

## Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

Chapter 91 The Plea Finished Upon seeing Elowen, Rowena immediately rose to her feet, her face etched with apology. "Just now, my daughter Elara behaved improperly, barging into your private chambers without permission. It was a grave offense. Please accept my deepest apologies on her behalf." She performed a formal, perfectly measured curtsy. Elowen was somewhat taken aback but maintained a pleasant smile. "It's alright." But Rowena continued to offer profuse apologies, even nudging Elara to make her own. Elowen finally caught on.

No wonder Cassian had told her not to worry-Rowena was clearly a woman of proper decorum. Once they were seated, Rowena spoke first. "Yesterday, I mentioned my nephew's marriage prospects to His Grace. He said the matter could be discussed with Your Grace." Elowen smiled, "Here's the situation. The Duke's uncle, General Aldric Ashcroft, has a younger daughter. Sylvia. She has come of age, and I thought, as the two are of similar years, perhaps they could be introduced." Rowena nodded. "General Ashcroft and my husband are old acquaintances.

I have met Sylvia a few times in the past a lively, pretty girl. She must have grown into a fine young woman." "Mother..." Elara's voice was soft and pleading from the side. "I'm of age too, and I still haven't married." Rowena shot her a glance but said nothing. Elowen looked over.

"Yes, Miss Wrenner is at a perfect age. Have any suitable matches been considered?" Elara whispered, almost to herself, "Cassian is quite good..." Rowena's expression darkened. First, the girl had barged into someone's private chambers unannounced. Now she was praising another woman's husband to her face.

Her daughter, usually so obedient, seemed to lose all sense and reason whenever Cassian was involved. As her mother, Rowena was burned with shame, wishing the floor would swallow her whole. Elowen's voice remained calm and measured. "The Duke is, without doubt, an exceptional man. But the world is full of different people, and the most suitable husband is different for each woman. Take your father, for instance-he is a truly good man. Marrying him was a great fortune in your mother's hite, was it not?" Rowena started, looking at Elowen with a mix of shock and admiration.

Chapter #1 The Plea be together... As long as you agree to let me in. I'll serve you well and-"  
Smack! Rowena could bear no more. She sprang up, strode forward, and struck Elara hard across the face. Elara froze, her hand flying to her cheek, staring at her mother in disbelief. In all her years, her mother had never struck her. The sting of the blow and the harshness of the reprimand broke the dam; tears streamed down her face. Rowena's face was dark with shame and anger. "You shameless girl!" Her fingers trembled violently, but she did not let it show.

Phinsheet Taking a deep, steadying breath, she turned back to Elowen, her eyes filled with profound remorse. "I have spoiled this child beyond reason. She is not in her right mind today and has spoken unforgivable nonsense. Please, Your Grace, don't take it to heart." C 1.7K 1 3月

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Chapter 92 Your Beloved Is The Duchess? Finished "This is not nonsense!" Elara cried out, tears streaming down her face. "I love him! I will have no one but Cassian!" Rowena's composure crumbled further. She shot Elowen a mortified look before gripping Elara's wrist and hauling her up from the floor. "Enough! We are leaving. You will not disgrace us further here!" Elara fought back with desperate strength. "No! I won't go! I must see him!" "Enough!" Rowena's voice was

sharp, a whip-crack of maternal authority. "There is no 'him' for you here! Only His Grace, the Duke of Duskmoor!

If you continue this unseemly behavior. I will have you married off to the first suitable match I can find by tomorrow! Perhaps that will finally cure you of this madness!" "I'll marry no one else!" Elara's voice rose to a near-shriek, hysterical. "If you won't let me have Cassian. I'd rather die!" The word "die" hung in the air, heavy and dangerous. Elowen immediately stood. "Mrs. Wrenner, Miss Wrenner, please calm down..." She gave a quick, meaningful glance to Mira and Cora, signaling them to be ready. Don't let her do anything rash. At that moment.

the sound of wheels rolling over flagstones came from outside the door. Elowen looked up to see Cassian in the doorway. Dressed in dark charcoal, his expression was unreadable, cold.

"Cassian!" Elara saw him too. With a burst of frantic energy, she wrenched her wrist free from her mother's grasp and stumbled towards him. "Cassian, I can't outargue them... They won't let me marry you, but I- Theard, Cassian's voice cut through the room, calm and measured. Elara stopped, sniffling. When she saw him, her heart steadied at once.

He's come to stand up for me Cassian's next words shattered that hope completely. "Elara, I will not marry you' Elara jerked as if struck, her eyes wide with stunned disbelief, fresh tears welling Cassian's face showed no pity, no softening. I do not know what I have ever done or said to give you such a mistaken impression. My support for you and your mother has always been, and will always be because your father served as my lieutenant and now sullers alone in Nordia. I have no romantic feelings for your E never have." ::30 pm ppp. Chapter 92 Your Beloved Is The Duchess? Finched "No...

that can't be... Elara stared at him, her gaze desperate, searching. "How can you not care for me? You assigned your own guards to protect me..." The Nordians seek to turn your father," Cassian stated flatly, "You and your mother were targets. The guards were a necessity." "But... you never married. All these years... You only have a Duchess now because the King arranged it." Elara choked out between sobs. "You were waiting for me, weren't you? All this time you waited?" Cassian's expression remained impassive. "I did not marry because I chose not to settle.

Not because I was waiting for you." Elara wiped her face roughly with her sleeve. "Then... then they say you have someone in your heart... Cassian. that person is me, isn't it?" Cassian didn't hesitate. "It's not you." Elara stood frozen, her lips moving soundlessly. "Not me? How... how can it not be me? Then... then who?" Cassian's gaze lifted, crossing the room, and found Elowen. Elowen, however, was not looking at him. Her brows drew tight, worry filling her eyes as she watched Elara. Her nerves were strung taut-she clutched Mira's hand beside her.

"Who is she?" Elara's eyes were red-rimmed, burning with a final, stubborn demand. "If it's not me, then who? Tell me!" Following Cassian's line of sight, Elara turned her head. Her bewildered, tear-filled eyes landed on Elowen. 'Don't tell me... your beloved is the Duchess?' Elowen started, looking from Elara's shattered face to Cassian. Her eyes met his-deep and utterly serious. That look sent a jolt of pure, unadulterated panic through her. No. It can't be... can it? 'Yes: Cassian's answer was calm, deliberate, and devoid of any hesitation.

A simple, devastating admission A roaring filled Elowen's ears, as if something had violently exploded inside her skull Cassian... loves me? Elara let out a broken, disbelieving laugh.

"Cassian, to reject me, you would go so far as to invent such a tale... If the Duchess truly held your heart, why did you not seek her hand at Hale Manor Everyone knows the marriage was the

King's decree, that she was meant for the Crown Prince I did not seek her hand formally only because I didn't have time" Cassian's interruption was final, his demeanor now distant. Elara, this ends now.

For your father's sake, my protection for you and your mother remains. But I will not see you alone again. You are not to come to Duskmoor Manor. I will give the order, you will not be admitted." 7.3 ::30 pm ppp. Chapter 92 Your Beloved Is The Duchess? Finished All strength left Elara's body. She slumped to the floor, a puppet with its strings cut, utterly broken. Cassian turned to Rowena. "Mrs. Wrenner, you may still call upon the manor if you have need. But do not bring Elara again." Rowena, her own face streaked with tears, nodded meekly. "I understand.

Thank you, Your Grace." She understood perfectly. After Elara's appalling behavior today, the fact that Cassian still offered his protection was an act of profound generosity. She took a deep breath, bent down, and pulled her weeping daughter up from the floor. Her voice was low, firm, and heavy with finality. "We are leaving." 1.7K 2 2:30 pm p p admin

Chapter 93 She Doesn't Understand At All 龜 Finished Elara was a portrait of shattered grief, her face a mess of tears, moving like a puppet as her mother led her away. After the Wrenners departed, a heavy silence settled over the room. Cassian's mood was palpably grim. Elowen was the first to break the stillness. She approached him, her voice gentle. "It's alright. She's young, and she's stubborn. She'll understand better when she's older." Cassian lifted his gaze to hers, deep and inscrutable. "That is all you're concerned about? Elara?" Elowen blinked, processing his question. "Oh, and Mrs.

Wrenner, of course. She's very sensible. Before you arrived, she even slapped Elara." She sighed softly, "She must be feeling terribly guilty and heartbroken." Cassian pressed his lips together,

frustration simmering. He spoke slowly, deliberately, "A moment ago, I said the one in my heart was you." At this, Elowen actually smiled, a reassuring, understanding smile. "I know. I understand." His eyebrows shot up. "You... understand?" She nodded. "Of course. Elara's infatuation with you is too deep.

Telling her you love me was the only way to make her let go, at least for now." Cassian could only stare. So she doesn't know. She doesn't understand at all. And she was being so terribly considerate about it. You can rest easy, my lord. I won't breathe a word of this to anyone." Otherwise, the woman you truly love would surely be heartbroken. A mix of exasperation and reluctant amusement tugged at him. "What makes you so certain I wasn't speaking the truth?" Elowen tilted her head slightly, thinking. "My lord, our ages..." She chose her words carefully. "There's a bit of a gap.

While I don't recall us ever meeting before, I would have been very young then. You couldn't possibly have been in love with me when I was seven or eight, or even eleven or twelve, could you?" Cassian's lips parted, ready to explain. Just then, Bran entered from outside. "Your Grace, Lord Jett from the palace is here." קחו 2.30 Chapter 93 She Doesn't Understand At All This was the Lord Chancellor, Daphne's father. Finished Cassian wasn't surprised. Last night at the palace, he hadn't only discussed the letters from Nordia, but he had also relayed the events at Miren Lake.

The King had cursed Galen then. "It was before the entire court," Quin continued. "Lord Garrett's face turned white, then red. He knelt and kowtowed, begging for forgiveness. His Majesty only permitted him to rise after the council adjourned." "He got what he deserved," Cassian said, his tone cool. "Indeed." Quin agreed with a smile. "No doubt Lord Garrett will be

taking a firmer hand with his children at home henceforth." Before taking his leave, Quin remembered something else. "Oh, and Your Grace.

Starting tomorrow, His Highness the Crown Prince will resume his duties in the council, assisting His Majesty with state affairs." In other words, while Alaric bore some responsibility for the Miren Lake incident, he was, after all, the Crown Prince. The King hoped Cassian would show his nephew a measure of patience. Cassian gave a noncommittal grunt. "Noted." In the palace, news from the morning council travelled swiftly to the Queen's chambers. Isla sent for Alaric to join her for the morning meal. As soon as they were seated, she fixed him with a direct stare.

"What exactly happened at Miren Lake?" 1.7K 3 3/3 admin

Chapter 94 A Sudden Collapse Finished Alaric recounted the events at Miren Lake, of course, omitting his own tangled feelings for Elowen and Cedric's disparaging remarks about Julian. Isla frowned. "Cassian is getting way out of line. Your father even favored him-he actually scolded Galen in council today... The poor man, at his age, was humiliated before the entire court for no good reason. I heard he invoked house discipline the moment he returned home and gave his son a sound thrashing.

Daphne escaped punishment, though she's said to be walking with a limp today from yesterday's punishment." A limp? Alaric's mind stirred. He suddenly remembered his uncle mentioning that he had punished Daphne with kneeling at the verse salon. That day, it was said the true Azure would appear, walking with an intentional limp. Everyone had assumed it was Daphne. Only Elowen had voiced doubt. Could it be that Daphne wasn't Azure at all, but had somehow taken

the credit by mistake? And Elowen, the one who questioned her... could she be the true Azure?

The sudden thought shocked even him.

Enough about them," Isla's tone shifted, focusing on him. "What is your opinion of Daphne?"

Alaric pulled his scattered thoughts together, answering vaguely, "She is... fine." Isla pressed on,

"Would you be willing to take her as your Crown Princess?" Alaric instinctively frowned. "...

Father reprimanded Lord Garrett today, clearly displeased with the family. He's unlikely to favor or promote them in the future. For me to marry his daughter might only anger Father further."

Isla waved a dismissive hand. "Your father scolded him today, but who's to say he won't praise him tomorrow?"

The tides of court change in a heartbeat. No one can guarantee the future. Besides, your uncle grows more arrogant by the day. He'll incur the wrath sooner or later. Mark my words, he won't last." Her voice turned earnest. "You are the Crown Prince. You must begin cultivating your own faction at court. In my view, the Garretts are a perfect choice. After the Miren Lake incident, they will surely bear a grudge against Cassian. If you marry Daphne, the Garretts will devote themselves to supporting you.

And Daphne herself is Azure, the writer Maerwyn admires so much." The more Isla spoke, the more she warmed to the idea of this match. Alaric's brow remained furrowed. He picked up a spoon, stirring the frumenty in his bowl aimlessly. Isla watched him for a moment, then her voice turned cold. "Don't tell me you're still pining for Elowen?" 1/3 2:31 pm ppp. Chapter 94 A Sudden Collapse Finished Alaric's heart gave a violent lurch. His hand stilled. He gritted his teeth. "You misunderstand, Mother. My feelings for Elowen... are nothing but annoyance." Only then did Isla look satisfied.

The rest of the meal tasted like ash in Alaric's mouth. Before he took his leave, his mother offered one final piece of advice. "You may resume your council duties tomorrow. Attend to them diligently, strive to please your father. I will find an opportunity to speak with him and arrange the marriage this year. You will wed Daphne." Alaric forced a smile. "As you wish, Mother." He returned to the Crown Prince's Wing as usual and went to his study to read. But shortly after sitting down, a sharp, crippling pain seized his abdomen. Alaric couldn't focus on a single word.

He slumped over the desk, trembling, a cold sweat breaking out across his skin. "Your Highness? Your Highness?" A servant, noticing his distress, approached. Alaric's hair was plastered to his damp forehead. He forced his eyes open, but the servant's face swam and blurred before him. His throat worked. "Elowen..." he croaked. The servant froze. Alaric grabbed the man's wrist, his own hand shaking. "I ate something bad..." His constitution had never been robust.

Isla, managing the harem, vying for the king's favor, and securing her own position, had little time or attention to spare for her son's delicate health. There were many things Alaric couldn't eat, but Isla seldom remembered, and even Alaric himself sometimes forgot. Only Elowen had known it all. The food she used to bring him had never caused any trouble. And whenever he did fall ill from something he ate, she would brew him a special, warm broth. He never knew what she put in it, but drinking it always brought profound relief. "I want that broth..."

Elowen, go make the broth for me," he murmured. The intense pain was sapping his strength. His grip loosened, his voice growing faint. The servant heard him but was utterly confused.

"What broth, Your Highness? What kind of broth do you mean?" Before he could get a clear answer, Alaric's eyes rolled back, and he lost consciousness completely 213 2:31 pm Chapter 94

A Sudden Collapse 0 Finished The servant hastily reported the incident to the Queen and summoned a royal physician to the Crown Prince's Wing. Seeing her son's paper-white face on the bed. Isla flew into a rage.

"Are you all corpses in this wing? Can you not even care for the Crown Prince properly?" The servants trembled, kneeling in fear. Isla's face was like stone. "How did this happen?" A servant prostrated himself on the floor. "The physician says.... it was something he ate at the morning meal 1.7K 3/3 admin

Chapter 95 Alaric's Whisper Isla's face hardened. On the bed, Alaric drifted in and out of consciousness. His lips moved, mumbling something. Leaning closer to listen, Isla immediately frowned. Finished A short while later. Theodric arrived, his voice carrying into the chamber before he did. "How is Alaric? Has he awakened?" Isla rose and curtsied, a shallow smile on her lips. "Your Majesty, you really should arrange a marriage for Alaric as soon as possible." "Oh?" Theodric raised an eyebrow.

"What prompts this sudden urgency?" "Listen to what he says in his delirium." Isla gestured slightly towards the bed. Theodric bent down, hearing Alaric's hoarse whisper. "Elowen..." Theodric straightened, his expression turning grave. "She is a Duchess now, and yet she still clings to Alaric's mind. Who knows what she has said to him in private? Look what she has done to our son," Isla hissed, venom in her tone. Theodric shot her a sharp look. "What does she have to do with this? She fulfills her role as Duchess without a hint of impropriety.

Several times now, it has been our son who overstepped and offended her. If anyone has been improper, it is Alaric. I should be asking you how you raised him!" Chastened. Isla lowered her head. But as he looked at his son on the bed, Theodric felt a headache brewing. "Still... you are

not wrong. His marriage should indeed be arranged quickly." A nephew crying out his aunt's given name in his dreams? If such a thing became known, the royal family would be a laughingstock. And more importantly, if word of this reached Cassian...

Theodric sighed wearily, "I had thought the Garrett girl suitable, but now..." Isla saw an opening and seized it. "The Garretts are a fine family, a worthy match for Alaric. And Alaric likes their daughter." Theodric's gaze was skeptical. "You are certain he likes her?" On the bed, Alaric murmured Elowen's name again. Isla forced a brighter smile. "Even if his affection is not yet deep, marriage will foster it. It is the same in the end." Theodric weighed the options for a long moment, then sighed in resignation, "Fine. He is your son.

You may make the arrangements." 1/3 Chapter 95 Alaric's Whisper 0445 Finished After breakfast. Elowen took a stroll through the courtyard, inspecting the rooms under repair and exchanging a few casual words with the servants tending the grounds. Mira came in from outside and approached her. "Your Grace, I was passing by Rose Hall earlier and heard Lady Marwen shouting. I asked around-turns out Lady Sylvia went out." Cora was surprised. "Lady Sylvia left the manor?" "Is that so strange?" Mira asked, glancing at her. "Very!

In the past, she scarcely set foot outside all year!" Elowen was also curious. "Sylvia merely went out. Why would Lady Marwen berate her for that?" Mira's eyes widened. "Your Grace, you should have heard the language! She called Lady Sylvia shameless, said she must be sneaking out to meet some random man." Cora couldn't help but add, "She says such things when her daughter steps out once, yet her son visits the Velvet Lantern every other day, and she never breathes a word." Elowen sighed. Later, in the study, she drafted an invitation.

It was for Rowena, asking her to bring her nephew to visit Duskmoor Manor the day after tomorrow. Elowen's thought was simple-if Sylvia and Rowena's nephew proved suitable, Sylvia could marry and escape her mother's suffocating control. However, this was the first time she had composed such an invitation herself. Worried her wording might be incorrect, she took the draft to find Cassian in his study. As she approached, she could hear someone reporting from inside. She caught the word "Crown Prince" and paused just outside the door. The voices inside fell silent at the sound of her footsteps.

Cassian looked up from his desk, his gaze finding her in the doorway. "Elowen. He raised a brow. "Come in." Elowen walked in obediently. Cassian watched her, his tone unreadable. Have you come because you heard the Crown Prince fell ill?" Her expression was earnest. "I came specifically to see you, not because of him. I only just heard about his illness outside the door." Cassian said nothing. Elowen asked curiously, "How did he fall ill? Too much wickedness catching up with him?" 213 Chapter 95 Alancs Whisper Finished A faint smile touched Cassian's lips. "No.

He ate something that disagreed with him." "I see. Elowen nodded, not at all surprised. Alaric's constitution was notoriously weak, with many dietary restrictions. In her past life, she had been the only one who remembered them all. She would try to remind him, but he often found her bothersome, dismissing her concern as nagging. Only when he was truly suffering, pale and miserable, would he call for her. Her heart would soften, and she would brew him a special broth. It was a tonic her aunt had taught her-delicious and remarkably effective.

Her aunt had developed it out of concern for her uncle's frail digestion and later passed it on to Elowen. 1.7K 313 ( admin

Chapter 96 Wish Him Ill The broth was a complicated affair, taking hours to prepare each time. Finished Alaric would drink it eagerly when unwell, only to complain about its smell and shoo her away once he recovered. Looking back, Elowen felt the urge to curse Alaric for his foolishness, and her past self for her own blind devotion. Now, she had no interest in the matter. She simply held out her draft invitation, blinking with a smile. "My lord, would you look this over for me? How is it? Does anything need changing?" Cassian lowered his gaze to the parchment spread before him.

The handwriting was elegant and graceful, much like the woman herself. Several edits were visible; she had clearly taken great care. His mood lightened considerably. A faint smile touched his lips. "It's well written." Elowen eagerly selected a quill from the stand, dipped it in ink, and presented it to him with both hands. Cassian took it, making a few notations and circling a phrase or two. He gave it a final look. "That should do. Just transcribe a clean copy." Elowen leaned in to read, her eyes shining with admiration. "Truly worthy of the Duke of Duskmoor.

Your edits make it far more appropriate than my draft." Cassian's smile deepened, unbidden. "Sweet talker." Elowen beamed. "Then I'll take my leave. I'll have it sent as soon as it's copied." She turned to go. "Wait." Cassian raised a hand. His initial impulse was to catch her wrist, but some unspoken thought redirected his movement. His arm rose higher, settling instead around her waist. A faint blush colored Elowen's cheeks. Her voice softened. "W-what is it?" Cassian's palm rested against the soft curve of her waist. "One more thing.

Regarding the Crown Prince." Elowen thought for a moment. "Don't tell me it's..." Cassian's look was encouraging, inviting her to guess. Elowen seemed to have an idea. She lowered her voice, her eyes alight with hopeful curiosity, "Did he... eat something so bad that he's gravely ill and

won't recover?" A low chuckle escaped Cassian. "No." 1/3 Chapter 96 Wish Him III Finished  
"Oh. Elowen sounded almost disappointed. Cassian looked amused. "From your tone, one might think you wish him ill." Elowen gave an embarrassed little laugh. "Not at all...

I was just guessing." Cassian studied her intently. "The royal physician prescribed medicine. He should wake soon. What I want to tell you is news from the palace." "Yes?" "The Queen and the King have discussed it. They intend for the Garrett girl to marry into the Crown Prince's Wing as his Princess." As he spoke, Cassian watched Elowen's expression closely. He detected no trace of sorrow, not even surprise. His eyebrow lifted slightly. Elowen nodded thoughtfully. "Seems a fitting match." Then, blushing again, she whispered, "My lord, is there anything else? If not, could you let me go?"

I'm a little ticklish..." Cassian's gaze dropped to her waist, darkening for a moment. He held it there a beat longer before releasing her. Elowen left the study, carefully transcribed the invitation, and had it delivered to Rowena. A prompt reply arrived, along with a letter containing the name and a brief introduction of her nephew, complete with a small portrait. Elowen was quite pleased. As she examined the portrait with a bright smile, Cassian glanced over her shoulder. "Do you favor that type of man?" he asked. Missing the hint of jealousy entirely, Elowen smiled, "What's not to like?"

He's young and handsome." Cassian blinked. Young? So she doesn't like older men like me? Unaware of his internal shift, Elowen closed the portrait. "Well then, I should go find Sylvia now." She sent Cora to Rose Hall to summon Sylvia, arranging to meet in the receiving parlor. For some reason, Elowen felt Sylvia seemed more vibrant, as if parched earth had been gently revived by rain, finally showing signs of life. 2/3 Chapter 96 Wish Him ill After curtsying.

Sylvia asked. "You want to see me, Your Grace?" Finished Your mother asked me to help find you a nice match," Elowen said warmly.

"I've met a lovely young man -around your age. Name's Kaclan Page. He comes from a good family; trained as a scholar at the royal abbey, and his way with ancient texts got him a spot in the Royal Archives two years back." Sylvia blinked, taken aback. "The day after tomorrow, he will be visiting Duskmoor Manor. You could meet him then." Elowen reached for the portrait. Sylvia's expression grew conflicted. Elowen paused, the portrait half-unrolled. "Do you have some concerns?" Sylvia hesitated, words seemingly caught in her throat. "It's alright," Elowen reassured her, her voice gentle.

"Speak your mind. This is your marriage, your future. I merely wanted to make an introduction if it suited. If you like the idea, we can proceed. If not, we forget it. I would never force you." Her soft tone gave Sylvia courage. She bit her lip, summoned her resolve, and sank to her knees with a soft thud. "Your Grace, I... I already have someone in my heart." 1.7K admin

Chapter 97 An Old Man's Intuition Elowen was taken aback. She first helped Sylvia to her feet.

"Get up." Sylvia rose with Elowen's help. Elowen asked, "Who is he? When did it start?"

Finished Sylvia blushed. "It's the gentleman I met on the hill that day. His name is Peres. Though he's a merchant's son, he is courteous and kind to me." That explained Sylvia's unusually bright mood that day. A memory clicked for Elowen. "And you went out today to see him, didn't you?" Sylvia's face flamed crimson. "We didn't do anything improper! Just sat talking a while-nothing more!

We didn't even touch!" Elowen chuckled, "Relax. I'm not a prude." Sylvia only turned redder.

"But there's one thing I should remind you." Elowen's tone turned serious. "Mr. Page is in royal

service. Peres is from a merchant family. In our world, commerce will always rank lower than official position. When we marry, we cannot consider only our present affection. We must look to the future. What will your life be like? What of your children's prospects? These require careful thought." Sylvia nodded. "I get it." But Elowen could see the lingering naivety in her eyes.

Sylvia didn't truly understand. Still, Elowen had given her counsel. The final choice was Sylvia's own. If Elowen pushed too hard and Sylvia later regretted it, resentment would follow. 'Well, as long as you understand," Elowen said, letting it go. Yet Sylvia's brow furrowed. "But, Your Grace..." She bit her lip, looking crestfallen. "My mother will never agree. She is determined for me to marry high-ranking family. She would never accept a merchant." into a Elowen thought for a moment. "Then have Peres come to Duskmoor Manor the day after tomorrow as well." Joy illuminated Sylvia's face.

"Thank you, Your Grace!" As Sylvia left, practically floating with happiness, Elowen felt a lightness too, humming a little tune under her breath. "Sylvia is right. Lady Marwen will never consent to her daughter marrying a merchant. She will make a dreadful scene, likely directing her fury at you. Cassian's low voice came from the doorway. 1/3 Chapter 97 An Old Man's Intuition Elowen looked up, tilting her head. "How do you know?" Cassian raised a brow.

"An old man's intuition, perhaps?" Elowen blinked, then laughed, "What's with this 'old man' talk all of a sudden?" Cassian's gaze flickered to the portrait still lying near her hand. Finished Elowen didn't realize he was sour about the age thing. She didn't dwell on it. She stood up and went to him, her skirts rustling. "My lord, you said Lady Marwen would blame me. But am I not the Duchess? Would she truly show me so little regard?" Cassian nodded. "She would." Elowen

was stunned again. Bran, standing behind Cassian, chimed in, "Your Grace, you should have seen it!"

During the arrangements for Lady Vivian's marriage, it was chaos for months. Lady Marwen complained that one suitor had too many brothers to split the inheritance, or that another's family had no title, their rank too low. And she said, these things to their faces! When His Grace reprimanded her, she simply collapsed on the floor, wailing about how pitiful General Ashcroft was, how pitiful her children were, threatening to follow the General to the grave..." Elowen could already picture Marwen pounding her chest and howling. Just imagining it made her scalp prickle.

Yet she had already promised Sylvia she could invite Peres. The day after tomorrow, Rowena and her nephew Kaelan would be guests at Duskmoor Manor. If Marwen caused a scene, as the hostess, Elowen would be mortified... This type of person was the hardest to handle. Reasoning with her was a total waste of breath. Even the most skilled were helpless against someone who discarded all dignity and was willing to overturn the table at any moment. Elowen closed her eyes in despair. "Need help?" Cassian's voice, calm and measured, broke through her thoughts at just the right moment.

She opened her eyes, hope blooming. "Really?" A faint smile played on Cassian's lips. "Really. But there's a condition" "What condition?" "Make me happy." "Ah..." 2/3 Chapter 97 An Old Man's Intuition Finished Elowen thought seriously. How could she make Cassian happy?/ Perhaps... A divorce? If she voluntarily stepped aside and returned the title of Duchess to the woman he truly loved, surely that would make him ecstatic? For some reason, watching the play

of emotions across her face, Cassian felt a distinct sense of foreboding. He tapped his fingers lightly on the arm of his chair.

"I'm hungry." Elowen immediately volunteered, her face brightening. "My lord, let me fix you something warm-just for you!" Cassian's gaze deepened. "Hmm?" Elowen beamed. "I'll knead the oat-and-wheat dough myself-promise it'll be tender and flaky, with a hint of rosemary mixed right in! Then I'll fill it with caramelized onions and sautéed mushrooms, and crack a lovely runny egg on top before baking. It'll be a perfect herb-crustéd savory tart-will that do?" Cassian paused for a moment. 1.7K 2 3/3 admin

Chapter 98 Shall We Continue Tonight? Of course. She was utterly guileless, understanding nothing. What had he been expecting? A faint, almost imperceptible smile touched his lips. Very well. Elowen promptly disappeared into the kitchen. Finished Alaric's abdominal pain had kept him unconscious for much of the day. By evening, the worst of it had finally subsided. Following the royal physician's instructions, he was allowed simple, easily digestible food. Yet. nothing the servants brought stirred his appetite. Your Highness, please. eat something.

You haven't had a thing all day," a servant pleaded. Take it away, Alaric said. his face expressionless. The servant dropped to his knees, nearly weeping. "This is the fifth dish the kitchens have prepared, Your Highness! If you touch none of it, Her Majesty will have my hide!" Alaric glanced at him, a rare flicker of sympathy crossing his features. Seizing on that slight softening, the servant asked tearfully, "Is there anything you crave? Name it, and I will have the kitchens make it at once." Alaric's throat worked. The words slipped out almost against his will.

"Tart." "Pardon, Your Highness?" Herb-crustéd savory tart." Alaric's brow furrowed. Elowen used to make them for him. He could always eat two whole ones. She would always ask,

hopeful, "Are they good?" He, thinking her too proud, needing her spirit tempered, would deliberately scowl and declare them flavorless, dreadful. Now, thinking back, it seemed an age since she had last baked those tarts for him. Looking at the dry, crumbly pastry on the table, a strange, sharp pang of regret twisted inside him.

But then another thought occurred: she must have stopped making them because her skills had declined. No way she'd be making them over at Duskmoor Manor for Cassian. Chapter 98 Shall We Continue Tonight? Firusted And even if she were, a man as aloof and refined as Cassian would never deign to eat more than a single, polite slice. Elowen had been busy for quite some time. When she emerged, a kitchen boy followed, carrying a large ceramic platter piled high with golden-brown tarts. She served Cassian a slice herself, her heart fluttering nervously as she watched him lift a forkful to his mouth.

She had once believed her herb-crustured savory tarts were among her finest dishes, impossible to dislike. Until Alaric. Every time she asked, he would coldly declare them tasteless. It had eroded her confidence so deeply she had never dared bake them again... until today. Holding her breath, she asked, "... Are they good?" "Delicious," Cassian replied without hesitation. Then, he proceeded to eat two full slices. For the first time in recent memory, he felt genuinely, pleasantly full, sitting back in his chair in a slight daze. Thinking he was merely being polite, Elowen turned to Bran.

"Would you like some? I made plenty." Bran looked to Cassian. Cassian gave a slight nod. "If you wish." So Bran tried a slice. Then he ate three. In the eight years since joining the household, living in comfort with ample food and warmth, this was the first time he had eaten to the point of pleasant stupor. Standing beside the wheelchair, one hand on his rounded belly, he gave Elowen

a thumbs-up with the other. "Your Grace, these tarts are incredible! The herb-infused flaky crust, the rich, earthy filling-truly the best in all the kingdoms!" Elowen smiled, a little abashed.

But a small piece of her long-lost confidence seemed to drift back into place. "I know how to make many other kinds of tarts, all quite good," she said brightly. "My lord, if you like them, I could make them for you every day." She looked at Cassian expectantly. "Would that make you happy?" 23 ( 2.3 Chapter 98 Shall We Continue Tonight? Cassian, feeling pleasantly lethargic from the meal, murmured, "Not bad." Elowen blinked. "Then... shall we continue tonight?"

Cassian paused, the lazy contentment evaporating. He said nothing. Finished Thinking he hadn't heard, Elowen repeated cheerfully.

"My lord, I will certainly continue striving to make you happy tonight." Bran's eyes widened comically beside them. A sharp glance from Cassian silenced him. "Still staring? Duties all finished?" Bran grinned. "Right. I'll be off then." Watching him leave, Elowen asked curiously, "Why did you send him away? It might have been fun to have him here later." "You wanted Bran to watch later?" he asked slowly. Elowen tilted her head. "Is that not allowed? It's more lively with company." "Lively is a consideration for this sort of thing?" Was she suggesting Bran cheer from the sidelines?

"It was like that in my family home..." Elowen murmured, then quickly brightened. "But just the two of us is fine too! That way, we can concentrate properly on where to place the pieces."

Cassian finally sensed a disconnect. "Place the pieces?" "Yes." Elowen nodded. "Playing chess with you, my lord." Cassian stilled. "...Chess." A faint, almost imperceptible thread of disappointment colored his tone. 1.7K (li 2 admin

Chapter 99 Let Me Make You Happier Elowen tilted her head. What else would we be doing, my lord?" Cassian averted his gaze, his tone vague. "I just thought... we might share a cup of spiced tisane or something He quickly changed the subject. You know I play chess:" Finished Her attention was successfully diverted. She nodded. "My brother told me! Lord Piers Leofric of Falconcrest is a chess prodigy. He never lost a match and was so arrogant that he'd wager heavily. demanding his defeated opponents quit the game. Over time, he nearly ruined the spirit of chess in Averior.

Then you challenged him. The wager was simple: the loser would serve as the other's personal manservant for three days. Lord Piers agreed... and lost the very first game." The reality had been far more dramatic than her retelling. The match between Piers and Cassian had drawn massive crowds. Elowen, visiting her grandfather's estate at the time. had missed it. hearing the tale later from Julian. It was said that during the match, Cassian had calmly sipped water while playing. While Piers agonized over his moves, Cassian lazily took a sip and told Bran, "I'm hungry.

Fetch some pastries." And still. Piers lost. Cassian. eating a pastry, had offered one to his opponent. "Care for one?" Piers ignored both the pastry and the offer. grinding his teeth. "One game doesn't count! I wasn't ready! Best of three!" Piers lost the second game. He stared at the board in disbelief before looking up at Cassian, fists clenched. Cassian raised a brow. "Best of five?" Mortified but stubborn, Piers nodded. He lost the third game. He didn't propose a best of seven, finally admitting defeat in despair. "I will never touch a chessboard again..." "No need. Cassian interrupted.

Just don't touch one for the next three days." Piers was confused. Cassian reminded him. "The wager was three days of service. For those three days, you are my servant I don't allow my

servants to play chess. But as the young lord of Falconcrest, whether you play or not is 1/3 2:31 pm Chapter 99 Let Me Make You Happier none of my concern." Piers froze. Finished After that, the chess circles of Avenlor settled down. The match between Piers and Cassian became an unparalleled legend. Elowen smiled softly, "I also heard that you learned chess from Dowager Queen Selene.

That you and Her Majesty would play late into the night. I may not be very skilled, but I thought... perhaps you miss those times?" Cassian's heart softened unexpectedly. He did. He missed it. His mother had been a woman of gentle strength. Were she not born a woman, she might have become Avenlor's foremost chess master. Instead, chosen for the palace, she had to feign losses to please the King during their games, only to teach his brother and himself in secret and then thoroughly trounce them match after match. "Well, my lord?" Elowen's eyes were shining with an impossible light.

"Shall we play?" Looking at her, something stirred within Cassian. Interest sparked, and a smile touched his lips unbidden. "Let's." Elowen fetched the chessboard and set it up on the table, her expression earnest. "Your Grace, don't go easy on me. The important thing is that you enjoy yourself!" As the game began, Cassian discovered, to his surprise, that Elowen's skill was remarkably high-perhaps even surpassing Piers. Truly a clever girl. However, as they progressed into the mid-game, she began to struggle, pondering each move at length.

Cassian watched her carefully, then subtly eased his offensive pressure. In the end, Cassian lost to Elowen by a half-point margin. Realizing she had won, Elowen blinked in disbelief. "I won? I actually won?" Cassian smiled, "Indeed. You won." Elowen studied him. "My lord, did you let me win?" "Did it feel like I let you win?" he countered. She shook her head. It hadn't felt that

way. "Then you won, Cassian affirmed, offering an excuse. "It's been a while. I'm out of practice." 2/3 2:31 pm ppp.

Chapter 99 Let Me Make You Happier Finished Elowen looked from him to the board, and finally, a delighted smile blossomed across her face. In the warm glow of the lamplight, her eyes and the curve of her lips softened with pure joy, like ice thawing, rivers flowing again, spring flowers covering the hillsides-a breathtaking kind of beauty. Cassian found himself unable to look away for a long moment. He thought he understood now why his mother had always let his father win. "Happy?" he asked. Elowen nodded, though she felt a flicker of confusion.

Wasn't she supposed to be the one making him happy? "Then let me make you happier," Cassian said, his gaze gentle. "What do you mean?" "I'll take you to meet someone." After that meeting, Elowen decided the plan would proceed. Rowena and her nephew would come as scheduled. The guest list had simply grown by one. On the appointed day, she chose the manor's relatively cool pavilion by the water for the gathering, setting out pastries. 1.7K 21 2:31 pm P p p Awakening Love Reborn to Be His Du admin

Chapter 100 Showdown At The Pavilion Finianed The appointed hour had not yet arrived. Elowen was making a final check to ensure everything was in order when Marwen arrived early. "Lady Marwen, you've come," Elowen greeted with a smile. "If I hadn't, my daughter's entire future would be ruined beyond repair!" Marwen's voice was icy, her face devoid of any warmth, her expression grim. Elowen's smile faded. Sylvia spoke softly. "Mother, Her Grace is kindly arranging a match for me. This is unseemly." Marwen glared at her. "This is unseemly?

It would be truly unseemly for you to marry into that Page family!" She had been kept in the dark for days, only learning this morning that Elowen was arranging a match for Sylvia-with the

nephew of Lieutenant Wrenner's wife! She was furious. The Pages held no title! They spoke of generations of scholars, but what of it? They hadn't produced a high-ranking official in years! Marwen's tone was dripping with sarcasm. "Some people, having married into the highest nobility themselves, arrange matches for others with mere scholars!

Is it fear that others might fare better than they do?" Sylvia's face paled. She tugged at her mother's sleeve. "Mother!" Marwen coldly shook her off. Elowen spoke slowly, "You are dissatisfied with Mr. Page?" Marwen offered a thin, insincere smile. "I wouldn't dare! Your Grace, you preside over the household, arranging a marriage for Sylvia. How could I be dissatisfied? I am merely an aunt-by-marriage, an outsider! My opinion holds no weight!" Elowen's brow furrowed slightly. "I just find it odd, Marwen continued, her voice sharpening.

"The Garrett girl is deemed worthy of becoming Crown Princess. Yet my husband gave his life for the kingdom! Can't our daughter even be taken as a concubine?" Elowen didn't hesitate. "No. Absolutely not." Her tone was final. Marwen, enraged at the rebuff, snapped, "Perhaps you're jealous, having failed to marry the Crown Prince yourself!" Elowen's already tight frown deepened. 1/3 2:31 pm P pp. Chapter 100 Showdown At The Pavilion Mira stepped forward, her voice stern. "How dare you insult Her Grace!" Finished Marwen paused, reining in some of her visible anger, but her fone remained caustic.

"I meant no insult to Her Grace. I merely speak the truth. Those past matters between Her Grace and the Crown Prince- "Mother!" Sylvia could bear it no longer. Marwen turned on her. displeased. "What is it?" Sylvia, bolstered by the encouraging words Peres had spoken to her. summoned a rare courage. Clenching her fingers, she said. "The match Her Grace has arranged for me today... is not with Mr. Page. You should not speak to her so harshly." Marwen's focus

snapped to the first part. "Not the Page boy? Then who?" Sylvia took a deep breath, steeling herself.

"He is a gentleman I met on the hill. He-" "A gentleman?" Marwen cut her off sharply, her expression turning suspicious. "When did you meet a gentleman?" "When I accompanied His Grace and Her Grace to pay respects to Father..." "What family is he from? What title does his household?" Marwen pressed. Sylvia lowered her eyes, her voice growing faint. "He... is not from a great family. They hold no title. He is... a merchant" "A merchant?" Marwen's voice rose to a shriek. "You want to marry a merchant?" Before Sylvia could explain the scolding slammed into her like a storm. "You foolish girl!

I bore you, raised you, so you could marry a tradesman? You've been ruined by your father's influence, turned into a brainless simpleton! Why didn't you just follow him to the grave!" Then, a realization dawned. "That day you went out-was it to meet that vagabond?" A flicker of guilt crossed Sylvia's face. Marwen caught it in an instant, shot to her feet, and slapped her daughter hard across the face. "Shameless hussy!" The blow was so forceful it sent Sylvia stumbling sideways, her hair coming loose and tumbling about her shoulders in disarray. Elowen, caught off guard, started.

She stood immediately. "Guards! Restrain her!" "I am disciplining my own daughter! Who dares interfere!" Marwen roared, her fury overriding all deference. She shot Elowen a venomous glare. "If you hadn't insisted on taking her out that day, that vagabond would never have been in the picture!" Elowen frowned. "He is not a vagabond. He-" "No name, no standing, what else is he but a vagabond?!" Marwen's shout drowned her out 2/3 pm ppp Chapter 100 Showdown At The

Pavilion Finished She turned back to Sylvia, her voice a harsh demand. "Tell me! How far has it gone with him?"

Did you sleep with him already? Sylvia shook her head, tears welling. "We've done nothing..."

Marwen didn't believe a word. She let out a scornful laugh. "Still lying to me! It seems a lesson is in order today, or you'll never learn!" Her hand rose again. "Stop!" Before Elowen could

intervene, a man's voice rang out from the doorway. 1.7K M 3/3 2:32 pm ppp. admin