

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 701 A Secret Elowen paused , caught off guard . She hadn't expected those words to come from Caelan , let alone be directed at Iris . If he sincerely meant them , his foresight was remarkable . If he was just saying what Iris wanted to hear , his ability to read and manipulate people was even more formidable . Either way , the man was dangerous . " I've given this a lot of thought , " Iris continued .

" It's true that I could just walk away from the palace with a light heart , come to the Silverloom Exchange to work as your advisor , and live a free , independent life doing what I love . But there is another path open to me . You founded the Exchange to give women more options in life , Your Grace . My becoming a consort serves the exact same purpose . If I can establish a secure foothold in the palace , I can help other women from humble backgrounds like mine . And the higher I climb , the more good I can do ." Elowen felt a profound shift stir within her .

The young maid standing before her was like a tree hardened by storms - its roots anchored deep in the earth , its branches reaching boldly toward the sky . Suddenly , Elowen realized she had no right to hold her back . In the end , Elowen simply let out a quiet sigh . " Very well ." It was her consent . After a brief pause , Elowen looked at her intently , her tone turning solemn . " But promise me this , Iris . If you are ever mistreated in the palace , if you regret your choice , or if you simply feel you cannot walk this path anymore , come to me . I will help you leave .

The palace won't keep you , Elira won't stop you , and neither will Caelan . Remember that with me , you will always have a way out . " Iris froze , tears instantly welling in her eyes . She wanted to say , Thank you , Your Grace , but the words choked in her throat . Unable to speak , she nodded vigorously , the motion scattering her tears . Elowen reached out to wipe the tears from the girl's face . Then , sparked by a sudden curiosity , she asked . Tell me , Iris - do you actually love Caelan ? " Iris thought it over for a moment .

" Your Grace , in matters like this , love doesn't really factor into v Affection , or the lack thereof , can always be faked . Especially for someone of my background putting on a front and adapting to your surroundings are the easiest things in the world . Besides , how many couples in this world truly love each other ? Most just compromise , endure , and settle for mutual respect Sensing a touch of cynicism in the girl's view on love and marriage , Elowen smiled softly . " Let me tell you a secret . Before I married Cassian , I didn't love him either .

It was only after living together day in and day out that I found myself falling deeper and deeper in love with him . " Iris blinked , surprised Elowen smiled warmly , offering her a sincere blessing . " You are a wonderful woman Iris I hope that one day , you too will

find a partner who shares your heart and matches your soul Iris nodded , stood up , and performed a deep , formal bow It was a gesture of immense reverence , her forehead pressed against the floor , and she remained there for a long time Finally , she straightened up .

" I am leaving now , Your Grace Finished " Go on then , Elowen replied gently . Iris stepped outside and closed the door behind her . A little way down , where the covered walkway curved around the corner , Caelati was waiting . Hearing her footsteps , he looked over . " How did it go Iris nodded quietly but offered no details about her conversation with Elowen . Instead , she simply said , " We should head back , Your Highness .

Lady Elira looked upset when she left earlier today ; you ought to go and comfort her ." Seeing that she had no intention of sharing a single word of what had just passed , Caelan felt a pang of disappointment . In her heart , Lady Elowen would always come first . What did it matter that he was the Sixth Prince ? To her , he was still nobody . Iris remained silent throughout the ride back . Yet , there was a difference in her silence today ; she lacked her usual cold detachment . Caelan stole a few glances at her .

She seemed troubled , but he couldn't quite bring himself to ask what was weighing on her mind . He spent the entire journey worrying and waiting , but Iris didn't say a word . Slowly , Caelan's heart sank . His disappointment deepened into frustration . When the carriage came to a halt , Caelan set his face , remaining tight - lipped as he moved to get out . A beat too late , Iris called out softly . " Your Highness . " Her voice was barely a whisper . Caelan paused and turned back , his expression blank . " Yes ? " Iris kept her head down . " I come from nothing .

Before I turned six , I had never once eaten a full meal . Whether it was during my time with the Garrett family or after I entered the Crown Prince's Wing , I have been slapped , forced to kneel in punishment , and severely beaten . " Caelan stared at her , caught off guard . " I never dared to dream of anything more , " Iris continued . " Just staying alive and having enough to eat was plenty for me . As for marriage ... even a servant from a decent family wouldn't look twice at me . After all , I have no education , and I'm not beautiful ." Caelan's brow furrowed sharply .

" Who told you that you aren't beautiful ? Elowen ? " Iris shook her head slightly and risked a glance at him , her eyes rimmed with red . " Her Grace only mentioned the day Lady Delphine locked me away in the back courtyard . She told me you said you liked me and that you wanted to marry me . I told her you were just taking pity on me , that you only wanted to save a lowly maid . But Her Grace asked me if you just wanted to save me , there were so many other ways to do it . Why would you use marriage as an excuse ?

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er 702 You Are the Only One Caelan said nothing Finished " Her Grace said that you truly care for me . But I don't understand why . What is there about me for you to like ? I'm clearly just ... " Her voice broke , and she hung her head as a fragile , muffled sob escaped her throat . Hearing her cry , Caelan's heart melted completely . All his previous disappointment and anger vanished in an instant , replaced by an overwhelming wave of tenderness and love .

You are beautiful , intelligent ; proper , and attentive , Iris , " Caelan said , his brow knitting as the raw emotion broke through his defenses . " You are deeply endearing , and you deserve the absolute best the world has to offer . " Iris froze , visibly stunned . The moment she looked up at him , large , glittering tears spilled over and rolled down her cheeks . Caelan let out a soft sigh . " Why are you crying now ... ? " He desperately wanted to reach out and wipe her tears away , but he didn't know if he had the right - or if he would pull away .

Iris bit her lip , seemingly gathering every ounce of courage she possessed . " Then , Your Highness ... would you still be willing to ... " She couldn't bring herself to finish the sentence , her face flushing crimson in an instant . Caelan understood immediately . He was asking if he was still willing to marry her . He had seen many sides of Iris - submissive and dutiful , calm and collected , and unyielding with her spine > erfectly straight . But this was the very first time he had ever seen her like this : shy , nervous , and entirely vulnerable .

His heart skipped a violent beat , a sudden rush of warmth expanding in his chest until he felt completely consumed by it . Completely losing control of his resolve , he nodded without a second thought " I am . " Realizing that wasn't enough , he quickly added , " I want nothing more than to marry you . You are the only one I want . " Hearing this , Iris let out a long , heavy breath , looking entirely relieved though even more tears began streaming down her cheeks .

Panic - stricken , Caelan scrambled closer to wipe her tears away , completely unbothered by the fact that he was now kneeling on one knee before her . I said yes , so why are you crying even harder now ? " I'm just relieved , " Iris sobbed , wiping at her eyes " And happy Caelan's heart ached with pure tenderness 173 Chapter 792 You Are the Only One Finished It was only then that Iris noticed his position . Finding her courage , she caught his arm . " Your Highness , please , stand up . " Allowing her to guide him , Caelan moved to sit down right beside her .

Then , as if it were the most natural thing in the world , Iris leaned over and gently rested her head against his shoulder . Caelan went entirely rigid . It wasn't out of aversion or a lack of affection ; it was simply the very first time in his life he had ever been this physically intimate with a girl he loved . He was so incredibly nervous he didn't know what to do with his hands , let alone what to say . Out of his line of sight , Iris was

still crying , but the shyness and vulnerability had completely vanished from her face . Her expression was entirely blank .

Putting on a front and playing weak was easy . Giving a man what he wanted to hear was just as simple . Iris knew he had feelings for her , so she had deliberately engineered a shift in momentum . First , she used silence to make him feel helpless , disappointed , and even angry . Then , just as his emotions peaked , she pared her vulnerability , sharing a half - true account of her miserable past . By echoing his own feelings back to him and shedding tears at the exact right moment , she maximized his pity and affection .

In the end , it took very little effort to get exactly what she wanted . ***** Back at Duskmoor Manor , Elowen returned to the banquet after seeing Iris off . On her way , she spotted Scarlet and Finn standing together in the shade of a tree , speaking in hushed ones . Finn's facial expressions were particularly animated . Intrigued , Elowen took a few steps toward hem . ' Scarlet , have you read that new novel ? " Finn was saying , his voice thick with intrigue . " Only five chapters are out , but people in Vanelle are absolutely scrambling for it .

I had to line up forever just to snag a copy . The prose is incredible , and the plot twists are so addictive you just can't put it down . " Scarlet nodded slightly . " I know it . The author writes under the pen name The Last Wayfarer Elowen raised an eyebrow . " The Last Wayfarer ? That's an interesting name . " Noticing Elowen's approach , Scarlet unmediately offered a respectful bow Finn followed suit with a quick greeting , sneaking a couple of glances at her before testing the waters " Your Grace , if I may be so bold as to ask is " The Last Wayfarer your new pseudonym ?

Elowen laughed . " It really isn't me this time I've been so incredibly busy lately , where would I find the time to write a novel ? " Fipa scratched his head . " True " He couldn't hide his disappointment " Then who could it be ? With writing that good , there are only a handful of people in Vanelle who could pull it off Elowen had no idea either . She ran through a few possibilities in her mind , but came up short " See if you 2/3 Chapter 702 You Are the Only One can find me a copy of The Last Wayfarer's book . I'd like to take a look . " Finn nodded eagerly . Out !

" Finished Once the baby's birth celebration wound down , Elowen and Cassian stayed behind to see off the last of their guests . As night fell , an imperial decree arrived at the Duskmoor Manor . The Emperor had kept his promise . He officially bestowed upon Emily the title of Lady Everwyn , granting her a golden certificate and seal . Along with the title came a massive trove of rewards - silks , satins , gold and silver vessels , and rare medicinal herbs . It took quite a while just to read through the inventory list .

r 703 You'll See in a Moment He truly doted on this little niece of his . " We thank His Majesty for his profound grace . " Elowen and Cassian kowtowed and accepted the

decree . Quin , who had delivered the edict , smiled as he helped Elowen to her feet . " Speaking of which , that isn't the only joyous occasion in the palace today ." Elowen listened intently . " Oh ? Is there more good news ? " " Indeed , " Quin replied with a smile . " His Majesty has also decreed a marriage for Caelan . " Elowen's heart stirred slightly , but her face remained perfectly composed .

" Which noble lady is the bride ? " she asked casually . " Well , she isn't exactly from a noble family , " Quin replied . " She is a maidservant from Lady Elira's palace . You know her , Your Grace - her name is Iris . " Though Elowen had known this all along , she feigned surprise right on cue . " Iris ? Really ? " Quin sighed softly . " Yes . Everyone in the palace is saying how incredibly lucky she is . " Lucky ? Elowen thought to herself . Iris's life had been anything but easy . Everything she had / achieved today was entirely by her own doing .

Elowen reflected on how Iris could have easily agreed to marry Caelan much sooner to become his secondary consort and secure a stable footing in the palace . Yet , she hadn't . She had waited , biding her time until the perfect moment arose to visit Duskmoor Manor and lay out her true intentions clearly to Elowen . Only then was she willing to make her move . She truly held Elowen in the highest regard . Iris was never one to waver ; she simply reserved her genuine devotion and loyalty for those she deemed worthy .

Of course , considering Iris had rejected a marriage decree once before , it was no small feat to make Caclan willingly beg the Emperor again , win Lady Elira's approval , and secure a smooth engagement in such a short span of time . Iris possessed both the calculation and the means to pull it off . She was bound for great things .

Boosted by the influx of grand rewards , Elowen was in high spirits She personally oversaw the inventorying and storage of the gifts in the treasury before heading back to find Casstall When she entered the room , Cassian was sitting by the window , polishing a sword Elowen recognized it as his personal blade Long , slender , and gleaming with a cold , sharp light , it was a weapon he rarely brought out . For some reason , he was in the perfect mood for it tonight , deliberately and meticulously wiping it down with a cloth in the dead of night .

1/3 Elowen took a sip of water from her cup and asked casually , " What are you polishing your sword for ? " " You'll see in a moment . Cassian replied , completely unbothered . Elowen finished her water but kept holding the cup . She tilted her head , amused . " Since when did you start keeping secrets from me , Cassian ? " Before he could answer , Anson entered the room and spoke in a low voice . " Your Graces , the two princesses of Nordia and Prince Zachary have arrived . " Elowen paused as it suddenly clicked why Cassian was polishing his sword .

A smile touched her lips , and she nodded to Anson . " Show them in . " ' Right away , Your Grace . " Moments later , the three guests arrived and took their seats . Mira and Cora served refreshments . Valessa pulled a silk box from her sleeve and presented it to Elowen with both hands . " A small token of my appreciation . " Elowen accepted the box and opened it to find an Etched Heirloom Pendant . The carving was exquisite , and the stone was smooth and flawless - clearly a priceless piece . Tracing her fingers over the Etched Heirloom Pendant , Elowen said , " This is far too valuable .

I really shouldn't . " Valessa smiled warmly . " It's for the child . No gift is too valuable . " Abandoning any further polite formalities , Elowen offered her sincere thanks and handed the box to Mira o put away . As Mira left with the box , Valessa's expression grew much more serious . " We also came here tonight for a more important matter , Your Grace . For you . " Elowen knew exactly what was coming . " We will be leaving Vanelle to return to Nordia very soon , " Valessa said , looking directly at her Before we go . I want to ask you one last time : won't you come back with us ?

I heard about your son's high fever and ! know it's not as simple as it seems . The people of Avenlor will always view your family with suspicion which means they will inevitably try to eliminate you . But Nordia is different . You are the Oracle of Nordia There , they have nothing but reverence for you " Elowen fell silent From across the room .

Zachary suddenly spoke up in his native Nurdian the sides as the Oracle coure allowed to have multiple husbands Elowen didn't understand the language but asian caught every word His expression remained cool and detached as he lightly tapped the hilt of his sword producing a sharp metallic ring . He slowly turned the blade lening the andlelight carch the steel . The bright reflection Chapter 704 You'll Scc in a Moment flashed directly across Zachary's face , forcing him to squint against the glare . " A pity , " Cassian replied Fanished hurriedly , speaking fluent Nordian .

" As the Oracle's husband , I happen to be a very good fighter . Anyone looking to get close to her will have to answer to my sword first . " Zachary fell sullenly silent . He knew for a fact he was no match for Cassian . " What are you two talking about ? " Elowen asked , thoroughly confused . Valessa gave a dismissive wave . " Men are always tedious , Your Grace . Pay them no mind . " Elowen didn't press the matter and brought the conversation back to the issue at hand . " I truly appreciate your kindness , Valessa .

But my child is still far too young to endure such a long , grueling journey . I'm not against visiting Nordia , but I'm afraid it will have to wait . " 13.3K 1 Awakening Love Reborn to Be His Duchess

r 704 You Jealous ? Valessa wasn't particularly surprised by the answer ; she had expected as much . " Regardless , we will be waiting for you in Nordia . You are our

Oracle , and that will never change . " With that , she stood to take her leave . Elowen rose to personally see them out , and Cassian set his sword down to walk beside her . Outside , the night was at its deepest . Moonlight washed over the cobblestone path , casting a crisp , cool glow over the courtyard . Watching the three figures recede into the distance , Elowen turned to Cassian , thoroughly amused .

" Did Zachary just try to provoke you? " " Mm , " Cassian murmured . " He said the Oracle of Nordia can have multiple husbands . " Elowen's eyes lit up . " Wow , really ? " Apparently so , " Cassian said , raising an eyebrow . " Looking forward to it , Ella ? " Elowen smiled beautifully , her eyes crinkling . " How could I be ? I love you too much to ever want anyone else . " She gave him a playful nudge . " Right , you jealous ? " ! Cassian leaned down and nipped her lip in a gentle bite . " Damn right I'm jealous , " he mumbled against her mouth .

Leaning into each other , they turned to head back inside . But at the threshold , Cassian paused slightly and glanced toward a pillar along the outer veranda . Elowen followed his gaze . " What is it ? " Cassian knit his brows faintly , then looked away . " Nothing . " The two went inside , and the door clicked shut behind them . Shrouded in the deep shadows behind the pillar , Rosaline pressed herself against the wood , her heart hammering wildly against her ribs . She had only come by tonight to retrieve something , completely unprepared to cross paths with the Nordian envoys .

She had meant to slip away unnoticed , but then she caught the word Oracle The Oracle of Nordia Lady Flowen was actually the Oracle of Nordia Rosaline had assumed the peace talks had gone in smoothly because the cavoys were showing respect to Cassian . Now she realized it was all because of Lady Flowers vered extraordinary stats Everything revolved around her Rosaline leaned heavily against the pillar , her mind racing and her fingers trembling uncontrollably For close her eyes fight , take a ragged breath , and desperately try to force down the mounting panic .

Following the celebration for the baby's birth , life at Duskmoor Manor settled into a peaceful routine . Terrified by the Emperor's recent warnings , Lady Elira and the Jones family had temporarily gone quiet , ceasing all their underhanded schemes . Meanwhile , the imperial court was busy preparing for Caelan's wedding to his secondary consort . Though Iris came from humble beginnings , Caelan was fiercely determined to ensure she received a proper , honorable ceremony . At the manor , Rosaline went about her days quietly , taking meticulous care of the two children .

She was so dutiful and responsible that no one could find a single flaw in her work . Elower didn't make things difficul for her either ; she granted every reward Rosaline deserved , but never spoke a word more to her than necessary . Over at the Silverloom Exchange , Scarlet was keeping everything running like clockwork . After the opening - day commotion , the shop's reputation had only grown . Everyone knew that Draven ,

the Commander of the Imperial Guard , had personally shown up to back Elowen's grand opening .

To the public , this implied the shop had the Emperor's personal backing , and no one dared cause trouble after that . Beyond its high - profile protection , the Silverloom Exchange truly delivered . The fabrics were exceptional . the patterns innovative , the craftsmanship exquisite , and the prices fair . It also helped that Scarlet was not only stunningly beautiful but possessed a flawless memory for every high - profile client's specific preferences . Naturally , the shop became a favorite among the elite .

With life calming down , Elowen finally found the time to visit the Silverloom Exchange herself . For one thing , the shop was her brainchild , yet she / hadn't set foot inside since opening day . For another . before the Nordan envoys left Vanelle , they had brokered a major deal with the Exchange for fifty premium bolts of fabric . Given the scale of the order , Elowen wanted to oversee the details in person . It was a beautiful , clear day . Elowen changed into something more practical and set off for the south side of the city by carriage , accompanied by Mira and Cora .

Meanwhile , Leander , a vice minister at the Ministry of Rites , was being dragged out one house by his younger sister , Charlotte . Charlotte was about sixteen or seventeen , with charming features and a voice as bright as a songbird Hurry up , Leander ! " she urged , tugging at him . " I don't know what's been wrong with you lately , but you've been moping around like a ghost for days . Mother and Father said you absolutely have to get out of the house !

Leander wasn't entirely sure why he felt so drained , either Trying his best to rally his spirits , he replied " Alright , I'm walking But what's the rush ? It's not like we're racing to the market Charlotte looped her arm through his , beaming Who says we aren't ? We're going to the Silverloom Exchange Before Leander could even process this , Charlotte hauled him through the main doors of the Exchange Finished Inside , the hall was bright and spacious . The walls were lined with an endless array of fabric samples .

ranging from simple silks to intricate gold brocades , and from soft lavenders to deep sapphire blues . A few rosewood tables and chairs were arranged by the windows , offering customers a place to rest and enjoy a drink . Nearby , a group of women huddled around a bolt of newly arrived patterned satin , whispering excitedly . The moment they stepped inside , Charlotte let go of Leander's sleeve and rushed over to the display racks . " These fabrics are gorgeous ! " she gasped in admiration . " Look , Leander ! This pattern is so unique , and the color is so vibrant !

" Left behind in her wake , Leander just stood there , his eyes wandering awkwardly , unsure of where to look .

Chapter 705 Do You Have a Fiancé ? He didn't really know why he was here . Though Charlotte had dragged him along, he knew that if he had truly dug his heels in , ten Charlottes wouldn't have been able to budge him . Reep down , he understood the real reason he hadn't refused , " Welcome , please take your time looking around , " a woman's voice cut through his thoughts . " Just let me know if anything catches your eye . I'm Scarlet . " Leander's heart skipped a beat . He looked toward the voice .

Scarlet was wearing a newly made , pale green robe , her hair pinned up in a simple , neat bun with a plain silver hairpin . Her skin was as white as snow , giving her a fresh , clean look . She noticed him , too . Unlike Leander , who was silently staring , Scarlet offered a polite smile , perfectly composed . " Long time no see , Leander . And who might this be ? " she asked openly , her gaze shifting to Charlotte . " This is my sister , Charlotte ! " Leander blurted out instantly , terrified she might misunderstand . Scarlet nodded in understanding , her expression unchanged .

She smiled warmly at Charlotte . " Charlotte , then . " Charlotte beamed back at her . " You have excellent taste , " Scarlet said , gesturing to the display rack beside them . " This fabric is a new arrival here at the Silverloom Exchange . It's woven from the finest silk and features an interlocking lotus pattern . The color is vibrant without being gaudy , making it perfect for a robe or a vest . With your fair complexion , this shade will suit you beautifully . " Delighted by the compliment , Charlotte nodded eagerly and began peppering Scarlet with questions .

Scarlet answered each one patiently . She spoke with a warm , engaging familiarity , effortlessly explaining everything from the fabric's origin and the intricacies of the weave to the meaning behind the patterns and styling advice . Standing where he was , Leander watched the two of them chatting and laughing . A sharp pang hit his chest - not a deep wound , but aching nonetheless . He remembered the first time he saw her . It was in the Great Hall of Duskmoor Manor . She had walked in , eyes cast down respectfully , bringing in water . With just that single glance , his heart had leaped .

Later , when he found out they would be working together , he was secretly ecstatic , unable to sleep a wink all night . But then came that day on the street , when he accidentally discovered her past . The Stargazer Pavilion . A hostess who only performed music and entertained guests . In front of others , he had chosen to defend her . Yet looking back on it later , he found it unbearable . He had struggled with his feelings , but in the end , he chose to distance himself . He was a vice minister at the Ministry of Rites .

Marrying a former courtesan as his primary wife would make him the laughingstock of his colleagues and bring shame upon his family . He couldn't afford to be reckless . Chapter 705 Do You Have a Fiance ? Y'er staring here now , watching Scarlet go about her work with such quiet confidence - her smile completely free of self - pity or hesitation - Leander felt a sudden , inexplicable wave of bitterness wash over him . Charlotte

turned back and waved at him . " Leander , come look at this! Do you like this color ? " Snapping out of his thoughts , Leander walked over .

He glanced at the sapphire - blue fabric , then at Scarlet , his voice a little strained . " They're ... all very nice ." Scarlet smiled , but it was a polite , professional smile - the kind she gave to any regular customer . " If you like it , Mr. Whitmore , I can have someone wrap it up for you . At the Silverloom Exchange , you can return or exchange any fabric within three days if you're not completely satisfied ." " No need , " Leander blurted out . Realizing he sounded too abrupt , he quickly added , " As long as Charlotte likes it .

" Charlotte , entirely oblivious to her brother's awkwardness , looped her arm through Scarlet's . She rambled on about the dress designs she had in mind , eventually pulling Scarlet toward the ready - to - wear clothing section . Scarlet led her deeper into the shop , her movements graceful and her voice bright with laughter . Leander's mind remained a tangled mess . After browsing the clothing racks for a while , Charlotte suddenly turned to Scarlet and asked out of sheer curiosity , " Scarlet , do you have a fiancé ? " Leander's heart leaped into his throat , his ears instantly tuning in .

Scarlet was caught off guard for a fraction of a second , but she smiled openly . " No , I don't have a fiancé . " Charlotte's eyes lit up , and she was just about to pitch her unmarried brother as a perfect candidate when Scarlet smoothly continued . " But there is someone I love . And he loves me very much , too ." As she spoke , her eyes grew soft and bright giving her an almost radiant glow . Disappointed but still curious , Charlotte pressed on , " Who is he ? " " Why are you asking so many questions ? " Leander suddenly interrupted . " That's her private business .

" Charlotte glanced at him and pouted , muttering under her breath , " I was just curious ... " " It's quite all right , " Scarlet said with a gentle smile . Just then , a steady cadence of footsteps echoed from the entrance . Everyone turned to see a tall , ruggedly built figure stride into the shop . It was Draven . He was wearing a brand - new set of charcoal - black martial robes , complete with subtle embroidery at the collar and cuffs , a silver silk belt cinched at his waist , and spotlessly polished boots . Leander took one look at him and couldn't help but frown .

The man had actually washed his hair ; every single strand was meticulously combed into place. 10:51 am M Chapter 705 De He looked absolutely radiant , a far cry from his usual groff appearance as Commander of the Imperial Guard .

Chapter 706: He's Jealous

Draven arrived carrying a greaseproof paper parcel. He walked directly to Scarlet upon entering, his voice softening. "A new pastry shop just opened outside the palace's south gate, and their specialty is honey cake. I bought you some while it was still fresh. Give it

a try?" Taking the parcel from him, Scarlet smiled and asked, "How are you back so early today?"

"I couldn't stop thinking about you, so I came over," Draven replied, his eyes casually drifting over to Leander. Nearby, Leander observed the intimate conversation between Draven and Scarlet, and his jaw tightened involuntarily. Knowing of Draven's feelings for one of Elowen's maids and his defiance against his parents to marry Scarlet, Leander had assumed it was mere impulsiveness.

However, witnessing the tenderness in Draven's eyes and the joy on Scarlet's face, Leander realized how trivial his own preoccupations with social status were compared to their genuine connection. Irritated by this realization, he coldly remarked, "Mr. Hall, you usually have many duties to attend to. What brings you back so early today? Don't tell me that falling in love has made you neglect your work. If so, I'm afraid you're failing to repay His Majesty's trust."

Elowen entered just as Leander spoke, pausing upon hearing his harsh words. Beside her, Mira sensed the jealousy underlying Leander's remarks and whispered, "Leander is being incredibly out of line." Elowen gently corrected her, "Because he's jealous." Understanding the situation, Mira suggested, "Should you go in and help Draven, Your Grace? He's a military man; he might not be able to outtalk a court official." Elowen smiled, replying, "No need. Draven can handle this just fine."

Elowen explained, "Whose side did Draven serve on before?" Mira quickly understood and exclaimed, "His Grace?" Elowen nodded, "Exactly. He's served His Grace for so many years. How could he possibly fail to handle a trivial matter like this?" Inside the shop, Draven remained composed, calmly addressing Leander's concerns about his early return and his relationship with Scarlet.

Emphasizing the Emperor's support for their affection, Draven challenged Leander to report him if he believed he was wrong. Speechless, Leander was left to ponder his actions. Elowen's arrival eased the tension, as she encouraged everyone to continue with their tasks. She then addressed Draven and Scarlet, suggesting they finalize their wedding plans due to their deep affection.

Leander, feeling defeated, acknowledged the correctness of the decision. Elowen, pleased with his response, turned to Charlotte, who was overwhelmed by the princess's attention. Meanwhile, Leander, heartbroken and poorer after footing Charlotte's bill, left the shop dispirited. As he glanced back, he noticed Scarlet engrossed in conversation with Elowen, while Draven's menacing glare caught his eye.

Unaware of the silent exchange, Elowen inquired about the Silverloom Exchange. Scarlet, with a smile, suggested discussing it in the back office, where she presented the ledgers to Elowen, ready to share the details.

After reviewing the fabric inventory , Elowen headed to the back of the building to visit Finn's new bookshop . The moment Finn heard Elowen had arrived , he hurried over to present a novel like a prized treasure " Your Grace , take a look at this !

" Elowen glanced down and read the pen name on the cover . " The Last Wayfarer ? " This was the author Finn had mentioned back during the celebration for Caius and Emily's baby . Recently , this writer and their books had taken Vanelle by storm , even threatening to eclipse the popularity Elower had enjoyed years ago under her own pen name , " Azure ." " You asked me to track it down for you that day , and I didn't forget , " Finn said with a broad grin , holding the book out to her with both hands . " The author is completely shrouded in mystery Have a look .

Your Grace - see if you can guess who it is ." Amused , Elowen took the book , flipped past the title page , and began to read . By the end of the opening chapter , she completely understood why the novel had become such a sensation in the city . The writing was exceptional - sharp and precise where it counted , yet beautifully evocative in its quieter moments . The plot twists felt entirely natural rather than forced , and the characters were vivid without being exaggerated . It truly was a rare masterpiece . The story was quite short , and Elowen finished it quickly .

Turning to the final page , she blinked in surprise , seemingly caught off guard by how fast it had ended . She even flipped back a few pages in disbelief , but she had indeed reached the end . " Well? What do you think , Your Grace ? It's good , right ? " Finn asked , watching her with a smile . " It's very good , " Elowen praised genuinely . Finn sighed , a look of wonder on his face . " If only we knew who they were . I had some people look into it , but all we found is that the manuscripts are left at the shop door every few days .

No one has ever actually seen the person delivering them . The shop manager said that one morning , he opened up and found a greaseproof paper bundle on the ground , weighted down by a stone . Inside was a thick stack of pages signed " The Last Wayfarer .' It's happened every three to five days , without fail , but we're completely in the dark about their identity . " He paused , looking thoughtful . " The Last Wayfarer . Sounds like someone carrying a heavy heart . " Elowen nodded , placing the book on the table . " I'll take this copy with me .

Keep a copy of the next volume for me when it arrives . " Finn nodded eagerly . By the end of the month , a sharp autumn breeze had begun to blow . Elowen was in the study reviewing the ledgers when Cora hurried in . " Your Grace , Draven is here . He ... seems to be in quite a rush . " Elowen paused . " What is the date today ? " " The twenty - ninth , " Cora replied . enter , he bowed , his voice tight . " Greetings . Your Grace "

Elowen nodded slightly . " What's the matter ? " Draven didn't beat around the bush . " Your Grace , that girl has arrived in Vanelle .

My parents have ordered me home for dinner tonight to meet her . I have absolutely no desire to go , but they made it clear that if ! don't show up , they will disown me . "

Chapter 708 An Invitation + Pearis He bowed deeply again . They you , Your Grace , have His Grace find a reason for me to stay at Duskmoor Manor for a few days , just until the storm blows over " " But Draven . " Elowen said , " running away won't solve anything . " Draven blinked , caught off guard . " Think about it , " she continued . " You can avoid them today , and maybe tomorrow . Cassian and I could easily make up an excuse to keep you here at Duskmoor Manor , but if your parents are truly set on you marrying this girl , are you never going home again ? " Draven looked torn .

" But I honestly don't know what else to do ... " " You need to have a serious talk with them , " Elowen said earnestly . " Tell them plainly that you won't marry anyone else because your heart belongs to Scarlet . " Draven scratched his head , his voice muffled . " I told them that last time , and I just ended up getting a sound thrashing . " Elowen smiled . " Last time you acted on your own without asking for my advice . " Draven stared at her , a glimmer of hope sparking in his eyes . " This time , don't just butt heads with them , " Elowen said with a smile .

" Go back and tell your parents that Duskmoor Manor has invited your whole family over for dinner tonight . They can hardly reject an invitation from Cassian , can they ? " Draven's face lit up . " Just tell them that dinner has already been prepared for your family at the manor . Even if they have their doubts , they won't have the nerve to question Cassian directly . Once they arrive and see the feast is actually waiting for them , what can they possibly say ? " Draven was stunned for a moment before giving way to sheer delight . He bowed repeatedly in gratitude . " Thank you , Your Grace !

Thank you so much ! " With that , he turned and strode out of the hall . Upon returning home , Draven stood at the front door , taking several deep breaths to steel himself before pushing it open . He searched the house and finally found his parents in his father's study . The door was firmly shut , light streaming from beneath it . Whispers drifted out from inside . As Draven drew closer , he caught a fragment of his mother Maud's voice , mentioning a " handsome reward . " Before he could lean in to hear more , Roger sharply caught the sound of his approach . " Who's out there ?

" his father demanded , turning a cold gaze toward the door . Draven quickly took a step back and answered truthfully , " Father , it's me . " Chapter 708 7 - Invitation The conversation inside ceased instantly . A moment later , the door swung open . eads Roger and Maud were seated properly at the center of the room , while the young

woman sat just below them . Draven barely glanced her way . Maud looked down at him with a commanding air . " You're back just in time . Your cousin from your aunt's side has arrived . " She gestured toward the young woman . " This is Evelyn Prescott .

You may call her Evelyn . " The girl stood up and offered Draven a gentle , polite curtsy . " Hello , Draven , " she said softly . Draven forced a tight smile . " Evelyn . " Roger set down his teacup , his voice carrying a natural , intimidating authority . " We called you back today so you and Evelyn could get acquainted . She has just arrived in Vanelle and doesn't know her way around , so you will be showing her the sights . " Draven fell silent for a moment . Then , lifting his head , he looked Roger dead in the eye , pronouncing each word deliberately .

" Father , Mother , there is something I need to say . " Maud's brow furrowed slightly . " Speak . " Draven set his jaw . " Scarlet is the only one for me . I won't marry anyone else . " Roger's face darkened instantly . Slamming his hands down , he shot to his feet and roared , " You insolent boy ! Say that again ! " Maud's expression turned equally grim . Seated to the side , Evelyn's smile froze , and she looked around in sheer awkwardness . Draven did not flinch . He kept his eyes locked on his father . " Father , if you want to beat me , I won't fight back .

But no matter how many times you strike me , my answer remains the same . I will marry no one but Scarlet . " " You think you can defy me now ?! " Furious , his face pale with rage , Roger snatched a wooden ruler from the desk and raised it to strike . r Draven didn't flinch or dodge . Instead , he calmly drew an invitation from his sleeve and held it out , his voice steady and resolute . " Furthermore , Father , Mother - Duskmoor Manor is hosting a banquet tonight . and they have invited our entire family for dinner . " Roger's ruler froze mid - air .

Maud stepped forward , took the invitation , and opened it . It did indeed bear the official seal of Duskmoor Manor . Written upon it were just a few lines , penned in a courteous tone , stating that Cassian wished to look back on old times and meet the parents of his former subordinate . He cordially invited the Hall family to the manor that evening for a gathering . Maud stared at the letter , reading it over and over , before fixing a furrowed brow on Draven . " Did you go begging Duke Cassian for this ?

" Chapter 208 3 Daren thought in himself that he hadn't begged Cession at all he had begged Elowen " No , he answered honesty Maud's eyes narrowed sharply . " You really are dead set on this , aren't you ? To marry that Scarlet girl , you even managed to get Duke Cassian involved . " I truly didn't ask Duke Cassian , Draven replied . " This invitation came directly from him . But if you and Father don't want to go , you can always refuse . Though , since it's Duke Cassian , turning him down might mean offending the Emperor as well . " Maud stared at him , momentarily stunned .

She let out a sharp , mocking laugh . " Well , Draven , you really have grown a spine , haven't you ? Threatening your own mother now ? " Draven lowered his head . " I wouldn't dare threaten you . I am simply delivering the message . " Maud scoffed ,

turning her back on him . She softened her tone as she addressed Evelyn . " Evelyn , dear , something has come up at home tonight , and you must be exhausted from your long journey anyway . Why don't you rest in the guest room ? If you need anything at all , just let the maids know .

3 Chapter 709 Could We Speak in Private ? Evelyn offered a poise , graceful smile . As right Once Evelyn was settled . Roger and Maud changed into fresh cishes and set out with Draven When their carriage arrived at Duskmoor Manor , they were surprised to find Elowen and Cassian waiting to greet them in person . Elowen looked elegam and composed in a begonia - pink robe , her hair adorned with a dangling gold and pearl hairpin . Beside her stood Cassian dressed in dark , casual attire , his handsome face bearing a characteristically cool expression .

Caught off guard by the honor , Roger and Maud hurriedly bowed in unison . " Greetings , Your Graces . " Cassian gave a slight nod . Elowen offered a warm smile . " Draven is always so reliable in his duties . I often thought he must come from a wonderful family , and seeing you both today proves me right . " " You flatter us , Your Grace , " Roger said quickly . " Our boy is stubborn , but he is incredibly fortunate to have your guidance and favor . Beside him , Maud smiled in polite agreement . " You are far too modest , " Elowen replied gently before gesturing inward .

" Please , come inside . Dinner is ready - just a few simple , home - cooked dishes , so I hope you will bear with us . " The party made their way into the manor . Dinner was laid out in the Great Hall of Stillwater Court . But just as everyone took their seats , footsteps echoed from the doorway outside . " Scarlet , you're back ! " Mira's cheerful voice rang out first . " Yes , " Scarlet replied softly . Inside the Great Hall , Roger and Maud froze slightly at the sound of the name . They exchanged a brief , silent look but said nothing . Outside , Scarlet asked , " Where is Her Grace ?

" " She's in the Great Hall , " Mira replied with a laugh . " We have guests tonight . " " Guests ? " Scarlet repeated , stepping across the threshold into the hall . Scarlet paused on the threshold , surprised to see the crowded table , her gaze lingering a moment longer on Draven . She had been working at the Silverloom Exchange all day and had no idea they were coming . had never met Roger and Maud because of their fierce opposition to the marriage , she almost instantly . d process the surprise , Elowen spoke up with a warm , welcoming smile .

" This is Scarlet , of the Silverloom Exchange . She is incredibly sharp and meticulous ; the entire lly runs on her dedication . " Turning back to the door , Elowen beckoned her . " Come in . napter 799 Could We Speak in Private ? Starlet . These are Draven's patents . " Scarlet stepped into the room , maintaining her composure as she offered a graceful curtsy . " Greetings , Your Graces . It is a pleasure to meet you , Mr. and Mrs.

Hall Finally , she turned to Draven . " Hello , Draven . " Without a second thought , Draven grinned broadly . " Don't be so formal !

You must be exhausted after a long day at the Exchange . Come , sit down and have some- He was cut off by a sharp cough from Maud . Realizing his blunder , Draven shut his mouth . Besides his wife , Roger looked equally uncomfortable . Taking the cue , Elowen addressed the room . " Cassian and I are well aware of the deep affection between Draven and Scarlet , and even His Majesty has taken a personal interest in the matter . I understand the Hall family values propriety , and given Draven's close position to the taperor , you might worry about Scarlet's less - than - perfect past .

However , Scarlet now leads the Silverloom Exchange - ar, institution established by royal decree . In terms of standing , she is a perfectly suitable match for Draven . " Roger glanced sideways to gauge Maud's reaction , while Draven watched his mother with bated breath . Maud simply knit her brows . " Your Grace , if I may , could we speak in private ? " " Of course , " Elowen agreed readily . By choosing to speak privately rather than refusing outright in public , Maud had shown there was still room for negotiation .

As the two women withdrew to the back parlor , Draven's stomach churned with anxiety . He looked toward Scarlet , his heart in his throat . Scarlet met his gaze , her eyes soft , gentle , yet filled with an undeniable strength . Looking at her , the fear inside him slowly began to fade . ***** In the back parlor , Maud spoke in a low voice . " Your Grace , if I am to be completely honest with you , my husband and I were actually at the grand opening of the Silverloom Exchange . " Elowen blinked in surprise .

r " We saw with our own eyes when someone started a riot outside , openly dragging up Scarlet's checkered past , " Maud continued . " But right there , in front of a massive crowd , Scarlet kept her composure , remained utterly unfazed , and exposed the instigator's tricks . Even then , we thought to ourselves that this girl had real courage and integrity . She is truly rare . " Elowen realized that Roger and Maud's presence at the grand opening was likely engineered by the Jones family . Yet , in a twist of fate , it had backfired , showing them exactly how brightly Scarlet could shine .

" If that's the case , " Elowen probed gently , " then you actually like Scarlet ? " Maud let out a soft sigh . " The world has always been harsh on women . A young girl doing whatever it takes to survive often has no choice in the matter . The Hall family isn't some grand nobility , so who are we to look down on anyone ? Scarlet is a good girl , and we hold absolutely no malice toward her . " Elowen frowned , genuinely puzzled . " Then why refuse to let Draven marry her ? " Chapter 700 would We Speak in Private ? 3 one Maud patred for a moment .

" The first time Draver , came home and said he wanted to marry a maid who used to be a laver Hostess - we naturally feared fie had been seduced and led astray . He is the wardrobe Commander of the Imperial Guard , responsible for the Emperor's safety . It is entirely possible for treacherous people to approach him , bribe him , and ultimately

harm His Majesty . That is why we gave him a thrashing Later , we learned Scarlet was your personal attendant , and after seeing her for ourselves , we realized Draven truly loves her .

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Maud's brow furrowed slightly as she continued . " However , even as Draven's parents , we have to look out for Scarlet as well . Right now , Draven is madly in love with her - so much so that he's willing to sever ties with us . But what about the future ? If his feelings change down the road , what becomes of Scarlet ? Besides , her past is a matter of record . Draven works in the palace , and jealous rivals will inevitably use it against him .

He might brush it off once or twice , but over time , will he start to feel ashamed ? Will he regret being so impulsive ? I am deliberately giving him a hard time , not because I dislike Scarlet , but to make him understand that marrying her comes at a high cost . People never cherish what comes too easily in this world . Only by letting him suffer hardships to win the girl of his dreams will he realize how hard - earned this happiness is , and how fiercely he must protect it . If he hears the worst of it from his own parents first .

he'll be able to handle whatever cruelty the outside world throws at them later . " Elowen listened to Maud's explanation , falling into a long , thoughtful silence . After a long moment , Elowen let out a soft sigh . " To be honest , Mrs. Hall , I completely understand your concerns . It is only natural for parents to look ahead and want the best for their children . You worry that Draven might have a change of heart , that Scarlet will be mistreated , and that years of petty gossip will eventually erode their affection for one another . You are not wrong for anticipating these things .

" Elowen reached out , placing her hand gently over Maud's . Her voice was soft , yet every word carried weight . " But Mrs. Hall , there is one thing you might not have considered . " Maud looked up at her . " Which is ... ? " " Scarlet is not the kind of woman who relies on a man to survive , " Elowen said calmly . Maud blinked , taken aback . " She runs the Silverloom Exchange , " Elowen continued . " From the grand opening until now , she has managed every single detail . She is sharp , efficient , courageous , and reliable . Even the noble ladies of Vanelle speak highly of her .

Did you know that when Lady Aveline comes to select fabrics , she explicitly requests Scarlet's assistance ? She won't deal with anyone else . Maud's eyes flickered with surprise . r She knew exactly who Lady Aveline was - highly aristocratic , notoriously fickle , and incredibly difficult to please . For Scarlet to be personally requested by her was no small feat . " Scarlet didn't get to where she is today because of Draven , or

because of me , " Elowen said softly . " She did it on her own . During her years at the Stargazer Pavilion , she never gave up on herself .

When people tried to ruin the Exchange's opening , she didn't back down for a second , even when she stood alone . Scarlet pulled herself out of the mire , step by grueling step . " you don't She paused , looking Maud directly in the eye , her tone growing more earnest . " So , Mrs. Hall , need to worry about Scarlet being left helpless . It would be wonderful for her and Draven to walk through life together . But if the day ever comes when Draven changes his mind and leaves her , she will still thrive . She has her own skills , her own career , and her own path to walk .

She is not a vine clinging to someone else ; she is a tree capable of standing tall on her own . As for Draven , he is your own son . You know his character better than anyone . Is he really the type to be unfaithful ? Is he the type to lose interest once he Chapter 718 + teve Been Overthinking This gets what he wants ? Deep down , you already know the answer . " Elowen patted the back of Maud's hand with a gentle stoile . " It's only natural for parents to worry about their children . But sometimes , you have to offer them a little trust and give them the freedom to live .

They are grown now , and they can make their own choices . " Maud took a deep breath , a look of profound relief washing over her face as she smiled . " You are entirely right , Your Grace . I have been overthinking this . " Elowen shook her head with a warm chuckle . " It's not overthinking It's just a mother's love . " The two women shared a smile , and the heavy atmosphere in the back parlor instantly lifted . Maud stood up and smoothed down her dress , looking as though a massive weight had been lifted from her shoulders . She offered Elowen a respectful bow . " Thank you , Your Grace .

I have learned a great deal today ." With that , they made their way back to the Great Hall together . Cassian ate his dinner in calm composure , while Roger and Draven remained visibly on edge , casting intermittent glances toward the door . When Elowen and Maud finally returned , both father and son instinctively sat up straighter . Their eyes darted between the two women , searching their faces for any sort of sign . But Elowen looked perfectly serene , and Maud was equally unreadable ; neither gave anything away .

Maud took her seat , picked up her glass for a sip of water , and remained silent . Draven's stomach churned with anxiety . Desperate to ask what had happened but lacking the courage , he sullenly shoveled a mouthful of food into his mouth . He chewed mechanically , tasting absolutely nothing .