

Hellbound Heart #Chapter 191 -200

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When Sebastian's brows lifted and he did not immediately retort, it was a sign that what she said had at least done something to him and a pleased grin bloomed across Elle's face. Somehow, the feeling that she ended up having the last laugh was really amazing. And it made it all the more sweeter since it is such a rare occurrence.

"So, behave, Crown Prince Sebastian..." she added, even tipping her chin at him triumphantly. Though that move looked proud, the genuine bright smile that had flashed across her face made her move come across as more playful.

Sebastian opened his lips as though he was about to say something, but quickly closed it again as he simply stared at her. It was as if he had loved what he was seeing so much at the moment that he did not want even himself to distract her even for a moment.

He then watched her giggle, shaking her head a little. It was as though she had stumbled upon a key discovery about Sebastian. "Lord... I can't believe that's all it takes to stop you from being naughty, Sebastian. Do you hate sleeping on the couch that much?"

While she was still being ecstatic that she had in her opinion, for once, managed to render Sebastian speechless, Sebastian on the other hand, just continued to stare at her. He was seemingly spellbound at the sight of Izabelle's genuinely happy face and her light-hearted laughter. He was just standing there, looking as though he was just so glad to see her smiling so brightly again, as though she had no other cares on the world.

"Now I'm feeling bad for letting you sleep there for quite a few nights now." she then continued, but still grinning widely, not looking the slightest bit repentant at all. "You should've asked for another bed. Or even a mattress, at least." Her grin still hanging widely on her face as her eyes sparkled with mirth.

As the music slowed, Sebastian pulled her closer against his body. Their faces were now so close. The happy, blissful and beautiful moment very naturally shifted into something more romantic. Not that the couple were not already oozing romance ever since they stepped into the hall.

Elle's wide smile slowly faded as she realized their breaths were literally mingling due to their closeness. This dance, she realized, was so different from their first dance.

And as she continued to gaze at him, it was then the realization came on how this current Sebastian was so different from the man she had danced with that night on Elijah's birthday. He was still the same in many ways. And he still acts as usual around everyone else except for... her.

She had noticed many times how his gaze always seemed to soften up whenever he talked or looked at her, no matter how serious and grumpy as usual he looked while he was talking with others. It always made her heart flutter, more violently so, lately. And right now... lord... he was just so drop dead gorgeous... and warm... hot as hell in fact. Though he was always hot and gorgeous, this Sebastian right now, was melting her heart... her mind... her soul... and not just her body.

Deep inside her, she was wishing that this moment would last indefinitely. That he would keep looking at her this way, holding her in this particular manner... treating her as gently and patiently. She wanted this moment to last... forever.

That word 'forever' had her nibbling the inside of her lip. She was even surprised at her own thoughts.

Trying to distract herself for fear she might actually suddenly kiss him right there in public, Elle averted her gaze and stared instead at his throat.

"Is it just me, or is the dance..." She had finally noticed that the dance was much longer than usual.

He smiled. "This is your night, Izabelle. I saw that you're enjoying the dance, so I signaled for the musicians to keep on going for a bit longer. Let me know if you want to stop."

"No!" She had said that a bit loudly, so she quickly snapped her mouth closed.

"Stop being worried about the audience, Iza. You don't need to whisper. Don't be afraid to talk normally like you used to."

"O... okay." She nodded.

"Good girl." He praised, flashing her that devastating smile again, made more lethal with the short appearance of his elusive dimple.

Elle blushed and she got lost in their slow dance and that pool of beautiful metallic grey eyes. Everything and everyone seemed to fade off into the background and there was only him and her. It was peaceful and just so good for her heart... this moment. She had never expected this night to be like this. Birthdays... she had hated it before. Because so far, ever since she was young, her birthdays were more like the gatherings of the socialites to further the political agenda of her father, rather than just celebrating and enjoying.

She had expected the same to happen tonight as well. In fact, she had thought that it would be something so nerve wracking and something so extraordinary in a bad way.

But none of what she had expected was happening. Everything felt normal. And everyone seemed to come just for the sole purpose of enjoying themselves and wishing her well for her birthday. There was truly nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, right now, she could tell that this was probably the most unforgettable and happiest birthday she had had since she was thirteen.

"What are you thinking?" his deep voice echoed.

"You?"

He raised his brow slightly. But he smiled and leaned in to whisper. "I'm thinking about the things I'd do with you later tonight."

Her lips parted before she smiled and uttered her threat ever so gently. "My husband. Did you forget what I had just said? Behave or else..."

"You really think you can threaten me with that, hmm... baby girl?"

His sexy voice and that teasing retort had Elle widening her eyes. And before she could process a reply in response to that statement, he continued. "It's not like the bed is the only place where I can screw your brains out, Iza. In fact, the couch is another perfect spot too, you know?"

As Elle fell utterly speechless once again, a woman standing in the veranda and drinking from a wine glass, had her eyes glued on the couple from afar and listened into their conversation secretly, her free hand clenching slightly. Her expression did not change, but her nails had grown long and her eyes turned red for a few moments.

Sebastian's eyes flew towards where the woman was and she flinched when his eyes locked onto hers, obviously shocked that she had been caught.

When his gaze had locked onto hers and even though it was just for a short moment, the warning in his eyes was all too clear. That split second flash of deep red, before the dark grey of his eyes glittered with something so predatory and dangerous, was enough to turn the blood in her veins into ice.

The woman stood there, frozen, as she watched him return his attention to the human princess in his arms. The warning in his eyes was completely gone, turning warm and gentle with no trace of the savagery and frostiness he had displayed when looking at her just seconds ago. She could not even begin to imagine that this was the same Prince Sebastian that she had known. He was becoming a completely different person when he was looking at that Princess.

The woman's jaws clenched slightly when a blond female spoke to her. Her shadowed and previously sullen face brightened up, with no trace of any other emotions but pure bliss.

'Wow. I can't believe you are so calm, Lady Kana.' The blonde told her through their eyes. 'If I were you, good god, I am not even sure if I could remain calm for even a few moments!'

Kana swirled her drink in the wine glass. Her gaze was innocent when she lifted them up to the blonde. 'Why shouldn't I be calm, Miss Jules? I don't think there is any reason for me not to be, right?'

'You're really amazing. But don't you feel jealous at all? After all, you were once chosen to serve His Highness...' Miss Jules stared rather enigmatically at Kana.

'Jealous...' she smiled and then she sipped on her glass elegantly. 'There's nothing to be jealous about, Miss Jules.' came her reply as she shrugged her slender shoulders.

The blonde glanced at the other females who had gathered around and were curious about the same issue. Everyone looked intrigued and confused until one of them butted in. 'But she stole the prince from you! You should be the one dancing with him right now. This is really alright with you?'

'Relax ladies...' Kana swept a proud gaze across everyone, her brow lifted as she pretended to be composed and in control of the situation. 'When did we vampires ever get jealous of humans?'

'Right!' another woman butted in with a sneer. 'Humans are always the ones jealous of us! Never the other way around. Because there is truly nothing worth getting jealous over about them. They grow old and die so quickly that they're like mist in the morning.'

When the ladies started to come up with their own conclusions, that there was no need for Kana to be jealous because Princess Izabelle was merely a temporary fixture in the prince's life. They even started to praise Kana as they pitied Izabelle, causing Kana's lips to tug upwards secretly.

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The dinner was another blissful event.

Sebastian had finally let her speak with some guests as they dined. She had enjoyed the little chit chats she participated in over the course of the meal. And before she knew it, any uncertainties and doubts and insecurities disappeared from within her. Until she was able to speak confidently like how she usually did again.

While she was animatedly responding to a young girl, Elle slowly trailed off, realizing that everyone had their gaze shifted to someone else. They looked so dumbstruck that Elle curiously followed their gazes to where they were looking, only to see that it was Sebastian they were staring at.

Sebastian was resting his head on his knuckles while watching her. Elle was not sure why everyone seemed shocked until he spoke. "Eat. You haven't eaten anything yet." He reminded her. His voice sounded serious. And then Elle realized that his hand was outstretched, holding his fork. Her gaze then fell to her plate and saw there was already a mountain of food piled up there.

Her lips parted slightly and she discreetly glanced around again. Her cheeks turned pink.

"Eat." He once again spoke. "Or is this some kind of plot for you to get me feed you?"

Flustered, Elle cleared her throat and stabbed her fork into her food, smiling at him. "Please don't tease me..." was all she could say. But he did not get what she really meant, or perhaps, he understood but he did not care.

"I'm not teasing, Izabelle. I would happily feed you if â€œ"

Elle cut him off with an awkward 'haha, you tease' and then she immediately began to eat.

Everything went so quiet after that. And even after that, Elle could still feel everyone's gaze on her and Sebastian.

Just as she was about to break the awkward silence, she felt Sebastian's warm and large hand landing gently on her head. He very casually tucked her hair behind her ear, as though this was a normal and daily occurrence between them.

A sound of metal falling echoed jarringly in the dining hall. It was most probably a fork falling into a plate.

Sebastian shifted his gaze from Elle to the source of the noise as his brows furrowed a little. Some of the other guests seemed to stiffen as the gleam in his eyes suddenly looked sort of intense.

Elle reached out and touched his arm, pulling his attention back to herself. When he looked back at her, Elle gave him a small calming smile which seemed to work on him.

"You should eat too." she whispered. And with Elle starting another topic, the stalemate ended and the blissful dinner continued.

Soon, Elle mouthed secretly to Sebastian. 'I need to go to the bathroom.'

When Sebastian nodded, Elle rose from her seat.

Sebastian silently stared at her as she took her leave. His gaze then roamed around and suddenly, he rose and left his seat as well, quickly heading towards where Elle had headed to.

If he could choose the one-line advice from Alexander that he was most thankful for, it would be 'pay close attention to your wife's actions and emotions and pamper her'.

During the last few days, Sebastian had been calling Alexander every now and then. He had been asking about many things he had never once thought even mattered before. Most especially with this birthday event he had planned for her. He had called Alexander and Abigail for help and guidance, knowing that Abigail seemed to always know what Izabelle likes.

In fact, it was the couple who had told him about Izabelle's birthday. He did not even know when it was as he never had thought about such matters before. He himself never bothered about his own birthday and he had never celebrated even when everyone wanted to. He simply did not care about it. It did not matter at all as it was just another day to him.

However, he understood that this event was important to the humans and even for many vampires. Apparently, birthdays were something that they would remember and celebrate on a yearly basis.

Initially, Sebastian planned to deal with the circulating gossip his way without this event, but Alexander had discouraged him and suggested a more natural way to kill the issue. Abigail had also butted in and told him Izabelle would love to celebrate her special day with him.

Sebastian was skeptical because he knew that troubles always happen during big events. Sometimes, it was unavoidable. Izabelle was already doing so fine and recovering pretty well. Everything was peaceful for once. So, Sebastian would not want to do anything that could possibly disrupt this hard-to-come-by peace they had. He just wanted this tranquility to last as long as possible.

But he got the point that Alexander and Abigail were trying to make. And if this event would really make Izabelle happy, then, he would do it, sparing no expense. He would just need to watch her extra closely so that there would be no chance for any trouble to strike. Even if it did strike, at least he would be there to immediately deal with it. He would not let anything bad happen tonight.

To his relief, everything went according to plan so far. Sebastian had even dispatched his men to keep a close watch on everyone who were identified as having a possibility of causing trouble and most importantly to keep keen eyes on any cunning secret move

from Elijah. Having Lucas and Raven for that matter was the reason he had allowed himself to relax the entire time.

Just before the dance, Rion came to report the situation to him secretly. It appeared that no trouble was brewing, but Sebastian still ordered everyone to continue to be on high alert. He knew he did not need to say it, but he did it anyway. And then to his surprise, Rion told him something unexpected. Rion had said that Lucas wanted him to spare some attention on Kana.

Sebastian simply raised his brow at that remark but during the dance, he could not believe he had actually caught her eavesdropping on his and Izabelle's conversation. He would know if someone was invading his privacy. He could sense if someone was eavesdropping. And he could pinpoint immediately who it was as long as there was no barrier blocking in between them.

Catching Kana eavesdropping was a surprise because she had never behaved in that way before. She was never a troublemaker. But then again, that did not mean that she would not cause any troubles now. Though he still thought that Kana stirring up trouble was very unlikely, Sebastian still warned her, just in case. Because he remembered what Abigail said during his last call with Alexander. She had reminded him to watch for the ladies and keep Iza away from hearing any gossip.

He was not certain why Abigail sounded a bit grave when she had mentioned that it was like something he needed to pay attention to the most. She even told him not to let her into the public bathroom alone which made Sebastian frown when he heard it. But since it was he who requested for advice, he had decided to just listen. All because he knew that Abigail had once been in Iza's shoes.

But for Sebastian, he was still more concerned about the possibility of lurking danger that Elijah had plotted than any gossip amongst the ladies.

So, he followed after her. No matter how secure everything was, Sebastian would never fully trust any security anymore. Most especially since they still could not figure out how did Iza disappear without any trace from Alexander's house.

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Elle was speechless when she found Sebastian waiting for her right outside the doors of the ladies'.

"What are you doing here...?! Good lord, you didn't need to..." Elle blushed a little as she thought how he had been waiting here the entire time she was in there.

He lifted a brow. "You know... I should've even followed you all the way inside because you have a history of disappearing from supposedly secured places, Izabelle."

Elle bit on her lip to prevent the gasp that she almost let out. The disbelieving look on her face slowly faded. Though he said those words so casually, the thought that Sebastian was just that worried she would disappear again to the point of following her even to the ladies', had her heart melting. He must not realize how endearing his actions had been to her.

And before she knew it, she had already tiptoed and kissed his neck.

Sebastian cursed low under his breath as he held her shoulders. "Is this you telling me to go and just end the party now? Huh? Izabelle?" His eyes bored into hers with a seductive intensity that sent her mind reeling. It was so sudden that she was completely taken aback. Was that one little kiss enough to trigger him to this extent?

With wide eyes, she shook her head frantically even as her hands signaled 'no' to him. She would not want him to do that, or their guests would really wonder what must have happened! It could spark unnecessary gossip which was what they were hoping to avoid.

"That's... a thank you kiss." She told him with reddened cheeks and before he could respond, she grabbed his hand and pulled him along.

She heard him mutter out a low curse again but she ignored him, smiling a little at the frustration in his voice. However, contrasting to his frustrated tone, his hand held hers in a gentle and warm grip with no intentions of letting go.

"You better not think I'm letting you get away with this, Iza." He muttered as he followed along, his tone filled with delicious promises that sent shivers running down her spine.

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Soon, Sebastian had let Elle mingling with the other ladies by herself. Of course, that was only after giving her multiple reminders on not to speak too much and strain her throat that had just healed.

The queen had gently told him to give Elle time to mingle with the other ladies without him sticking next to her. Sebastian thought that as long as he was looking at her directly, it should be alright. Nobody would be stupid enough to do anything outrageous on his watch.

While some officials finally approached him and spoke to him, Sebastian had kept his attention carefully on Elle, never keeping her out of his field of vision even as he listened and spoke with the officials.

He could see her smiling, enjoying her time as she accepted the gifts from the ladies. He, on the other hand, was responding to the officials as he usually does. Even as he kept glancing and watching over his wife, he could multitask and he was giving them

just the right answer. That made the men he was talking to stop thinking that he was not actually listening to them and was utterly distracted. It amazed them how he was even engaging in the conversation like usual while his gaze was somewhere else.

Until the air suddenly changed.

Sebastian's hand that was about to lift his glass and take a drink of wine halted and a heavy and dark energy enveloped him.

"Your Highness? Is there a prob..." one of the dukes was brave enough to ask, but before he could even finish his question, Sebastian had vanished from sight.

Blood. He had smelt the scent of Iza's blood! Though faint, there was no way he could ever mistake it. No one had that unique scent but her!

His heartbeats were thundering loudly in his ears. He knew that he should not panic. She was right there. He could clearly still see her there. Standing. Looking alright. He should stay calm so he could assess everything with precision. But f**k. It was just not possible!

Reaching her in an instant, he seized her by her arms. Not caring about anything or anyone else at the moment.

"Sebastian?" she called out. Her eyes reflected her shock and confusion.

He did not respond. He could not. Because he too, was in shock that the scent was now suddenly gone. He had thought she got wounded hence the scent. But the scent was gone! How... just how was that possible?!

"Honey?" Iza's voice echoed again in his ears as her hand held onto his hand. "What is it?" The slight worry that tinted her voice brought him out of his contemplation.

Sebastian's eyes stretched slightly after realizing what she had just called him. What did she just say?!

His mind that was already reeling from that mystifying occurrence, was now threatening to blow up at that one word from her. That was the first time she had ever called him that!

But he tried his best to shift his focus back to the more pressing issue right now that was the scent of her blood. Thus, he surveyed her again, using all his senses to detect if there was any area on her that she might have been hurt and bleeding. Still, there was not even a trace of that heady scent of her blood anymore. It was as though the source of the scent did not even come from Izabelle, or more like it had actually never been there in the first place. Which was something Sebastian could not even begin to comprehend. What was happening?

"Pardon me, ladies." Sebastian said with a serious tone. "But I'm taking my wife now."

He then looked over at Izabelle to gauge her reaction. And when there were no signs of any protests from her, he scooped her up into his arms. He had expected her to be embarrassed and ask him to put her down as she usually did. But surprisingly, this time she did not. She instead held onto him so intimately. Which was another big surprise.

Everyone just stared at their public display of affection. Some ladies even had their lips parting open in shock as the crowd opened a path for Sebastian to walk freely through with his precious princess cradled in his arms.

But Sebastian could not care less about anyone else's reactions. His gaze subtly assessed the crowd as he slowly made his way out. Because he had just heard several guests whispering, asking their companions if they had picked up a scent. Someone even called it 'spellbinding scent'.

That had told Sebastian that he was not the only one who had caught it! And that made everything even more serious now.

When his gaze met Lucas', the man immediately reported.

Lucas had reported that they did not spot any signs of Elijah or any danger. However, Lucas too, smelt the scent.

'Tell me, can you still smell it?' Sebastian asked through their eye contact.

'Not anymore, Your Highness. It disappeared completely before we could even begin to trace where it came from.'

'F**k that.' Sebastian could not help the irritation that was blooming within him now. Whatever this game was, it was really getting on his nerves. 'Find something... anything about that scent.' He could only order. 'Also, find out if any witches are involved in this. No, I believe a witch must be involved.'

Lucas creased his brows at his last line, but the man still nodded, acknowledging the order given.

Sebastian knew why Lucas reacted that way. Witches no longer stick their noses to the vampire's business unless asked. The vampires and witches were no longer in a feud. However, that didn't mean that it was impossible for the witches to get involved now. There could still be a rogue witch. What happened just now... such a thing was... it was something that might only be possible with the help of magic. Witches' magic to be exact. No matter how intelligent Elijah was, there was no way he could perform such an improbable thing with just his vampiric ability. Witches might really be involved!

Fighting the urge to grit his teeth, Sebastian forced himself to appear calm. He needed to keep his anger and frustration under control as Iza was still in his arms. Then he glanced towards the queen and princesses. 'Keep the party going without us.' He told them and they nodded with understanding.

Once the couple was gone, the emcee spoke and distracted everyone, giving the excuse that the couple had some sort of private celebration going on with just the two of them. The guests nodded and clapped in understanding, some even laughed merrily with mischievous twinkles in their eyes. But of course, there were others who immediately gossiped secretly about the scene they had just witnessed.

'Did you see that? Good god... was that really our Prince Sebastian?' The ladies were in total shock.

'I bet they're just showing off. It's really weird to see the prince acting so unlike himself.'

'Right. He didn't need to scoop her up like that! She can walk! I bet that's scripted.'

'But for what? Why would Prince Sebastian bother doing any of those actions? You know His Highness was never the type to give a shit about things he didn't like doing. We all know he was a man who don't even bother to fake a smile.'

Silence reigned for a while until someone butted in. 'Unless, our prince has been put under the spell of a witch.'

The ladies' eyes widened after hearing that statement. 'Are you saying that the princess is a witch?!'

Chapter 195 Inviting

Someone who caught the silent conversation due to the utter shock in that one ladies' eyes piped in with warning in her eyes. 'Watch what you are saying, Jules. The princess is not a witch. And if the prince ever finds out what you are gossiping about...'

'I never said that the princess is a witch.' Jules retorted, defending herself from being accused. 'She's the one who came up with that conclusion. Not me!' Though she never said it explicitly, however, she was hoping that someone would misinterpret that statement and lead the conversation in that direction. That would only lean in her favor.

'But you had implied it! Leave the princess alone. The prince is just in love with her. That's it. Stop being bitter about it.' The woman warned them again and then she turned around and left. Leaving Jules and the other girls with sour expressions.

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Sebastian halted in the middle of their spacious room. He took a deep breath and then slowly put Izabelle down.

She had not spoken since the moment he scooped her up into his arms. Which was not like her at all. However, Sebastian thought that perhaps she could feel that something was going on with him and that was why she refrained from distracting him.

Stepping back, Sebastian put both his hands on either side of her shoulders. Bending down so he was more at her level, he searched her face slowly, and then down her entire body with a scrutinizing gaze. The way he was doing it was as though there was something important he needed to find. However, after a few moments, his gaze returned to her face and they locked gazes again.

"Tell me, Izabelle." His voice was grave as his hands squeezed her shoulders a little. "Are you harmed anywhere? If you are, don't hesitate to tell me."

Blinking at him for a couple of seconds, Elle stared at him rather uncomprehendingly. Her expression told him she was not hurt.

"You thought... I have been harmed?" she asked curiously. Her gaze searched his face as well. "Was that why you suddenly came to get me?"

"Yes." He replied and her blue eyes gleamed. It was as if she suddenly became emotional.

He reached out to brush her face with the backs of his fingers. His voice dropped low and grave but sexy as he continued. "I need to see it for myself, Izabelle. I needed to check and personally see to it that you truly weren't harmed anywhere. I needed to know that nothing had happened to you. That no one dared to â€" He suddenly stopped talking. It was as though his voice just gave way.

"I am fine, Sebastian." Her tone had changed into something deceptively firm. The look in her eyes turned a little... fierce.

The sudden change in her demeanor and that rare gleam in her eyes made Sebastian momentarily forget how to respond. It had lent her a look of a warrior princess that was so contradictory to her usual image of a slender, gentle and gracious princess. And it was that beautiful contrast in her that had took him by surprise and sent his mind in a whirl. While he was still in a daze, it was then that she reached out and grabbed the collar of his coat all the while pushing him backward.

Sebastian allowed himself to be pushed back by his little wife. Her actions, that were so unlike her and that compelling look in her eyes... had him silenced and spellbound. For some reason, it was sending his heart racing hard within him. Even so, he still did not want to do anything to distract her. He would like to see this other unique side of her that she had never shown to him before, even if it was only for a little while longer.

Neither of them spoke as she stepped forward and he stepped back. Their gazes never breaking, never letting the other go. Curiosity and yes... thrill surged within him as he waited in silence and anticipation. Her behavior right now was just so unexpected and so... refreshing. It truly was a surprise... a very welcomed one indeed! He never thought he would think of her being this fierce as adorable, as when she was obedient and blushing. In fact, f**k... she looks like an inviting inferno right now. Not that she was not always already hot but...

What had gotten into her? Did he miss out on something that had triggered her to suddenly behave like this?

No matter how he was enjoying this moment, he knew that there should always be a reason behind everything. Especially since it was really so sudden. Too sudden, in fact. She recently had only been blushing hard as always when he was teasing her not too long ago. So what had gotten into her, to so suddenly...

She pushed him on his chest hard. Again, Sebastian did not bother to maintain or keep his balance as he realized she had planned to fall down along with him.

He let himself fall back on the comfortably padded couch.

Izabelle was on top of him, her one knee kneeling between his legs while her hands were still gripping the collar of his shirt.

Sebastian fought the urge to speak or to raise his brow or to seize her again and pin her against him. He wanted to know what she was going to do next. The anticipation building within him was so great. He could feel and tell that she was about to do something that she had never done before. As to what it was, he was not quite certain. And he was not going to try figuring it out. He wanted to see for himself what this woman of his was going to do.

His heart started to beat with so much expectancy and suspense.

Her blue eyes dilated and finally, she opened her mouth. "You are mine, Sebastian." She declared.

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196 That woman

The conversation with the ladies had been quite pleasant at first. Though she did not speak much and only listened as the conversations flowed around her, she quite enjoyed the chit chats like she usually did whenever she was attending events previously in this country. Everyone had been polite and respectful to her as usual.

But later on, the topic took a nose dive when a lady named Milette joined them. She had greeted her and introduced herself to her ever so politely, making it known that she was a noble vampire. Elle had asked Sebastian about the reason why no one had ever mentioned anything about vampires in the previous parties she had attended. Sebastian said that it was because all parties she had attended previously had been actually filtered and pre-selected before getting Lucas to hand her the invitation cards. All the parties and events she had attended were what they called a 'general event'. These general events were events attended by all and during these circumstances, according to the vampiric law, no one was allowed to speak about anything related to vampires or do anything that the humans might find as supernatural. Essentially, they were to suppress their vampiric nature and behave as any ordinary human. That was why during those times, Elle had never heard or seen anything unusual. Her birthday party was labeled as a 'private event', and so everyone was allowed to talk about things they were not usually allowed to during general events as well as behave as their normal selves. Thankfully, Sebastian had already briefed her about this. So, she was already prepared for such topics. Still, she was not quite prepared for the topic that came up next. "Have you met with Lady Kana yet, princess?" Milette asked in a curious tone, both tone and body language indicating that she was all ready for some interesting gossip. The name alone was enough to affect Elle. But she tried her best to keep her expression unaffected. "She is here. Hmm... where is she? I had spotted her around just a while ago." The woman looked around as though she was searching for someone. When her gaze returned to Elle, she continued, without giving anyone a chance to speak. "I'm sure you already know who Lady Kana is, right, Princess?"

Another lady piped in. "Oh Milette, what kind of question is that? There's no way she does not know Lady Kana yet. I've heard that Lady Kana was here in Reigns castle just the other day. So it's impossible that Princess Izabelle has not met her yet." Though her words were meant to be understanding, Elle clearly felt the jab from her tone.

"Oh, now that you've mentioned that... I have been meaning to actually tell you this, Princess, but there have been gossips spreading out that the prince didn't like your blood. And that's why he was still calling for Lady Kana." "I'm sure Princess Izabelle understands the circumstances even if that rumor is true," Milette butted in before Elle could speak. "Lady Kana had been serving Prince Sebastian for so long. Even since she was younger. And Prince Sebastian was the one who chose her specifically, so he must really like her taste. The fact that he never changed her, unlike how the other royals would, is enough to tell everyone that Lady Kana's blood is irreplaceable to the prince. And I don't think he'd ever change her." Milette sounded as though she was lobbying for Lady Kana and seemed to be her loyal supporter.

One thing that made Elle frown a little before Sebastian let go of her was when he whispered to her that if anyone started to gossip about things she did not like to hear or feel uncomfortable about, then she should signal for Sebastian immediately. Elle was a bit curious when he said that but now, she understood why. She glanced at him and she saw him still watching her even as he was speaking. Sebastian had told her that she needed to signal him if there was even a little thing that bothers her. Elle had read in the

modern book in the library that the modern vampires had found it bad manners to listen in on anyone's conversation. So, vampires almost never do that unless it is extremely necessary. "You really didn't need to say all of that here, Lady Milette." the other lady, named Almira, retorted. She was one of the nicest vampires Elle had met. In fact, they had been talking quite a lot in the previous event and even in the couple of dinners before. "Everyone already knows that. I don't think that we should be talking about Lady Kana here—" She tried to stop the conversation from going down this path before anything bad might happen.

"I think Princess Izabelle doesn't mind, right? She's a rational woman and can understand the circumstances behind this." Lady Milette cut Almira off. "Also, it's been a while since Princess Izabelle showed up in public. Let's not limit our conversation to just the serious matters. Actually, isn't it better if the Princess knows more about all the gossip going around lately?"

"What gossip?" Elle finally spoke, her curiosity piqued. Her expression was still composed. Almost serene even.

"It's about you and Prince Sebastian, Princess." Another woman joined in. "There are rumors saying that you snatched Prince Sebastian away from Lady Kana." And then almost everyone began to join in the conversation. "I too, actually heard a ridiculous rumor that Prince Sebastian only married you for a show. And that your marriage is just abrupt and shady." "Enough with this." Almira cut in, annoyed at the direction the conversation was going. And then she faced Izabelle. "Please don't listen to them anymore, Princess. What they're saying is just ridiculous." Elle smiled understandingly at Almira.

Some of the ladies were not happy at Almira's interruption until Milette gasped softly and uttered. "Oh, there she is. Lady Kana is right there with the Queen!" Elle followed Milette's line of sight and the scene she saw next to Queen Layla nearly broke her composure completely. That woman... she had seen her before... so that woman was... that beautiful woman Sebastian was with, in that restaurant was... Kana, huh...

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This bonus chapter is dedicated to @MonsterUnderTheBed!! Thank you so very much for the supergift!!!

Their eyes met and Elle found herself feeling worse than when she was hearing every single word that Milette was spouting just a few minutes ago.

Kana was... she was beautiful. She was tall and had the looks and body of a supermodel. She stood there graciously next to the queen, behaving as though that was her rightful place -- the next queen.

Elle never expected the feeling that surged within her. It was incredibly palpable. Something she had never ever wanted to feel at all. Jealousy. What an ugly thing.

"She's saying 'Hello' to you, princess. She just wished you a very happy birthday." Almira acted as her messenger.

Elle already knew that vampires can communicate through their eyes. They have the ability of telepathy as long as they are staring directly into each other's eyes.

"Tell her, 'hello'." Elle replied to Almira, while she kept staring straight back into Kana's face. "Though I wonder why she's not coming over here to greet me on her own? Was she banned from approaching me or something?"

The sight of Kana's face turning hard told Elle that her message had been sent across.

But then, Kana's expression changed and turned almost smug once again as she stared at Almira.

When Almira's eyes widened, Elle couldn't stop herself from asking. "What did she say this time?"

"Err... uhm, princess. I don't think â€" Almira hesitated in answering Elle. Her earlier neutral expression was now gone, a frown decorated Elle's forehead.

"Tell me." Elle pressed. Curious as to why Almira was suddenly hesitating to speak now.

"Are you sure, princess? She's said some really... you really don't need to even hear about this â€" Almira kept dissuading Elle from hearing the message sent by Kana. To Elle's point of view, Almira seemed afraid that what she'd say next would hurt her.

"I want to hear it." Elle stared firmly into Almira's eyes, forcing the lady to repeat the words that Kana had said. She wanted to know. To hear it. Whatever it was.

Leaning in, Almira whispered to Elle. "She said she didn't need to greet a mere human that way."

Elle's lips lifted up a little. "Mere human, huh..." she muttered lowly, though she made sure to keep her expression in check. She would never let anyone see any expression on her face that would give them the satisfaction.

Glancing at Sebastian with her most neutral face first, Elle then whispered back to Almira. "Tell her that this Crown Princess doesn't acknowledge greetings that were not spoken directly to her when the person is present."

Kana's expression darkened for a moment. But then again, she tipped her chin up at Elle after staring into Almira's eyes.

"She said... temporary... that you're just a temporary Crown Princess who will... uhm... die sooner or later." Almira kept pausing as she told her those words. But when Elle kept waiting for her to continue, she could only go on and spout the words. "She said, she's just lending the position to you and that... she'll have it back again once Prince Sebastian gets rid of you or when you... you die." Almira choked out at the last words.

Elle's body throbbed at those words.

She fought hard. So hard to not show any reaction at all, at least outwardly. Those words... struck her. Hard. So very hard. She did not like how those words came at her like crashing waves. She wished those words never affected her.

"Princess... are you okay? Let's just stop â€œ" Almira glanced worriedly at her, brows furrowing as she wondered if things were already getting too much out of hand.

"I'm fine, Almira." Elle managed to keep her voice composed. Then suddenly, her eyes gleamed brightly and intensely. "Tell her this... 'Lending the position? The position was never yours. And you will never get it back even when I die. Because it was never yours to begin with.' "

Almira's eyes widened at the Princess' reply, but her eyes gleamed with excitement. And when she stared into Kana's eyes, Elle made sure to watch her expression carefully, not wanting to miss any changes on her face.

Kana's eyes widened upon 'hearing' the message that Elle sent through Almira, unable to hide the ugly expression that formed on her face. Her eyes - wide opened and blazing - flew to glare directly into Isabelle's in an open challenge. However, Elle ruthlessly clamped down on her own volatile feelings, kept her composure and only smiled sweetly at Kana. That only caused Kana's face to turn absolutely sour.

When she shifted her gaze back to Almira, Elle stopped Almira from looking over at Kana again. There was no point in continuing their 'conversation'. Going back and forth like this, things would only go south from here on out. She had already said her piece. That's enough... for now.

Elle then leaned over and whispered to Almira to ignore Kana now and stop receiving her message when her heart suddenly throbbed.

It was a throb so hard and inexplicable. Was it happening again? That... thing... that excruciating pain she experienced before in her chest? Lord no... she cannot be fainting here again! Please no...

Elle was still leaning against Almira, so her face was hidden from Sebastian's view when the pain came. But surprisingly, it was not as excruciating as before. In fact, it was... tolerable after that one throb that made her wince. But something was wrong. She did not know how to explain it but...

"Princess..." Almira, who had noticed Elle wincing, was worried if there was anything wrong with her.

"I'm good." She was able to speak despite this weird feeling. She took deep breaths, trying to regain her composure completely. The pain had subsided quickly as if it had never happened.

Elle gently rubbed her chest, trying to ease the weird feeling and took in another deep breath. She then moved away from Almira and smiled at her. She could move and speak just fine apparently, but what was this now? What was with this feeling?

Her body... felt like it was floating.

Elle could not quite explain this floating sensation.

It was just weird. Did someone manage to slip past the tight security around her and drug her drink or something? But that should not be possible! She was with Sebastian the entire time and she knew he had been paying close attention to every single food item she had eaten or drink that she had consumed. So if it was not the food or drinks, then it might be herself. Then she really needed to get this condition of hers checked by a specialized doctor soon. There was no way that this was not a big deal. She had totally forgotten about it due to all the recent happenings that had kept them all so hectic. But now that it happened again, she could not possibly keep ignoring it. She must get this checked to know what was going on with her own body!

Though she was glad that the pain was no longer that severe and that she did not faint this time around, this cannot keep happening anymore.

Planning to finally signal Sebastian so she could go and compose herself until this strange condition or whatever this feeling or sensation was gone, Elle lifted her face to look at him. Only to see Jules' face, blocking her view.

Leaning closer, Jules whispered. "Princess... Lady Kana wants me to tell you these words... 'Prince Sebastian is mine. He has been for countless years before you even existed. Just because you're now married to him, it makes a difference? Do you think you even stand a chance against me? Dream on little human princess.'"

Before Elle could react, a ferocious voice rang out above them. "Move."

Jules was about to turn when she was brushed aside rather rudely and she tumbled a little. Just as Jules wanted to scold the person who did that, she looked up and froze. Her mouth still hanging open, the words remained stuck in her throat. It was Prince Sebastian who did that.

Sebastian seized Elle's shoulders. His face was shadowed and his aura was heavy and deadly. She could see from the corner of her eyes how everyone had turned to look at the commotion they had caused.

The look in his eyes immediately told Elle he was in a dangerous mood. Despite the still lingering weird feeling... despite the whirlwind of emotions starting to turn violent within her because of the words she just received from Lady Kana, her mind told her that she needed to do something to calm Sebastian down first and foremost. She must not let him erupt right in front of everyone's eyes. No matter the reason, they were still halfway through the party, with everyone's eyes on them. On him. The Crown Prince.

Elle had been trained since young to react positively, at least outwardly, no matter what the situation was whenever she was in front of everyone's eyes. She was not allowed to show or do anything negative, anything that could spark rumors or create tension. And not just that, she was trained to lighten up complicated situations if she could or to step in to disrupt the tension that could potentially be fatal for the royal family's reputation.

So, she did what she thought would be enough to distract Sebastian, even if it was only for a little.

She called him 'Honey', and somehow, it seemed to work. He had blinked and the tight pressure that was building eased off a lot that it became easier to breathe. It was a surprise! She had thought she might even need to say more to at least make him calm down a little.

When he scooped her up and held her high and close to his chest, Elle did not protest in the least. Not only that protesting was the last thing she had on her mind at the moment, but also because she was busy sighing in relief that somehow she had managed to evade yet might be another big scene in public - this time among the vampire high society!

Pressing her hand over her chest as Sebastian carried her, Elle glanced over the crowd and thought to herself at what bad luck she had, because the very first person she had locked eyes with was Kana.

A haughty smile flashed across the lady's face. Elle did not know why she was smiling like that, but she hated it. Though she knew she must be just playing mind games and was trying to piss her off, Elle still could not help but get affected at how confident and knowing that smile directed at her was. It was as if she knew of something that Elle

herself did not. It was as though it was already confirmed that she had the upper hand. The words Jules whispered earlier echoed loudly in her ears.

Quickly, whatever lingering strange feeling that was left within her was quickly forgotten. All Elle could think about now was that smile of Kana's flashing tauntingly in her mind.

And then everything she had heard from those ladies, from Kana herself through Almira's and her eye-to-eye communication, and most especially those last words Jules had whispered, echoed in her ears over and over.

When Sebastian finally put her down inside their room, she reached out and grabbed his collar with more enthusiasm and boldness than she had ever shown to him before this. Her mind could no longer think of anything else but the desire to corner this man and... make him hers. To prove them completely wrong. To have it irrefutable and set in stone. That Sebastian would never be Kana's. That this man was hers. Alone.

She was angry. Upset. Hurt. But she refused to be the one backing down. She refused to just stay still and silently suffer on her own any longer. She would not step aside and just watch silently from the sidelines anymore. She refused to concede defeat. She refused to let Kana keep smiling mockingly at her like that. This man... Sebastian was her husband. She was his wife, the Crown Princess of this nation, not Kana. She refused to let Kana keep smiling at her like that. She would erase that mocking smile on her face. She swore on herself that she would.

"You are mine, Sebastian!" She declared in a possessive growl. Any fear and worry relating to the consequences of their past agreements was now brushed aside, cast into the wind and completely forgotten.

A/N: This chapter is for yesterday's update. There's an emergency so i failed to publish it. Thanks for patience and understanding.

Elle found herself holding her breath upon hearing her own words echoing boldly in her ears. Hearing her own declaration jolted her intense focus and her mind began to clear a little from the thick fog of determination that had clouded her judgment earlier.

Her heartbeat began to race like crazy and she could feel the strong thumps pounding on the inside of her ribcage. The drumming sound of it filled her ears as nervousness quickly caught up to her.

She thought she had only uttered those words in her mind. Why had she ended up saying them out loud, for goodness sakes!? She should have at least held back a little and tested the waters first! She should have played it a little safe and refrained from saying all of that at the get go. Lord... what would she have to do if he... if he reacts negatively right now?

He looked surprised as evidenced from the way he stared at her and blinked. And she totally understood why he behaved that way, because her sudden boldness must be really shocking. She had even surprised herself, what more for him?

Just from looking at his face, she could not tell what he was thinking. He was only silently staring at her. His gaze was searching, watching her every expression like he was trying to read her mind through her face.

Getting more shaken every second that passed, Elle fought to keep up her bravado instead of faltering. She had already said it earlier and she meant them. There was no more taking those words back.

Before her nerves and her mind could influence her and make her take a step back, she had already made a move and her lips landed onto the side of his neck.

Sebastian snapped out of the trance she had put him under.

He could not believe what she just said. And f**king hell! Because those words she spouted had done something inexplicable to him. Her words were still echoing in his ears! Now here she was, kissing his neck as though it was something so normal for her to do. F**k. This level of boldness was beyond what he had expected from this little wife of his. But despite how he was feeling at the moment, he truly could not help but wonder what was it that had driven her to suddenly become so proactive and this bold and even expressive. She had never been as enthusiastic before this.

No matter how he wanted to smile, he forced himself to hold back. More than anything else, he first wanted to find out the reason behind this sudden change in her behavior. Even if he had ended up finding out she had only said those words out of anger or even because of some wrong reasons, he would not care. Those words still made him f**king... f**k... he could not believe he was about to say the word 'happy'. Sebastian and happy never went together in a sentence before. It was only after the presence of his little wife in his life that things started getting more interesting.

"Izabelle..." he called out. He refrained from touching her because he knew that he would end up turning the tables around and pin her beneath him on this couch the moment he did that. No matter how badly he wanted to ravage her now, he knew he should not do that yet. Not yet. Not when she was finally making her move on him like this.

Elle halted at the mellow tone he had used to call out her name. He knew that she was feeling very nervous. She was so f**king nervous that her heartbeats were so loud. He could clearly hear them hitting loudly in her chest. She even jumped a little when he called her name.

"Look at me..." came his gentle voice. But she did not obey him immediately and just kept her face buried into his neck.

He must really know what was going on now.

"Baby..." he began to coax her gently. "Tell me... did something happen to you earlier out there? What is it that you're not telling me?"

The moment she became very still, Sebastian's relaxed and pleased face darkened. Though she had yet to say anything to him, he knew Izabelle enough to tell from her reaction. Indeed, she must have encountered some form of trouble. And in that kind of setting, the only trouble that could have happened would be related to someone saying something distasteful.

Finally lifting his hand, Sebastian held her shoulder and gently peeled her off him. He wanted to look into her face as he asked her.

"Who is it?" he whispered in a controlled voice. "Was it that woman whispering to you?"

He had been observing and had noticed two women who were constantly whispering to her. But he had not minded it one bit because Izabelle's expression did not look bothered at all the entire time they were whispering to her. There had been no signs of her hearing something she did not like.

"If..." she finally met his gaze. "If I tell you who they are... what will you do?"

"I'll have them punished accordingly. So, tell me who they are and what they did or say to you."

"What if I told you it's..." she hesitated and pressed her lips tight. But when he kept his eyes on her, urging her to go on, she made her decision to trust him once more and tell him the truth of what had happened. She opened her mouth again and continued. "It's actually the female noble you had chosen. Kana."

Sebastian's eyes narrowed slightly. Kana? But Kana had never approached Izabelle. He doubted she even knew what Kana looked like.

"You don't believe it's her, do you?" she uttered lowly, a sharp pang of disappointment shooting through her when she saw his narrowed eyes. Something bitter and hurtful flashed across her eyes. Then she abruptly scrambled off him, suddenly not wanting to be in close proximity with him anymore.

But before she could move away, he grabbed her wrist and made face him again. He looked up, his expression a little grave. "I didn't say I don't believe you, Iza." He purposely used the nickname that only he used to coax her.

"But you looked like you didn't." She muttered softly, eyes lowered.

He let out a quiet breath. "Alright. Listen. I simply wondered how because I saw that she had never approached you the entire time. Now explain to me what exactly that she did, Izabelle."

"But will you believe it?"

Having Sebastian even asking her to explain further was something Elle had not expected at all. The fact that he felt something was wrong, that something had actually happened made her feel incredibly emotional. She had braced herself for possible negative consequences of her declaration, but she got this instead. Her heart was threatening to burst with emotion until she mentioned Kana's name and his eyes narrowed.

He seemed to be in doubt that it was really Kana and just that narrowed eyes was enough to make her heart immediately crash and burn in hopelessness. It was happening again. He was making her feel like she was being lifted up to the heavens before being sent crashing to the ground in the very next moment.

When he further explained that his pause was only because he had never seen Kana approach her, a small smirk tugged at the corner of her lips. Could this be the reason why Kana never dared to approach her? Because of this? So, she would have the perfect alibi? Because technically, Kana did not speak to Elle at all. She only utilized the others around Elle to pass whatever message she wanted Elle to receive.

Elle could not believe how this looked like Kana had come at her all well prepared. It made her feel defeated. Defeated because now it seems like she did not have any more evidence for her claims. There was Almira, but would Sebastian believe her when he was already doubting her, his very own wife's words?

"But will you believe me?" she asked in a hopeless manner, her tone already sounding defeated. The situation had reminded her once again of the countless times her words were not believed just because she had no hard evidence to show and back her innocence. The fear within her magnified and she shuddered to think that it will happen again this time too, making her fist her hand nervously over her heart.

But when his face darkened at her question, Elle was suddenly reminded of that moment in that room when he had found her after so many days being missing. When Sebastian told her he believed her over and over again.

"F**k yes, Izabelle!! Why do you think I am even asking you all these details if I am not going to believe you?" he asked her a little exasperatedly. His grey eyes staring right into hers and shining dangerously bright.

His words eased the fear in her immediately. Part of her kept telling herself that it was okay. That Sebastian was not her father. Sebastian had believed in her before. He believed in her this time too, right?

"She and I spoke through Almira." Elle finally started explaining after mustering up the courage to tell the truth. "She said... Kana said that I am... only temporary... That I am just a temporary Crown Princess who will die sooner or later. That she's just lending this position to me and that she'll have it back once you cast me away or when I finally die. Either way, I am only temporary and she is the permanent one."

Once those words tumbled out of her lips, Sebastian's already dark expression darkened even more. It was like his face was one black thundercloud. Quiet fury blazed not just from his eyes but from his entire body too. Elle could sense that he was only holding back his raging savagery.

He sprung from the couch. Something heavy and dark clung so powerfully around him that it forced Elle to snap out of her emotional state.

When he started to walk towards the door with her in tow, Elle called out. "Seb... Sebastian? Where are you?"

"We're going back to the ballroom." He told her in a dark somber voice that bode no objections.

...

Meanwhile, at the party.

Kana was the center of attention most especially with the ladies, now that couple of the hour, the Crown Prince and Crown Princess were gone.

The group of ladies that included Kana and Jules had been gossiping continuously with each other through their telepathies. They were giggling like they were enjoying their very own secret topic.

'I bet she's crying in her room right now. Poor princess.'

'I can even imagine her already throwing a tantrum like a child. Poor little princess in distress. She must be dreaming to think that there's a place for a powerless human like her in our society.'

'I honestly can't fathom why Prince Sebastian is even wasting his time on a useless person like her. Like did he seriously expect that we vampires can accept a powerless human like her as our future queen? Hell no! That's like letting a bunny rule the wolves!'

'Right! I really can't wait for the day when Prince Sebastian finally wakes up and casts her away.'

'Me too. I cannot wait for Lady Kana to finally get that crown that originally belongs to her.'

'I'd celebrate all day and night once that happens!'

Kana did not say a word, but she kept smiling innocently as she busied herself with drinking her wine when someone suddenly changed the topic.

'By the way, Lady Kana. I don't know who was spreading this ridiculous rumor, but I heard someone saying that Prince Sebastian had rejected your service lately. That's not true, right?'

Kana's composure almost wavered but she clamped down on her nervousness and kept her chin up proudly. 'Such baseless rumor. Perhaps, it was Princess Izabelle who had sparked such a ridiculous rumor because she's jealous that Prince Sebastian doesn't like her blood.'

'I knew it! I knew that's just a ridiculous rumor! Yes, I bet that must be the case. She's just jealous! Tsk. Poor princess. Imagine having your husband drinking from another female. If I were her, I would just kill myself from the humiliation!' The other ladies tittered in amusement as they heard that comment.

'Right! But gosh, is she dumb enough to believe that someone will believe such rumors when everyone knows that you are the female Prince Sebastian had chosen for himself?'

Just as the female vampires were busy laughing, a commotion grabbed their attention.

Their eyes widened with shock when they saw Sebastian and Elle descending the grand staircase.

Curiosity filled everyone's eyes as they looked up at the couple they thought had already called it a night to continue with their own private celebration.

"We returned because there's a couple of announcements I wanted everyone to hear." Prince Sebastian's voice rang out loud and clear, catching everyone's full attention and stopping all conversation. "First is... I want to announce that Lady Kana is no longer of any service to me."

Happy 200th chap hellbounders!!