

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

We Had Something Real But Didn't Handle It Right

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Chapter 671 The Question He Finally Asked

Scarlet had never allowed herself to cry in front of other people.

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She understood far too well that tears were useless things. And yet now, she suddenly could not stop.

It felt as though something sealed shut inside her chest for years had finally split open without warning. and all the hurt she had spent so long burying came rushing out at once.

The moment Draven saw tears falling down her face, he panicked completely.

Instinctively, he reached toward her as though he meant to wipe them away, but halfway there he abruptly froze after noticing the blood smeared across his hands. Afraid of staining her skin, he immediately drew back again instead, standing there awkwardly with broad shoulder tense and helpless.

“I know I shouldn’t’ve acted without asking first,” he said hurriedly, his voice low and rough with nerves.. “Scarlet, if you didn’t like this, then I swear I won’t do anything like it again.”

Mira had been standing nearby watching the entire exchange with increasing disbelief, and at last she could not hold back anymore.

“Commander Hall,” she interrupted with a sigh, “Scarlet isn’t upset with you. She’s crying because you moved her.”

Draven stared blankly for a second.

Scarlet's cheeks instantly flushed red, and she turned her face aside while tears still clung to her lashes. The faint color warming the tips of her ears was impossible to miss.

And finally, at long last, Draven understood.

His heartbeat slammed hard against his ribs.

For one dizzying instant his mind emptied completely, and everything else around him disappeared. The assassins, the blood on his clothes, the pain from his injuries, none of it seemed to matter anymore.

All he could see was Scarlet.

He gathered his courage and stepped closer, his voice tightening despite himself.

"Scarlet... a little while ago, I went home to talk with my parents." He swallowed hard before forcing the rest out. "I told them I want to marry you."

Scarlet looked up at him in stunned disbelief.

"Marry me?" she asked softly. "But... aren't you afraid people will laugh at you? What about the men serving beside you? What if they talk behind your back?"

To her complete surprise, Draven only looked confused.

"Why would they?" he asked honestly. "You're beautiful, you're strong, and you're smarter than most

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Chapter 62 The Question He Finally Acker

people I know. If anything, they'll probably envy me

Scarlet froze.

She had imagined countless answers before this moment.

Maybe he would say he did not care about other people's opinions.

Maybe he would promise to protect her.

But never, not once, had she imagined he would answer so naturally, as though the idea of anyone looking down on her was completely ridiculous.

“You really are...” Her voice trembled again before catching entirely. “Such an idiot.”

She had pushed him away so many times already, yet somehow he still came back. Still carrying that same unbearably sincere heart toward her without hesitation. From farther down the street came the hurried sound of approaching boots.

The city guard had finally arrived.

For some reason, the interruption made Draven suddenly anxious, as though he might lose this chance forever if he let the moment slip away now. Before he could second-guess himself, he finally blurted out the question that had clearly been trapped inside him for days.

“Then... would you marry me?”

Scarlet quickly wiped at her face with the edge of her cloak.

“Even if I said yes,” she answered gently, “that still wouldn’t be enough.”

Her voice remained soft, but the seriousness in her expression made it clear she meant every word.

“You still need your parents’ blessing first. They raised you, cared for you, and sacrificed for you your entire life. That couldn’t have been easy. If marrying me only leaves them heartbroken, then how could I possibly feel at peace with it?”

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Draven immediately thought of his parents’ reaction, and his expression darkened with worry.

“Well... that’s the problem.”

The truth was, his parents did not like Scarlet at all.

The day Draven first mentioned wanting to marry someone, both of them had been thrilled and immediately demanded to know who she was.

Being completely incapable of lying, Draven told them honestly that Scarlet now served beside the Lady of Grace and Virtue at Duskmoor Manor, and that years ago

she had performed music and dance at Stargazer Pavilion. He had also added, with complete sincerity, that she was beautiful, clever, and kinder than anyone realized.

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The moment those words left his mouth, his parents' expressions changed completely.

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His father had exploded #fury, accusing him of disgracing the family, while his mother cried that he had lost all sense of shame. By the end of the argument. Draven had been beaten so badly he could barely stand upright afterward.

Ever since then, he had privately believed convincing his parents would be nearly impossible.

But Scarlet only smiled softly.

"It's all right," she told him. "We'll try together. I'll do my best to make them like me."

Inside Isla's residence, the atmosphere was so cold and tense that even the servants lingering near the walls barely dared breathe.

Caclan stood in the center of the chamber beneath the glow of iron lanterns fixed along the stone walls, his posture straight and still while his gaze remained fixed on Isla.

Ordinarily, warmth and easy composure lingered naturally in his expression.

Tonight there was none.

"Where is Iris?" he asked flatly.

Isla reclined comfortably against the back of her chair with a silver cup resting in her hands, slowly stirring the heated spiced wine inside before lifting it lazily to her lips.

“That’s an interesting question,” she replied without even bothering to look up at him. “Who exactly is Iris? There are dozens of attendants serving here. Am I expected to remember every single one of them?”

A faint crease appeared between Caelan’s brows.

“My Lady,” he said evenly, “there’s no reason to pretend otherwise.”

Isla remained entirely calm.

“I already told you. There’s nobody here by that name.” Only then did she finally lift her eyes toward him with faint mockery curling at the edges of her mouth. “What? You don’t believe me?” [

Caelan said nothing.

He only continued looking at her in silence.

Isla slowly set down her cup, looking almost amused now.

“Although...” she said thoughtfully, “now that I think about it, the name does sound familiar. Wasn’t she one of the attendants serving in the Crown Prince’s Wing? Daphne’s maid, if I remember correctly. Since Alaric’s already been stripped of his title and imprisoned, shouldn’t everyone connected to the Crown Prince’s Wing already be under investigation?”

Caelan’s expression darkened slightly, but instead of answering, he turned toward the chamber doors.

“Bring her in.”

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The heavy doors opened immediately.

Two guards escorted a trembling young woman inside, practically dragging her forward before forcing her

down onto the stone floor.

Dust clung to her skirts, and tear tracks streaked across her face while her entire body shook uncontrollably.

It was Tamsin.

Isla's gaze settled on her at once, though her expression did not visibly change.

Tamsin stayed bowed low against the floor, too frightened to even raise her head properly.

"I-I'm Tamsin," she stammered weakly. "Greetings, My Lady... greetings, Your Highness..."

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Chapter 672 Everything Finally Exposed

Caelan looked down at Tamsin from where he stood, his voice turning

colder with every

“Tamsin, tell them exactly what you did today, and don’t leave out a single detail. If you lie about anything you already know what’ll happen.”

Tamsin immediately began shaking even harder

Her lips trembled as though she wanted to speak, yet fear still held the words inside her throat

“Speak,” Caclan snapped sharply.

The sudden force in his voice shattered the last of her composure

Tears burst from her eyes as she collapsed fully against the floor, sobbing, so hard she could barely force the words out properly.

“It was... it was Hilda from Lady Delphine’s household,” she cried. “She came looking for me and said Her Lady needed someone dependable for an important task inside the residence. I... I never liked Iris in the first place, so I brought her there myself. I swear I didn’t know what Lady Delphine intended to do with her. I was only following orders...”

For the first time since Caelan arrived, Isla’s expression finally changed.

She straightened slowly in her chair, her cold gaze sweeping over Tamsin like a blade, though she still said nothing.

Caelan asked flatly, “What did Lady Delphine want with Iris?”

Tamsin cried so hard her breathing kept catching between words.

“I don’t know... Hilda only said there was important work inside the residence. She never told me what it actually was. I really don’t know...”

Caelan slowly turned his gaze back toward Isla.

Her response was nothing more than a sharp, mocking laugh.

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“You’re a prince of Avenlor,” she said coldly. “And yet here you are storming into my residence over a palace attendant. Don’t you think that’s pathetic?”

Caelan's jaw tightened visibly.

Isla watched his reaction carefully, and then suddenly something almost amused flickered across her face

The corners of her mouth lifted slowly.

"More importantly, Caelan..." she said deliberately, "does your mother know you've fallen in love with a servant girl?"

Caelan froze,

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Chapter 672 Everything Finally Exposed

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His pupils contracted sharply, and the answer escaped him before he could stop it.

"Iris isn't lowborn."

The moment the words left his mouth, a woman's voice rang clearly from outside the chamber doors.

"That's right. Iris has never been beneath anyone."

Isla's mocking smile vanished instantly.

She looked toward the entrance in complete disbelief.

Elowen stepped calmly into the chamber.

Not a strand of hair was out of place. Her clothes were immaculate, and there was no trace whatsoever of the ambush that had nearly taken place earlier.

Isla's face slowly drained of color.

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"You..." she whispered. "How are you still alive?"

Elowen stopped a short distance away and looked at her calmly.

“That’s a strange question, My Lady. Of course I’m alive.” Her gaze sharpened slightly. “What? Were you hoping otherwise?”

Isla’s fingers tightened abruptly against the armrest.

She had sent every assassin under her command to intercept the carriage from Duskmoor Manor. Those killers were people she had spent years cultivating in secret, the result of nearly half a lifetime of planning.

So how was Elowen standing here completely unharmed?

Had they failed?

Elowen, meanwhile, knew absolutely nothing about the assassination attempt itself.

She simply walked to Caelan’s side, exchanged a brief glance with him, and gave a small nod before turning back toward Isla.

“My Lady,” she said evenly, “I didn’t come here to play games today. Please hand Iris over.”

Hatred immediately surged into Isla’s eyes.

“Hand her over?” she repeated slowly. “Elowen, you helped destroy my Alaric. You left him dead without even an intact body, and now you still dare come here demanding things from me?”

Elowen’s brows shifted faintly.

Isla’s eyes had already turned red with fury.

“You think I don’t know?” she hissed. “His head disappeared. Disappeared! That was your doing, wasn’t it?”

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You wanted him dead, and even after he died you still refused to let him rest whole. at you be so vicious?

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Mas Majesty already investigated Alaric's death thoroughly. Daphne killed him, and it had nothing to do me nad Of My Lady refuses to accept the official judgment, then perhaps you should take the matter to

Majesty instead of throwing accusations at me without proof.”

viet out a cold laugh.

on and Cassian bribed the King's Guard, bribed the matrons in the Secluded Wing, and even anipulated Daphne herself. You think I can't see what really happened? You and Cassiar are the ones no pushed her into killing my Alaric!”

voice grew sharper and sharper with every word.

Do many blows had fallen one after another these past few weeks, and by now she felt stretched so thin

suit seemed one more hardship might finally break her altogether.

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ing directly at Elowen now, she finally abandoned all restraint.

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you from the very beginning,” she spat bitterly. “The first time I saw you, I already couldn't stand . The only reason I ever tolerated your presence at all was because of your father.”

Ebreathing had become uneven with rage.

pent you your days climbing walls and running wild like some unruly child without a shred of dignity. yet you sou still clung to my Alaric constantly. Sneaking out into the streets alone wasn't enough for you. always dragged him along too. One time you nearly got him killed.” Her eyes burned viciously. “You hought saving him afterward meant he owed you something? That injury to your knee was exactly what you deserved. You should've died beneath those carriage wheels.”

The hatred in her voice grew uglier with every sentence.

Every time I looked at you smiling like some empty-headed fool, I wanted to tear your face apart. Alaric was destined to become Crown Prince and eventually rule this kingdom, while you were nothing but a hameless girl chasing after him

without knowing your place. And then His Majesty actually intended to arrange a marriage between the two of you...”

Her expression twisted with disgust. “A girl like you wasn’t worthy of even a single strand of his hair. Of course I interfered. Of course I warned him away from you. I wanted him to finally see what kind of woman you really were and stay as far from you as possible.”

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Chapter 678 Blood Before the Hall

Floweren stood motionless her expression so composed it bordered on indifference.

By now Isla had nearly exhausted herself from shouting. Her breathing had turned ragged, and every furious word seemed to scrape painfully from her throat.

You stole Alaric’s place as Crown Prince. You destroyed his reputation. You took his life. And now you won’t even leave him whole enough to rest in peace”

The memory of what she had seen inside the coffin struck her again with brutal force.

Her eyes had gone bloodshot from grief and rage, and just then, as her gaze swept wildly across the room, she noticed the dagger resting nearby.

Something changed in her expression instantly.

The despair twisting across her face sharpened into the reckless resolve of someone who no longer cared whether she survived the next moment or not.

Without warning, Isla snatched up the dagger and lunged toward Elowen.

Fortunately, Elowen reacted quickly.

The instant she caught the flash of steel, instinct took over. She stepped backward and twisted sharply aside just as the blade sliced through empty air where she had been standing only a heartbeat earlier.

The dagger barely grazed the sleeve of her gown.

But Isla had thrown herself forward with too much force to stop now. She stumbled several desperate steps ahead, completely off balance, and crashed toward the entrance doors.

At that exact moment, Theodric was striding toward the hall with a dark expression already clouding his face.

From where he stood, Isla came hurtling out through the doorway with her hair in disarray, eyes blazing wildly, and a dagger gleaming in her hand.

Theodric's face changed instantly.

"Your Majesty!"

Before anyone else could react, Cassian moved first.

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His figure crossed the distance in an instant as he stepped directly in front of Theodric and caught the blade with his bare hand.

"Cassian!"

Theodric's eyes widened in shock.

Looking down, he saw Cassian gripping the dagger tightly enough that the sharpened edge had sliced

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doplum his palm Host immediately spilled through his fingers and placere heavy onto the one floor beneath them pooling bogdancingly fast

Theodric's expression darkened with fury

The King's Guard rushed forward at once and forced Isla violently to the ground before pinning her arms behind her back

Theodric immediately turned toward Quin

"Go get the royal physicians Now!"

Quin bowed quickly and hurried off at once.

Meanwhile, Cassian finally loosened his grip enough to transfer the bloodied dagger into his left hand.

The wound across his right palm looked horrifyingly deep, flesh split open white blood continued streaming steadily down his wrist.

Theodric frowned so hard it nearly twisted his features,

“How did you cut yourself this badly?”

Cassian only smiled faintly, as though the injury hardly mattered at all.

“As long as Your Majesty is safe, it’s nothing serious. I’m not made of glass.”

Theodric’s chest tightened painfully at the answer.

What an incredible brother

I could search every kingdom in the world and never find another brother like Cassian.

Then Theodric turned slowly toward Isla, and whatever remaining warmth he once held for her disappeared entirely.

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“You attacked me and injured the Duke of Duskmoor in the process. Do you understand what you’ve done?”

His voice was cold enough to freeze the entire hall.

Isla struggled weakly against the guards restraining her, her face pale as candle wax.

“I wasn’t trying to harm Your Majesty,” she said hoarsely. “How could I possibly dare attack Your Majesty? D

would never...”

Cassian stood nearby with blood still dripping steadily from his hand while the dagger remained clasped. in his other palm.

“If My Lady wasn’t trying to attack His Majesty,” he asked evenly, “then what exactly were you planning to

do with this?”

Chapter 678 flood Before the Hall

Isla's eyes burned with hatred as she glared toward Flowen.

"I wanted to kill her. I wanted Elowen dead"

Theodric stared at her in disbelief.

"You tried to murder the Duchess of Duskmoor too? Have you lost your mind entirely?"

Isla suddenly jerked against the guards as though trying to stand, but they forced her back down immediately.

"She deserves to die," she cried fiercely. "If not for her, none of this would've happened to me. If not for her, Alaric wouldn't have died like this. Your Majesty, he was your son too."

Her voice cracked apart.

"He died without leaving behind a single heir. And now he doesn't even have his head anymore."

Theodric froze.

"What are you talking about?"

Isla lifted bloodshot eyes toward him and nearly screamed the next words.

"I'm not lying. I saw him today. I saw him inside the coffin. His head was gone. Gone! Elowen stole it!"

Her shrill voice echoed harshly through the hall.

Theodric's expression darkened further with every word.

At that same moment, Elowen and Caelan emerged from inside the hall one after the other.

The very first thing Elowen noticed was Cassian.

Then she saw the blood.

The blood soaking his hand.

The blood staining the stone beneath him. Her face drained instantly.

Without hesitation she hurried toward him and carefully lifted his injured hand into both of hers, her voice trembling apart the moment she spoke.

“Cassian... your hand... what happened?”

Tears spilled down her cheeks before she could stop them.

Cassian’s expression softened immediately at the sight.

He wanted to wipe her tears away, but one hand still held the dagger while the other had been cut too badly to move properly.

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All he could do w Tower his voice gently.

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“Easy now, Ella. Don’t cry You’ve only just recovered from childbirth. If you keep crying like this, your body won’t handle it well”

Theodric watched the entire exchange in silence.

Something complicated stirred in his chest.

Then his gaze turned sharply back toward Isla.

“The Duchess of Duskmoor only recently gave birth and strengthened the royal bloodline in doing so. Why would she want Alaric’s head? She’s a mother now. How could you possibly think she’d do something so vicious?”

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Chapter 673 Blood Before the Half

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ious?"

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Chapter 674 The End of

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Ista clenched her teeth hard enough that her jaw trembled.

"Because she hated him," she spat bitterly. "She loved Alaric for years. She wanted to marry him more than anything, but he refused her, and she never got over it. Everything she's done since then has been revenge

Theodric actually laughed from sheer disbelief.

Then maybe you ought to take a proper look at who the Duchess of Duskmoor married instead."

He pointed first toward Cassian and then toward Elowen, mockery thick in his voice.

You keep reminding me that I'm Alaric's father as though I somehow understood him less than you did. I may have once been Crown Prince, but in talent, judgment, and accomplishments, he never came close to matching Cassian."

His expression turned colder.

And after marrying the Duke of Duskmoor, the two of them have been inseparable. Why in the world would she still be obsessed with Alaric?”

Isla stared at him as though she could no longer recognize the man standing before her.

Theodric, meanwhile, no longer seemed interested in hearing another word from her.

“Your Majesty.”

Cassian suddenly spoke.

Theodric stopped and looked back.

Blood was still dripping steadily from Cassian’s injured hand, yet his expression remained calm and serious.

“Since Lady Delphine has raised such serious accusations, perhaps it would be best to

verify whether Alaric’s

remains are intact. He was once Crown Prince and remains part of the royal blooder

happened to his body, none of us can afford to overlook it.”

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The words sounded thoughtful and reasonable enough that Isla/nearly choked from rage.

omething truly

“Oh, stop pretending,” she snapped viciously. “You think anyone still believes this performance? If Elowen really took Alaric’s head, then you helped her do it.”

Her eyes blazed with hatred.

“Who else in this kingdom has enough power to tamper with the remains of a former Crown Prince? Everything you’ve done was for her.”

Then she turned toward Elowen with cruel triumph.

“But do you honestly think she ever loved you? She wanted my son from the very beginning. Alaric was the one who rejected her. Only after he refused her did she settle for marrying you.

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Her voice grew sharper and sharper,

Everything afterward was just her using you to get revenge on him.”

Theodric’s patience finally snapped.

His hand struck her across the face so hard the crack echoed through the hall.

Isla’s unfinished words died instantly. Slowly, almost numbly, she turned her head back toward him.

Your Majesty... struck me?”

Yes. Theodric said coldly. “I did.”

This expression had become terrifyingly severe.

Even after everything that happened, I still allowed you to remain in the royal residence and retain your title out of respect for the years we once shared. And this is how you repay that mercy?”

His anger sharpened with every sentence.

You accuse Cassian of pretending. Then tell me this. All these years, while the kingdom faced war and unrest from every direction, was he only pretending while risking his life for the crown too?”

Theodric’s voice rang through the hall like iron striking stone.

“If the sons of the Baker family are so capable, why didn’t they step forward and ‘pretend’ in his place?”

Then he pointed furiously toward the blood on the floor.

“And just now, if Cassian hadn’t stepped in front of that blade, I might already be dead. Yet you still dare stand here screaming accusations like a madwoman.”

Isla collapsed against the floor while tears streamed endlessly down her face.

“I didn’t mean... I only...”

“Only what?” Theodric cut in sharply. “Only believe that everyone else is a fool while you alone are clever?”

His gaze burned with fury.

If you were truly so clever, then explain this to me. Why did Alaric die like this? Why has the Baker family fallen into ruin?”

Isla opened her mouth weakly, but no words came out.

Theodric did not give her another chance.

When Alaric was young, he was bright, kindhearted, and honorable. So how did he become arrogant, selfish, and cruel later on? As his mother, how is that not your responsibility?”

Isla’s body trembled violently.

Theodric continued mercilessly.

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Colton spent decades building the Baker family into what it became. He secured influence, expanded its power, and even placed you upon the highest seat in the royal residence. Yet now look at what remain

Thx eyes hardened further.

The younger generation grows weaker with every passing year. Some even disgraced themselves durin Court qualification trials and dragged the entire family down with them.”

Then came the final blow.

“And whose fault is that? Yours.”

Every word landed like a hammer.

You used your position to force incompetent relatives into offices they never deserved. Those children grew up believing authority belonged to them simply because you handed it over.”

His voice lowered coldly.

“They weren’t born useless. You ruined them yourself.”

Isla’s face had gone completely white.

Her lips trembled as though she desperately wanted to defend herself, but not a single word emerged.

Theodric looked down at her without pity.

“You keep insisting the Duchess of Duskmoor wanted revenge. You insist Cassian was manipulated. Yet have you ever stopped to consider that maybe this is simply the consequence of your own greed and arrogance?”

That sentence struck harder than anything else.

All her life, Isla had been praised, feared, admired, obeyed.

She had been the treasured daughter of the Baker family, the woman who once ruled the royal residence, the mother of the Crown Prince.

She had always believed herself smarter than everyone around her.

And now Theodric had shattered every illusion she ever clung to.

It was her failure that ruined her son.

Her failure that dragged the Baker family into disgrace.

Her failure that destroyed everything.

Isla sat frozen on the floor while tears rolled endlessly down her face.

Not a single word remained inside her anymore.

Theodric looked at her silently.

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And despite everything, his heart softened in the end.

After all, this was still the woman who had married him at sixteen.

The woman who had borne his children.

And though Alarte was gone now, they still had Maerwyn.

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Chapter 675 A Flawless Explanation

Theodric released a long, exhausted breath before finally turning away from Isla altogether as though merely looking at her had become tiring. When he spoke again, weariness pressed heavily beneath every word.

Take her back to her residence and keep her confined there from this day forward. Without my dire order, she is not to step beyond her chambers.”

After a brief pause, he added coldly. “As for Alaric’s head, I’ll have the matter investigated myself. Once Quin returns with the findings, he’ll inform you personally.”

The royal guards answered at once before escorting Isla away.

nly then did the royal physician finally arrive in hurried panic.

The physician’s surname was Arden, and he had spent decades tending to the nobility within the royal Court, yet even he felt a jolt run through him the moment he saw Cassian’s hand drenched in blood.

Theodric motioned calmly toward the adjoining chamber. “Bring the Duke of Duskmoor inside and see to his wound properly.”

The side chamber stood prepared for use at all times, the hearth burning warmly and the furnishings maintained with meticulous care by palace attendants each day.

Arden quickly lowered himself beside Cassian and began cleaning the wound with painstaking caution before spreading salve over the cut and wrapping fresh linen around the injured palm layer by layer.

His hands never once trembled, but despite that, a sheen of perspiration gradually appeared across his forehead.

Nearby, Elowen remained standing beside them the entire time, her nerves stretched so tightly that every movement from the physician made her chest tighten along with it.

At the same time, Theodric beckoned Caelan closer before studying him carefully. “Now tell me something. What exactly are you doing here tonight?”

Caelan immediately lowered himself into a respectful bow. “Your Majesty, one of the attendants serving in my

mother’s residence was summoned here earlier by Lady Delphine to assist with something, but she never returned afterward. My mother grew worried and asked me to come look for her.”

Theodric’s brows pulled together faintly. “And what sort of attendant would make you go to this much trouble?”

Caelan lowered his gaze modestly. “She’s... unusually capable.”

As he spoke, the tips of his ears slowly reddened.

Theodric noticed instantly and let out a quiet laugh beneath his breath.

Not far away, Elowen remained focused on Cassian’s injury while Arden worked, but her attention had actually been fixed on every word of the conversation behind her.

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The moment she heard that amused sound from Theodric, unease crept straight into her chest.

1. The Emperor of Arranged Marriages is about to meddle again.

sure enough. Theodric looked back toward Caclan with visible amusement in his eyes. “If you’ve taken a

ing to this girl, I could always grant her to you as a secondary consort. How does that sound:

elan visibly froze before slowly lifting his head.

Theodric continued casually, “What’s the girl’s name?”.

Belan gathered himself almost immediately. “Your Majesty, her name is Iris. She originally served beside Alaric, and before that she entered the palace as part of Daphne’s household.”

One of Theodric’s brows lifted faintly. “That’s quite a path for one palace attendant. First Daphne, then Alaric, and finally your mother’s residence.”

Listening nearby, Elowen felt her nerves tighten instantly.

every

Too many things had happened lately, but if someone truly followed every thread carefully enough, Iris remained the key connection tying everything together.

And Iris was the very person Elowen had secretly asked Elira to rescue.

The problem was that Theodric was far too perceptive. If anyone tried explaining things too directly now, suspicion would only deepen.

Yet Elowen could not carelessly interrupt either, because involving herself too eagerly would only make the

matter seem even stranger.

At that exact moment, Cassian suddenly let out a low laugh from beside her.

“Ella, sweetheart, it honestly doesn’t hurt that much. If you keep looking at me like you’re about to cry, you’ll make me feel worse than the injury itself.”

Elowen immediately caught on and sniffed softly before answering in a trembling voice, “How am I supposed not to worry? You’re hurt much worse this time than ever before. I’ve never seen you bleed this much.”

Theodric instinctively turned to glance toward them after hearing her voice.

That single distraction created exactly the opening Caelan needed.

“Your Majesty,” he continued smoothly, “I’d actually seen Iris several times before while visiting Alaric’s residence. Leonhart often went to the Crown Prince’s Wing as well, and he mentioned her to me more than once. Every time he spoke about her, he praised how dependable and sharp she was while handling matters. After hearing that enough times, I naturally remembered her.”

Theodric shifted his attention fully back toward him.

to help Caclan continued steadily, “At the time, my mother’s residence wasn’t lacking attendants entirely, but after my aunt became pregnant, my mother sent many of her most trusted servants to Duskmoor Man care for her. Naturally, that left some responsibilities within the palace difficult to manage for a while.”

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His tone remained calm and measured throughout.

I saw how much pressure my mother was under and wanted to help where I could. After finding out how capable Iris was, I suggested bringing her into my mother’s service. My mother agreed it seemed appropriate and had people inquire further.

Theodric listened quietly without interrupting.

Caclan lowered his voice slightly as he continued. “Then, after Alaric’s affairs came to light some time veryone serving in the Crown Prince’s Wing was investigated alongside him, Iris included. But after thinking carefully about it, she had only entered the palace as part of Daphne’s household and had not actually served there very long. Most of her duties involved preparing drinks and handling/ordinary household matters. As for the things Alaric did privately, someone in her position would never have known anything substantial.”

Every sentence flowed naturally into the next without the slightest hesitation.

So after several days of questioning, my mother had people look into the matter more carefully. Once it became clear Iris had committed no wrongdoing, she was brought back into the palace and assigned to my mother's residence instead."

Only near the end did his voice soften slightly.

I visited my mother's residence from time to time afterward and happened to see Iris there on several occasions. Somewhere along the way... I suppose I started looking at her differently."

By the time he finished speaking, the redness along his ears had already spread faintly down his neck.

Listening nearby, Elowen genuinely felt impressed.

Caelan truly was much smarter than Alaric had ever been.

Not one thing he said was technically false, yet not a single unnecessary detail slipped out either. In only a few calm explanations, he had managed to separate everyone involved from suspicion so cleanly that even Theodric could not possibly find fault with it.

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Chapter 676 A Future Worth Watching

Howen quietly sighed inwardly.

This boy is going to become someone truly formidable someday,

But the thought had barely crossed her mind before another problem followed immediately behind it eaving her with an entirely different headache.

She and Iris had already spoken privately long ago. Once the current turmoil settled, Iris was supposed to leave the palace and become Elowen's adviser.

But if Theodric truly decided to grant Iris to Caelan as a secondary consort, refusing would become near impossible.

Imperial decrees were not something anyone could casually reject, especially not a marriage arrangement personally bestowed by Theodric himself. No matter her position as Duchess of Duskmoor, Elowen

certainly could not compete with Theodric over a person.

After listening to Caelan's explanation, Theodric suddenly burst into hearty laughter.

So that's what this is," he said with clear amusement warming his voice. "Sounds like the two of you were meant to cross paths after all."

Caelan lowered his head again at once, his ears still visibly red. "It's only that Iris came to Lady Delphine's residence earlier and never returned. When I came searching for her, Lady Delphine insisted she'd never seen her at all. I... honestly couldn't stop worrying."

Theodric waved the concern aside easily. "Lady Delphine has suffered too many blows one after another and lost her senses. Don't concern yourself. I've already sent Quin to search for the girl, and he'll make sure Iris is brought back safely."

As he finished speaking, he cast Quin a brief glance.

Quin immediately understood and strode from the chamber.

Theodric remained in good spirits for a moment before another thought suddenly occurred to him. "Actually, if you came here because of Iris, then why is the Duchess of Duskmoor involved in this as well?"

Elowen turned her head slightly at once.

The question sounded casual enough, yet hearing it still made her chest tighten faintly.

'Caelan, however, answered without the slightest pause.

"Your Majesty, because I'd grown fond of Iris, I spent time quietly asking about her past. I learned that while serving beside Daphne, she was treated rather

harshly and often punished, while my little aunt had shown her kindness on many occasions before. Iris has always remembered that kindness deeply.”

His explanation continued smoothly and naturally.

“When I heard Iris had become trapped here tonight, I worried I might not be clever enough or persuasive enough to save her on my own. After thinking it over, I sent word outside the palace to my little aunt

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because I believed that if I failed, she would still be able to help

After a slight pause, his voice lowered

I with lingering unease.

just never expected things to escalate this badly. Not only did I nearly endanger my little aunt caused harm to Your Majesty as well. I failed to think things through properly. Please punish me

Standing nearby, Elowen suddenly felt both amused and exasperated all at once.

Caclan truly had the nerve to claim he was poor with words?

She glanced sideways toward Cassian.

Is this some sort of Valebourne family talent? Every one of them better at pretending than the last.

Cassian was exactly like this.

And Caelan clearly was too.

Theodric dismissed the matter with a wave of his hand. “Isla was the one who lost her mind. None of this is your fault. Besides, you weren’t frightened tonight, were you?”

Caelan immediately lifted his head with an obedient smile. “I’m alright, Your Majesty. Thank you for worrying about me. But Uncle Cassian was injured protecting you tonight. The blade cut deeply into his palm, and there was a great deal of blood.”

Theodric sighed softly before looking toward Cassian, whose hand was still being carefully wrapped in fresh linen. “Yes. Cassian has always protected me this way.”

Cassian immediately smiled. “Then if you truly feel moved, perhaps a few extra rewards would be more practical.”

That earned another laugh from Theodric.

Once the laughter faded, the atmosphere inside the chamber relaxed considerably.

At that exact moment, footsteps echoed outside the hall.

Quin entered first, and behind him followed a slender figure.

Iris had arrived.

Two swollen handprints stood vividly across her face, dark red and already bruising purple around the edges. One look alone made it obvious she had been struck hard more than once.

Her hair had partially come loose as well, several strands falling untidily across her forehead, while one sleeve near her wrist had been torn open.

Iris walked steadily into the center of the chamber before lowering herself into a deep formal bow.

Tris greets Your Majesty.”

Theodric studied her quietly for a moment before finally asking. “So you’re Iris?”

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Keeping her head lowered, Iris answered softly, “Yes, Your Majesty

Theodric continued leisurely. “Do you realize Caclan risked himself tonight after hearing you were here?”

Iris’s lashes trembled faintly.

I’m only a low-ranking servant. I hardly deserve such concern from His Highness”

Theodric smiled slightly. “Caelan tells me you’re clever and exceptionally capable. Apparently he thinks someone useful like you shouldn’t suffer unfair treatment.”

Iris lowered her head even farther. “His Highness gives me too much credit. I’ve only ever done the worst expected of me. I wouldn’t dare call myself especially clever.”

Watching her humble manner, satisfaction deepened noticeably in Theodric’s eyes.

A woman with this sort of self-awareness was perfectly suited to become a secondary consort.

Someone like this understood boundaries, knew when to advance and when to retreat, and carried herself carefully.

Now that Alaric was dead, very few among Theodric’s sons possessed the qualities necessary to inherit the Crown Prince’s Wing and eventually ascend the throne of Avenlor.

Some lacked intelligence.

Others lacked the proper family standing.

But Caelan...

Caelan was a genuinely promising choice.

In some ways, perhaps even better than Alaric himself.

Caelan was humble, respectful, and thoughtful. During last year’s royal hunt, he had already distinguished himself impressively, and ever since then, he had continued surprising Theodric again and again.

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Chapter 677 An Imperial Arrangement

Cacian’s maternal family was the Jones family, and truthfully speaking the Joneses had rycu mo people than the Bakers.

When war broke out in the Southwestern Marches, Theodric had appointed one of Rodney's sons in #toops there.

And back when he finally decided to remove Alaric from the position of Crown Prince. Theo/lric had Tready begun considering supporting Caelan as the next heir to the Crown Prince's Wing

But with a maternal family as influential as the Jones family already standing behind him, Caelan could pos marry a wife from another overly powerful noble house.

Which was why Theodric thought Iris was at choice.

A palace attendant without a powerful background would never upset the balance at court.

A faint smile appeared on Theodric's face.

There's actually another responsibility I'd rather entrust to you."

Iris lifted her head slightly. "I'm afraid I don't understand what Your Majesty means."

Theodric looked at her steadily,

Caelan's old enough to marry by now, Elira brings it up often enough, and she worries about it constantly Earlier, Caelan told me he's quite fond of you, so I've decided to arrange a marriage between the two of you. You would enter his household as a secondary consort. What do you think?"

Iris looked up at him in complete shock.

Theodric noticed her reaction immediately and raised a brow slightly.

"What is it?" he asked. "You don't want this?"

Of course I don't want this.

The person I wanted to follow was Elowen.

I never imagined it would end with His Majesty personally arranging my marriage.

Her thoughts tangled into complete confusion.

She knew perfectly well that an imperial marriage decree was royal favor, and refusing it was equivalent to defying the throne..

The smartest thing she could do was accept immediately.

But Iris dug her nails hard into her palm, the sharp sting helping force herself

to

stay

calm.

In the end, she still lowered herself into a deep bow.

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Van Majesty, please reconsider,” she said carefully. I come from humble origin, and for

dered myself particularly capable or refined. I’ve never dared dreams beyond my station. It was to serve well and handle the duties given to me properly. Becoming a prime escoment thing I’ve never once imagined for myself, and I know very clearly I would never be sintered for sundr 1 beg Your Majesty to withdraw this arrangement

ian stood nearby, his gaze fixed on Iris as hurt flickered briefly across his eyes.

was lowered there with her shoulders trembling faintly

because he understood her well enough by now, Caelan knew she was not frightened of Theodric

So was she nervous.

She simply rejected this marriage from the bottom of her heart.

Every word she spoke landed heavily in his chest.

Humble origins.”

Not refined.”

Never dared dream of it.”

Caelan knew she meant every word sincerely.

This was not false modesty. Nor was it polite refusal.

She genuinely did not want to marry him. At least not now.

Theodric listened quietly from beginning to end before glancing from/Iris to Caelan, looking as though he intended to say something.

But before he could speak, hurried footsteps suddenly echoed outside the hall.

Theodric looked up just as the deputy commander of the King's Guard strode quickly inside. His expression was grave as he lowered himself onto one knee.

Your Majesty, Commander Hall was attacked in one of the city lanes. He suffered several injuries.”

Theodric's brows drew together immediately.

Wasn't he on leave recovering at home? Why was he out in the city?”

The deputy commander lowered his head.

Your Majesty, Commander Hall intervened to protect a carriage from Duskmoor Manor along with the attendants traveling with it. The attackers targeted the manor's carriage today. Commander Hall happened to pass by and stepped in to help. There were too many assassins for him to avoid injury entirely. He managed to drive them off, but not before suffering several wounds himself.”

Elowen immediately turned pale.

The carriage from Duskmoor Manor.

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Mira and Scarlet.

But only moments later, she forced herself to calm down.

The report mentioned Draven's injuries, but nothing about deaths or injuries inside the carr

And if Draven had arrived it time to intervene, then Mira and Scarlet were probably unharmed.

Theodric paused before turning toward Cassian.

Cassian met his gaze calmly.

Earlier today, Ella and I went outside the city for some fresh air. We'd only just returned to Vanelle when we received word from Caclan that something had happened to Iris, so we entered the palace immediately. Mira and Scarlet took the carriage back to the manor first. I didn't expect someone would target an empty carriage."

Theodric considered that carefully, his frown deepening.

But that still did not explain why Draven had become involved.

Then suddenly, everything connected.

Draven had taken leave because he had been punished. And he had been punished because he wanted permission to marry.

The woman he wanted to marry happened to be one of Elowen's attendants.

Now the entire situation made sense.

Draven really was stubbornly devoted.

Did that make him the Emperor of Arranged Marriages all over again?

Still, there were more important matters right now.

Theodric's expression darkened.

"Have you identified the people behind the attack on Duskmoor Manor's carriage?"

The deputy commander lowered his head even farther.

"Your Majesty, the assassins were all trained killers prepared to die, but Commander Hall managed to capture one alive after dislocating his jaw. During interrogation, the man confessed that... the orders came from Lady Delphine."

The entire hall fell silent.

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Chapter 678 A Fracture Appears

“Lady Delphine.”

Theodric repeated the title with a cold laugh.

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“I showed her mercy, and this is how she repays me. She sent assassins after a carriage from Duskmoor Manor.”

And this was already the second time.

No one in the hall dared speak.

Most did not even dare lift their heads.

Cassian’s expression remained calm.

“Your Majesty, please don’t let anger cloud your judgment. I wasn’t harmed, and Lady Delphine has shared many years with you. There’s no need to damage that relationship over me.”

Hearing that only made Theodric feel worse.

His younger brother had nearly been killed more than once, yet he was still standing there speaking on behalf of the person responsible.

Theodric waved a hand decisively.

“I’ll handle this matter myself. You don’t need to defend her.”

Cassian sighed softly.

From the corner of his eye, he noticed the tension in Elowen’s expression and knew she was worried about Mira and Scarlet.

Since the royal physician had nearly finished tending the wound on his hand, Cassian finally said, “Your Majesty, my hand’s already been bandaged. It’s nothing serious. I should return to the manor and see what happened there.”

Theodric nodded, his gaze lingering briefly on the bandages wrapped around Cassian’s hand.

“Go. And take care of yourself.”

Cassian acknowledged the order before turning toward Elowen.

“Ella, let’s head home.”

Elowen nodded obediently. Watching his injured hand carefully, she moved to support him as they headed toward the hall entrance.

After only a few steps, they passed Iris.

She was still lowered to the floor.

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678 A Fracture Appeal

Elowen paused briefly beside her. Iris lifted her head slightly, and their eyes met for only a mome

Elowen smiled softly, the look in her eyes seeming to say,

“Don’t worry. It’ll be fine. I’ll figure something

The corners of Iris’s lips moved faintly in return, as though answering silently,
“All right”

Between clever people, words were unnecessary.

Elowen did not stay long before leaving with Cassian.

After she disappeared from sight, Iris lowered her head again.

“All right,” Theodric said at last, rubbing tiredly at his temples. “I still have matters to handle. You may all leave.”

Everyone answered at once before bowing and withdrawing.

Iris slowly rose from the floor, but her legs had gone numb from remaining there too long, causing her to stumble slightly.

“Iris.”

Caelan stepped forward immediately and steadied her arm.

Her body instantly stiffened with resistance, and she instinctively wanted to pull away, but before she could, Caelan added quietly, “I’ll walk you back.”

At that moment, Theodric happened to glance in their direction, faint amusement visible in his eyes.

Under that gaze, Iris did not dare refuse no matter how unwilling she felt.

She could only force herself to answer, “Thank you, Your Highness.”

Caelan released her arm.

Then the two of them walked out of the hall together.

Only after they moved beyond Theodric’s sight did the warmth disappear completely from Iris’s expression.

She deliberately kept several steps between them as they walked side by side, neither close nor distant, but unmistakably restrained.

Caelan did not rush to speak first.

Instead, Iris broke the silence.

“Your Highness really shouldn’t have put me in that position today.”

Caelan slowed slightly and turned toward her.

“A difficult position?”

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Iris kept her eyes lowered as she walked.

You know exactly what I mean, Your Highness.

course he knew.

The difficult position” she referred to was Theodric’s attempt to arrange their marriage

She cared only about remaining beside Elowen.

Caelan let out a quiet laugh.

Tris,” he said softly, “you haven’t exactly been gentle with me either.”

That finally made her look at him.

A faint crease appeared between her brows.

I don’t understand, Your Highness. Since when would I ever dare hurt you?”

“Haven’t you?”

Caelan looked directly at her.

Iris, do you even remember how many times you’ve turned me down already? Back at my mother’s residence, you rejected my invitation without the slightest hesitation. I told myself that if you ever got into trouble again, I wouldn’t interfere anymore or embarrass myself chasing after you. But the moment I heard something had happened to you today, I still came running anyway. And through all of it, you never once thanked me.”

Pain showed openly in his expression now, fragile enough that it almost made Iris pause.

Something deep inside her shifted faintly.

But outwardly, she remained composed and distant as ever.

For a very long time now, Iris had always been like this.

Respectful on the surface, while keeping everyone far away.

Caelan watched her quietly for a long moment before the emptiness in his chest deepened further.

Finally, he looked away.

“Forget it,” he said softly. “I guess I really did make a fool of mys...”

Thank you.”

Iris interrupted him gently.

Caelan froze briefly before turning back toward her.

For the first time, there was genuine sincerity in her expression instead of the cautious distance she usually wore around him.

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She spoke seriously.

Thank you for coming to help me today, Your Highness. I truly didn't know what was happening at the time. Lady Delphine had me confined in the rear courtyard, so I had no idea what was happening in the residence. I hope Your Highness won't hold that against inc.

Caclan looked at her, suddently unable to stop the corners of his mouth from lifting.

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Chapter 679 Different Roads

The smile in Caetans eyes slowly spread, washing away much of the gloom that had shadowed his expression moments earlier

Looking at her, he said quietly, "I wasn't really blaming you"

Iris gave a small nod.

Finist

After that, neither of them spoke again for a while. They simply walked side by side along the stone corridor cutting through the palace grounds while the evening wind stirred through the trees overhead, carrying the clean scent of grass and damp leaves.

Now and then, patrols from the King's Guard passed somewhere in the distance, their armor clinking softly before the sound faded back into silence.

Only when Elira's residence came into sight did Caelan finally stop.

Iris halted beside him and turned slightly to look his way.

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No one else was nearby.

Caelan stood there in silence for a moment before speaking again.

"Some time ago, the Duchess of Duskmoor dealt with a man named Barrett. He was one of my grandfather's protégés. My grandfather spent years grooming him for court and hoped he'd eventually make something of himself politically."

Iris stayed quiet and listened.

Caelan continued evenly.

"I asked around afterward and learned what happened. Barrett's son used his family's influence to bully people and ended up offending one of the duchess's attendants. Maybe the duchess wasn't wrong Corbin deserved punishment, and Barrett failed miserably as a father"

He paused briefly.

“But even so, what happened still hit my grandfather hard.”

His gaze drifted toward the palace walls ahead.

“Nothing’s ever completely black and white. This wasn’t really about right or wrong. It was about where everyone stood.”

Iris’s brows tightened slightly, though she still said nothing.

Caclan’s voice remained calm.

“Neither my grandfather nor my mother has openly complained about it. They both know Corbin started it, and they know the duchess’s punishment, while harsh, wasn’t unreasonable. But whether things like this keep happening in the future, and whether they’ll always stay understanding about it. He shook his head

faintly. “Nobody knows.”

After a short pause, he continued.

“Prince Alaric is gone now, and Isla’s barely holding herself together. In Vanelle today, my gutter family and Duskmoor Manor stand on opposite sides. The same goes for me and the Duke of Duke

A humorless smile touched his lips.

“It’s not what I wanted, and it’s probably not what he wanted either, but that doesn’t change reality. Some things don’t disappear just because people wish they would.”

By now, Iris fully understood what he meant.

Back when Prince Alaric and Isla still held power, Elira and Eloweff shared the same enemy. Because of that, they naturally became allies and supported each other.

But now Alaric was dead.

Isla had fallen completely.

The Baker family had been pushed out of the center of power, and the balance inside the royal court had changed entirely.

Elira and Elowen were no longer true allies.

More accurately, now that their shared enemy was gone all that remained were their separate loyalties and positions.

Behind Elira stood Rodney, generations of respected nobility, and the old ministers who prided themselves on preserving royal tradition.

Behind Elowen stood Cassian, military prestige, and the rising faction that despised the former crown prince's camp after the court qualification trials scandal.

The two sides were already beginning to push against one another. Eventually, conflict would come.

And beyond politics, there would always be smaller disagreements waiting to grow up larger.

Royal courts were never gentle places.

Perhaps one day, Elira and Elowen would stand directly across from each other with none of what they still shared now.

The thought sent a faint chill through Iris.

Caelan watched her expression carefully and knew she understood.

He took a slow breath, as though finally deciding to say his time.

"Iris... can I ask you something one more time?"

As he had been

Chapter 679 Different Roads.

She looked at him quietly.

Finish

"When you say you want to stay beside the Duchess of Duskmoor... what is it you actually want to do there?"

Iris answered without hesitation.

“I want to serve as an advisor.”

Caelan blinked.

Then he looked genuinely caught off guard.

“But you could do that beside me too.”

Iris slowly shook her head.

“But the duchess is a woman. She understands things men don’t.” Her voice softened slightly. “Some hardships only women truly understand.”

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Caelan looked at her steadily.

“Iris, if being a woman is the reason you want to stay beside the duchess, then yes, maybe she understands your struggles better, and maybe life would be easier for you there.”

His tone grew quieter.

“But have you ever thought about all the other women/in this world?”

“The women sold into brothels. The women abandoned by their husbands. The women their own families cast aside. The women driven into dead ends because life gave them nowhere else to go.”

His eyes never left hers.

“What happens to them?”

“They don’t have your luck. They don’t have your intelligence. And they certainly don’t have someone like the Duchess of Duskmoor willing to help them.”

Iris froze slightly.

Faces drifted through her memory one after another.

Some belonged to women she had only crossed paths with briefly. Others had once been friends.

Caelan continued quietly.

“Have you ever thought about building a life that could open doors for women besides yourself

“Have you ever thought that if you made it far enough, other women might finally have a chance to follow after you 100?”

His gaze deepened.

Chapter 679 Different Roads

Finished

“And do you realize you might actually have the ability to help women live better lives than they do now?”

A sudden gust of wind swept through the corridor, sending Iris’s skirts and loose hair scattering around her.

She stood there unmoving while the wind tugged at her clothes like branches bending in a storm.

And in that instant, it felt as though something stuck directly into her mind.

Everything inside her turned chaotic.

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess

680

Chapter 680 The Future Ahead

Caelan stopped there.

“You’ve had a rough day. Get some rest.” He stepped back slightly. “I should go too

Without waiting for her response, he turned and walked away.

Iris remained standing there for a very long time.

His words kept echoing in her head.

“And do you realize you might actually have the ability to help women live better lives than they do now?”

Then another thought slowly surfaced.

Caelan was right about one thing too.

If someone trusted by both sides remained beside Elira, someone capable of speaking openly to both Elira and the Duchess of Duskmooor, then perhaps future conflicts between them could be softened before they grew worse.

Or perhaps the connection between them could become even stronger.

For example...

If Iris became Caelan’s secondary consort, she could advise him politically and help him ascend to the Crown Prince’s Wing before eventually taking the throne.

And whenever conflict arose between Elira and Elowen, Iris could step in to mediate.

If she later bore Caelan children, the bond between the two sides would only grow stronger.

From every angle, it seemed like the best possible outcome.

But then another thought followed immediately behind it.

Iris lowered her eyes slightly.

With a background like mine...Looking this ordinary...Am I really worthy of becoming a prince's consort?

Meanwhile, inside the carriage returning to Duskmoo Manor, Elowen held Cassian's injured hand carefully between both of hers, turning it over while her face filled with distress.

"You really had to grab the blade yourself?" she muttered. "You could've shoved Isla away or pulled His Majesty back instead. Do you know how much this must hurt?"

Cassian smiled faintly.

"The worse it looks, the more sympathy His Majesty feels for us."

Elowen lifted her face toward him, still worried.

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Chapter 680 The Future Ahead

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"Speaking of sympathy.. Cassian, Alaric's head really is gone now. If His Majesty decides to investigate later, what happens then was the one who hated Alaric. I'm the one who insisted on taking his head.

"I already handled it."

Cassian's tone stayed calm, almost amused.

"By now, someone's probably already attached a replacement.

Elowen blinked at him.

“A replacement?”

“A resin replica,” Cassian explained. “I hired the best sculptor in Vaffelle to recreate his face based on how he looked while alive. It’s convincing enough that nobody would notice unless they physically touched it.”

Elowen stared at him.

“When did you arrange all that?”

“The day you told me you wanted his head.”

Elowen looked at his sharply defined profile, and something inside her softened completely.

Cassian was always like this.

The moment she said she wanted something, he quietly arranged everything for her before she even had time to worry.

“The craftsmen working inside the royal crypt today were all my people,” he continued. “And now that Alaric’s buried, nobody can casually reopen the royal tombs. Besides, Isla’s already fallen. Nobody’s going to keep investigating this matter.”

A faint smile touched his lips.

“And even if someone brings it up months from now, the body will already be decomposed. By then, nobody’s going to inspect whether the head is genuine.”

After a pause, he added, “Later on, I’ll have someone finish cleaning up the remaining details.”

Elowen finally let out a long breath. “Cassian... you’re too good to me.”

Cassian lowered his face closer to hers.

“If I’m that good to you, how are you planning to repay me?”

Laughing softly, Elowen leaned over and kissed the corner of his mouth.

Cassian clearly decided that wasn’t enough.

He immediately leaned down and kissed her properly, firm and lingering against her lips.

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Chapter 6804he Future Ahead

By the time they returned to Duskmoor Matier, night had already fallen, and iron lanterns glowed throughout the estate.

The moment Elowen stepped down from the carriage, she spotted Mira pacing anxiously near the entrance while Scarlet stood nearby trying to calm her.

The second Mira saw Elowen, she rushed forward.

“Your Grace! You’re finally back! I was so worried”

Elowen gently patted her hand before looking her over carefully.

Dust clung to Mira’s clothes, and one sleeve had been torn open, but otherwise she looked unharmed.

Only then did Elowen finally relax.

“I heard you ran into assassins?”

Mira nodded hard.

“We did! They attacked us on the road, but Commander Hall stepped in and saved us.”

Then she hurriedly asked, “What about you, Your Grace? Are you all right?”

Scarlet smiled beside her.

“Mira was terrified the assassins had gone after Your Grace too.”

Elowen turned toward Scarlet.

She looked unharmed as well, though her hair had loosened slightly and her face was still pale.

“I’m fine,” Elowen reassured them. “No one came after me.”

Mira carefully looked her over from head to toe and only relaxed after confirming Elowen truly seemed untouched.

“Thank goodness...”

Standing beside them, Cassian glanced down at the bandages wrapped around his own hand and silently reflected that apparently every maid in Duskmoor Manor only cared about Ella.

As for him...

The group began walking inside together.

Then Mira suddenly remembered something.

“Oh, right, Your Grace. Commander Hall was injured during the attack. He’s in the courtyard right now while Doctor Dray patches him up.”

Elowen nodded.

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Chapter 680 The Future Ahead

“I heard about it at the palace. Let’s go check on him.”

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Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess