

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

We Had Something Real But Didn't Handle It Right

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Chapter 691 Somewhere Else Entirely

Even when Cassian spoke in anger, he meant every word.

And when someone loved her with that kind of steady, all-consuming devotion, Elowen found it impossible to stay angry for long. The citation in her chest slowly faded away until all that remained was warmth and a quiet ache of tenderness.

For one fleeting moment, doubt crept into her heart again.

Could someone like me really deserve to be loved this much?

“Well?” Cassian asked softly. “What do you think, Ella?”

Elowen looked up at him and sighed quietly.

“But Cassian, you’ve never wanted the throne.” She shifted slightly against him before continuing. “Look at His Majesty now. He’s dragged out of bed before sunrise every day just to sit through endless council meetings while nobles argue over each other for hours. Half the court is busy scheming, taking bribes, building alliances, and clawing for power, while the other half keeps him worried military commanders might grow too influential. Every day there’s another mountain of state papers waiting for him, and by the time he finishes dealing with them it’s already deep into the night. Most evenings he can’t even finish a mug of mulled cider while it’s still warm. Then there’s the royal household itself. One consort is upset today, another causes trouble tomorrow, and somehow every little thing becomes his responsibility.”

Cassian immediately caught the trace of sadness hidden beneath her voice and gently brushed his thumb along her cheek.

“But Ella,” he murmured, “I wouldn’t want anyone else. One queen would already be more than enough for me.”

Elowen shook her head.

“That’s not what I meant. I’m not worried you’d suddenly fall in love with other women.” She paused briefly before speaking more honestly. “I just think being emperor looks miserable, and if you had to live like that every day, I’d hate seeing you worn down by it.”

Then after another moment, she added quietly, “Though if you really did end up surrounded by other women someday, of course I’d be hurt. It’s not that I don’t trust you, but once someone takes the throne, things stop being simple. What if the court insists you marry some noblewoman because her family’s influence is needed to steady the kingdom?”

Cassian’s brows drew together slightly as though he were genuinely considering the question.

A moment later, however, amusement flickered back into his eyes.

“Then maybe we should make you empress instead.”

Elowen stared at him for half a second before laughing outright.

“Oh really?” she said. “And you’d be perfectly fine with me keeping other men around

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Cassian gave her a lazy smile.

“Absolutely not. I’d probably end up drawing a sword.”

That only made Elowen laugh harder.

“Exactly,” she said between laughs. “Neither of us is suited for the throne. I was furious because they went after Phoenix, but honestly...” Her voice softened. “I’m not nearly as angry anymore.”

Cassian lifted one brow.

“And that’s because of me?”

Elowen nodded before opening her arms toward him.

Cassian immediately leaned closer, and she wrapped both arms around his neck before settling comfortably against his chest.

“Cassian,” she said quietly, “don’t become emperor, I don’t want you spending your life unhappy. And if staying in Vanelle means people will always keep plotting against us, then we’ll leave someday. We can go to Falkriver, or Nordia, or Rivenshire. I have entire valleys and hills in Falkriver that Grandfather left to me. And in Nordia, I’m still their Oracle. I heard the grasslands there stretch farther than the eye can see, wide enough that you could ride all day without ever reaching the end. Nina once told me Rivenshire is filled with old stone bridges and little riverside streets, and every hidden lane has another bakery or tavern worth discovering. Aunt Elspeth even bought me a manor there years ago and keeps servants maintaining it, but I’ve never actually lived there.”

Cassian suddenly remembered something.

“After the treaty signing today, Valessa specifically asked whether you’d made your decision yet. The Nordian delegation is leaving Vanelle soon, and she still hopes we’ll travel north with them.”

Elowen’s expression softened further.

“The only thing holding me back now is Phoenix and Poppy. They’re still too little. But once they’re older, we’ll take them with us and go wherever we want. No council meetings. No state papers. No listening to ministers argue themselves breathless all day long. In spring we’ll travel south to see the flower fields bloom. In summer we’ll head north where the weather stays cool. In autumn we’ll ride through Falkriver, and in winter...” She smiled quietly. “In winter we’ll stay home beside the fire eating slow-cooked stew and fresh bread while the snow falls outside.”

Cassian’s chest softened painfully at the picture she painted.

He reached over and gently smoothed a hand through her hair.

“Alright,” he said quietly. “As long as we’re together, I’ll go anywhere.”

Elowen lifted her face toward him.

Cassian lowered his head and kissed her softly.

Elowen immediately smiled against his mouth before leaning closer and deepening the kiss herself

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By the time they finally pulled apart, her breathing had gone uneven.

“Although before we leave Vanelle,” she said, “there’s still something we should do to better protect Phoenix and Poppy.”

Cassian raised one eyebrow.

“What are you plotting now?”

Elowen immediately shot him a look.

“That makes it sound terrible.”

Cassian nodded solemnly.

“You’re right. Let me rephrase. What brilliant little scheme are you planning this time?”

Elowen’s eyes instantly turned sly.

Leaning close to his ear, she whispered several quiet sentences.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the city, Draven was in an exceptionally good mood.

After spending more time with Scarlet earlier that day, he rode home practically glowing, humming under his breath the entire journey back. Along the way, he even stopped two boys from fighting over a skewer of berries and helped an elderly woman safely across one of the crowded market streets before finally returning home himself.

But the moment he stepped through the gate, his mood faltered.

His parents were both waiting in the courtyard outside the main residence, something they almost never did.

Draven instinctively straightened.

“Father. Mother.”

Maud answered with only a cool hum.

Roger studied him sharply before speaking.

“So you still remember what your parents look like.”

Draven blinked, genuinely confused by the remark, though he answered honestly enough.

“Of course I do. Even if decades passed, I’d still recognize the two of you immediately.”

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