

My Husband Chose Her Over Me Novel

Chapter 5

My Husband Chose Her Over Me Novel – Chapter 5

“Lady Elara,” Queen Arinelle’s voice cut through the corridor like a blade of ice. “Just the person I was looking for.”

I froze, my shoulders tensing involuntarily. The queen never sought me out unless she intended to inflict some new humiliation. Three years of marriage to her son had taught me that much.

“Your Majesty,” I curtsied, the gesture as perfect as years of practice could make it. “How may I be of service?”

Her smile was a beautiful, terrible thing—all perfect teeth and cold eyes. “The king requires these documents delivered to his private chambers immediately.” She extended a leather folio embossed with the royal crest. “They’re quite sensitive. I can’t trust just anyone with them.”

It was a trap. We both knew it. The king’s private chambers were strictly off-limits to anyone but his personal servants and family members. For me to enter uninvited was a breach of protocol that could result in serious consequences.

“Surely a royal messenger would be more appropriate—” I began.

“Are you refusing a direct request from your queen?” she interrupted, her voice honey-sweet but threaded with steel.

Several courtiers paused in their conversations nearby, openly eavesdropping. Exactly as she’d planned.

“Of course not, Your Majesty.” I took the folio, my fingers brushing against hers. She withdrew her hand quickly, as though my touch might contaminate her. “I’ll deliver them at once.”

“See that you do.” She turned to leave, then paused. “Oh, and Lady Elara? The king despises tardiness almost as much as he despises incompetence.”

With that parting barb, she glided away, satisfaction evident in every step. The courtiers resumed their conversations, but their eyes followed me as I made my way toward the king’s wing of the palace.

The royal guards posted outside the king’s chambers regarded me with suspicion.

“His Majesty is expecting these documents,” I said, projecting a confidence I didn’t feel.

The older guard frowned, but he stepped aside. “Be quick about it, my lady. The king is attending the council meeting in the east wing and won’t appreciate unauthorized visitors in his absence.”

My heart sank. Of course the king wasn’t there. The queen had set me up perfectly, sending me where I had no right to be, ensuring I’d be discovered and disgraced.

“I’ll leave these on his desk and depart immediately,” I promised, stepping into the forbidden chamber.

The door closed behind me with a heavy thud. I stood for a moment, allowing my eyes to adjust to the dim light filtering through heavy velvet curtains. The king’s private study was impressive walls lined with leather-bound volumes, maps of conquered territories, and the mounted heads of exotic beasts. The massive oak desk dominated the center of the room, its surface neat and orderly.

I placed the folio precisely in the center of the desk, task completed. I should leave now before anyone discovered me here.

But something caught my eye. A drawer, slightly ajar, with the corner of a parchment peeking out. I tried to ignore it, already turning toward the door, when a flash of gold lettering on the parchment stopped me.

My name. Elara.

Not “Lady Elara” or “Princess Elara.” Just Elara, written in an elegant, unfamiliar hand.

The sensible part of me screamed to walk away. This was exactly the sort of trap the queen would set, leave something with my name on it, tempt me to look, then have me caught red-handed.

But my curiosity burned too fiercely. Three years of constant belittlement and exclusion had made me desperate for answers. Why did they hate me so much? What had I done besides exist?

Glancing nervously at the door, I pulled the drawer open further. Inside lay several letters bound with black ribbon. The one bearing my name was on top, unsealed, as if recently read.

My hands trembled as I opened it.

My dearest daughter, Elara

If you are reading this, then circumstances have forced my hand. I have lived with the burden of our separation for twenty-three years, watching from afar as you grew into the remarkable woman I always knew you would become. The time has come for truth, though I fear it brings greater danger than the lies that have protected you thus far.

You were born not to the merchant family of Sorian fishing villages, but to the royal house of Verdana. You are my firstborn child, Elara Dorian Verdana, rightful heir to the throne your uncle usurped. Your mother died hiding you from his assassins, and I entrusted you to loyal subjects who raised you as their own, far from court intrigue and danger.

I had hoped to reclaim your birthright without revealing your identity, but events move too swiftly now. The marriage arranged between you and Prince Caden was no coincidence—I orchestrated it to place you back within the protection of royal walls before revealing the truth.

Forgive an old man's machinations. I sought only to protect you until the moment was right.

With deepest love and regret, Your father, King Dorian Verdana

My jaws dropped open in shock.