duchess of Duskmoor is fair and compassionate!”

The other immediately jumped in after him.

“Exactly! Once Her Grace hears how Commander Hall abused his authority to bully someone, she’ll absolutely stand up for you. Just tell her the truth. Her Grace will give you justice.”

Corbin’s eyes spun quickly.

Then, forgetting all dignity, he stumbled desperately toward Elowen as though she were his last hope.

Unfortunately, Draven still had hold of his wrist, preventing him from getting far, so Corbin could only lean awkwardly forward shouting at the top of his lungs, “Yo ur Grace, save me! Please save me!”

10:01 am P ppp.

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

660

Chapter 660 Justice

+5 Pearls

Draven loosened his grip slightly before shoving Corbin backward with visible disgust.

Corbin staggered several steps and nearly crashed onto the street before finally managing to steady himself. The moment he regained his footing, he hurried closer toward Elowen, though he still did not dare approach too near with Draven standing there.

Elowen looked at him calmly.

“Go ahead,” she said evenly. “Tell me what happened.”

To Corbin, those words sounded like pure salvation.

He immediately wiped the stew and blood from his face before launching into a dramatic complaint.

“Your Grace, I’ve truly been wronged!” he cried miserably. “I was only passing by this street and happened to see an old acquaintance, so naturally I walked over to greet her and exchange a few words. Then out of nowhere, Commander Hall attacked me without even bothering to ask what happened first!”

He pointed toward Draven while exaggerating every ounce of misery on his bruised face.

“Look at me! My face is swollen, my ears are still ringing, and my head hasn’t stopped pounding since he hit me. Your Grace, you have to stand up for me!”

As he spoke, he deliberately tilted his injured face toward Elowen, clearly hoping that his sight alone would win her sympathy.

Elowen did glance at it.

And she did frown slightly.

Seeing that reaction, Corbin immediately became even more energized.

“I may still be studying for the examinations and not yet hold an official title,” he continued tearfully, “but my father serves the crown honorably alongside Commander Hall. How could he possibly treat me this way? I’m nothing more than a scholar with no ability to defend myself. I still don’t even know what offense I committed that deserved such brutality!”

Now that he had started complaining, he clearly intended to commit fully to the performance.

“And him too!” Corbin suddenly pointed toward Leander. “That lord dumped an entire bowl of stew over my head for absolutely no reason! We don’t even know each other! I’ve never offended him in my life, so why humiliate me like this?”

Leander merely glanced at him meaningfully from where he stood nearby.

Corbin ignored the look completely and continued his theatrical misery.

“Commander Hall served under the Duke of Duskmoor for years and now commands enormous authority in the capital. Someone like me could never afford to offend him. But I’m still someone’s son too. Why should I be beaten like this for absolutely no reason? Your Grace has always been known for fairness and

10:01 am P p pp

Chapter 668 Justice

kindness. Please, I beg you, give me justice!”

The other two men immediately rushed to support him.

“That’s right, Your Grace! Corbin only walked over to greet someone he knew, and now look what happened to him!”

+5 Pears

“Commander Hall thinks he can attack people in broad daylight just because he commands the King’s Guard. Is there no law left in Vanelle anymore?”

Elowen listened patiently until everyone finished speaking.

Then she nodded lightly.

“A scholar being beaten without reason certainly would be unfair.

Draven frowned instantly.

4

“Your Grace,” he said at once, “this bastard is twisting the entire story around!”

As he spoke, he shot Leander a sharp look that very clearly meant, Are you seriously planning to stand there in silence?

Leander, however, merely stood there with his head slightly lowered, the faintest trace of amusement lingering at the corners of his mouth.

Draven's irritation deepened immediately.

Meanwhile, Corbin lifted his chin defiantly.

"How am I twisting anything?" he argued loudly. "Commander Hall says that very easily for someone standing there perfectly unharmed while I'm the one covered in injuries!"

"You little..."

Draven's temper nearly snapped again.

The glare he shot toward Corbin looked violent enough to bury him underground on the spot.

Corbin instantly felt a chill run down his spine and instinctively backed away several steps.

Before things could escalate again, Elowen spoke calmly.

"That's enough."

Draven immediately swallowed the rest of his anger despite how furious he still looked.

Corbin, however, felt triumphant.

With Elowen stepping in to stop Draven, his confidence returned almost immediately, and he even dared lift his chin smugly toward Draven in open provocation.

Draven's eyes darkened dangerously.

2/3

10:01 am PPPP

Chapter 668 Justice

+5 Fears

Corbin let out a quiet snort before arrogantly looking away.

So the Duchess of Duskmook really believes *me*.

Women really *are* easy to fool with a few carefully chosen words.

Elowen finally spoke again. "What's your name?"

Corbin brightened instantly. *Now she's asking about my background too?* She really is planning to back me.

"My surname is Crowe," he answered quickly. "Corbin Crowe. My family lives on Willow Lane in Eastmarket. My father is Barrett Crowe, Commander of the Left Cavalry Division."

Elowen smiled faintly and nodded.

"Corbin Crowe. Son of Commander Barrett Crowe."

Corbin's mood improved immediately.

Suddenly, the beating no longer seemed entirely pointless. If the Duchess of Duskmoor remembered his name after today, perhaps this incident might even help him build connections with Duskmoor Manor later on.

Then Elowen looked toward the other two young men standing behind him.

"And the two of you?"

Corbin instantly felt annoyed.

He was the one who got beaten. Why were these idiots benefiting from it too?

The other two men, however, looked delighted by the attention and hurried to answer first.

"My name is Leighton!"

"And I'm Maddox! My father serves in the Imperial Secretariat!"

r

Elowen nodded once after each introduction. "Good. I'll remember all three of you."
"

Although Corbin still felt slightly dissatisfied, he quickly reassured himself.

After all, those two had not been beaten. Surely Elowen only asked out of courtesy.

Thinking of that, Corbin's anticipation returned immediately.

12.4K