

Love's Unexpected Awakening Elowen's Choice Novel

Chapter 4

Sharing a Bed with the Duke A faint twitch pulled at Alaric's brow . With his uncle still unconscious , unable to perform the ceremonial escort , someone else had to take his place . And if Elowen had been given the choice- She would have chosen him without hesitation . At least , that was what he had always believed . He knew her too well . Admiring my uncle ? Wanting to marry him out of sincerity ? Please . It was nothing more than another performance - another calculated move to circle back to him , to force his attention .

+10 Free Coins It must be her who arranged Leonhart's visit for that very reason . Afraid he might refuse outright , she had sent someone first to soften his stance . And Leonhart ... well , he had once liked Elowen . Mostly because of the sweets she baked - but still . None of it mattered . Alaric had no intention of escorting her . A maid entered quietly and placed two cups of steaming tea on the table . Leonhart picked his up , blew across the surface , and took a cautious sip . When he remained silent , Alaric's patience thinned . " Has no one else in the royal family been considered ?

I don't have the time - or the inclination . " Leonhart blinked , caught off guard . " But- " Alaric cast him a sharp glance . " What ? " Leonhart hesitated , scratching the back of his neck before choosing his words carefully . " Her Majesty did think you'd be the most suitable ... since you're not married . " A short , dry laugh escaped Alaric . Exactly as expected . " But , " Leonhart added quickly , " Elowen said it wouldn't be appropriate to trouble Your Highness . So Her Majesty summoned me instead . She said I could go in your place . " Alaric stilled . .She refused me ?

1/6 12:02 pm ppp . Chapter 4 Sharing a Bed with the Duke +10 Free Coins He had been nothing but irritated at the idea of being dragged into her wedding . Yet hearing that she had rejected him outright brought no relief . Only a vague , unwelcome irritation stirred in his chest - tight , unnameable . Leonhart watched him closely , catching the subtle shift . Trying to ease the tension , he forced a grin . " She probably just figured you're too busy . Escorting a bride would be a hassle . Unlike me - I've got nothing going on . I'm free every day . " Alaric said nothing .

Silence settled over the study , thick and uncomfortable . The tea in Leonhart's hands suddenly felt scalding . He shifted in his seat , then stood abruptly . " Alaric - I've got other matters to attend to . I'll be going . " Alaric gave a low , indifferent hum , not even bothering to rise . Leonhart took a few steps toward the door - then stopped . Something tugged at him .. He turned back , voice quieter this time . " Alaric ... about what happened back then . Elowen really wasn't at fault . You've blamed her all this time , but it's not fair .

Things have come this far , and you're clearly not happy . She- " " Leonhart . " Alaric cut him off . His brows drew together , his voice low , edged with warning . " Didn't you say you had somewhere to be ? " Leonhart lowered his gaze . " ... Yes." The rest of his words died in his throat .

He turned and left the Crown Prince's Wing . The wedding day arrived . The first thing Elowen did upon waking was walk to the window . Sunlight poured from a clear , open sky . The air was bright , crisp - no trace of rain . She let out a quiet breath . A good day . Truly . 2/6 12:02 pm ppp .

+10 Free Coins Chapter 4 Sharing a Bed with the Duke She rose , bathed , dressed , and took her place before the vanity . Maids moved around her in a soft flurry of silk and whispers , adorning her piece by piece until every detail was perfected . Perhaps because she had already lived through a wedding once before she felt nothing at all . No nerves . No anticipation . Only calm . This was merely a ceremony . By the time Leonhart arrived , everything was ready . Tradition dictated that a bride be led from her home by a male relative .

But Hale Manor had long since been stripped of its men- lost to the battlefield , one after another . The only one left ... was a five - year - old boy . So Leonhart stepped in . As he took her hand and led her forward , laughter and well - wishes rose all around them . Amid the noise , he leaned closer , lowering his voice . " Elowen ... Alaric won't be coming today . " She paused , just for a fraction of a second . Of all things to bring up - today ? " He's ... unwell , " Leonhart continued . " Ever since I returned from the palace , he's been sick . Still hasn't recovered .

The palace ordered it kept quiet ... " He hesitated , as if there was more he wanted to say . Elowen sighed softly and cut him off . " Leonhart , " she said gently , " I stopped caring about His Highness a long time ago . I know you mean well - but the past is the past . " She looked ahead , her voice steady . " Eyes are meant to look forward . Not back . " The words lodged in his throat . Elowen lifted her hand and gave his arm a light , reassuring pat , her smile soft . " It's my wedding day . Let's be happy , alright ? And next time we meet ... remember to call me Aunt .

" Leonhart lowered his gaze , a strange mix of emotions tightening in his chest - bittersweet , complicated . Outside the Hale Manor , the procession was already waiting . Music filled the air - drums beating , horns ringing bright . 3/6 12:02 pm Ppp . Chapter 4 Sharing a Bed with the Duke The escort from the Duskmoor Manor had arrived early . +10 Free Coins This was a royal marriage , decreed by the King himself and overseen by the Queen . Every detail was immaculate - lavish beyond reproach . And yet ...

Elowen couldn't shake the feeling- that this procession was grander than the one she had walked in her previous life . As though the Duskmoor Manor had been waiting for this day ... for a very long time . Because the Duke remained unconscious , the ceremony was kept brief . After the essential rites were completed , Elowen was led toward the bridal chamber . As she passed beneath the courtyard gates , her gaze flicked to the guards stationed on either side - hands firm on their sword hilts , expressions sharp and unyielding . She had heard the stories .

Her father used to say - the number of enemies who wanted Duke Cassian dead spoke louder than any praise . The bridal chamber was vast , elegant , draped in pristine white . In her previous life , the Crown Prince's chambers had been far simpler . After the ceremonial wine , Alaric had left her there - alone - to entertain guests . He never returned . She had waited for hours in silence , the heavy ceremonial crown pressing down until her neck ached , her breath growing shallow beneath its weight . That would not happen again . Elowen's gaze shifted to the bed .

Cassian lay there , motionless, eyes closed . The Valebourne bloodline was famed for its beauty . Alaric was refined - polished , flawless . Cassian ... was something else entirely . Sharp . Striking . Dangerous . Like a blade still in its sheath - silent , but lethal . 4/6 12:02 pm Ppp . Chapter 4 Sharing a Bed with the Duke A broad - shouldered man stepped forward and bowed deeply . " Bran

Holt at your service , my lady . " Elowen recognized him immediately - Cassian's most trusted lieutenant ... and now , his keeper . +10 Free Coins He had lost his left eye .

Usually , he wore a leather patch . Today , for the wedding , it had been replaced with a strip of gold silk - an oddly festive touch . Rumors about this guy had always been wild . Some claimed Bran stood nine feet tall . Others said he feasted on human flesh . Yet the man before her bowed with absolute respect . " His Grace has been asleep for over half a year , " Bran said carefully . " He's grown a bit thinner , but otherwise , he's in good condition . He takes his medicine daily . In this heat , we bathe him every other day . " Elowen said nothing .

Bran mistook her silence for reluctance and hurried on . " Please don't worry , my lady . Everything is handled . A separate chamber has been prepared for you , just across the hall- " Elowen shook her head . Bran stiffened . " Then ... would you prefer another courtyard ? " Since the Duke's fall , many attendants had been assigned to his care . But most were negligent - skipping medicine , cutting corners , assuming a man who could neither see nor speak would never know . Once , the Duke had been revered . Now he was pitied . Or worse ... despised .

Bran assumed a noble lady from Hale Manor would feel the same . " No need . " Elowen's voice was soft , calm as a spring breeze . Her gaze rested on the man lying on the bed . " The Duke and I are husband and wife now . There is no such thing as separate chambers . " She paused , then added gently- " From tonight onward ... I will share his bed . " Bran froze , eyes widening in shock . 5/6 12:02 pm ppp . Chapter 4 Sharing a Bed with the Duke " It's getting late , " Elowen said with a faint smile . " I'll go freshen up . " Without another word , she turned and walked away .

She did not see it the faintest movement . At Cassian's side , his fingers twitched . 1) Just once . +10 Free Coins