

Love's Unexpected Awakening Elowen's Choice Novel

Chapter 3 Escorting the Bride from Hale Manor Elowen stilled , a flicker of real confusion crossing her face . " I beg your pardon , Your Highness - what did you say ? " +10 Free Coins Alaric's tone was ice - cold , sharpened with open contempt . " Since you've so publicly declared your intention to marry my uncle , you can stop trailing after me . That kind of persistence is ... revolting . " For a heartbeat , she stood frozen . Then it clicked . So that was how he saw it . In her previous life , scenes like this had played out more times than she could count .

She had always known she ought to explain- but fear had sealed her lips . Fear of choosing the wrong words . Fear of earning even deeper scorn . And so , again and again , she had said nothing . But now ? She didn't care anymore . His opinion no longer held any weight . Elowen pressed her lips together briefly , then spoke with quiet clarity . " Your Highness , I have never intended to cling to you . At the family banquet , I made myself perfectly clear to His Majesty - I do not have feelings for you . Not in the slightest . " Alaric arched a brow , disbelief laced with sarcasm .

" Is that so ? Then what - did you lose your way and happen to wander here by chance , only to run into me ? " " I was summoned to the palace by Her Majesty , " Elowen replied evenly . " If you doubt me , then at least trust Hilda . " A brief pause . Alaric's gaze shifted . Hilda stepped forward with a composed smile . " Her Majesty did indeed summon Lady Elowen . " She had served the Queen for years - her word was beyond question . So Elowen hadn't come here for him at all . A faint crease formed between Alaric's brows , irritation rising , unwelcome and sharp .

" I will soon be marrying Duke Cassian , " Elowen continued , her voice steady as still water . " Her Majesty is overseeing the arrangements . Today , she asked me to choose the wedding date . If Your Highness remains unconvinced , you are welcome to confirm it with her yourself . " When she finished , something inside her loosened - like a weight she hadn't realized she'd been carrying had finally slipped free . Alaric , however , felt the exact opposite . 1/5 12:02 pm ppp . Chapter 3 Escorting the Bride from Hale Manor +10 Free Coins His gaze locked onto her .

" My uncle has been unconscious for years . The physicians say he may never wake . If you marry him , you'll spend your entire life alone . " Elowen's thoughts stirred quietly . In my previous life , I married you ... and I was alone until the day I died . Her expression remained unchanged . If anything , a faint , almost serene smile touched her lips . " Thank you for your concern , Your Highness . But as I've said , I have admired Duke Cassian for a long time . As long as I can remain by his side ... it doesn't matter whether he wakes or not . " Alaric's face darkened at once .

Elowen turned to Hilda without another glance at him . " Let's go . We shouldn't keep Her Majesty waiting . " Alaric did not move . He simply stood there , watching her retreating figure . For a fleeting instant , another image surfaced in his mind- Elowen , smiling , timid , her eyes lowered as she spoke in a soft , earnest voice : " Your Highness ... I'm truly happy to be able to marry you . " The image wavered , like a reflection disturbed by ripples- and vanished .

A dull , unfamiliar ache spread through his chest , heavy and suffocating , as though something important had just slipped beyond his grasp . Inside Rose Hall , the Queen had already been waiting . At the sight of Elowen , she smiled at once - graceful , impeccable ... and utterly without warmth . " Elowen , you've finally arrived , " she said , gesturing her closer . " Come , sit beside me . " Elowen did not move immediately . Instead , she dipped into a flawless curtsy . " Your Majesty . " The Queen's smile lingered . " Always so well - mannered . But tell me why did you come alone ?

" Elowen understood the implication perfectly . She simply chose not to acknowledge it . " There is no one left at Hale Manor to accompany me , " she said softly . For the briefest moment , something flickered in the Queen's eyes - then disappeared . " Let's not dwell on such things , " she said lightly . " Come , take a look at the dates . " 2/5 12:02 pm ppp . Chapter 3 Escorting the Bride from Hale Manor A parchment lay upon the table , two dates written in neat , deliberate script . June third , October nineteenth . October nineteenth .

The date she had married Alaric in her previous life . An " auspicious " day , they had called it . +10 Free Coins And yet , rain had poured without mercy , a relentless storm that drenched the entire procession . Silk and satin clung in disarray , musicians faltered , the ceremony descended into damp humiliation . Later , whispers spread . Ill - omened . A bride who would bring disaster upon the royal house . " In my opinion , " the Queen said smoothly , " the nineteenth of October would be far more suitable . What do you think ?

" " Thank you , Your Majesty , " Elowen replied , her smile gentle but unwavering . " But I believe June third would be better . " " It is already April , " the Queen pointed out . " Wouldn't that be rather rushed ? " " It is , " Elowen admitted . " But I wish to marry Duke Cassian as soon as possible . " A faint blush surfaced at just the right moment - subtle , controlled , perfectly convincing . At that instant , the doors opened . Alaric stepped inside . Her words reached him clearly . His stride faltered - just slightly . His jaw tightened before he even noticed it himself .

Is she truly that eager ? " Ah , Alaric - you've come at the perfect time , " the Queen said warmly . " Elowen insists on marrying on June third , but I find it far too hurried . October would be more appropriate . Come - help persuade her . She has always listened to you . " Alaric shot Elowen a glance , his voice cutting and cold . " If she's so eager to marry my uncle , why deny her ? Delay it until October , and she may start complaining behind our backs . " The words were deliberately cruel . Where once they might have struck deep- Elowen simply smiled .

" His Highness is quite right , " she said calmly . " Then June third it shall be . I do hope Your Highness will attend the celebration . " Alaric's eyes darkened , something dangerous flickering beneath the surface . He let out a faint , humorless huff , then turned away , away / 5 12:02 pm ppp . Chapter 3 Escorting the Bride from Hale Manor " I have other matters to attend to . I'll take my leave . " " Very well , " the Queen replied . " Don't overexert yourself . " He gave a perfunctory nod and left without another word . Elowen was about to excuse herself when the Queen spoke again .

" Oh - Elowen . " She turned back . +10 Free Coins " You're aware Duke Cassian remains unconscious , " the Queen said thoughtfully . " He will not be able to escort his bride from Hale Manor . By custom , someone must stand in his place - an unmarried man of suitable standing . " She paused , then added lightly , " I'm considering Alaric . " Elowen shook her head without hesitation . " His Highness carries many responsibilities . I wouldn't dare trouble him . It would be better to choose another from the royal family .

Leonhart would be appropriate - he is twenty , unmarried , and of proper age . " If Alaric were to escort her , he would only find new ways to humiliate her . The Queen studied her for a moment , then nodded . " Very well . " On the carriage ride back to Hale Manor , fragments of childhood rose unbidden . Her grandfather had once instructed Alaric in riding and archery , often bringing her along to the palace . In those years , they had grown up side by side . They had shared everything . Sneaking out beyond the palace gates . Laughing without restraint .

Speaking of futures that seemed certain . Once , a runaway carriage had thundered down a crowded street . Elowen had pushed Alaric aside just in time - saving his life - but she had been struck instead , her knee slamming hard against stone . The injury had left her unable to walk for days . Back then , Alaric had been beside himself , gripping her hand , sweat beading down his temples . " I'll take care of you forever , " he had vowed . When had that changed ? When had warmth turned into distance ... and distance into disdain ? She couldn't remember .

In her previous life , she had chased that answer relentlessly - crying through endless nights , wearing herself thin . 4/5 12:02 pm Ppp . Chapter 3 Escorting the Bride from Hale Manor +10 Free Coins In the end , her injured knee ached without cease , and her vision deteriorated . In dim light , the world blurred into shadows . This time she let it go . There was no need to understand . In this world , aside from life and death , everything else was trivial . As the wedding approached , preparations engulfed the palace , Duskmoor Manor , and Hale Manor alike .

Golden silk and gilded ornaments bloomed everywhere , impossible to ignore . Living in the Crown Prince's Wing , Alaric found himself surrounded by it . Day after day , his irritation mounted . At last , he stepped out for air . Just then , a visitor arrived . His cousin Leonhart Valebourne , eldest legitimate son of Duke Roland . They met in the study . " You've come with a purpose ? " Alaric asked lazily . Leonhart grinned , unabashed . " Well - Uncle Cassian is getting married , isn't he ? Her Majesty wants to appoint someone from the royal family to escort the bride from Hale Manor ...

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