

My Husband Chose Her Over Me Novel

Chapter 10

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I turned to face Queen Arinelle, the woman who had spent three years treating me like something scraped from the bottom of her shoe, suddenly bowed her head. Her entire demeanor transformed in an instant, the haughty disdain replaced by something I'd never seen directed at me before: deference.

"Your Royal Highness," she said, her voice unnaturally soft. "Please forgive my previous... discourtesies."

I couldn't speak. Couldn't move. This had to be some elaborate jest—another cruel game designed to mock me. But the guilt etched across her face seemed genuine, her usually perfect composure shattered.

The Queen turned to her husband, desperation in her eyes. "Is it true? Is she really...?"

The King nodded solemnly. "Yes. She is Princess Elara Dorian Verdana, rightful heir to the Verdana throne."

Queen Arinelle gasped, her hand fluttering to her throat as though she might faint. "But how? We all thought the princess died during the coup. There was a funeral—I attended it myself!"

"An empty casket," the King said, his voice heavy with the weight of decades-old secrets. "A necessary deception to protect the child."

"But that farmer—the one who calls himself her father—"

"A loyal servant of King Dorian," he explained. "One of his most trusted guards, in fact. He and his wife volunteered to raise the princess as their own, far from court intrigue and assassins' blades."

The Queen sank into a nearby chair, her legs seemingly unable to support her any longer. "All these years... all these years, we've had the Verdana heir living under our roof, and we treated her like—" She couldn't finish the sentence, her face contorting with the realization of what she'd done.

I watched this performance with growing disbelief. Three years of casual cruelty, of deliberate humiliation, and now she acted as though it had never happened? As though a simple "forgive my discourtesies" could erase the nights I'd cried myself to sleep, the public mockery, the constant reminders that I wasn't good enough?

"Why?" I finally found my voice. "Why hide this from me? I had a right to know who I am."

The King's eyes met mine, not unkindly. "It was for your protection, Princess. Your father has spent twenty-three years rebuilding Verdana, eliminating threats, ensuring it would be safe for your return. The timing had to be perfect."

"So my entire life has been a lie." I wasn't asking a question.

"Not a lie," the King countered. "A necessary shield. Your father loves you deeply. Everything he's done, everything we've done, was to keep you alive."

The Queen began to sob, pressing a handkerchief to her face. Without another word, she hurried out of the room, her usual graceful exit abandoned in favor of what looked suspiciously like flight.

Silence settled over the King's chamber. I stood there, trying to absorb the magnitude of what I'd just learned. Princess Elara Dorian Verdana. Not the merchant's daughter from a coastal village. Not the barely-tolerated first wife of Prince Caden. A princess in my own right—no, more than that. An heir to a throne.

"Where is he?" I finally asked. "My father—my real father. Where can I find him?"

"King Dorian maintains a private residence in the eastern forest, near the Verdana border," the King replied. "Officially, he's there for his health. Unofficially, it allows him to be closer to you, should you need him."

"He's been nearby all this time? Has he... has he seen me?"

"From a distance, yes. At your wedding, certain state functions." The King's expression softened. "He couldn't risk closer contact. Your uncle may be dead, but his supporters remain influential in certain circles."

"I need to see him." The words came out with unexpected force.

"Of course." The King nodded. "I'll arrange an escort to take you to Dani, your supposed father. Dani will take you to King Dorian discreetly."

"Thank you." The words felt inadequate for what this man had just given me—my identity, my history, my truth.

I rose to leave, my mind racing with a thousand questions I couldn't yet articulate. The King called after me as I reached the door.

"Princess Elara?"

I turned, still startled by the title.

"Your father will be overjoyed to finally embrace his daughter again."

Something warm and unfamiliar bloomed in my chest—hope, perhaps, or the first tentative unfurling of belonging.

I stepped into the corridor, my thoughts so consumed with visions of meeting my true father that I nearly collided with someone standing just outside the door.

Caden.

He stood frozen, staring at me as though seeing a ghost. His usual mask of royal indifference had cracked wide open, revealing raw shock beneath.

“You’re... you’re the true heir to the Verdana throne?” he whispered.

I knew immediately that his mother had told him. The Queen’s hasty exit had led straight to her son, perhaps hoping he could somehow fix the diplomatic disaster unfolding around them.

“Yes, Caden,” I replied, my voice unwavering where once it might have trembled. “I am.”

The implications hung between us, reshaping everything. For three years, I’d been the inferior partner in our marriage, the commoner elevated beyond her station, expected to be eternally grateful for the crumbs of royal attention. Now those power dynamics had inverted in an instant. My bloodline was older, my kingdom larger, my claim to royal heritage more legitimate than his could ever be.

We stared at each other in silence, and then he looked down at his hands, the weight of his choices visibly sinking in. “What have I done?”