

# HELLBOUND HEART

## Chapter 21 A Little Bit



Elle did not move. She could not avert her eyes either and just kept her gaze staring straight at Sebastian and that beautiful woman sashaying by his side.

This morning, when Ava told her that Sebastian was not coming again, Elle had wondered if Sebastian was testing her. Could he be doing all these on purpose just to see her reaction? Could he be trying to push her buttons to see if she could maintain her patience and calmness? Could he be setting these situations up to find out if she would lose control and demand for him to come or if she would take matters into her own hands and appear at the Reigns residence, and introduce herself as the crown prince's fiancé?

These thoughts had flooded her. She had known how powerful people think. They do not trust anyone, even their family sometimes. They would do everything to inspect the motives and real character of someone before letting them into their inner circle. Elle understood that because she knew full well how dangerous it was to let some stranger into your family or inner circle, without knowing them full well. She knew how easily one person could bring the whole household down. And that was why she always agreed on the saying, be careful of who you let in your home.

That thought had Elle understanding Sebastian's action and giving him the benefit of the doubt. She knew she was a stranger he literally just met a few days ago. They could not even be considered friends and were acquaintances

at best. If this was really a test for her, Elle would really not blame him. She would show him instead that she was a person who could keep her word.

But right now, looking at her fiancé seemingly out on a date with a stunning woman, when she thought that he had been busy, caused a really awful feeling to bloom within her chest.

She wondered again if this was yet another test. Yesterday and this morning, Ava had encouraged her to call Sebastian, but Elle did not listen to her suggestion. She only told Ava she did not want to disturb Sebastian. Could he be upping his test since he did not get any reaction out of her in the past two days that he had ignored her and made her wait?

Whatever the case, Elle found out that this was not as easy as she thought. However, no matter what happens, no matter what she felt about this, she could only do one thing, and that was to keep a straight face. She was the one who barged uninvited into his life. She was the one who chose to go for this arrangement despite all his warnings. She had been warned not once but a few times.

Moreover, she promised to herself never to regret her decision. Because to her, all these little hiccups were still far better than marrying Brandon Haze.

Squaring her shoulders, her gaze followed the pair as they moved towards the building's main entrance. They were about to enter when Sebastian suddenly paused.

Slowly, he turned his head and looked toward her.

Elle felt her heartbeat skipped a beat when his eyes held onto hers. Time seemed to move in slow motion. He was a bit far off so she could not quite read his expression clearly, whether he was surprised to see her there or not.

One second... two seconds... three seconds...

The stunning woman by his side then spoke to him, so he averted his gaze and looked back at her.

"Miss, our car's here." Ava's voice echoed, causing Elle to quickly turn to face her bodyguard and nodded.

When she returned her gaze to where Sebastian was, she was surprised to see him already looking at her. Elle gave him an elegant smile, befitting her status as the crown princess. She then glanced over at the woman for a second and before she turned to follow Ava, Elle gave Sebastian a respectful nod.

She never turned back to look at him again and just gracefully walked away.

Quietly, Elle sat there as the car accelerated, just looking out the window with unseeing eyes as many thoughts jumbled up in her mind.

"Miss, are you alright?" Ava's voice jolted her out of her musings, and she finally realized they were already back at the hotel.

"I'm good, don't worry." She immediately smiled. "Just a little tired from our full day outing, I think."

"I guessed you are, Miss. You've been so energetic all day, so I had expected this. You really need to take a rest ASAP." Ava closed the car door as Elle stepped out of the car.

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Once Elle shut her room's door closed behind her, Elle went straight to the bathroom and was welcomed by a bathtub already filled with warm water and a bathbomb which she could detect the scents of jasmine, ylang ylang and gardenia oils. The bathtub by the floor to ceiling wall was also sprinkled with rose petals that added to the fragrance. There were also unscented pillar candles on the side and a bottle of her favorite rosé wine. The scene was so romantic and welcoming that she quickly washed up in the shower before

soaking herself in the warm bath. The scent and the warmth of the water was just perfect and allowed her tense muscles to finally relax after a whole day out touring the city again.

Reaching out for the bottle, Elle poured herself a generous helping of the sweet rosé wine. She swirled the wine in the glass slowly as she stared at the city lights down below. When she sipped from the glass, she closed her eyes, savoring the fruity and citrusy taste of it.

Right then, she felt so contented, so relaxed. She has never had a moment like this before. She must thank Ava tomorrow for this. She knew that Ava must have been the one to ask the hotel staffs to arranged this ahead of time as they were headed back, thinking she was very tired. If she only knew the real reason that she was a little out of it on their way here was not because of tiredness.

After a long while of just enjoying the moment, Elle gulped the rest of her wine down and put her glass on the floor. She leaned her head back and stared up at the ceiling, her fingers playing with the petals that were floating on the water surface. Her body was fully relaxed now but no matter how she tried, she still could not quite erase the little bit of pain and emptiness that had taken root in her heart. It was pretty tolerable, she could even ignore it, but it was there nonetheless, lingering and not going away no matter what she told herself.

Her eyes then turned heavier and before she knew it, she had fallen asleep.

An hour later, the doorbell started ringing. But no one came to open the door. A few minutes passed and the doorbell finally stopped.

The door swung open and a man in a bespoke suit emerged from the door. It was Sebastian. Ava was standing worriedly behind him, poking her head from the side, trying to see into the room at where her mistress was.

Ava rushed into the bedroom while Sebastian headed straight for the bathroom. He lifted his hand to knock but stopped midway and instead, pushed the door open. When no complaining noises came, Sebastian rushed inside, only to pause at the sight of Elle. She was fully submerged in a bathtub filled with fiery red petals with only her face visible, her usually large and crystal clear blue eyes now closed.

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Chapter 22 At All



A jarring voice jolted Elle awake. Ava? After blinking blearily, as she tried to clear the haze of just waking up, her eyes flew wide open at the very first face welcoming her. Sebastian? Was she dreaming?

He was standing there, looking down at her, wearing the same neutral expression that he had on the last time they had seen each other. Finally realizing the presence of cold water surrounding her entire body, Elle moved, only to realize that her limbs felt numb and stiff. She slipped but her face did not sink into the tub as she had expected to.

A large hand had shot out, caught and was already cradling her jaw. Her eyes widened even more as she rolled her eyes up to look at him from that awkward angle. How... how did he move so fast? Was her mind playing tricks on her? It must be... right? It must have been the wine and the warm water...

"Towel, Ava." Sebastian's deep voice cut through her musings as he pulled her up and then out of the tub.

Pressing her against his solid and warm body, he took the towel from Ava and wrapped it around her. It was then that Elle realized her teeth had started chattering. She was cold. So cold.

"Do I need to call for an ambulance, Your Highness?" Ava asked worriedly from the side.

"No need." Was all Sebastian said before lifting her up into his arms effortlessly. Even with his suit on, Elle felt his body radiating so much heat that she was craving badly. It almost felt like he himself was running a fever. She wanted to think that this must be due to the fact that she just felt too cold, thus the contrast in temperature. But... she remembered that he felt like this too, back then when she was in his bed that night. But then again, it could also be just her feeling his temperature hotter than normal because she was in such a desperate situation back then.

Once they reached the bedroom, he dried her down quickly with the towel before he grabbed a fluffy fleece blanket and wrapped her up in it. Her teeth's chattering and body's shivering slowly subside as warmth seeped into her.

Stealing sideways glances at him when she thought that he was not looking, Elle could not help but notice how careful he had handled her. It was as if he thinks that she might break a bone if he accidentally made even a single careless move.

He sat on the edge of the bed with her still cradled in his arms and he did not let go until her shivering completely stopped. Elle looked up at him, curious and confused yet touched at the same time. She had never expected this man to do all this for her. And why was he here at all? Was he not on his date with that beautiful woman? She was puzzled but kept all her questions to herself.

When he looked down at her, his face turned a little dark. "You could've drowned in there. Don't you know you shouldn't drink when you planned to

soak in warm water in the tub?" his voice was not particularly loud or angry, but the faint displeasure in his eyes had Elle's slightly warmed-up heart turning a little colder again.

However, she knew that he was right. Sleeping in a tub was a dangerous thing. She could have easily drowned or even if she had woken up when her face was below the water's surface, she could have still gotten water into her lungs. She could have also suffered severe hypothermia as the water had already cooled and the room's air conditioning was on due to the centralized control in the hotel. She also could not blame him if he was mad, since he, the crown prince, needed to safeguard his reputation as well. If his fiancée were to be found dead in a random hotel room in Viscarria, it would definitely be a huge scandal that could ruin his and his family's reputation forever. This situation must have worried him. She knew exactly how people like them treat possibilities of destructive scandals. "I made sure to drink just enough so I won't get intoxicated. But it seems..." Elle trailed off, stopping herself from explaining any further, knowing that it made no difference even if she did. Then she moved and slid off his lap, holding the blanket tightly around her body. She wobbled a little but quickly regained her composure.

Facing him, Elle gave him a genuine apology. "I'm sorry... that will never happen again," she promised solemnly.

As their gazes met, Elle felt the urge to ask him what happened to that stunning woman that was with him earlier in the night. She wanted to ask why he was even here. But she did not open her mouth to ask those questions that were just at the tip of her tongue. Sebastian could do whatever that he wanted according to their agreement, and she must not pry into his personal business. At all.

"Thank you for coming to my aid. I really appreciate it." she looked at him with gratitude. "I feel alright now. You can..." she wanted to tell him he could leave

now and go back to his date, but she did not want to sound as though she was kicking him away nor giving him an order when he came all the way here to prevent the possible big trouble from happening to her. She could just ask Ava her questions later. She would need to ask who was it that set up that bath and especially that wine. It just did not make sense to her that she would pass out when she had just drunk literally only a few gulps. This matter needed looking into.

"Your Highness, your clothes are here." Ava's voice echoed from the slightly opened door. Clothes? Elle's eyes flew to the door. Wait... he intends to sleep here?!

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Chapter 23 Tomorrow



Sebastian unceremoniously stood, walked forward and opened the door, leaving Elle standing where she was, her eyes widening as she stared at his retreating back. But the expression on her face quickly changed at the thought that came belatedly to her – that the clothes Ava was talking about must be clothes for him to change into since his suit had been splashed and soaked in the front when he had pulled her out from the tub earlier.

Watching the door that had closed after he walked out, Elle took a long deep breath. Then she climbed back onto the bed as her limbs still felt a little weak and shaky. If she had attempted to follow after Prince Sebastian, she might have tumbled right there and then to the floor. She wondered if this was still the effects from the wine that she had taken, which was again, really strange.



Sighing, Elle laid back, stretched out and stared up the ceiling as she thought back on what happened.

Her mind wondered again. Was Ava the one who called for Sebastian to come? Why? Could it be because Ava came to check on her first, but she did not open the door and that was why she asked for help? But why would Ava call for the prince? She should have just called for the hotel staff or even their manager to open her room door, right? Or could it be that... Ava had reported to Sebastian that she was acting weird since they left the restaurant and that was why...

Elle shut her eyes closed and covered her eyes with the back of her hand. Her other hand was clenching on the bedsheets at the possibility that had occurred to her. She truly wished that she was overthinking it and what she suspected was not the case. She never wanted Sebastian to think that she was sulking because she had seen him with another woman!

Minutes passed but Elle just could not fall asleep. She turned to her side and stared unseeingly at the wall when she heard the door opening again. Was Ava there to check on her? She kept her eyes closed and pretended to sleep, feigning deep and calm breathing. She did not want Ava to think that she was having a hard time sleeping or she might make a fuss out of it.

Her eyes flew opened when she felt a heavy weight climbing onto the bed behind her. Turning, she looked at the man with shock. Sebastian? He did not leave after changing?! Why?

Once again, her expression quickly readjusted itself from a shocked surprise to a mask of calm indifference as she noted that he was not wearing his sleeping clothes, but instead, he had on a new suit.

Sitting up, Elle straightened her back as she gracefully sat and faced Sebastian who was now looking at her. "I'm guessing you have an important

matter to tell me, Prince Sebastian." She said, looking at him curiously. Him sitting in her bed made her it hard for her to stay as composed and relaxed as she wanted to because right now, she was being reminded of that night.

"Yes." He said, his unfathomable eyes seemed to be observing her. At the same time, he seemed to be expecting something else from her. But what... she did not know.

Elle did not rush to speak and just waited patiently for him to start the ball rolling.

"We're getting married tomorrow." His deep voice informed her as the spine-tingling vibrations caused by his voice travelled from her ears and through her entire frame. She stilled for a while.

"Okay," She replied, nodding agreeably at him. "I'm guessing it will be a civil wedding, right?" She hazarded a guess, knowing that a marriage that was as quick and rushed like this without giving either side much time for preparations whatsoever could only resort to a civil wedding.

He gave her a nod. "Let me know if you object and prefer a formal wedding setting instead."

Elle could not immediately respond to his comment. She would be lying to herself if she said she had not been dreaming of walking down the aisle with that perfect white wedding dress of her dreams. But... she did not want to tell him that. She did not want to object. She could not bring herself to.

p Not only because she was not sure how he would respond if she objects to him or if this was another test, but also because she knew that if she go ahead with a formal wedding, it will take more time for preparation. Not to mention that it will definitely be made known to the public. Elle did not know why but after what happened tonight, she felt an uneasy feeling that she was not as safe in this beautiful place as she had initially thought she was. She

could not shake off the feeling that perhaps it might all be related to Brandon Haze. She could not think of anyone else who would want to cause such troubles for her other than that monster. Unless there was someone else in this place that was... but why? She quickly forced herself to stop thinking too much about it and finally gave her answer to Sebastian.

"I'm okay with a civil wedding." She answered, keeping her tone neutral, neither her eyes nor expression showed any signs of being forced.

Sebastian nodded and suddenly reached out to her. Elle tried her best not to react when his gloved hand brushed against the sides of her neck. She felt him pick at something that was seemingly caught in the hair at her nape.

It was a red petal from the bath. He stared at the petal with those discerning grey eyes before crumpling it in his leather gloved fist, as if he was trying to crush it into dust.

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## Chapter 24 Expectation



Returning his deep gaze to Elle, Sebastian simply said, "Sleep."

The next thing she knew, he had her lying down on the bed. Not in a forceful way whatsoever. She did not feel him push her back into the bed at all but... was that normal? She could not quite explain how it had happened. All she knew was one moment, she was staring deeply into his eyes and then in the next moment, she was already lying back on the bed. What in the... she mentally shook her head, telling herself that she must still be heavily affected

by the wine she had drunk. She was really getting more and more suspicious that that wine might have been drugged.

Sebastian tugged at the blanket and covered her to up her neck. Then he rose, shoving his one hand into his pocket.

"Alright, I'll come fetch you tomorrow morning. Seven, sharp."

"Seven sharp..." Elle stared hard at him. "Is this time for real then? I would like to know... because if you don't come on time or stand me up again, I won't be here in the hotel just waiting for you. You know that, right?"

He lifted his brow and Elle continued confidently. "I would rather be out and enjoying the beauty of Quesa all day long instead of waiting, doing nothing in the room. You might not even find me until I come back to the hotel at night."

His faint dimple appeared as he gave her a quick but breathtaking smile. It was a smile that threatened to send Elle staring off in a daze again. Damn him for being so unacceptably gorgeous and having that enviable smile and appealing dimple.

"Seven sharp, Izabelle." His tone sounded certain as he looked meaningfully at her. "So go to sleep now and get some rest." Then he turned and left, the sound of the door closing gently echoed in his wake.

Elle could not stop herself from cracking out a disbelieving smile. Why is this man so confusing? He seems to vacillate between acting hot as an inferno and cold as blizzard with just a blink of an eye! She felt as though her neck would suffer from whiplash if he continued flipping from hot to cold like this. However, at that moment, she felt like this man had the power to burn a woman's body and freeze her heart all at once. What a dangerous combo!

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It was 6:57 in the morning. Elle held a graceful posture as she sat and stared at the wall clock in her hotel room. Her thick and long lashes which was a dark shade of auburn were fluttering open and close as she blinked in silence, to the beat of the minute hand with a serene expression.

When the minute hand hit 59, Elle slowly and unhurriedly turned her gaze to the door. She had prepared herself. But despite the words that he seemingly promised her last night, she did not dare raise her expectations beyond fifty percent of him keeping his word.

The next second, the doorknob moved. It was exactly seven sharp, when someone pushed at her door. Ava? Sebastian?

When it was Sebastian who stepped into her room, her large blue eyes slightly widened.

He stared at her. His right hand shoved into his pocket again. "You look as though you were expecting that I would not honor my words, Izabelle," he said in a casual tone. He was wearing a tailored black suit, looking dapper and very much like a proper groom now.

"Well," Elle stood, "anything could've happened that might have hindered your arrival on time, Prince Sebastian." Her tone was calm and gentle, a tiny lift of a smile at the corners of her lips, keeping to her status as the crown princess of a country.

"So, you have prepared yourself for the worst-case scenario instead of expecting me to keep to my words?" His tone sounded a little amused as he offered her his arm.

"Expectation is the root of all heartaches, they say." She answered him glibly as they glided out of the door. "Sometimes, it's better to expect the worst so you would not have the chance to be disappointed."

"Because when that does happen, you will not get caught off guard and will just say 'it is as expected'?" Sebastian followed her reasoning so quickly as though he had that exact sentence prepared in advance.

Elle glanced at him and was surprised to see the corner of his lips slightly lifted. "And when the opposite happens, you will feel the positive emotions stronger because you really had no expectations on it."

"Interesting..." Whatever he was going to say next got interrupted by the sound of his phone vibrating in his pocket.

Upon looking at the identity of the caller, Sebastian glanced over at Elle and said, "Go ahead, I'll follow along in a moment."

There was a split-second pause before Elle gave him a short nod and then followed after Ava to enter the elevator.

Sebastian did not take long to catch up with them so once everyone was in the car, they finally left the hotel. The trip was silent as Sebastian was suddenly unusually quiet. He was already not a man of many words, but Elle felt that something seemed to be occupying his mind since he received that earlier call.

Now Elle could not help but start thinking about what it was that he could have heard from the caller. Could it be related to their marriage today?

After mulling over it in her mind for a long while, Elle could no longer contain herself. She could not help but think that Sebastian was going to stop the car and tell her their civil wedding would not happen today as planned.

"Is everything alright?" she finally broke the silence.

Sebastian regarded her with a searching gaze. "I'm guessing..." A glint of amusement seemed to flash in his eyes. "... your pessimism is kicking in again and thinking that some kind of trouble had occurred and now you're suspecting that the wedding will not happen. Is that right?"

His words had Elle's lips parting before her face flushed a becoming shade of dark pink. How... how did he know? Was she that transparent? It was as though he could read her like a book already!

She cleared her throat to regain her composure and was about to retort when she caught him staring at her face. There was an unusual gleam in his eyes that had stopped her from continuing her riposte.

"If that's what you're thinking, you are right." His reply stunned her.

"W-what?" Elle stammered in a low voice.

"There's indeed some trouble that had arisen."

Elle stilled, utterly speechless. She could not even put into words what she was feeling right now. Why was it so hard for her to get married to someone other than Brandon Haze?! She almost lost her cool and broke down in tears thinking of her rotten luck.

But then, completely unexpected words tumbled from his mouth next, shooting a hopeful ray of salvation in the jumble of her unsteady emotions.

"But worry not, Izabelle. Because no trouble can stop this wedding from happening today."

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Chapter 25 Last Chance



"There is no one who can stop this wedding from happening today either, unless one of us backs out." Sebastian added before Izabelle's relieved breath could even escape her lips. The great tension that was about to leave

her because of his earlier remark had suddenly been pushed back into her the moment he uttered that latest sentence of his. There he goes again...

Izabelle could not help but feel like she is a balloon he was playing around with, filling her with air, lifting her up to the heights before depleting her the very next second, sending her plummeting into the dumps. Was he trying to tell her that he could still back out right now? Her overthinking and pessimistic mind kicked into high gear and tendrils of fear unfurled secretly within her. What if he really suddenly wanted to back out? He would not treat her like this, right? There was no reason for him to suddenly back out...

In the midst of her chaotic thoughts, Elle felt herself being yanked and collided against a hard and sturdy body – Sebastian's of course – as the car suddenly made a sharp turn. She winced and had goosebumps travelling up her skin as she heard the car's tires screech piercingly.

Elle's eyes turned wide as she clutched her fists tightly on his shirt. Then in the next second, the car was speeding up just fine again that Elle could not quite tell if they've been involved and closely avoided a car accident or something.

His scent, his warmth, and the feel of solid muscles just under his suit distracted her senses so badly that she had a hard time pulling herself up to look at him to ask what just happened.

But as soon as she lifted her head, she heard something that had her insides freezing again. "Hello? Seb? Did something happen?" It was a pleasant voice belonging to a woman coming from his phone that was near her ear.

He removed his arm that was wrapped around her shoulders and placed the phone to his other ear. "Give me a moment, I'll call you back." He said on the phone, waited for a moment before uttering an "Mn" sound before ending the call.



When did he even manage to call someone? It seemed as though she was too preoccupied with her thoughts again a moment ago that she did not even notice!

"Are you okay?" he asked, his gaze searching her body as if to check for any visible injuries.

"I'm... I'm fine." she replied, finally pulling away from him. "Thank you. What just happened?"

"Just a reckless driver on the road. Lucas avoided it, thus the sudden sharp turn."

Elle blinked. "Oh... I see..." she looked outside the window, but she could not see any cars around anymore. It also finally came to her notice how fast their car was moving at the moment. The speed was... it was just too fast! How could a crown prince's driver drive this fast?! Does this country not have any protocol on driving a royalty?

When she turned back to look at Sebastian, she saw him busy on his phone, tapping swiftly on his keypad, seemingly texting someone. Elle's thoughts were immediately pulled off from the driving issue back to the woman's voice she had heard a while ago. Who was that woman? Was he texting her right now?

The stunning woman from yesterday came to her mind, followed by the thought of him backing out of today's wedding.

Her fingers moved, itching to clutch onto her white elegant dress. But she held back making any sort of reaction until the car finally reached the city hall and slowed down to a stop.

"Wait here, Izabelle." Sebastian told her, his gaze lingering on her face for longer than necessary before he stepped out of the car and closed the door.

The sound somehow felt full of finality in Elle's ears, and she could not help from gulping in nervousness.

She watched him walk inside the city hall until he disappeared from her view. Elle let out a long deep breath. They were finally here at the City Hall and Sebastian did not say anything about backing out. Everything should be alright now. But her heartbeat was racing too fast. She could not relax nor calm down no matter how much she tried.

Taking another deep breath and holding it in for a few seconds before exhaling out slowly, Elle shifted on her seat when some papers fell on her feet. She had noticed a brown folder sitting on her seat when she entered the car earlier on and had moved it securely to her side.

Elle quickly bent to pick up the papers which appeared to be official documents, when she saw it was actually divorce papers. Their divorce papers to be exact. Her entire being stilled for a few breaths before she continued picking up the rest of the documents. The other papers contained an agreement. Their agreement.

For an immeasurable amount of time, Elle just stared at it blindly until Sebastian returned to the car. He walked around the car and opened the door on her side for her. Staring down at her, Sebastian regarded her with that seemingly scrutinizing gaze again.

Bracing his hands against the car, he asked, "Still no change of mind?"

Their gazes held. Both of them seemingly trying to read each other's thoughts. He offered her his hand. "This is your last chance to back out, Izabelle. Once you..." Sebastian trailed off when Elle placed a folder in his hand.

"As promised, I've already signed on both the agreement and the divorce papers, Prince Sebastian." she said in a serious tone, holding his gaze firmly.

No way was she backing out of this. She was counting of this marriage to escape her fate from being tied with Brandon Haze.

While Elle turned to gather her clutch, Sebastian shot a peculiar glance at Lucas, causing the red-haired man to frantically shake his head, as if denying something.

"I will never back out, Prince Sebastian. So if you're waiting for me to do so... I'm sorry to disappoint you." she told him stiffly as she lifted her hand for him to take it. "I'm keeping my word, so I hope you will keep yours too."

Sebastian chuckled under his breath, a look of wonder and disbelief gleamed across his eyes for a moment.

He accepted her hand. "You really just don't cease to amaze me, princess. Now I can't help but wonder how you would be once you learn the worst parts of me." He whispered that last line as he bent close, placing his hand above her head to protect her in case she bumped her head against the car while getting out.

"If and when that happens, please be rest assured, I will keep every single word I said." Was all she replied.

"We shall see when that time comes. We shall see, Izabelle."

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Chapter 26 Act



26 Act

The procedures did not take long, and the wedding was done. Just like that.

Elle couldn't help but secretly huffed out a humorless chuckle. It was just as she had expected. A wedding befitting a marriage of convenience, a loveless marriage. The official who wedded them did not even announce, 'you may kiss the bride'. She did wonder if this country did not do that or was it Sebastian who had asked the official to skip it because as he had said, he does not do kisses?

Shaking her head, Elle forced herself to stop thinking about it, knowing that it did not even matter anymore.

Once again, she reminded herself that this was her own choice and that this quick and straight to the point wedding was way better than the extravagant and lavish wedding that Brandon Haze had prepared for her. At least, she did not have to be forced to walk down the aisle against her will, trembling and hoping that someone would shoot her dead, or better yet, shoot Brandon dead before they reached the altar so that the wedding will not happen.

Keeping her gaze focused on the scenery beyond the window that was passing, Elle fought not to look down at the silver band that was currently adorning her ring finger. Earlier, when he had slipped the ring on her finger, Elle had felt an indescribable feeling. Even until now, she could still feel the wake of that unknown emotion, now seemingly lingering every time she became conscious of the ring that was now on her.

At last, she was finally married. She was now Sebastian Reigns wife. That fact alone would definitely secure her from any kind of trouble Brandon Haze might still be planning. And with this, Elle was certain her own father would no longer trouble her.

All she had to do now was do her best. Do her duty as the wife of this country's crown prince and make sure to never cause Sebastian a reason to divorce her. She wasn't afraid of it. She was already expecting that it will eventually and definitely happen but not now, not soon. She needed more

time to stand on her own feet first. So, when that time comes, she won't rely on anyone, not even to her father or her royal status.

Taking a subtle deep breath, Elle relaxed as she slowly exhaled it out.

"May I ask why you suddenly decided to go ahead with the marriage with me today, Prince Sebastian?" Elle broke the silence inside the car that was smoothly moving in quite a safe speed this time. "Of course, you are free not to answer."

"You can stop being so formal now, Izabelle." He replied, holding her gaze.

"Just to let you know, my family are full of love birds. All the married ones are married to the love of their lives. So, we'll need to act like a real married couple around them. Do you think you can do that?"

Elle creased her brows, surprised at what he had said. "But... but didn't they, I mean your father and uncle, already know that we are not –"

"They assumed that we are attracted to each other at first sight and that's why something 'supposedly' happened between us that night. There's a high chance that both would not reveal the truth to the rest of the family as well."

"Why? I mean why would they... is it to avoid possible future gossips and scandals?" Elle could understand how the royal family would want to avoid such bad reputation to affect them.

Sebastian paused for a moment after hearing her comment.

"Not letting them know is actually better for us as well. My family, most especially the ladies will definitely come at me and nag me endlessly if they ever notice that something is amiss in our relationship. I can't promise they will not bother you as much as they do to me if they end up finding out." He was very serious while speaking about his family that Elle really felt that he was not lying.

Somehow, she felt a little better about it because it seemed his family was not as what she had been expecting – of course, she also had lowered her expectation to prepare herself to expect the worst about his family. Just in case. But the fact that he said they all had married the love of their lives, spoke volumes. That was an amazing fact. Especially when considering that they were all royals. As far as she knew, royals tend to have arranged marriage and seldom had the chance to marry for love.

"So, in front of them, we need to act like we're in love with each other?" Elle asked and Sebastian nodded.

"That's right."

"I understand." She gave him an understanding nod. "I will try my best."

Your gift is the motivation for my creation. Give me more motivation!

Creation is hard, cheer me up! VOTE for me!

KazzenIX

Suy nghĩ của người tạo

Bình luận

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Xem tất cả

Let's meet your new family,Izabelle☺ I can assure you, you would be pampered and loved especially by our awesome and wonderful ladies☺❤

If Izabelle will try her best, so will Sebby!And I'm excited at what he does☺☺  
Acting round the fam will soon be real and natural☺☺☺

Congratulations Mr. and Mrs..Reign☺( Your dream wedding will come soon Izabelle, Sebby will give it for sure)[imgs]

From our dear author[imgs]



The Reigns castle sat on a rugged hill overlooking the city of Quesa. It was a colossal six story structure in the shape of two huge cuboids that were connected by a bridge at a straight angle and covered by two adjacent high gable roofs. The snow-covered mountains that could be seen rising majestically behind the castle just made the view all the more magical in her eyes.

The past few days, Elle had already begun seriously studying the city of Quesa and this country. She had found out that the Reigns Castle had stood on that same hill for centuries, and that the royal family had religiously buried their ancestors under that hill.

p She had seen a photo of this castle before but now that she was seeing it with her own two eyes, she could not help but feel something peculiar. That something magical and mysterious she had been feeling since the moment she stepped into this country seemed to become even stronger now as their car entered the castle's complex through the symmetrical gatehouse flanked by two stair towers.

When the car stopped at the vast courtyard, Elle felt her heart thud hard within her.

"Don't worry. They already know that the wedding's already over." Sebastian's calm voice sounded from beside her. "So, you don't need to bother about explaining it."

Elle could not help but crease her brows at him. "You already gave them an explanation on why we had gotten married so suddenly? Would you mind

telling me what excuse you used on them so our stories will match? I believe that they will still question me about it."

"I didn't give any explanation. I just said that this is our decision. They won't pry you about this matter, Izabelle. That I can assure you." He sounded so confident and sure about it that Elle had no choice but to believe him and stop asking about the matter. She could only hoped that the ladies would not corner her later on and try to dig more information out of her.

The sight of the entire castle being sprinkled with numerous decorative chimneys and ornamental turrets, and the court front with colorful frescos while the court-side gable was crowned with a black-colored dragon mural, made Elle pause in her steps. The mysterious feeling escalated once again. The thought that this feeling seemed as though she had just arrived in a fictional world had her shaking her head in disbelief and wanting to laugh out aloud. What was going on with her? She really needed to stop overthinking because her feelings and thoughts were really starting to become more and more ridiculous!

Sebastian offered her his hand and when Elle accepted it, he intertwined their hands together as though it was a natural thing for them to be so touchy-feely. She guessed it was necessary as they needed to portray the loving and passionate relationship that they had which would justify their sudden registration of marriage. She decided to not say anything as she understood that this was him already starting their act, trying to ignore the feel of his large hand entwined with hers that was more than just a little bit distracting.

"Relax," his velvety deep voice echoed softly into her ears as they walked forward hand in hand. "You have nothing to be nervous about."

Elle just gave him a nod. And once they both entered the main door, Elle halted at the people who were already gathered there, seemingly anticipating their arrival.



All eyes went to her. Their faces smiling, and she could see no pretense in them as she looked from one pair of eyes to another. They all looked at her like they were genuinely pleased. Each one of them were extremely beautiful people oozing with an unsettling elegance.

"Welcome to the Reign family, Izabelle," an older woman around the same age as King Rudy approached her first. She had seen her in the picture. This was the current reigning queen. King Rudy's wife, Queen Lana of Viscarria. Her mother-in-law.

Lana embraced Elle in a welcoming hug. And then, the others came to her. Two princesses approached her after Queen Lana. Their names were Rena and Minerva. Both had blond hair and brown eyes, just like the queen.

"Nice to meet you, Sister-in-law, I'm Kyle." The handsome man who was obviously one of the Reign's princes, just going by the color of his eyes and his aura, shook hands with her. He had a face of a male superstar and such charming and gentle smile.

After gracefully greeting Prince Kyle back, another man stepped forward. She knew him. He's the famous businessman and CEO of Quin Corporation, Skyler Quin Reign. He's also the second oldest prince of this kingdom.

Just like Kyle, Prince Skyker had that princely kind of attraction which was befitting a perfect prince on a white horse. It was so opposite and unlike Sebastian's villainous and fallen-angel type of male beauty.

"Hello Izabelle, so glad you're finally here. Meet my wife, Kelly." Skyler flashed Izabelle such a warm sisterly smile as he introduced her to Kelly.

Kelly was a sophisticated lady exuding an aura of an alpha woman. She had seen her in interviews before so she already know that Prince Skyler's wife was also a powerful businesswoman. These couple too exudes elegance but for some reason she didn't feel that indescribable presence around them. She

didn't know how to explain it but these couple feel more just like her, when compared to the rest of the family.

"I see why Sebastian has fallen in love you at first sight, Princess Izabelle." Kelly giggled when a familiar voice echoed.

"Izabelle!" Elle's gaze widened before it flew to the man approaching them. It was Alexander.

When her eyes fell to the woman next to him, Elle just stood there for a while, unable to pull her gaze away as she stared at her. She must be Alexander's wife, right?

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## Chapter 28 The Reigns (Part II)



There was just something so breathtaking about the lady that Elle could not quite put into words. And it was not only due to her beauty and that indescribable presence she possessed... why did she feel like... this was not the first time she had seen this lady?

"Hello, dear..." her sweet voice echoed and Elle was speechless as she stared back into her bright black eyes that was seemingly filled with so much emotion. "I'm Abigail. I am so happy to meet you... Izabelle..." she said before spreading her arms open to envelop Elle in a tender hug.

Elle could not quite explain what she felt. She was feeling a little confused at how this woman named Abigail was reacting so emotionally to her right now. Could it be that she was just emotional due to something else? Perhaps, something sad had happened today and that was why she was being so

emotional? Or maybe her looks just reminded Abigail of someone that was close to her and that was why she was behaving like this? That was the only explanation Elle could think about, because she was certain that she had never met this woman before.

Abigail hugged her far longer than was normal in a greeting hug. It was even a little tighter, and Elle still felt that this beautiful woman was holding back some. What on earth...?

"So pleased to meet you too..." Elle awkwardly greeted while still caught in the woman's embrace. It was after her greeting that the woman released her. But Elle could feel the reluctance even as those arms slowly unwrapped themselves from around her. She almost wanted to burst into a self-conscious laughter. However, her training as a princess and a noble lady was truly ingrained into her and she withstood that urge and managed to retain her graceful smile.

"Just call me Abi." The beautiful woman informed her before smiling at Elle so tenderly. It was the kind of sweet smile that could probably melt the iciest of hearts. It was really amazing how this lady made her suddenly feel so much better. She was like a bright and warm ray of sunshine in the middle of a cold winter night.

"Mom?" a young boy around ten or eleven years old appeared from behind the crowd of people, pulling on the hand of a girl of his age. One look at them and Elle could immediately tell that the two children were twins! The boy an exact carbon copy of Alexander and the girl also greatly resembled Abigail. They were no doubt their parent's children. One would be blind not to notice it.

"Oh, Alexis, Alice... come over here." Abigail waved excitedly at the kids to approach them.

"Is she... our new aunt?" The boy – Alexis – asked in a very curious tone. His large and bright grey eyes looked up inquisitively at Elle like he was amazed at what he was seeing. Smiling, Elle said her greetings to the cute boy.

"Yes." Sebastian replied flatly because Alexis had then turned to look at him with those big questioning eyes.

Alexis cocked his head, his gaze now staring attentively at their intertwined hands. "So, this beautiful lady is your wife now. Right, uncle?" His intelligent eyes twinkling as it travelled from their locked hands, back up to their faces.

"That's right, Alexis." Sebastian again agreed to his nephew's comment.

"Hmm..." The boy hummed, pursing his lips and tapping a finger against those pouty things. One of his brows arched and he looked as though he was not convinced at all. Elle looked at the sharp look on the boy's face and her heart rate picked up its pace a little. Could a young child like him even tell that there was no true love nor affection between her and Sebastian?

Elle squeezed Sebastian's hand, wanting him to do something to clear the obvious doubt in the child. But Sebastian did not bother to say or do anything and simply ignored the boy, causing Elle to fall speechless. Did he not say they needed to act like they were truly in love and be as convincing as possible?

"Alice, is it just me or you feel that something's just off with them?" the boy whispered to the cute and quiet Alice that was standing beside and slightly behind him. Though it was supposed to be a whispered discussion between the twins, it was loud enough for Elle to hear. Oh lord... the boy was highly perceptive!

"I feel the same way too, brother." Alice replied in a low voice.

"Right!" Alexis exclaimed. "They don't look like real couple, right?"

Elle's jaw almost dropped to the floor when she heard the boy's confident words. What on earth did Abigail feed her twins?! Why were they so sensitive and insightful that they could tell what was happening between her and Sebastian at first glance?

"Oh my..." Abigail held Alexis's shoulder and bent down to whisper into his ears.

Whatever Abigail said made the boy looked instantly apologetic. "I'm sorry. That was rude of me to say." he apologized followed by Alice who repeated the same thing her brother said. Both children looked sorry at their direct comments to the new family member.

"I'm sorry. We assumed you two are not a real couple because our parents and aunts and uncles are always very sweet and loving to their husband and wife while you two are only holding each other's hand." The girl's fast explanation had Elle lifting her eyes and looking around at the other adults who were present.

The little girl was actually right. The princesses and their husbands as well as the king and queen were all standing close to their significant other that they were brushing up against each other's arms. The twins' parents as well as Prince Skyler and his wife looked even sweeter as the men were intimately holding and curled their arms rather possessively around their wives' waist. Meanwhile, not only she and Sebastian were merely holding each other's hands, but they even had quite a wide gap between their bodies! No wonder it triggered such comments from the twins. Elle could feel a warm flush on her face due to embarrassment and she knew that there would be a pink tinge highlighting her cheeks.

"Oh, it's okay..." Elle smoothly let go of Sebastian's hand and gracefully squatted down to put her gaze to the level of the twins. She whispered to them, smiling, making sure only the kids would hear what she was going to

say. "I and your uncle Sebastian are still newly wedded, so we are still a bit shy to be so sweet to each other while there are people are around. Right now, we are still trying to get used to our new roles as husband and wife." She explained, blushing a little as she grinned at the kids.

"Oh..." Alexis' mouth formed an 'o' while Alice blinked her huge eyes at Elle with an understanding gaze. "So that's why... I understand now, Princess Izabelle."

"You two can call me Aunt Elle."

"You're very beautiful, Aunt Elle." Alexis complimented generously and Elle giggled at how adorable these twins were.

Soon, the family gathered around a spacious and luxurious sofa. Each had given the newlyweds their gifts and then they started pleasantly chatting to each other, making small talk to ease Elle into her new surroundings. Well, Sebastian did not talk much. He only answered when Alexander and Skyler spoke to him.

Elle had also become aware on what Sebastian and the twins said were right. All these married couples were very much in love with each other. She could see sparks in their eyes as they looked at their spouse. The way they touched and held and spoke with their other halves were just... Elle could not help but wonder if they could really fool these love birds with their little acts.

Sebastian had made sure to have her sidled up as close to him as possible, the entire time since the twins had pointed out their distance, but that was it. Now she could not help but wonder if Sebastian was even serious about this acting. She could feel that he was when he said it earlier. But she was expecting him to up his game but surprisingly, he did not. Could it be because this man thought that this was enough?

Silently sighing, Elle slowly brought Sebastian's hand to rest on top of her lap and then started massaging his palm as she spoke with the ladies. Her attention was fixed onto Abi and Kelly while she casually massaged his palm, that she did not notice Sebastian staring at their hands on her lap with an unfathomable expression danced across his eyes.

## Chapter 29 Taboo



Meeting the Reign family and getting to know them felt too good to be true for Elle. She had never expected how harmonious and happy and peaceful everyone was. There seemed to be no power struggle or envy or anything unpleasant within their midst. This was something really rare in a royal household. This is what a true and loving family should look like in Elle's thoughts. Observing and communicating with them had caused her to feel a little wistful as she compared it to her own family. She knew that she should not, but she just could not help it.

"I can't believe how amazing everyone in your family is..." Elle commented, still smiling softly. She had actually enjoyed every minute of her time socializing with them, most specially with Abigail. She just liked her very much. She had never thought it was possible for her to like someone she just met this much. But they were just so welcoming and warm that she just could not help being drawn to them. "I've never seen any family in power as peaceful as the Reigns. It's really amazing. I really don't know how your family does it." She continued to gush as they walked along the corridor.

A while ago, everyone had urged Sebastian to bring her for a tour around the castle grounds. So here they were, walking around silently. And as she had

expected, Sebastian really was not tour guide material at all. In fact, he was the worst choice possible if they were to ask for a tour guide. He did not even bother explaining to her about any background history of the places in this massive and magical castle.

"Well, everything's peaceful. For now." Was all he said in a quiet voice, causing Elle's smile to slowly fade. For now? What was that supposed to mean? She creased her brows and opened her mouth, but before any word could come out of her lips, she pressed her lips together again and shifted her gaze to the beautiful eastern garden that had caught her eyes. She had thought about it for a while and realized that he was right. All families had their own peaceful moments until one day, when everything would just change. Just like hers. She hoped from the bottom of her heart that this family would forever be this happy and peaceful, but she knew that even that might be too much to ask.

"Are your other two brothers joining us for dinner tonight?" Elle asked, changing the topic.

Sebastian halted. Then he let go of her hand and leaned against the veranda, his back facing her. She watched him bring out a cigarette and lit it up. Did she say something wrong? She just asked purely out of curiosity. She knew from her research that there were five princes of Viscarria but today she had only met two of Sebastian's four brothers. The second and youngest princes.

Since she had found out that Sebastian was not the eldest, yet he was chosen as the crown prince, Elle thought that the eldest must have given up on his rights to the throne. There was no information on why Sebastian, the third prince was crowned as heir apparent to the throne. She could understand why Skyler Reign relinquished his rights, but how about their eldest brother?

"Elijah will probably appear tonight." He said, blowing out smoke. Elijah... that must be the fourth prince? "I advise you to be extra careful around him."



She had not expected that warning. Was Elijah probably the black sheep of the family and that was why he said that?

Elle opened her lips to ask more but Sebastian spoke before she could. "As for the eldest... never ever ask about him. Never." his voice was hoarse and scratchy.

Silence reigned after those words. She had felt a little shiver run down her spine for a moment. His voice always sounded calm and cool even when he spouted threats. But this time, there was an obvious edge in his voice. Something intense and terrifying. Elle got the message. It seems the mere mention of their eldest brother was a taboo to him.

The sounds of people approaching them reached Elle's ear and she immediately recognized Kelly's voice among them. They were coming their way...

Looking over quickly at Sebastian, Elle easily realized how their postures must look like to others right now. And with how grim Sebastian's aura felt, she was certain that they would immediately come to the conclusion that they were fighting once they saw them.

When the group of people were about to reach them, Elle nibbled on her lower lip as she contemplated before throwing caution to the winds and wrapped her hands around his waist, hugging him from behind. She felt him still due to her sudden 'attack' so she quickly whispered to him, "People are coming..." then she rested the side of her head against his back. Heart thumping fast and face flushing, she hoped that it would be enough to give that false impression that her pink cheeks was due to their couple time instead of something else.

She squeezed her eyes tightly closed and her face turned even redder when she heard the talking ladies lower their voice as they passed by them.

Once the sounds of their steps were far enough, Elle breathed out in relief and pulled away from him. "Should we go back now or..." Elle trailed off as her gaze met his. Was it just her or was there really something different in the way he was looking at her right now?

The faint sounds of a vibrating phone had him shifting his gaze away from her and he smoothly pulled his phone out of his pocket. He stared at the screen for a moment before lifting his gaze to her.

Elle immediately turned around. "I'll go ahead first. I'll walk slowly to give you some time to catch up." Then she walked away, never turning back.

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#### Chapter 30 Decision



The dinner that night was another joyful moment to savor and file into her memory for Elle. She had been with people she could never trust much less laugh along freely with for far too long ever since her sister's death, that it was truly a breath of fresh air to her in being able to meet these amazing and beautiful people. She had forgotten how liberating it was to just take everything at face value and just laugh with abandon at the jokes and harmless jabs thrown between the family members.

Joy. That was what she was feeling at the moment. In fact, she had totally forgotten about Sebastian – her newlywed husband – while she was socializing with the ladies as well as the twins, until she turned towards him in the middle of her laughter and their eyes inadvertently met. After throwing a bright smile at him, Elle did not wait for his reaction and immediately returned her attention to Abigail and the rest of the ladies surrounding her.

But a long while later...

"Alright, everyone." Alexander stood from his chair. "It's a joyful night but it's high time for us to let the newlyweds go." He winked suggestively at Sebastian, smiling. "This night is special for them after all. So, ladies, please return the wife to her husband now or Sebby here might go berserk."

Everyone agreed, giggling good naturedly as they looked over at Elle with meaningful gazes. Gazes that brought a flush of warmth into her cheeks.

"Alright, you should go now, Elle. We'll be able to catch up more again tomorrow." The ladies urged.

Elle could only nod and stand. Deep down, she did not want to leave yet but everyone else were practically pushing the new couple away from the dining hall now for the much-anticipated wedding night. Alexander had even gone to the extent of excitedly guiding them both back to their room and unceremoniously shut the door behind them with a solid thud.

The matter of their wedding night had completely slipped Elle's mind! She had been enjoying herself a little too much since she had met the Reigns that she had totally forgotten about this one crucial matter! She nibbled on her lips uneasily as she thought on how to approach this sensitive matter with Sebastian.

"You are not obliged to have sex with me if you don't want to." His dark and sultry voice pulled her out from her deep thoughts. It was then that she realized they were already in a large room, and she could tell that it clearly belonged to the crown prince. "We didn't tackle this issue in our agreement after all." He seemed to be offering her a way out as he shrugged his broad shoulders, as though this was only a small matter to him.

She could not see his expression clearly as he was already walking towards another room. She assumed that it must be his dressing room and bathroom.

He must have noticed that she was a little nervous and that was why he had said those words, right?

When he was back, Elle could not help but have her mind go back to that night. The first time they met, he was also in this outfit – a black bathrobe tied loosely around slim and tapering hips and damp hair which still had some water droplets dripping from the ends of it. The overall effect was just smoking hot. But Elle managed not to stare at him any longer than was necessary as she quickly disappeared into the same bathroom Sebastian had just exited from. It seemed that she was finally developing a higher tolerance against her husband's gorgeousness.

Elle took her time in the bath. Her mind was full of conflicting and confusing thoughts for a long while, but her body and heart were surprisingly relaxed despite the decision she had just come to a few seconds ago.

Letting out deep breath, Elle left the bathroom. She wore the provocative black night gown folded and left on the shelf in the bathroom that had been most likely prepared by the castle's maids beforehand. It barely covered anything as it was almost see through. It was a very sensual robe made of soft and sheer black chiffon. It was an off-shoulder style with thin straps that barely hold it up to cover the chest area. The entire outfit was flowy and only held together with a chiffon waist tie that would fall open even with a light tug on it.

Her cheeks flushed a ruddy red as her fingers gripped tightly around the doorknob. Shyness had made her hesitate a little, so she reminded herself that there was literally nothing that Sebastian had not seen yet. He had already seen everything! He had even touched certain places already!

Braving herself, Elle turned the doorknob and pushed the door open before entering their bedroom. Her feet halted at the sight of him sitting on an antique sofa. His endlessly long legs stretched out in front of him on the footstool,

crossed at the ankles as he sipped at his red wine in a relaxed and graceful manner. Elle could not help but swallow heavily at the provocative sight.

Those grey eyes of his lifted above the rims of his glass and Elle's hands unconsciously lifted to cross and cover her breasts. His gaze dragged slowly down her body that she could almost feel it as a physical touch, and when it settled down there, Elle's hands almost flew to cover it as well. But this time, she bit down on her lip and managed to stop herself from covering up, knowing that it was useless for her to cover herself. She had already made her decision and she would not be changing her mind.

Elle moved and approached him unhurriedly. She felt like she was a prey presenting itself to its predator, only that she was a willing and courageous participant. She stopped once she was only a few steps away from him and continued holding his intense gaze, thankful that she did not stumble as she made her way over to him.

"Just for tonight." Her soft but decisive voice broke the thick silence between them.

Sebastian's glass hung in midair, as he was halfway swirling the wine in it and his eyes trained intensely on her.

"Just for tonight," Elle repeated. "I want our marriage to be consummated. But after that... no more sex between us. That's my decision."