

Love's Unexpected Awakening Elowen's Choice Novel

Chapter 5 A Man Lying Beside Her Chapter 5 A Man Lying Beside Her +10 Free Coins The dressing table had been set up in the adjoining chamber . It was clearly brand new - darkwood , finely crafted , its surface polished to a rich , glossy sheen that caught the light . A clear mirror rested on the tabletop , beside an intricately carved wooden casket . " You're so gorgeous , my lady . It's such a shame His Grace couldn't see you on your wedding day . " Mira , Elowen's dowry handmaid , gently let Elowen's hair down , her movements careful and unhurried . Her voice was light , almost wistful .

Elowen curved her lips into a faint smile . " There's nothing to regret. Beautiful women are everywhere in this world . I'm nothing special . " She was only seventeen . Cassian was ten years older than she was . In those ten extra years , he must have seen countless women - some alluring , some sweet and bright , some bold enough to leave an impression . Compared to them , her face probably seemed painfully ordinary . And Besides , even surrounded by beauty , Cassian had never married . Rumor had it that his heart already belonged to someone else .

Elowen couldn't imagine what kind of woman could inspire that level of devotion from the Duke of Duskmoor . What kind of breathtaking beauty she must be . After washing and freshening up , Elowen changed into a pale , moon - white nightgown . Bran had already brought over a brand - new pillow and a brocade quilt , laying them neatly beside Cassian . Once everything was in order , the servants withdrew with practiced discretion . Elowen climbed onto the bed as quietly as she could and lay down beside him . The wedding bed was wide , leaving a clear distance between them .

She caught the faint scent of medicinal herbs and felt the steady warmth radiating from Cassian's body . Like her father and brothers , Cassian trained year - round. His body temperature always ran slightly higher than most . Elowen turned onto her side . Outside , the night was deep and still , the moonlight faint . But inside the chamber , the wedding candles burned steadily , filling the room with a soft , golden glow . Bathed in that light , Elowen studied Cassian's profile . His features were sharp and sculpted , like mountain ridges carved by time .

His lashes were thick and dark , casting faint shadows beneath his eyes . Because he had been unconscious for so long , his lips were pale , and a faint bluish stubble traced the line of his jaw . She watched him for a long moment before speaking softly . " I'm truly sorry ... for saying I would marry you while you were unconscious . " Not far away , a candle crackled , molten wax blooming as the flame flared . 1/4 12:02 pm Ppp . Chapter 5 A Man Lying Beside Her +10 Free Coins Elowen paused , then continued in a low voice , " But I promise you ~ I'll take good care of you .

I'll fulfill my duties as the Duchess of Duskmoor . " Compared to the liveliness of Duskmoor Manor , the Crown Prince's Wing felt heavy and lifeless . The Crown Prince had been ill for many days . Royal physicians came and went , prescriptions were changed again and again , yet there was no

improvement . The Queen was displeased . Her temper had grown increasingly sharp , and the entire wing lived in quiet dread - heads lowered , voices hushed , every step taken with care . Alaric knew none of this . He lay in bed , his thoughts tangled , drifting into a dream .

In the dream , there was a wedding . And the groom was himself . Rain poured down that day , relentless and cold . His shoes , stockings , even the hem of his robes were soaked through , smeared with mud , leaving him wretched and miserable . When he stepped into the bridal chamber , the first thing he saw was Elowen . She sat upright on the wedding bed . Her hair had been swept up and coiled atop her head , crowned with an ornate , luxurious headpiece . She wore an ivory wedding gown , the fabric heavy and finely woven , embroidered with subtle floral patterns along the hem .

In the candlelight , the silk caught the glow with a soft , muted sheen . She had altered the gown herself . As the youngest daughter of Hale Manor , Elowen had been taught far more than courtly manners . She could ride and shoot like any noble girl raised on the frontier , and she was just as skilled with needle and brush . Now , her cheeks were flushed . She lowered her gaze , a restrained , nervous smile touching her lips . Faint dimples appeared , lending her an air of quiet warmth . Alaric stared at her , unable to look away . The sound of rain against the windows faded into nothing .

All he could hear was the uneven , pounding beat of his own heart . He jolted awake . Darkness filled his vision . All he could make out was the heavy bed canopy above him . His entire body was drenched in sweat . It took a long moment for his thoughts to settle . " Your Highness , you're awake ? " His personal attendant entered quietly . 2/4 12:02 pm ppp . Chapter 5 A Man Lying Beside Her +10 Free Coins Alaric's voice was hoarse . " What time is it ? " " It's nearly the end of the night watch , Your Highness . Her Majesty will soon be returning from Duskmoor Manor .

" Duskmoor Manor Alaric abruptly pushed himself upright . " What day is it today ? " " The third day of the sixth month . Today is the day the Duke of Duskmoor married the general's daughter . " Alaric froze . Elowen's image resurfaced before his eyes - dressed in wedding robes , smiling softly . It felt as though something had carved into his chest , sharp and unrelenting , sending waves of pain through his heart . " Her Majesty has arrived . " The announcement came from outside the door . Moments later , the Queen entered , supported by a matron .

When she saw Alaric awake , relief lit her face . " Alaric , are you feeling any better ? " He gave a distracted sound in response . A servant lit the candle nearby . The Queen examined his complexion - still pale , still weak from illness . She sat down at the edge of the bed and spoke slowly . " Now that the Duke of Duskmoor and Elowen's wedding is finally over , I can breathe a little easier . From now on , I only need to focus on your marriage . " Alaric stiffened slightly . " Mother , I- " " You are the Crown Prince , " the Queen interrupted gently , smiling .

" You've already come of age . Your father mentions your marriage often . The entire court is watching . " She continued calmly , " Once your health improves , I'll make the arrangements . There are so many noble daughters in the capital . We can take our time choosing graceful ones , gentle ones , well - read and well - mannered ones . Every single one of them is better than Elowen . " At the sound of her name , a sharp pain clenched in Alaric's chest . The Queen went on , her words flowing freely now . " When you were young , that was when you should have been studying .

Yet Elowen was always dragging you off to play . She even sneaked you out of the palace once - you nearly got hurt . From then on , I disliked her . " These past years , you devoted yourself to state affairs , yet she clung to you like a burr . I wanted to drive her out of the palace long ago , but with Hale Manor behind her , I had to restrain myself . " Now that the Hale family is gone , she's of no use at all . At least she had the sense not to shamelessly insist on marrying you . " And as for Duskmoor Manor - it's hardly a blessed place .

The Duke lies unconscious , the manor's in chaos thanks to his relatives . If I hadn't kept things under control , do you think the wedding would have gone so smoothly ? Elowen will have plenty of hardship ahead of her . " Alaric couldn't bring himself to speak . 3/4 12:02 pm ppp . Chapter 5 A Man Lying Beside Her +10 Free Coins Having vented her thoughts , the Queen looked far more satisfied . She rose to her feet . " Alright . Get some rest and recover quickly . I'll arrange for you to meet those young ladies . With me here , your position as Crown Prince will remain perfectly secure .

" The next morning , before the sky had fully brightened , Elowen woke . Mira came in to comb her hair and glanced at her face . " Did you not sleep well , Your Grace ? " Elowen blinked slowly . " I'm not used to the bed . " Nor was she used to having a man lying beside her . She studied her reflection in the mirror and rubbed her eyelids . " Mira , fix my hair for court . We'll- " " Is the Duchess awake ? " An aged yet steady voice came from outside . Elowen turned and saw a matron dressed in respectable attire . The woman didn't bow . She spoke plainly .

" Lady Marwen instructs that on the first day after the wedding , the Duchess is to go and see her . " Elowen was well aware of the situation at Duskmoor Manor . Cassian and the current King were full brothers , both born to Dowager Selene of the Ashcroft family . The Dowager had a younger sister and a younger brother . The sister had married into a noble house far away in Rivenshire . The brother had joined the army , followed Cassian into battle , and died saving his life . Perhaps out of guilt , Cassian had brought his uncle's widow and children into the manor . That widow was Marwen .

Cassian spent most of his years at war and had little time for domestic matters . Marwen had volunteered to take over the management of the manor . Which meant that now , Duskmoor Manor was firmly under her control . Elowen had also heard that Marwen had once hoped to marry her youngest daughter to Cassian . She had formally proposed it- only to be refused . And now , it was Elowen who had married into the manor instead . 4/4 12:02 pm