

Hellbound Heart

Chapter 211 Glad

The heavy and sexually charged silence resumed as they held each other's gaze, neither wanting to be the first to look away. His grey eyes looked so determined. So certain. And Elle was completely tempted to tell him 'Yes, kiss me, my mouth is all yours'.

But no matter how much Elle's heart was rejoicing at this moment and for what was about to come, there was still a part of her that was hesitating and thinking twice about going all out. And she knew exactly why she was behaving this way.

Elle felt that he was rushing a little too much right now. Despite the unwavering will that was clearly brimming in his eyes, she thought that maybe even then, it might not be enough to pull them through. His trauma was truly deep rooted, existing within him for so many years that it must be something so beyond complicated. She believed that it was not something that could be overcome so easily no matter how strong his will was. It was not something so simple as him wanting to break through, and they could just go ahead and do it. She had given it some thought and was also of the opinion that the reason he did not get triggered just now, could be because he was in a complete daze.

What if he gets triggered this time since he was now clear headed and was no longer under a strong spell of pleasure?

He began to move his face closer when Elle's hand suddenly flew to his mouth, cupping one hand over the other and covering his lips.

His brows creased a little in surprise at her sudden reaction. He did not understand why she had stopped him.

"Uhm... I... I..." Elle stammered, trying to quickly think up an excuse at why she did that. "How about... we do it tomorrow instead?"

He lifted a brow. Not shocked, but seemingly so curious.

"I am... really happy and glad that you didn't get triggered a while ago and I... I can't wait for more too but... I think we should take it... slowly..." she trailed off and bit down on her lips. "I just don't want you to push yourself too mu :"

"Izabelle." He called out her name. His gaze steady as he grabbed her wrists and took her hands that were still hovering over his mouth. "Listen... I'm not pushing myself too much. And this isn't going fast because it's actually about damn time that I get over this

damn thing. I know you're still worried about me being triggered. But believe me baby, I think I can overcome this now all because of you. Just like a while ago... I believe nothing will happen, because it's you."

Her heart swelled from so much happiness that she felt it could actually burst if he continued uttering more of those words of his. Yet still... Elle also felt that Sebastian was perhaps being too positive. That he was trusting in her being there too much just because it had worked once before. She was still a little afraid that something might go wrong despite his positive encouragements.

Elle had her own traumas and demons and she knew full well that overcoming these things were never easy. She knew he could be different because he was a vampire, not a normal human being like her. But the fact that this supposedly powerful man was not even spared from such trauma attacks and actually even had something of the worst only, meant that he was just like her. It would never be easy to break through and overcome it.

"You do wonders to me, Izabelle." He continued, coaxing her with his sinfully sexy voice. "You're the only one who ever did these things to me. I may not trust myself sometimes and most especially when it comes to this. But... I trust you. You have a special kind of magic on me and you've already proven it twice."

Her eyes widened in awe and disbelief but eventually, she shook her head slightly. "You give me too much credit, Sebastian." She told him softly. Magic... huh... As much as she wished for it to be true, she was as far away from magic as it could get.

Magic may not be an impossible thing to her anymore after all the things she had learned about Sebastian and this country. But she also knew that traumas don't get healed by it. No trauma could be healed magically, literal or not. It would never be that easy. If it was, why would Sebastian be living with it for such a long time? He would have gotten rid of it and lived a normal life.

"I may have helped but I believe it all went well because of you as well, Sebastian. You might have found a way to overcome it naturally with me because... because you've been opening up and baring yourself without restraint to me." Elle added. "I think that maybe it's also because..."

"Because I was in the heat of the moment and in an utter daze...?" he finished, perfectly knowing what she had wanted to say. "And that's why you're a bit worried now because I am currently no longer under the complete spell of pleasure and could get triggered any time. Isn't that right?"

When Elle could not respond, but only looked at him open mouthed, the corner of his lips tugged up and he chuckled.

"Your pessimism really does make me speechless sometimes, Iza." He commented, "But then again, I do think it's not an entirely bad way of thinking. You trained yourself to think of the worst outcomes to minimize the impact of it once it really does strike, and also so you could prevent it from happening."

Her gaze lowered. "I don't want to see you like that again." She whispered weakly. "Tonight, had been... perfect... one of the best nights of my life... thanks to you, Sebastian. So, I... I don't want to... I want us to..."

He pulled at her wrists that he had yet to let go of, and his lips landed on her forehead once again.

"Hush now, Iza... It's okay, baby. You don't needa@ to explain anymore.."

"Really? I'm sorry I..."

"F**k, Iza... you have nothing to apologize about, baby girl. You are just being so damned rational right now. You just didn't want to risk this night getting ruined and I'm totally okay with that. In fact, I'm quite glad we can postpone this as well." A wicked and seductive smile flashed across his face as his dimple appeared. And though she had been seeing this dimple more often lately, the effect it has on her had not diminished in the least! "Because the moment I managed to kiss you... I don't think you'll be getting any more chances to keep being in charge tonight."

As Elle blushed hotly from his statement, Sebastian glanced at the clock on the table. And when he saw it was about to strike midnight, he almost cursed out loud. F**k! The birthday present!!!

A/N: I suddenly felt a little unwell so I took a med and now I am so dizzy I think i've written this chap half awake. >.<

So, sorry but there won't be a bunos chap today guys. I will be giving 2 bunos chaps that our supergifters earned tomorrow instead to make tom's update 3 chapters. Thanks for understanding. <3

Chapter 212 Present

The words that Alexander had said a few days ago echoed in Sebastian's mind. "You can forget everything else except your present to her, Sebby. I'm telling you... you're doomed if you actually fail to give it to her. So, make sure not to forget about it."

Sebastian had simply responded with a deadpan 'yes'. Because he believed that there was no way he would actually forget it. It is like, come on... her birthday. So why would he forget her birthday present?! Yet here he was, almost actually failing to even remember.

Somehow, Alexander's annoying I-told-you-so-face telling him the words 'See? That's why I told you to always listen to this wise old man of yours' flashed in his mind. He could not believe that Alexander seemed to have even seen this one coming as well! What is he? A prophet now?!

Shifting, Sebastian held her closer to him and buried her face into his chest. His gaze quickly searched for his pants and he very quickly spotted it right there, a few steps away on the floor.

When Izabelle moved to pull away from his tight embrace, he did not let her go. He instead held her a little bit tighter and then stood with her tucked into his side.

He knew he had surprised her, but there was really no time to delay. He needed to give it to her now! Before it passed midnight and would no longer be counted as her birthday anymore.

Using his vampiric speed, Sebastian crossed the room along with her in his arms, in a blur. The pants were already in his hand. He had made sure Izabelle did not even notice not feel how he had bent over to pick up his discarded pants.

"S-Sebastian?" Just as she finally called out his name, Sebastian loosened up his hold around her and settled her on top of a nearby table, making sure that she was steady before letting go. Her back was now against the Victorian mirror.

Her face looked so curious when their eyes met. But then, she suddenly caught his face with both her hands and reminded him, "I thought we had agreed that I'm still in charge, Sebastian. The bargain is for the rest of the night until morning, not just until midnight."

He smiled after listening to her speak that way to him. F**k, it was truly one of the biggest surprises that he actually really liked it when she talked like a boss like this!

"I know, baby... and contrary to what you are thinking, I'm not trying to turn the tables around on you."

She then raised a brow at him, wondering what it was that he was up to this time.

"Really? Then why pin me on a table like this, hmm? I don't think I can keep being in charge if you're not under me..." she blushed hard after saying those last two words before she bit down on her lip. Oh f**k, he really needed to divert the topic before he ended up bringing them both back to the couch! Shaking his head and giving a wry smile, Sebastian told himself to focus and make sure to complete the task at hand. And it was an important task too.

"Don't worry baby... we'll return to the couch or the bed, or anywhere you want to be soon enough. But after this..." he said with a smile on his face, enjoying how his words had her expression changing in an instant.

"After... what?" she asked curiously, her eyes starting to sparkle and brim with anticipation.

A few days ago, Alexander had asked Sebastian about his present. He was not planning to say anything about it to Alexander since he believed that the present was not something the man needed to know about. Also, Sebastian was confident that his present to Izabelle was something more than enough. Though he had thought of giving her far more, he had refrained a little because he somehow felt that Izabelle might feel that it was a bit too much.

However, Alexander was adamant in asking if he had even prepared something, so he had ended up spilling it out so the man would finally stop bugging him about it.

To his dismay, Alexander had made the comment that the present he prepared for Izabelle was not even all that special. And then he went on to preach to him, telling him to be more thoughtful and that lavish material items were not really the most special thing one could give to their one special someone.

When he asked Alexander to just tell him or give him some choices for him to choose from, the man had totally refused to name the special present he was talking about. Instead, he forced Sebastian to think about it and to find the perfect present that Izabelle might want and cherish.

Thinking about it had caused Sebastian several hours of headache. Until Alexander himself had given him a clue. Of course, that was only after torturing him with all his wise old man's talks.

Sebastian was a little doubtful though. He was still skeptical if this present would really be enough and is something that would be able to make Izabelle happy. That was the only reason why he still prepared the original gift anyway and would still give it to her still after this. Alexander was confident that it would, but Sebastian was a little unsure. Would this one little thing really be that effective in making her that happy? Would she really treat this one little thing as something so special?

Sebastian knew that the only way to find the answer was to give it to her and see it for himself.

Taking a quiet breath, he pulled away a little and stood before her.

When he reached for her hand, her pupils dilated and he heard her heartbeat begin to thud so loud. So fast, that for a moment, that was all that he could hear.

"Happy birthday, Izabelle... my baby girl, my princess... my wife..." he said and then he slipped something onto her wedding finger.

A/N: Tysm for all the understanding guys. I'm still unwell so just one chap today too. Hopefully tomorrow, I can finally get back to shape fully.

Chapter 213 Had I Known

Sebastian paused the moment he tore his gaze off hers and looked down. The sight of her ring : the silver ring he had given her that day of their civil wedding : made his jaw clenched.

He had never paid attention to it before, but he knew that she had always been wearing it. And the sight of it now had him feeling like he just wanted to go back to the past and hit himself up the head for it. Because this silver ring had been a cold, lifeless jewelry without any significant value to him at all. In fact, it was given to him by Lucas at the very last minute after he had found out that Sebastian had not prepared any ring for his bride on their wedding day! And Sebastian never even asked where he had even gotten it from.

"I'm taking this off." He told her hurriedly, causing her to blink, snapping her out from her trance.

Before she could answer, he had already slipped the silver ring off her finger. "Forget about this one. Because from now on, this is your real and only wedding ring."

Once he slipped the simple yet elegant and unique wedding band onto her ring finger, Elle could not help but just stare at it. It looked so perfect in her finger. As though it was specifically made to fit her, be it the design, color and feel that it carried.

She returned her gaze to him. "Thank you. But... may I know why... you're changing it?" she asked carefully, a little confused.

Sebastian dropped his gaze and half-bite on his lower lip, only he himself knew how he was feeling at this moment and how much he was berating his past self for being such a moron in matters such as this. "Because this one is... not official. I want you to wear something that is unique and being the only one in this world. I hope you'd like this one more." 'Much, much more than the earlier one.' Sebastian did not say the last sentence out loud.

Her lips parted and then closed. Words seemed to be failing her as her eyes began to gleam with emotions.

"I love... it. Thank you so much. But uhm... how about... yours? I mean, the pair of this that is for you to... wear." She kept pausing as she stated those words, as though she was being extra careful.

"Oh yes, there is." He told her and he saw how her eyes stretched and twinkled so brightly. A reaction that confused him. Because he thought that that reaction should be for her ring and not his. "Here." He dug it out of his pants pocket and showed the other ring pair to her and she was quick to take it, her face almost beaming like the sun. As if she had just found something so meaningful, so precious beyond words.

Asking the smith to forge two rings had not been in Sebastian's plan at all. He was only planning to make her a new one. But Alexander had insisted on him asking the smith to make a pair of wedding bands. He had given in just so that Alexander would stop nagging at him like a fishwife. But he never even planned to show it to her. Simply because he thought that there was no reason to.

And yet, here she was, looking so happy at the sight of his ring.

"You're... going to wear this, right? Sebastian?" she asked him excitedly. Her big blue eyes staring at him with extreme anticipation. And he could hear how her heartbeats were racing so fast as she waited for his answer.

"Do you want me to?" He asked her slowly, curious to see what she would answer.

"Yes!" she responded immediately and a little loudly that the both of them were surprised.

A slow smile tugged at the corner of Sebastian's lips. What was going on? The turn of events was not what he had been anticipating at all.

"I didn't know you'd want me to wear it this bad." He uttered, his dimple showing up.

Her expression suddenly turned a little sullen as she stared down the ring in her hand. "I have been... wondering why you didn't bring a ring for yourself that day of our wedding. I had thought it was because... you didn't want other people to know that you're already

married." She mumbled as she spoke the last half of the sentence. However, Sebastian heard her loud and clear. And he was really surprised at her revelation.

"I didn't know you'd been having such negative thoughts just because I wasn't wearing a ring."

"It's... important. At least to me, Sebastian." She retorted. "It might not matter to you, but other women don't believe me when I tell them that you're my husband. And it is just because they don't see you wearing any wedding ring. And it had always made me feel so..." she trailed off, catching her lower lip between her teeth. Her gaze wandered from his face and she looked away, while Sebastian was more than a little stunned at what he had just heard.

F**k. He had never once thought that him not wearing his wedding ring could turn out to be this big of an issue. He knew that wedding rings were norms even for the vampires. But to him, wedding rings were just another accessory that did not really matter.

"Tell me who those b*tches are and I will make them :"

"You can't really blame them for thinking like that, Sebastian." She cut him off before looking at him, a little reprimanding. "Wedding rings have been used for such a meaningful symbol : that one is already taken. That one is married. I don't know about the vampires but..." she paused again and hesitated to continue.

But Sebastian had already understood the gist of it. It seemed that he had f**ked up with this one too.

"Alright..." he nodded slowly. "I'm sorry for being such a thoughtless ass about this. Had I known this little... thing had been giving you such troubles..." he sighed and shook his head, "Well... it doesn't matter now. Because from now on, I'm wearing this thing everywhere and for as long as you'd want me to. Is that enough, Izabelle?"

A/N: Thank you for waiting guys. I'm doing good now. Still coughing but i'm doing much better now. <3

Chapter 214 Gift

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

"R-really? You're going to wear it?!" her blue eyes were wide as she exclaimed, excitement and nervousness warring within her.

When Sebastian nodded, she was at a loss for words for a while.

"Oh Lord... seriously? Everywhere? And all the time?! You're not going to take it off?" her questions came pouring out one after another from her mouth, not able to stop them.

Sebastian was amused at how adorable she was reacting with just this little statement from him. It was truly such a wonder why this matter had such a big effect on her.

"I have already told you, right? It is valid for as long as you want me to. I won't take it off without your express permission." he assured her again, seeing that she truly needed reassurance.

And Elle's lips hung open. She was simply in utter wonder and disbelief. She could hardly believe what was going on. Sebastian just kept on shocking her to her bones tonight and it seems like he was nowhere near done yet! Everything was just a little unbelievable that she could not help but wonder if this was a dream.

Heart beating so loudly in her ears, Elle reached for his hand. Her gaze then dropped to stare at his large veiny hand and long tapering fingers, devoid of any jewelries.

She had never thought she would ever experience this. Her, putting the ring on Sebastian's ring finger. He did not give her any chance on the day of their wedding, and she thought that there would never ever be any more chance for her to do this. Yet here she was, now having that one in a lifetime chance to do it! Lord... things had really felt too good to be true tonight, and now this... she could barely stop herself from jumping up and down in excitement. She was just holding back with everything that she had.

But her excitement was quickly disturbed at the moment she realized that the both of them were somehow... completely naked. Oh dear lord...

Her face burned as she snapped her gaze up back to his gorgeous face. Lord... why did Sebastian not give her the present while the both of them were still dressed properly?

The mere thought that this very special moment was happening with them completely... naked was... oh my lord... could the ground just open and swallow her up already?! She was so embarrassed she could melt into a puddle of goo!

"What's wrong, baby girl?" his sultry voice echoed out right next to her already sensitive ears. The sexy mischief in his tone suddenly returned with full force. "You're so red. Are you suddenly reminded of some naughty stuff?"

"No, I... I th-think we need tuh- to get dressed." Elle stuttered a little as she answered.

He lifted a brow and then tilted his head a little to the side.

"I think I should put the ring on you while we're both properly dressed." She told him shyly, stressing the word 'properly'.

"Why?"

"Be-because this is a special moment and..."

"And?"

"And I would like to remember this moment... being as perfect as it can be." She scrambled to reason out her request to him.

"But we're already as perfect as we are right now baby, in fact..." he trailed off and leaned in closer to whisper, "us, like this will only make this moment all the more memorable, don't you think so?"

Elle blushed harder after hearing him make that point.

"I personally think it'll be a moment so unlike any other if we continue doing it this way. And besides, I already did my part and put your ring on you while we're completely naked. I definitely won't mind doing it this way, Iza. In fact, I'd really love it if you could put the ring on my finger with me just like this."

Their gazes held. Elle could almost feel steam evaporating off her face - she was that hot! But she knew nothing else should really matter anymore at this point. No matter how embarrassing it might be, it did not really matter, all that mattered to her was that this moment was happening and since he had said that he would love it more this way, she would be more than willing and was happy to do it according to his wishes.

So, she lifted his hand again. Her expression slowly became so serious as her heart danced once again with so many emotions.

All were forgotten for a moment as she finally slipped the ring onto his ring finger.

...

In a certain empty park.

Elijah was squatting on a bench, dressed in a long black coat. A stray dog was wagging its tail as it looked up at him.

"Wait for a bit, buddy. The food is coming. Oh, it's here."

A man appeared beside him, holding a container of take out consisting of delicious meat from a luxury restaurant.

"Your Highness, the food is here." The man gave him the food and Elijah quickly wore a plastic glove. He picked the meat and then offered it to the stray dog, causing the man who brought the food to facepalm himself.

"You... should've told me it was for the stray dog, Prince Elijah." He complained, almost rolling his eyes in exasperation. "I should've spared myself from going to that restaurant and bought some common food somewhere nearer!"

But Elijah did not seem to hear his subordinate's complaints. He only kept praising the stray dog as it happily devoured the delicious food Elijah was hand feeding him.

"So... my gift didn't reach Sunshine?" Elijah finally asked, without taking his eyes off the stray animal.

"No, Your Highness. The security was just too tight. And it seems, Prince Sebastian had specifically ordered for any and all gifts to be screened, immediately disposing of any suspicious gift, especially those from you."

He halted and then he smirked, shaking his head. "Bad move, Sebastian." He muttered. "If only he knew that the gift I gave to Sunshine for her special day was a whole night of peace."

His tongue clicked as he reached out with his other hand and petted the dog's head. "Since my gift wasn't accepted and didn't reach her, then I guess... there's only one thing I could do now." He slowly stood before stretching languidly and looked up towards the castle that stood on top of the hill from afar. "I'm sorry in advance, Sunshine. Blame Sebastian for this."

Chapter 215 Droplet

The utter bliss and genuine happiness between them, shattered in a blink of an eye as Sebastian suddenly smelled it again. The scent of fresh blood. Iza's blood.

He froze for a second before his entire being immediately responded to the potent scent. Both desire and fear crashed into him like a tidal wave. Desire to taste it... this lethally seductive scent, and fear... of where it was coming from.

Subconsciously, Sebastian's widened eyes traveled down to her throat.

His entire world pulsed. Red and darkness blurred his vision as his blood ran cold within him.

Blood.

Blood was coming out of her skin. As though an invisible knife had been pressed against her throat, piercing her skin.

No...!

The small dot of the wound began to widen slightly. It was like the invisible knife had begun to move, cutting her skin. Slicing very slowly across her tender flesh. More blood flowed from the widening wound, causing the heady perfume of her blood to fill the air.

No!!!

Sebastian screamed within himself. That internal scream seemed to reverberate in his mind, shaking his soul. The red in his vision pulsed powerfully once again. And it consumed everything. His rationality, his self-control and composure... they were all crumbling like frosted flakes under the heat of the flames.

He saw blood come gushing at him, splattering across his face. Someone... someone's throat was slashed right before his eyes. Hot, fat droplets of blood hit his face, flowing down his cheeks, nose, forehead... everywhere!

"No!!!" he screamed out in agony when he suddenly heard someone start calling out his name.

"Sebastian?! Sebastian!" The voice and the warmth on his face made his body freeze up once again. "Sebastian... w-what's going on? Please look at me!" the panic-filled voice pierced his clouded mind. He then registered the feel of small hands on his skin.

Slowly, the gore and darkness in his vision dissolved. What appeared next was... Iza... his Iza... totally hale and hearty.

His gaze fell to her neck. There was no wound. No blood was flowing from her neck.

"Sebastian?" she called out again, calmly. But he could see the utter panic and worry she was trying to tamp down within her eyes. Her hands that were cupping his face were shaking lightly, and yet she was not letting go of him. In fact, she was clinging onto him even tighter. "Please tell me you can see me now, Sebastian."

Lifting his hand slowly, Sebastian's trembling palm landed on her small and precious face. She was real. She was alright. She was here... She was alright. Alive... that vision he saw earlier was not real... that was just... a dÃ©jÃ vu... yes... just a dÃ©jÃ vu...

The icy horror that froze his veins began to melt and he grabbed and pulled her against him. He buckled and his back soon hit the wall.

He panted as he anchored them both against the wall, his arms never letting her go and not allowing her to get hurt. And then he slid down to the floor along with her, all the while protecting her from bumping onto the floor.

He could feel her gently caressing the back of his head as he rested his head into the crook of her neck. Her warmth, her gentle caresses, her patient and sweet whispers... they were like fire in the hearth, slowly but surely melting the ice of horror that had swallowed him whole.

Once Sebastian calmed down a little, he pulled away and looked at her. His gaze fell on her throat again, anxiously checking if she was truly unharmed and there were no wounds on her. The wound was not there anymore but... he still could detect the scent of her blood. He then noticed that a little drop of blood was still there.

His breathing snagged as he reached out his hand and swiped the little droplet of blood with his thumb.

"Sebastian?" she uttered his name once again, her voice full of confusion at what had happened to him. He could see millions of questions brimming in her eyes. But she held her tongue and did not ask anything as worry was still gripping her bad.

"You... you need to get dressed." He managed to say. "We're going to leave here... this place. I need to bring you somewhere else as soon as possible. Now, Iza. Hurry."

With slight difficulty, Sebastian hauled himself up again along with her. He walked towards the dressing room, swaying from left to right, as though he was drunk.

"Get dressed. Make haste, Iza." He ordered as he put her down. She listened and the two of them scrambled to dress themselves in haste.

Sebastian was still fumbling about, trying to put on his shirt when Isabelle came to him and held his still trembling hands. Giving his hands a light squeeze, she looked into his eyes and gave him a gentle smile.

"Let me..." she said softly and he realized that she was already dressed.

Nodding and cooperatively putting his hands down, he allowed her to button up his shirt for him. Once she was done with it almost too quickly, she then went to grab his coat and help him put that on too.

Sebastian quietly let her help him. He was busy trying to recover his composure. He needed to get Isabelle out of here now. He needed to bring her to them before... before...

He gritted his teeth. He needed to haste but his body could not stop trembling no matter how he tried to stop it. His body was just not listening to him at this moment.

Clenching his fists, he took a few deep breaths before grabbing a hold of her hand and leading her out of the door.

Once he spotted Lucas downstairs, he immediately knew that the man had just come from their room to check on him.

'Go prepare the car... we're leaving. I need you to drive us.' Sebastian ordered him through their eye communication and Lucas quickly disappeared.

Chapter 216 Shattering

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

Sitting quietly without moving around, Elle kept glancing over at Sebastian. The car was already speeding out of the Queza and she did not know yet where they were heading towards. She and Sebastian were in the back seat while Lucas was driving.

Sebastian did not say anything yet since the moment they had left their room. Since they entered the car, he quietly sat next to her, his head down, resting his forehead against his palm. His free hand was gripping hers so tight like he was afraid someone would snatch her out of his grip. He seemed to be having a lot on his mind and it was as though he needed to sort out his thoughts before being able to explain what was happening to them.

She stared at his hand that was clutching hers, and the wedding band around his ring finger. Elle felt her heart swelling once again just at the mere sight of it. She had not even told him yet how happy he had made her feel tonight most especially when he had given her the chance to finally slip this precious ring onto his finger. The actions were so significant to her. It told her that he was now willingly acknowledging her as his wife and was announcing to the world through this wedding band, that he was now off limits to other women, and belonged to her alone. Words were no longer enough to express all the emotions she had gone through until... until he...

It was shattering and heart wrenching. That scream. His scream. She actually thought that it was more of an inhuman wail rather than a scream. The sound had come so suddenly and had pierced her heart and crushed her soul when she realized that it had originated from her husband's mouth.

Elle did not know what happened. What made him suddenly shriek and react like that out of nowhere. Just one moment ago, they were both so happy and content in each other's arms, and the next moment Sebastian was... She totally had no idea at all on what had brought that episode on. There was only one thing she knew at the moment : that whatever he just went through was something extremely traumatic. She could swear she had felt the utter horror in that one word he had yelled so agonizingly. The sound of that scream shook her entire being and sent a lancing pain through her heart and soul so excruciatingly. And then that look in his eyes... lord... what was it that this man was going through?

For a man like him to react that way, to be so horrified like that... Elle could not even imagine how deep and how awful whatever the damages inflicted on him were.

Her heart ached so bad. When she felt him trembling in her arms... when he was fumbling while buttoning his shirt... and even now... she just wanted to gather him to her and hug him so bad, to soothe whatever it was that was torturing him. If she could, she would do anything for him.

Gently, she began to run her thumb in large relaxing circles against his hand. Elle was careful to do it slowly and with just the right amount of force, making it into a very repetitive and relaxing movement. She did not want to disturb him as she knew that he must still be trying his best to recover from whatever it was that he had gone through earlier. But she also wanted him to know that she was just here, right next to him. She wanted to wordlessly remind him that she would always be there beside him as a comforting presence.

She heard him take another sharp breath before he finally moved.

"Come closer to me, baby." he called for her. His voice was a little hoarse.

Elle scooted over to him, leaving just slightly less than an inch of a distance between them.

"Closer, baby." He reiterated.

Once again, she obeyed and moved closer until there was no more space between them. She was literally stuck to his side.

He then gently pressed her head against his shoulder and whispered. "Sleep. This trip will be long."

"Can I ask a question?" she thought for a while before asking hesitantly. "But... it's also okay if I can't right now."

"We'll talk in detail once we get there." He told her.

A short silence passed before Elle nodded understandingly.

However, Sebastian suddenly continued. "One question. I'll answer just one question for now. Give me the easiest one... for now..."

She shifted to her side and looked at him.

Her gaze studied him as she decided on the easiest question she had wanted to ask. She had millions of questions... but she knew that this was not the right time to ask them. Not only because he was obviously not ready yet, but also because Lucas was there with them. She wanted to ask him her questions only when they were alone together.

"Do you feel... a little better now?" this was the question that came out of her mouth. She had thought of asking where they were heading to, but she had at the last minute decided on this one instead. She did not really care much on where he was bringing her. He could bring her anywhere he liked, as long as she was there with him. Right, she needed to know if he was alright. He clearly was not, but she still wanted to know if he was at least feeling a little better now. She felt his trembling had stopped.

He reached out and kissed her head. "Yes." He whispered close to her ear. "Now sleep, Iza. You need to rest."

"Mmm. You too, Sebastian." she muttered and he simply made an 'mmm' sound.

Soon, Elle drifted off to sleep.

A couple of hours later, she was jolted awake by a series of a loud crashing sounds filling her ears.

Chapter 217 Bad move

Chapter 217 Bad move

Elle could hear nothing but a very loud and piercing ringing in her ears as she looked up at Sebastian. He was on top of her, covering her with his body as she was pinned to the car seat. She was confused for a few seconds and looked around to figure out what was happening. But suddenly something caught her eyes.

Blood. Bright red blood.

His forehead was covered with blood, flowing and dripping down onto her face.

Elle was momentarily paralyzed due to shock, but her eyes drifted to look over his shoulder. The car's roof was pressed against his back.

Before Elle could even start to recover from the shock, her vision was suddenly blocked. He had pulled her and pressed her face against his chest.

And then loud sounds echoed around them again. There were screeching sounds of metal being ripped apart.

When he finally pulled away from her, Elle only saw the dark starry sky above them. The roof of the car was completely gone. She was still lying on the car's seat and Sebastian... his eyes had already turned blood red. His fangs were out and he was blazing with darkness and fury.

She knew in that instant that anger was consuming him fully.

Elle tried her best to get her bearings, but her body and her speech only failed her. What in the world had happened? The last she remembered was her falling asleep after listening to him telling her to rest. What had happened between then and now? She wanted to believe that it was only an accident, but with the way that Sebastian was behaving, there was no way it could be that simple and straightforward.

"Lucas..."

Elle could not help the shiver that overtook her at the hardness of Sebastian's voice, or was it the unsettling and suffocating aura he was exuding right now? She could no longer tell. All she knew right now was that Sebastian was at the verge of doing something... dangerous. His red eyes, the overwhelming dark and dangerous aura that had enveloped him just screamed to her that he was about to totally lose it.

"Your Highness." Lucas was instantly next to them, he too had blood smeared on his face. But there were no more wounds. Elle thought that it was either the blood was not his, or that he had wounds but their speedy vampiric recovery capabilities had kicked in and healed him almost immediately.

"Take Izabelle away." The order Sebastian gave out had caused Elle to jerk out of her own contemplation and look up at him, wide eyed. He was sending her away with Lucas? But where to? And what about him?

"No, Prince Sebastian." Lucas' response came as a shock to Elle, and even perhaps to Sebastian himself too. She had never heard this man or any of the men who were working under Sebastian, ever said 'no' to their Lord before. "You're not going to go after them –" Lucas had even gone on to tell Sebastian what he should not do, but was quickly cut off.

"Shut up, Lucas." Sebastian hissed out agitatedly. His tone reverberated with warning and was filled with lethal danger. "They are not going to let me bring Iza to the Black Forest. So, there's only one thing that needs to be done. I'll fight and hold all of them back as long as possible, while you bring Iza there. Do you understand?"

"No!" Elle finally managed to speak. "We're not going to leave you here all by yourself, Sebastian! We will go there... all of us, together."

Turning to look at her, he cupped her face and pressed his forehead against hers. "Listen, Iza. You'll only get hurt if we all go together. I can't risk having you get caught in the middle when I am fighting them off! Do you understand me? I am just barely keeping you from getting hurt just now. I need you to go before me. That's the only way I can keep you from getting harmed –"

"But Seb –"

"No buts now, Iza. Go! I'll catch up even before you know it."

"This could be a bad move, Your Highness. What if they're just trying to separate you from the Princess?" Lucas butted in, voicing out his concern. His statement caused Sebastian to whip his head towards him and look at him in silence for a couple of seconds.

"I think we should go together..." Elle agreed with Lucas. She really did not like Sebastian's plan. Something about it was making her feel so uneasy. She wanted the three of them to go together. He must not be left behind! She did not want to get separated from him again because she knew that there was always nothing good that happened whenever they were apart.

However, Elle found herself being pushed against Lucas.

She was about to protest when she saw men - vampires - appearing one after another. Their eyes flashing a bloody red in the dark. Those 19:58

creepy and somehow bloodthirsty red eyes seemed to multiply and surround them very quickly that Elle could not help but shudder in fear.

There was only one thing that came to Elle's mind at that moment. Rouges. The rogue vampires. She had read about them in one of the books in the library. She had also heard from Rion during one of their earlier conversations that they still existed to this day and they were powerful. More powerful than the non-rouges because these vampires were law-breakers who were still drinking human blood - direct from the source.

Uncertainty and a little fear crept through Elle's heart. Though she knew Sebastian was powerful, and a vampire royal ... there were just too many of them against him alone!

Elle looked at Sebastian but he was not even looking at the rogues before them. His gaze was turned away from them and looking somewhere else. He seemed to be focusing on the top of a hill across them.

Something dark reeked from Sebastian's body as he uttered through clenched teeth. "E-LI-JAH..."

At the top of the hill, Elijah was sitting leisurely on a rock with his legs crossed and looking down at the road far below. One arm was crossed over his knee while the other, he was using it to lazily rest his face on his knuckles. The way he was observing the things happening down below was as though he were watching some interesting but light TV drama.

"H-he's looking at you." Mike broke the silence. "Are you sure about this, Your Highness? What if Prince Sebastian ends up coming after us?"

"No, he won't." Elijah replied with nonchalance. However, there was a hint of confidence in his tone as though he was very sure that what Mike was afraid of would not happen.

"I don't know about that. Can't you see he's super angry right now?" Mike's tone wavered a little as he could feel Prince Sebastian's heavy gaze and the pressure exerted even all the way here. He shivered at the thought of Prince Sebastian's mad rage.

"Not angry enough." Elijah only shook his head rather playfully, not taking Mike's concern to heart.

Mike sighed, shaking his head. "I still believe he'd come at us once he's done slaughtering everyone else. You do know he could still take all those rogues down on his own, right?"

Elijah glanced at Mike like the man had said something really stupid.

"Don't you dare f**king insult the power of a Reign, you big idiot." Elijah said in a neutral yet scary voice. And his words only confused Mike. Bloody Mary... was he actually defending his enemy now? I really cannot understand this man sometimes!!!

"Though his other powers are gone, and he's now, well... a little tamed, his vampiric prowess as a Reign has always been there." Elijah continued.

Mike scratched the back of his neck. "So, you believed before you even dispatched those rogues that they'd end up getting destroyed by Prince Sebastian...?"

"If he chooses to fight... that is. But Sunshine's there. He might choose flight over fight."

"Really? Prince Sebastian would even consider running away?! I don't think that's possible, Your Highness." Mike laughed awkwardly. Never had he heard of Prince Sebastian running away from a fight. Chances are even higher for him to run towards a fight rather than away from one!

"Perhaps before, that might have been impossible. But now, he's changed. I don't think he'd let her see him slaughter those men."

Mike's lips formed an 'o' but then, his brows creased with confusion once again. "What would we do if he chose to run away, then?" he asked, still looking more and more confused.

Elijah tilted his head and returned the question to Mike. "What do you think?"

"We'll chase after them? Since well, our goal is actually to stop them from reaching Alexander's territory and especially the Black Forest." Mike tried guessing as he scratched his head, knowing that he was just throwing out guesses.

A mysterious smile graced Elijah's handsome face as he shook his head ever so slightly.

Mike gawked in surprise. "What?! No... you're just kidding right..." he let out a short awkward laugh.

"There's no way you're just going to stay still and watch them escape, right? You've waited for so long and planned so meticulously... only to let this opportunity slip away just like that?" Mike continued, reasoning out for himself. "By the way, Your Highness... there's still one thing I can't quite understand. Why did you wait for such a long time before taking actions against Prince Sebastian? I believe that there were a lot of opportunities before this as well. And during those times, I believe that Prince Sebastian isn't as dangerous as he is right now."

"What made you think that Sebastian's more dangerous now?" Elijah glanced at him, an elegant brow arched up in question while one corner of his lips curled up minutely.

"Well... just look at how he always seems to be on edge lately. It feels like the moment he manages to get his hands on you, he'd turn right around and torture you nice and slow until you are just begging for death. He used to not react this intensely at all no matter how you had provoked him." Mike pointed out the points that he felt were key in arguing his case.

Another soft smile flashed across Elijah's lips. "That's where you are wrong. Sebastian's at his weakest state right now. Weakest, Mike. Desperate... state..." The last two words were a whisper when it came out of Elijah's lips. "It wouldn't be fun at all if I actually came at him seriously before he was brought to a state like this, wouldn't it? It would be one hell of a boring game, don't you think so, Mike?" Turning around, Elijah looked back

down the hill where Sebastian was before a twisted grin flashed quickly across his face, full of meaning but one that Mike could not decipher no matter how he thought about it.

"Er... I think so, Your Highness." Mike agreed to his Lord's statement. That was all he could respond with.

The atmosphere very quickly became heavier, reeking with something so strong that it was enough to make any oblivious passerby feel a chill crawl over their skin.

"P-prince Elijah..." Mike could no longer stop himself from breaking the heavy silence. He was literally sweating where he stood. "I think they're about to escape! I think you should do something now before they..." Mike trailed off as Elijah finally rose from his sitting position.

Taking a steady step up, Elijah stood on top of the stone he had been initially sitting on and shoved one of his hands into his coat pocket. His long dark coat was fluttering about, dancing in the soft breeze that blew in from behind him.

His grey eyes that were warm, relaxed and nonchalant earlier, suddenly turned cold, so cold that the temperature of the very air around him dropped significantly. "I had waited so long for this... Sebastian..." He uttered in a sibilant manner, meeting Sebastian's gaze from far down the road. "It's time... it's time for the real game to begin... I can't wait... I can't wait to watch you suffer slowly and finally lose your mind... It's time for you to pay... for everything."

Chapter 219 Don't

"Turn around, Izabelle." Sebastian ordered in a low voice. "And don't ever turn back and look until I say it is fine to do so." Sebastian's voice was serious and deep, brooking no arguments.

Elle swallowed hard but she immediately obeyed. She knew what was about to happen. He was going to fight and he did not want her watching him in action.

But this was far better than him ordering Lucas to take her away and leave him to fight alone. As much as she wanted to tell him that she could help him out in some way or other, she did not. Biting down on her lips, she only nodded and kept silent. She would force herself to immediately obey him despite the unease and fear and worry creeping within her.

Almost immediately, the fight began. And Elle could only squeeze her eyes tightly closed and clenched her fists into rigid balls as she stood there, as still as a tree. The

sounds were so loud in her ears and all she could do at that moment was to pray that Sebastian would be okay. That he was going to somehow beat them all and the three of them would finally manage to escape.

But just a few moments later, she lifted her hands and covered her ears. The sounds were making her stomach tremble in fear no matter how she tried to steel herself. Because those sounds were obviously made by someone who was... dying.

She could not tell how long the chaos had gone on for, but she was jolted to her senses by Sebastian's yell. "Stop!!!"

Elle's entire being shuddered at the sound of his voice. That sound... it was almost like his scream back in their room.

Her heartbeat thundered against her ribcage, causing her entire frame to shake a little and Elle could no longer stop herself from turning back to sneak a little peek, disobeying his earlier orders. She must check if he was alright! Please... be alright. She prayed, over and over again.

The scene that welcomed her was shocking. The rogues' bodies were scattered all over the ground. The atmosphere was reeking with blood and stank of ... Death. Just a light whiff was enough to send Elle's stomach heaving. However, she clamped down hard on the instinctual reaction of wanting to bend over and throw out the contents of her stomach.

Elle gritted her teeth and withstood the sour churning of her stomach.

But nothing had turned her blood colder than the sight of Sebastian standing there, looking at her with that horror in his eyes again.

"S-sebastian..." Elle uttered and her feet began to move towards him when an unfamiliar voice echoed.

"His Highness said you must tell Princess Izabelle not to approach you, Prince Sebastian." The man dressed in black suit standing several steps away from Sebastian said. He did not look like he had just participated in the fight. Where had he come from?

Elle returned her gaze to Sebastian and she saw him gritting his teeth. "Don't move, Iza. Stay still... please..." He pleaded with difficulty and Elle immediately stopped, obeying him. Lord... she felt her heart breaking once again after seeing the look on his face.

He looked alright. Physically. Despite the bodies that were littering the ground, he did not look like he had received a single blow at all and yet... here he was, acting like this. He had won the fight so what was going on? Why was he having that look in his eyes again?

"His Highness said that you must let me come near you. And do remember to keep still and not do anything at all. If you make even a single movement, you know what will happen to the princess." The man continued giving his instructions, throwing in the threats to harm Elle, and Sebastian's eyes burned with a lethal gray fire. His aura was now blazing so dangerously, like the solar flares on the surface of the sun.

But then, he yielded. "Just f**king come. I won't do anything. So don't... don't f**king touch her!" he growled.

Elle was so confused. Who would touch her? There was no one but the three of them now. Lucas... she could not see where he was. He was gone. So why... why was Sebastian obeying the other man like... like she was being held captive?

The man approached Sebastian cautiously, but still with confidence. And then out of the blue, the man lifted his hand.

Sebastian was quick enough to catch his wrist. A syringe was in the man's hand and he was obviously planning to stab Sebastian with it in the neck!

Just when Elle thought that Sebastian was going to take the man down now that he had caught him, he suddenly whipped his head towards her and yelled again. "STOP It!! F**K!! DON'T!"

He looked so terrified as he looked right at her. Specifically... at her neck.

Elle lifted her hand to lightly brush against the skin of her neck when she felt something wet on her skin.

Pulling her hand away from her neck, she looked down only to see something straining her fingers red. Blood. When did it get on her neck?

"Then let go of my hand and let me stab you, Prince Sebastian. Don't worry, this is just a potent sleeping pill in liquid form." The man said and Elle, who had heard every single thing the man spoke, snapped her head back at them. Lord... what were they trying to do? Please don't... don't let go of his hand, Sebastian...

Elle begged him through her eyes, willing him to understand her look. But Sebastian was not even wanting to meet her gaze. His eyes were fixed on her bleeding throat instead.

"Don't harm her!" Sebastian uttered. But to Elle's ears, it sounded like a bargain being made, and it sent a pang of unease through her.

"She won't get hurt as long as you obey, Prince Sebastian. Now let go. This is the last time I'm warning you. If you stop me again, you'll regret it." The man threatened.

"No..." Elle called out, but Sebastian had already let go of the man's wrist.

Chapter 220 Different Reason

"No!!!" Elle's scream rang in the darkness as she watched Sebastian get stabbed in the neck with the syringe.

And before she knew it, she was rushing towards her husband, totally forgetting about the threat to her safety. Her mind had completely disregarded her own life, only wanting to get to Sebastian as fast as she could. She pushed the stranger out of her way. Her strength did not do much, but the man had his eyes widening at her fearless action.

"Sebastian!" Elle caught Sebastian as his body became limp. "Sebastian!" She slowly slid down to the ground as her smaller body could not handle his large and heavy one.

Kneeling on the ground, Elle held him protectively against her as her arms wrapped around him. He was panting and groaning even as he rested his head on her shoulder. And she could feel him suddenly burning up. The heat coming from him was so extreme that she could even feel it radiating through his clothes.

Her heartbeat raced so hard with worry. She had heard it was a potent sleeping pill. So why did Sebastian seem as though he was in pain and burning instead of just getting drowsy?

She glanced up at the stranger now looking down at them. Her eyes were filled with spite.

"What did you do my husband?!" she hissed at him angrily, unable to control her emotions at all anymore.

"Whoah! Princess... easy there. Don't look at me like I've beaten up the prince to death. I only injected something into him, okay?" the stranger said, holding both hands up to her in surrender.

Her jaws clenched, her eyes sharpening as she gave him the look that could only be described as the one that means, 'if looks could kill'.

"It's just a sleeping pill, Princess. Don't worry and just chill out. But of course, it would be very hard to take the prince down with just a pure sleeping pill so there's some additional stuff in there to immediately immobilize a man like him. But again, worry not princess, that's never enough to even endanger his life a little. Believe me." The stranger continued explaining rather nonchalantly.

Elle was a little relieved hearing what the man said, but she knew better than to just trust anyone's word right now. Especially this man who had just stabbed her husband right in the neck.

"He's telling the truth." A familiar voice echoed. A dark and beautiful voice that had her gooseflesh crawling over her skin.

Whipping her head towards the source of the voice, she saw him standing there ever so leisurely, one hand still shoved into his pocket. Elijah! What was he even doing here?!

She still could not quite see his face as the light coming from their wrecked car was behind him. But she could never mistake this man's voice and that presence.

"Hello, Sunshine." He greeted in a sultry and relaxed voice.

Elle gritted her teeth, not happy to see him in the least despite him being Sebastian's brother.

"So, it's you again." She did not hide the hatred in her voice. "Why are you doing this? Why are you doing this to your own brother?!" her tone grew even more aggressive and furious as she spoke.

He seemed to take a deep sigh before he approached closer. And as he did, Elle held Sebastian tighter against her, wrapping her arms around him like she was terrified that Elijah would snatch Sebastian away from her.

"Wow..." Elijah sounded amused and amazed. "What a protective princess you are. As expected of you, Sunshine." He sounded as though his praise was genuine. But Elle would never believe anything from this man ever again. "I wonder though... if you'd still be this protective of Sebastian once you learn what kind of being he truly is... what kind of insanity had he committed... and what kind of secrets he's been hiding. I honestly can't wait to find out..."

"You didn't answer any of my questions." Elle bravely retorted, as though she did not hear a single word of what Elijah had just said. Her eyes were gleaming with so much intensity in the dark as she trained her hostile gaze on Elijah. Sebastian had stopped groaning. He was only panting now and she knew that he was starting to lose consciousness. "Answer me, Prince Elijah :"

"First things first..." Elijah cut her off, squatting down right before her and then stretching his hand towards her. A white handkerchief was offered, dangling from his fingers. "Wipe off that blood on your neck. I don't drink directly from non-vampires but I might end up breaking my own rules and taste that intoxicating blood of yours..." his eyes were intently looking at her bloodied neck as though he wanted to lick it.

He trailed off when Elle snatched the handkerchief from his hand and immediately and harshly wiped the blood off her neck.

"It seems that Sebastian has already told you something about your blood." He said as he stretched his hand at her again, this time palms facing towards as he silently asked for the handkerchief.

Elle reluctantly gave it back to him and then she watched him set the handkerchief on fire. "We need to get rid of your tempting scent, or my men might lose their wits and launch themselves at you. They are trained, but it is your one-of-a-kind blood we're talking about here."

He threw the burning handkerchief away behind him and Elle returned her gaze to him. She was not able to see his face clearly again as her eyes were focused on the handkerchief when he lit his lighter up.

"Speaking about your blood..." he continued. "Did you know that there's a very interesting reason why Sebastian is refusing to drink your blood, Sunshine? And no, it's not because he's afraid to endanger your life or anything like that. There's a completely different reason why and I know he'd never told you about it. Do you want to know what is it, hmm? Princess Elle?"

Chapter 221 Dust

"Uhm... Your Highness..." Mike reluctantly butted in. "I think we really need to move now. You both can continue your chat in the car instead."

"Oh!" Elijah looked up,. "You're actually right."

He stood before leisurely offering his hand towards Izabelle. Which Elle simply stared at with the same spiteful look in her eyes.

"Be good, Sunshine –"

"Be good?" Elle snorted. "You really expect me to be good after all that you did to my husband?" Elle glared contemptuously at Elijah.

"If you don't accept my hand on the count of three, I'll have you put to sleep too, Princess Elle." He stated, his grey eyes in the darkness were bright and dangerous.

"Can't you see I'm holding my husband? I can't –" Elle retorted, giving an excuse.

"Mike." Elijah gestured at the man next to them and without a word he came and grabbed the unconscious Sebastian from Elle's arms.

Elle tightened her grip on him, glaring daggers at the man called Mike.

"Let go, Princess. You know there's no use struggling –"

"Where are you taking him?!"

"Into the car, Sunshine." Elijah was the one who replied. "Don't worry, I'm taking you along with him."

Mike pulled Sebastian from Elle and due to the man's sheer strength, Elle was also pulled up along with the still unconscious Sebastian. Nevertheless, she still clung onto Sebastian, never letting go even as Mike brought him into the car.

In no time at all, Elle was holding Sebastian as she settled herself in the back seat. And when Elijah sat in the passenger seat, Mike immediately stepped on the accelerator, causing the car to speed off smoothly.

"Where are you taking us?" Elle then asked after a long while of silence when she suddenly started to feel dizzy. 'Oh lord... don't tell me...' Did they manage to drug her too?!

She fought hard to keep her eyes opened as she tightened her grip around Sebastian.

"You will know once we get there, Sunshine." she heard Elijah say before her eyes lost the fight and helplessly remained closed after a particularly long blink.

...

Shocked at finding herself inside a grey toned and minimalistic room, Elle scrambled to her feet, eager to leave. To look for Sebastian.

She had checked herself once over and to her relief, she was still wearing her clothes and there seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary. But her panic skyrocketed when she could not find Sebastian anywhere. Where did Elijah bring him to?

Rushing out of the door, Elle found herself in a wide marble living room. It was modern and luxurious and... surprisingly sparse. It was as though it was not a place that someone dwelled in constantly.

There were some basic but luxurious looking furniture but that was about all there was inside. It was like a new luxury villa that had just been finished and the owners were yet to move in.

Looking around, Elle's heartbeat thundered harder when she could not feel the familiar presence of Sebastian. She was starting to feel the dread of getting locked up again. But her fear for Sebastian's safety was far stronger. Where was he? She needed to find him!

After hastily wandering around the empty and spacious mansion, Elle finally found the main door. But to her dismay, she could not open it. It was locked!

She debated whether to yell for anyone but in the end, she decided not to call out, afraid that she might end up alerting her captors lest they return her to that room and lock her up in there. She must not let that happen again!

And so, Elle continued roaming around, searching for any way out.

But time passed yet her attempt in looking for an exit was a failure.

Frustration and helplessness began to get to her. Her worry for Sebastian was making her feel worse. She felt like she just wanted to scream her frustrations out.

Slamming her hand against the wall, Elle's eyes then caught sight of her new wedding ring. She paused and stared at it. As though it had some kind of calming power, Elle brought her fingers to her lips and kissed the ring before her eyes gleamed with determination again.

Moving again, Elle continued searching around, relentlessly. Until she noticed a small smearing of dirt on the marble floor. A dust patch.

Bending over, she swiped her finger over the patch and rubbed her thumb and pointer together, trying to guess and decipher more information from this. She was familiar with this kind of dust. How did it end up in a modern and marble place like this?

Elle's eyes widened. Her skill of looking for secret passages since she was young was suddenly activated. And deep within her, this dust alone was enough for her to believe that there was a secret passage leading to an underground chamber or area in this place! And she was certain that it should not be a newly built underground passage, judging from this kind of dust. It was highly likely that it was an ancient underground passageway!

She started to run her hands over all the tiles, the walls and everything in the area until she finally found it. One of the tiles on the wall was pushed back when she pressed on it and the floor slid open. It then revealed a stair.

Swallowing, Elle cautiously looked down.

There was some light and she knew there must be people inside. The first thought that came to her mind was that Sebastian was probably being tied up and tortured or

something along those lines by Elijah deep within this underground passageway and it had made her to rush inside. No longer considering if her moves were wise or not.

The underground passageway was not as simple as Elle had initially thought. It was indeed an ancient dungeon. She believed that this place was certainly ancient, but had been modernized. Most probably it was an old castle that was demolished and had been rebuilt into a modern mansion.

Elle moved farther in without any hesitation. She was thankful that the dungeon was well lit and there was still no other pathway that could trick her and get her lost.

But after a long while of walking, Elle stopped between two pathways. One was dimly lit and the other, well lit-up.

One would consider the well lit-up path, but not Elle. Because as soon as she stood there, she felt a familiar presence coming from the dimly lit pathway. She could feel something dark and heavy flowing from it and a shiver ran down her back.

Facing it, Elle braced herself and entered. She was careful with her steps as it was dim. When she reached a little farther, she found that the lights inside were old candelabras instead of the modern bulbs used in the other pathway.

Her heartbeat started to drum louder in her ears when she started to see bars ahead. She knew this. They also have these back in one of their oldest castles in Dalenn. Dungeons that were used to be prisons.

Her steps slowed, measured, as she prayed that the worse case scenario she was expecting would be completely wrong.

But as she reached the massive bars and looked through them, her gasp echoed in the heavy silence.

Chapter 222 Before...

Inside a speeding black car, Lucas and the youngest prince of Viscarria, Kyle, both had severe expressions plastered over their faces.

Kyle had insisted on following him when he had come across him a while ago. Or more like, the prince had actually chased after him.

Lucas could only tell that the youngest prince had already found out that something had happened. And that something grave was going on.

"I don't understand how this happened at all." Kyle said, shaking his head in disbelief. "I can't believe my brother got himself captured so easily like that. Is that even Sebastian?! Just what exactly in the world happened?"

Lucas kept his driving speed steady and impossibly fast on the highway as he replied to Kyle, without sparing him a glance. "They blackmailed him."

"What? Don't tell me they caught Princess Izabelle? Like how? Wasn't she under heavy security ever since her disappearance?" Kyle was frowning hard as he asked Lucas, questions shooting out one after another. He had heard that Sebastian had been with his wife since he found her and had never left the castle at all. Even during her birthday party, Kyle knew there was no way there would be any chances for anyone, even Elijah to kidnap her. So how was she even taken captive again?

"Witchcraft." Lucas answered simply, his already hard expression worsened. And his answer had Kyle's eyes widening. "I believe the princess had been under a serious spell. She keeps on getting wounded out of nowhere."

"A poppet!" Kyle exclaimed, eyes narrowing at what Lucas had disclosed.

"I believe that's what is going on with the princess. And the witch who is performing the witchcraft must be someone powerful, as they actually managed to draw blood from her without her even realizing it. I believe His Highness thinks the same and that's why he was hellbent on bringing the princess to the Black Forest, where any and all forms of witchcraft wouldn't work."

Speechless, Kyle could only shake his head again. Now he understood why they managed to actually catch Sebastian.

"That sly fox..." Kyle hissed, gritting his teeth. "He must've already gotten control of the princess since her first disappearance, right?"

"I believe so." Lucas' tone also did not sound good.

"What did Alexander say?"

"He's working closely with the witches in the Black Forest right now. He said he'll move immediately, the moment he gets more information from the witches."

A short silence passed until Kyle spoke again. "Who could it be? That strong witch who is working with Elijah? The princess' disappearance had been very strange even from before, and I believe that the most possible conclusion about that mystery is that a strong witch is involved. Now this... I can't believe this is happening. There shouldn't be anyone strong enough to give us this kind of trouble except for L ... except for the witch queen and Zeres!"

"You're right. Whoever it is that's working with Prince Elijah should be at least on par with the caliber of the witch queen herself. Or... perhaps not as powerful, but their ability for not being able to be traced at all by the witch queen herself is definitely superior." Lucas commented. "And we... I believe even Alexander and everyone in the Black Forest, has yet to figure out who it is as well." Lucas' voice was tight as he told all this to Kyle. It could be seen what a predicament they were all in right now.

A long, deep sigh escaped Kyle's lips. He was starting to feel that this trouble would end really really badly. There was a restless unease swirling within him, and that was growing stronger by the minute now as worry for his brother and his wife began to surge.

"Lucas..." Kyle uttered after another long stretch of silence. "Is my brother really in love with Princess Izabelle?"

Kyle had heard about this already. That Sebastian was whipped so badly by the princess. In fact, the whispers in the castle were full of delight at the news of how the prince was so head over heels in love with his wife. He even heard that his brother who was never fond of pets, actually even had a large dog, Snow, brought to their rooms just so it could keep his wife company!

But Kyle was a bit unsure as he had somehow felt the pretense and acting that had gone on between the couple ever since that first time the princess had arrived at the castle. He had totally not bought into their fake lovey-dovey act as newlyweds, as much as they did seem sweet to each other on the surface. However, he had then kept his silence as he had thought who was he to question what his brother wanted to do with his own love life. But now faced with the whispers going around, Kyle had then felt he needed to reevaluate if his brother did really love his wife.

"He is." Was Lucas' straightforward reply. And Kyle knew for sure that if it was Lucas who could confirm the news, then it must really be true. And that news only made the already bad situation far worse. His brows creased further and deep furrows formed on his forehead, marring his normally flawless and gorgeous face just a little. Because Kyle realized now that Elijah had found a perfect tool to use to destroy Sebastian.

"We really need to find them quick. As soon as possible before... before..." Kyle could not make himself continue speaking. In that moment, no matter how he tried to think positively, he could already feel that things were going to be dark and bloody.

The heavy feeling within him right now was something he had never experienced before. This felt even worse than that battle that had taken place ten years ago. Perhaps because it was a fight within their family, between two Reign princes this time, and it was something that had never happened before.

Chapter 223 Did You Know

Elle could not believe what she was seeing. Though the lighting around her was dim and it was even darker behind the bar, she immediately knew that the man being chained inside was none other than Sebastian.

Her hands flew to her mouth. He was already behind such massive and thick bars, why must they chain him up too? Was that not overkill?!

With her lips slightly trembling, she was about to call out his name when a voice spoke up and jolted her.

"He's not awake yet." Elijah's smooth voice reverberated in the darkness.

Whipping around, Elle saw Elijah leaning against the dungeon's wall, right across from her.

Despite her thundering heartbeats, Elle clenched her fists and glared at the man, whose face she had yet to even fully see. And it was then she realized that all her encounters with Elijah were always happening during the nights. And due to that, it was always too dim for her to see what he truly looked like. Not that she cared for how his face looks, but she was starting to wonder if it was on purpose or just purely coincidental. However, now her focus was not on Elijah but on her husband who was in such a dismal state.

"Please..." she pleaded, but her words were a startling contrast to the rage brimming in her eyes. "Release my husband. I don't know why you're doing this, but... in case you've forgotten, he's your brother, Prince Elijah. So, please let him go."

"I haven't even done anything at all to him yet, Sunshine –"

"You had him stabbed with that potent drug! Now you have him chained even when he is already behind bars! And you dare tell me that you have not done anything to him yet?!" Elle's voice got a little louder at the end, not being able to help herself.

"Those things you mentioned are nothing to him, Princess Izabelle. Insignificant. Don't you know that Sebastian had spent seven hundred years of his life in that state? Chained and locked like this behind bars?" Elijah's eyes were zooming in on Elle as though to see her reaction to his statement.

Elle's eyes widened and speech failed her for a moment. Denial hitting her like a ton of bricks. It was like all the breath was being knocked out of her for a few seconds. "What... what are you talking about?" She finally managed to croak the question out after opening and closing her mouth a few times..

A sigh escaped Elijah's lips. "Of course... you would know nothing about this too, wouldn't it? Sebastian wouldn't have wanted you to know what kind of a monster he truly is." Elijah's words were mocking, piercing her heart as she wondered why Sebastian would not tell her more about himself and she had to hear about this from someone else.

Shaking her head, Elle swallowed hard before retorting. "You're the monster here, Elijah. The fact that you could even do this to your very own brother. And if what you said is true, that Sebastian had been chained and locked for several hundred years... then... you're an even more horrific monster for doing this to him again!" Her eyes were literally shooting sparks at Elijah, as though she hoped that he would just combust right where he was.

Elijah pushed himself off the wall and began to approach Elle. His grey eyes gleaming brighter than ever, causing her to hear warning bells echoing at the back of her head.

"What if I tell you that Sebastian's been locked up because he was an uncontrollable monster who couldn't even recognize anyone anymore?" he uttered as he approached her with deliberately slow steps. "That he had to be chained and locked like that to ensure everyone was safe?"

He paused right before Elle who was now holding her breath and then continued. "The man you married is not just a mere vampire, Princess. He's a demon too... a monster who is not supposed to be here, living among us as though he belongs here."

All Elle could do was shake her head at him and he smiled. His white teeth flashing in the dark. "Don't believe me? You think that it's impossible? That there's no way demons are real?" He then bent slightly closer, causing Elle to unconsciously scoot back and her behind hit the bars. "Just like almost all humans, you must've found it funny now. But worry not Sunshine, you will be enlightened soon once Sebastian wakes up. You shall see it for yourself. Just wait for it."

"Why..." Elle's voice broke due to the intense emotions swirling within her like a storm. "Why are you doing this?" Elle could not understand why Elijah was treating his brother, Sebastian this way. So what if Sebastian was not just vampire but was something else? Should he not be helping his brother out instead of tormenting him further?

"I told you already, didn't I? I wanted him to go mad. To go completely insane as he deserved. Sebastian deserves nothing else but to be chained and locked up in prison... and suffer... forever." His voice held so much conviction and hatred as he uttered that last line. Elle shivered as she saw the deep hatred shining in his eyes.

"Just... just what..." Elle stammered, swallowing her surging tears. "Just what did... Sebastian ever do to you for you to treat him this way?"

Unexpectedly, Elijah seemed to be suddenly surprised by Elle's question. Then out of nowhere, he barked out a laugh. A quick disbelieving laugh that sounded almost...

He mumbled something under his breath and he stepped back, running his fingers through his hair before looking at her again. "Did you know that you're the very first person who asked me that question? Sunshine?" he breathed out in a huff. "No one had ever asked me that. All of them kept on asking why am I doing this and that... no one had bothered to ask me what Sebastian and Ezekiel had done to me first... until now."

Chapter 224 Story

"Alright, Sunshine." Elijah was against the wall again, leaning his back against it in a seemingly relaxed yet a little unsettling stance. "Since you are the first to ask me that question, I think I am obliged to at least answer you."

His grey eyes that were the only ones fully visible to Elle in the dim light were glinting with an intense light. So intense that Elle could not help but feel the pressure of it under her skin.

"But first... I guess I'll have to question you one last time, Princess Elle. Do you really want to know?"

Elle could not help swallowing. For some reason, she felt the unease growing within her. A weak warning bell echoed at the back of her head, telling her there must be some kind of consequence if Elijah ends up revealing the answer to her question. And the way he asked that question was just so suspicious.

But she wanted to know. She wanted to know everything! She wanted to understand what was going on! She was sick of always being left in the dark and not knowing what was even happening.

Braving herself, she tipped her chin up. "Are you telling me that there will be a consequence that might befall me once I hear your answer?" she asked.

"Well... isn't that always a given? That's why sometimes, not knowing something at all is the better choice. Ignorance is a bliss they say..." he shrugged elegantly.

Elle bit the insides of her lower lip hard. But after a few breaths, she replied with a small forced smile across her face. "It's not like I'm in a blissful state right now for not knowing anyway." She mumbled, knowing he would be able to hear her.

She understood where he was coming from but right now, all she wanted was to have answers to her questions. Because perhaps, once she learned more of his reasons, she could find something that will help her to get Sebastian out of this place. Maybe, this

was her opportunity to not just learn more and understand what was going on, but also to find a possible way out of this. She did not have any idea how, but she would rather take this risk than just sitting on her hands doing nothing, or worse - begging him, which she knew would not help at all.

"You really never cease to surprise me, Sunshine." Elle heard a hint of amusement mixed with sarcasm lacing his voice. "Fine then." He sighed and rested his head back against the wall.

A short silence passed before he began speaking again. "Let me tell you a story, Princess Elle... long ago, there was a boy who was living all by himself in the forest. Well, not exactly by himself since he was with the wolves and other animals. The animals had taken care of him, treated him as though he belonged to their pack. Do you know why he'd ended up there?"

Elijah tilted his head and threw a very quick glance towards the still unconscious Sebastian who was behind bars. The neutral air around Elijah seemed to change and a ripple with a dark wave of emotions being stirred around them. Elle could feel herself finding it a little harder to breathe from the sheer pressure. However, she could not bring herself to make any noise as Elijah was finally talking and telling her something.

"It's because his mother had been driven insane by his very own two demonic half-brothers. The insane woman who was once... a loving, beautiful mother who cherished her son the most in the world, had left her own son in the forest. Abandoning him there. Hoping that he'd die. But sadly, the boy somehow managed to survive. Of course, it was all thanks to the animals who took care of him instead of eating him alive and leaving nothing but his little bones..." Elijah's voice was still light and seemingly unaffected by what he was telling her. However, Elle could feel the pressure that had increased from the moment he started speaking about this matter. She was clenching her fists beside her, keeping herself up and not allowing the heavy pressure to get to her and send her collapsing to the ground.

Then he shut his eyes and drew in a couple of breaths as though to relax himself. And immediately, the heavy and unsettling atmosphere slowly turned back to normal. That caused Elle to finally release that last breath she was unconsciously holding in.

"For years he had continued living with the animals... living as though he was one of the animals himself. That went on until vampire hunters arrived in the forest. They... killed his animal family one after another until... there were none left. They made him watch them die. The boy had thought he was going to be killed next. In fact, he had hoped they would kill him next. But they didn't. They left him alone... and alive. That was the moment when the boy had realized he was being played cruelly. That they must have purposely hunted his animal family just to torture him. To drive him... mad." The dangerous ripple in the air was suddenly back with a vengeance. However, this time it was stronger, darker, heavier. Making it a little harder for Elle to even breathe naturally.

"The boy had managed to snag one of the hunters who were leaving the forest and after torturing him to reveal their objectives... he'd found out that everything that had happened was an order from... the Crown Prince : his eldest brother. Apparently, the Crown Prince had found out about the boy's existence and now... he was doing what he had previously done to the boy's mother."

"But why?!" Elle spoke at last. Her voice was weak and filled with hesitation. "Why would the Crown Prince do something like that? What would he even get from doing all that to his younger brother?"

Chapter 225 Simple

"Simple. To eliminate the threat to his throne, Sunshine." Elijah answered without any hint of doubt in his tone. As if what he had just said was a proven fact.

Elle slightly shook her head in disbelief. "I don't... understand. If that is true, why did he not just give out the order for those hunters to... harm the boy? Wouldn't that be easier and get the job done faster?"

"Eliminating doesn't only mean killing, Princess Elle. If the boy had gone mad, then he would be automatically unfit for the throne. Also, the Crown Prince can not just kill the boy. He had taken a vow to never take the life of any of his brothers. That's why he'd resorted to that tactic. Unfortunately for him... the boy was smarter than he'd ever thought."

She could not help but crease her brows deeper. "Is the Crown Prince so powerless that he had to go so far as to go after a young boy like that?"

It was Elijah's turn to shake his head. "He's the complete opposite of powerless, Sunshine. He is so powerful that he had ruled for hundreds of years even though he was never formally addressed as 'king'. He'd even had his father, the king in name, as his puppet until his death."

"Then why? If he's that powerful, why would he even... bother to..." she trailed off when Elijah pushed himself off the wall and approached her again.

"Let me tell you a small secret of that young boy, Princess Elle." He stopped right before her, reaching out and braced his hand against the bar. Then he bent over a little and continued. "The Crown Prince had apparently found out from the vision of the prophetess that... the boy is going to be crowned King someday."

Elle's eyes stretched wide, never expecting what he had just said. She had already heard of what the vampires were speaking of about 'the prophetess'. She would hear whispers and low-voiced comments about this mysterious person, but never had she heard any clear and straightforward information on her. She had also read it in one of the books that this oldest vampiress could apparently see and foretell some future events.

Pulling away, Elijah straightened. His eyes now bright with something eerie. "The Crown Prince had found out about that vision since the day the boy was born. And that's why the Crown Prince had done all those things... threatened the boy's mother and forced her to hide her pregnancy, drove her insane, and then tried to drive the boy insane too."

"That Crown Prince ... is Prince Ezekiel, right?" Elle finally asked the obvious. She wanted to confirm it by hearing Elijah saying it himself, but one look in his eyes at that moment had given her the obvious answer. Yes. She was right. It was Prince Ezekiel that he had been talking about.

She did not know much about Ezekiel. She had not even met him or knew where he even was right now. But she had heard of nothing but good things when Abi had talked about him before. She could not explain why, but she had instantly believed in Abi's words about Ezekiel without even a tinge of doubt.

And now, even after what she had heard from Elijah, his account of this Prince Ezekiel from his point of view, she still could not believe the Ezekiel that Elijah was talking about was the one and the same Ezekiel Abi had been telling her about back in the Black Forest. She still remembered how Abi had described Ezekiel. Yes, he had been cold and aloof. But never was he cruel and unjust. He had always carried himself with the manner of a powerful ruler of the vampires that was befitting his stature as a Reign royal. And Abi also had whispered to her how after Ezekiel had fallen in love with Alicia, he had taken such good care of her that it could not reflect the vicious and unsympathetic personality that Elijah had painted of him.

Elle then wondered if Elijah somehow had formed some kind of misunderstanding on the matter as she was quite sure that Abi would not be mistaken in identifying how Ezekiel was since both she and Alex had been friends with him for such a long time already. However, she had doubts if Elijah had even bothered communicating with Ezekiel properly or at a personal level at all.

"I... I am actually having a hard time believing that... Prince Ezekiel did all those things." She replied, speaking slowly as she was hesitant in sharing her thoughts freely. "Have you... ever talked to him about all those things? I mean, regarding the matters that you had just told me about. What if... what if there's been a misunderstanding? What if..." she broke off when Elijah scoffed as his face twisted into a sneer.

"Sunshine..." he drawled out tauntingly. "You think this matter could be solved with just talking? You don't know how cunning Ezekiel is. He's the most cunning man you'd ever

heard about. What if I tell you he had already talked to me about this a few times before? Do you know what he told me? He said that he did not do anything to my mother. He told me it was my mother who was the cunning one. That she was the cunning villainess who had planned everything since the very beginning. It was her plan to get me to hate my brothers to death and fight them to the death for the throne. And despite the fact that I had watched with my own eyes on how my mother changed and fell into madness, I was sold on that reasoning because of Ezekiel's cunning mouth. I believed in him, hook line and sinker. That it was all my mother's fault. But that was the greatest sin and mistake I've ever done in my entire long life... believing Ezekiel's words without any evidence and despising my mother for everything I thought she had done."

His breathing changed a little as he braced his arms against the bars again. Towering over Elle as he continued with utter hatred burning in his grey eyes. "I should've believed her without a doubt... the woman who had brought me into this world. More than anyone else, I should have trusted her instead of believing in the stone-hearted and demonic man who called himself 'my brother'. But I failed her and it was already too late when I realized my foolishness. Because my mother had to ultimately kill herself for me to come to my senses."

Chapter 226 Not Enough

This chapter is dedicated to @Dreamer_Princess and @Monica_Ceja! Thank you so much for the supergifts!

A long and heavy silence reigned after Elijah's statement.

What he had just revealed... That his mother had taken her own life had reminded Elle of her own sister. Ellaine. Her heart could only shudder in remembrance of the situation that her sister found herself in which had driven her to choose to end her own life. She could almost see that familiar look in his grey eyes. It reminded her of how her own gaze looked whenever she stared at herself through the mirror since the day she found Ellaine cold and dead in her room. That horror had been burnt into her memory and had stayed there ever since.

But the horrors reflected in his eyes were far worse. The hatred and everything else were blazing like an eternal inferno, as though never able to be quenched nor sated. The kind that looked irreversible. The kind that would demand exact repayment for every wrong - that he deemed it to be - counted against him.

He pushed himself away and Elle finally realized her breathing was uneven and shallow. His emotions and fluctuating aura had affected her once again.

She panted for air once he was a few steps from her again.

None of them spoke for a long while until Elle somehow managed to regain her normal breathing, all the while just watching him move back to his earlier spot from the corners of her eyes. She only lifted her face when she saw him leaning against the wall once again. The dangerous inferno in his eyes seemed to have calmed down for now. She really wished she could see his face clearly to at least be able to discern and have an idea on what expression he was wearing.

When he did not speak, Elle fidgeted and could not sit still to just wait for him to start talking again. Thus, she could only force herself to break the silence.

"Why... are you coming after Sebastian instead of... Prince Ezekiel? Is it because he's gone and now you are venting all your anger and frustrations onto Sebastian in his place?" Elle's brow furrowed as she tried to understand where Elijah was coming from.

She thought she saw him smirk, but could not be sure from the dimness where he was standing. However, that alone was enough to make Elle's heartbeat race harder.

"The story didn't end there, Sunshine." He replied as he pulled something out from his shirt pocket. She could not tell what it was, but she could see him playing with it in his hand. Tossing it a little and catching it. "Sebastian had done something much worse and I'm not going to tell you about it right now. I know you're doubting my words and obviously, you'd choose to believe their version of the story instead of mine. But worry not, Princess Elle, I'm not going to force you to believe me. You'll find out about it all soon anyway, once he wakes up... now Sunshine... you need to get out of this place for now and go get something to eat. We can't have you starving here, can we?"

The sudden sound of her stomach growling followed Elijah's words. But Elle could barely bother about hunger or even her thirst for water at the moment at all.

She shook her head. "Please... don't hurt him." She said softly, pleadingly.

Elle could now feel real dread. Back then, when she first met Elijah, she could not make herself feel the kind of fear she was supposed to feel when she was near him. Now she could feel it. But it still was not that directed to herself. She feared what he would do to Sebastian instead of herself.

"You said he'd been locked and chained up for seven hundred years..." she continued, just saying these words was enough to make her chest squeeze tighter. "He had su :"

"Enough, Sunshine." His tone was hard, cold, and unforgiving. This was the first time she had heard him in that tone. "Don't you dare tell me he's suffered enough. It's not

enough. I want to drive him insane not because of some demonic powers. I wanted him to go insane for real. For real, Princess Elle..."

Elle shook her head and her eyes began to feel hot. The thought that this man was planning to most probably drive Sebastian into taking his own life in the end made her shiver so hard that her knees weakened with the fear that was threatening to overtake her.

"Please don't do this." She begged. She wanted to believe Sebastian was not going to yield. That he was stronger than anything. But she knew Sebastian was already living with nightmares and traumas. What if Elijah knew what exactly it was that could break him?

"You need to get yourself prepared too, Princess Elle." He added, as though giving her that warning was a last friendly move on his part. He did not seem to have heard her begging at all.

"Y-you're going to make me watch :)" Elle choked at the thought. Her insides twisting into a knot.

"Not just watch, Sunshine." He cut her off, causing her eyes to widen with the horror of the unknown.

"W-what are you... planning to do?"

"You will see. But for now, go and eat. This is for your own sake. Unless you want to pass out due to hunger and weakness once Sebastian wakes up."

She could only clench her fists tight and fought hard to keep her trembling under control. Fighting to not succumb to any fear.

"I'll go... If you come with me." She would not let him remain alone with Sebastian. She was very fearful that he would do something to Sebastian once she was outside. "There is no one outside and... I don't think I see any food in the kitchen."

He stared at her. And then he glanced over at Sebastian.

However... "Fine." He still gave in, causing Elle to secretly feel a little relieved as she secretly let out the breath that she had held in.

When he began to walk away, Elle glanced over at Sebastian and then followed after him. Elle was busy trying to force herself to think and come up with a useful plan, while her gaze was fixated on Elijah's broad back.

Soon, the secret door opened and when they were finally out, Elijah turned around to face her.

Chapter 227 Uncanny

Elle's mouth hung open as she looked at Elijah's face. Her heart seemed to stop at the utter shock that had surged through her body, just rocking her entire being. How... what... was what she was seeing even real? For a moment, Elle felt as though she had been transported into the twilight zone.

His face was... Elijah's face looked... exactly like Sebastian's!

The eyes, nose and even lips were almost exactly identical, that one would definitely mistake him as Sebastian if not for those... those scattered tiny moles on his face. Their resemblance to each other was just too similar that it was uncanny!

To say that she was shocked was an understatement to explain what Elle was going through at the moment. She just could not believe her eyes. And the emotions within her were in total chaos.

"Sorry for the surprise, Sunshine." He told her. There was a touch of apologetic yet amused tone in his voice. "And no. Sebastian and I aren't identical twins no matter what you think." He waved his hand elegantly and continued. "The humans say that the likelihood of two people sharing the exact same facial features is less than one in a trillion. But here we are. Not funny at all, isn't it?"

Elle could not even muster up any thoughts, much less form any words. She could only stare at him, still unable to completely snap out of the shock.

She was looking at a face which was so familiar and dear to her. The face with all the beautiful and perfect features she had memorized. The face of the man she... lord... just what kind of... please... this must be just pure sorcery, right?

"If it bothers you that much, just think of this as some kind of nasty sorcery, Sunshine." He added, literally speaking her mind and then he turned. "I think of that too, every time I see my own face in the mirror."

What he said only made Elle's heart sink. Because that only confirmed what she saw was not any kind of sorcery or prank at all. She even heard an obvious hatred in his tone when he said that last sentence. It seemed as though he really and truly despised his own face more than anyone else.

When he felt her not moving from her spot, he turned and looked at her over his shoulder. "I believe you won't like it if I hold your hand and drag you along with me to the dining area, right? Sunshine?" His voice was light, but Elle perceived the threat in it.

That was enough to make Elle move again and started following him towards the kitchen. She tried her hardest to not think about this new shocking twist. Not only because she was desperate for any plans on how to escape or call for help but also because she was certain her already reeling mind would probably combust if she continued dwelling about this any longer.

But it was always easier said than done, that she had wished she had not seen his face at all today or tonight. In fact, she did not even have any idea on when it was the right time at all!

Once they were in the kitchen, Elijah had ordered her to sit as he rummaged inside the fridge.

Elle could only obey as she discreetly looked around. Trying to find anything at all that could give any ideas on what to even do to help them in this situation.

Her eyes fell on the kitchenware when Elijah opened a cabinet. She caught a quick glimpse of the many different knives that were inside it.

"I hope you're not planning on grabbing any of these to use as weapon against me, Princess Elle." His voice nearly made her jolt out of her skin. She thought that she was discreet enough. "I don't want to hurt you... so don't even think about it."

She hesitantly lifted her gaze to his face and she instantly regretted it. Because her words of retort only got stuck in her throat the very moment she saw his face. Again! The visual impact was so powerful that she could feel her mind reeling again.

They truly looked so identical. So uncannily alike. Why... why had no one told her about this at all? Should this not be something that was a big deal? Especially for her, who was Sebastian's wife!

The longer she stared at him, the more Elle felt like his face was truly real. Those tiny and slightly larger moles beautifully scattered all over his face until they trailed down his neck... looked just so real! Something like that could not be made by surgeries or even masks. At the back of her head, she reasoned to herself that it was not impossible nowadays. But his words beforehand and the despise in his voice a while ago... that was something she could not even explain anymore.

"Good thing I'm a decent cook. But right now, I don't have the time to cook a full-on meal for you. So, I'll just prepare something easy." He said and he began to fold his sleeves up till his forearm.

While he was busy, Elle could not help but keep her gaze on him. Her body wanted her to study him, to find what was the difference between her husband Sebastian and Elijah.

She had noticed since the very first time she met Elijah, that his stance and physique was almost the same as Sebastian's too. Only that Sebastian was probably just an inch taller than him and now she realized, Sebastian's shoulders and back were a little broader too. Sebastian's jaws were more chiseled as well compared to Elijah's. But other than those characteristics, to Elle's dismay, she could not find any other differences in appearance.

"You... you purposely hid your face from me because... because of... this..." she muttered. Not really asking him, more like making a statement.

Elijah glanced at her and a moment of silence passed before he replied. "I always hide my real face from everyone, Sunshine. Every time... all the time. Today was the exception."

Chapter 228 Sunny

It was a struggle for Elle to finish her meal. She did not know how she even took bite after bite of the food that was before her. Every mouthful tasted like cardboard on her tongue. But somehow, she forced herself and tried her best to at least relax a little for her to take in the food. She knew she needed it.

To her relief, Elijah did not push her to finish her meal quickly as she had expected him to do. So, Elle took the opportunity to stall for time. She ate as slowly as she could, thinking that every minute that passed would probably give the others just that extra time to find them. At the same time, perhaps she might experience some lightbulb moment to give her that one brilliant idea to escape this situation they were in.

Elle was at least certain that Sebastian and Alex's men must be definitely on the lookout for them by now. Though she felt a little scared that the help would take a long time to arrive, based on how long it took for Sebastian to finally locate her when she went missing, she repeatedly told herself that it should not take that long this time around. Their situations were completely different! Because Sebastian was this country's very own Crown Prince! Everyone should be doing everything they can to find him right now. She also believed that Lucas had escaped to inform everyone about what had happened to them.

While she was slowly and carefully eating, munching slowly as though she was truly savoring the food, she kept on sneaking furtive glances at Elijah. But not at his face. She was trying to avoid looking directly at his face so as to not distract herself. She truly did not have the luxury to think about his face right now.

He was preparing something by the sink. She was certain it was not for himself though.

Soon, he glanced at her over his shoulder. Their eyes met and Elle could only clench her jaws once again. She could never ever get used to this. It was just so weird, so uncanny, that her body was not sure what to even feel.

His gaze fell to her food and Elle swallowed. Somehow, the look in his eyes seemed to tell her that he knew she was deliberately dragging her meal to pass time.

"Since you're not done yet, I'll go :"

"Wait!" Elle rose in an instant, cutting him off. She must not let him go back to the underground cell without her! "I'm done." She could only say as she pushed back her chair when...

"No." Elijah's voice was a little commanding. "You're not done yet. Make sure you're completely finished with your food when I'm back. Or else I'll force feed you myself. Got it, Sunshine?"

Elle clenched her fists. She hated that she could not take his threats lightly because it always felt like he would really do what he had threatened once she did disobey.

"W-where are you going? Are you going to go feed... Sebastian with that?" she asked, her eyes darting to the small bowl he was holding. She could not see what was inside it, but she found it suspicious.

"Ah..." he looked down at the bowl in his hand before he replied. "This is not for Sebastian, Sunshine. You can't be thinking I'm feeding the person I hated the most with the same food I prepared for you, can you?"

"Y-you could've put... something in it."

He smiled. A quick and amused smile. Seeing his smile for the first time, Elle found herself feeling utterly relieved.

She would really not know what to even do anymore if Elijah had a dimple in the same spot Sebastian had too. But thank god he did not have it! And that was all that mattered to her at that moment.

"And what if you're right? What would you do, Sunshine?" one of his brows raised a little and Elle focused her gaze to the moles that were right below his eyes. All because she hated how similar that expression was with Sebastian's.

"I'll have to... fight you to death right here, right now." She replied and a short silence passed before his laughter echoed in the spacious dining area.

Again, though Elijah's laughter was as dark and sultry as his voice, Elle was just thankful nothing in his laughter and voice were the same or even remotely similar with Sebastian's.

"Really... Sunshine... there's never a dull moment with you!" He commented with laughter in his voice, shaking his head.

"Stop calling me that already!" she glared at him. But he had already turned to leave.

"Finish your food." He said before turning around and abruptly left, leaving no chance for Elle to object.

Elle rushed to eat more food on her plate. Then she stuffed the remaining food in her mouth until her cheeks were bulging out like a squirrel's, finishing her meal in a very short while.

She then rushed to the cabinet Elijah had opened a while back. All the knives were not small enough for her to hide. And there were no sheaths. How could she hide them on her body? She might end up getting wounded!

So she picked the kitchen shears instead, tucked it into the back of her clothes and ran out of the kitchen and rushed towards the secret passage. She was too afraid Elijah would lock the secret door to keep her out!

But she halted the moment she spotted Elijah squatting on the floor of the living room. She almost did not notice him as she passed.

Still trying to chew on the food she had hastily stuffed into her mouth, she faced towards him only to see him feeding a... squirrel on the floor.

Elijah glanced up at her and his eyes widened for a moment before he burst out with laughter once again, eyes curving into narrow crescents as his mirth poured from him.

Knowing exactly what had made him laugh, Elle shot him a deadly glare as she struggled to chew the food in her mouth. She tried to look around to find anything she could probably use to hit him. But could a vampire even pass out from getting hit?

Picking up the cute little squirrel he was feeding, Elijah lifted it towards her. "I think I know now what to name her. I'll name her Sunny. After you, Sunshine. What do you think? I picked her up from the roadside last night, so she's new here and still nameless." He spoke, all the while chortling at how similar both squirrel and lady were to each other.

Without waiting for Elle's response, Elijah turned again and continued watching the squirrel gobbling up the food he had fed it.

"You look adorable with your squirrel cheeks. But go back and drink some water first, before you choke, Sunshine. Also, you might want to use the bathroom. I can only give you twenty minutes to do everything you need to do before we get back down there." His tone changed when he said that last sentence without looking her way. "I'm not certain when I can let you out again. So you'd better grab this opportunity now."

Chapter 229 Stuck

When the secret door silently and seamlessly closed behind them, Elle fought to not let the fear get through to her. She steeled herself and determinedly followed after him as they walked further in.

Her mind was reeling now with all the thoughts of what will happen next from here on... if she should attack him now with the shears while he seemed to be leaving his back open for her to...

Clenching her fists, Elle secretly let out a deep breath. She told herself that there was no way she would be able to bring this man down so easily. There was no way this dangerous man would foolishly give her such an obvious opening for her to attack. Perhaps, this was him testing her to reveal if she had hidden a weapon on her.

'Right... not yet...' she whispered in her mind. 'There will be a much better chance later.'

To Elle's surprise, Elijah entered the bright path instead of the dim one that would lead them to where Sebastian was held captive.

Halting, Elle looked at the other path. Her expression now flashing with her intensifying suspicion.

"Over here first, Sunshine." Elijah's voice echoed in the silence, calling for her to follow after him to the other path.

"But... that's not :)" Elle objected, her whole person resisting moving further away from where she remembered Sebastian was being kept.

"I need to show you something else first before we go back that way." He cut her off. "Now be a good girl and just obey."

Though Elle was extremely reluctant, she could do nothing else but move her feet in the direction that Elijah was taking her towards. She knew that disobeying him in a situation like this would only have her ending up in a worse situation for her. And she could not

imagine how much worse it would be for Sebastian. Thus, even if her feet felt like lead, she still forced them to move in the opposite direction that she wanted to go.

The other path seemed to go much deeper than the other. And as they reached further, Elle's stomach began to twist up in knots. This feeling... her gut told her that there was something bad waiting for her at the end of this path. Run... she should run... now...!!

But where? How? Not to mention that there was no way on earth that she could outrun Elijah.

Right. She should scream. Perhaps her voice would wake Sebastian up! He should still be able to hear her all the way from here, right?

A hand was suddenly clamped tightly over her mouth before she could even draw in a breath to scream. That action effectively stopped her from making any sounds at all.

"Shh... Don't. I don't recommend that you wake Sebastian up right now. Not just yet, Sunshine." Elijah whispered behind her. It seemed like he had moved first with vampiric speed and reached her before she could even execute what she had in mind. "And forgive me, but this will be a little painful. Don't worry, it will only be brief."

Elle's body began to feel strange.

As her wide eyes looked ahead, she finally realized the strange smoke lingering around them. It looked weirdly red.

And now her vision was starting to go reddish too. Lord... no... what was going on?

She then felt herself being lifted and her entire being protested. But her body was weirdly feeling so light. Her mind was also... lord... she knew this feeling...

It was almost the same feeling that she experienced during her birthday party. That floating feeling. Only this time, it was worse. She felt like she was in a paralytic nightmare.

Her body did not seem to be under her control anymore. It was as though someone else was controlling her limbs.

Soon, her vision went completely red. Oh lord... had she passed out? This cannot be happening! Please...

She could no longer even tell if Elijah was still holding her. Or if she was even awake. Her heart began to feel achingly heavy. It was beating so loud in her ears. Too loud, that it was the only thing she was hearing at the moment.

And then something sharp seemed to have struck her. Or more like pierced her soul. Breaking it apart. Her mouth naturally fell open and she screamed. But she did not know if she was even making a sound or if she was just screaming in her head.

The pain was so severe that she feared it would shatter her mind and soul itself.

However, there was nothing she could do but scream endlessly as she could not even move her limbs to clutch her hands over her chest. If she could, she might have clawed at her own skin to stop the pain.

And then everything suddenly went dark.

Now she felt like she was free falling. The pain had stopped. But the hollow feeling was indescribable. It was something that she could not even put into words no matter how she tried.

When the falling feeling stopped, Elle felt like she was stuck in the deepest part of the ocean. Where not even a speck of light could reach.

It was just dark. Too dark. Even with her eyes open, she could not see anything. As though she had gone blind.

She tried to keep herself calm and assess what was going on.

This did not seem to be a nightmare. She felt as though her body was moving but... it was not her who was controlling it anymore.

It was like... someone had gotten control of her body. In the darkness, she felt like her hands and feet were moving. She seemed to be doing something on her hair.

Elle began to fight the movement, to take back the control of her own limbs. But after struggling for a long while, nothing had worked. What... was going on?!

...

Behind the thick bars, the sound of metals echoed in the thick silence. Sebastian had finally made a movement.

His eyes slowly opened and he immediately frowned hard at the extremely jarring headache that welcomed him awake. But he gritted his teeth, ignored the ache and rose, only to realize that there were chains holding him down.

Sebastian's eyes widened as he finally realized the situation he was in.

But his shock at that moment was nothing compared to what he saw next.

A woman... his vision that was still reddish could not see her fully, but there was one thing that was so vivid in his eyes. And that was... the woman right there... approaching his cell, had long silver hair.

TW: This chapter contains content that some readers may find disturbing. Reader discretion is advised.

A/N: This chapter is a flashback. It's a bit more detailed compared to Zeke's narration in HWY. I decided to include it as a flashback for the new readers who have not read the first book, Hellbound With You(since I did promise that this book, HH, could be read as standalone). And for the readers from HWY, there will be new details/information that you will learn in this flashback.

Just the mere sight of that silver haired woman approaching his cell had instantly sent Sebastian hurtling back into the past. Back to that horrid past which was worse than any nightmare that one can ever have.

Sebastian would then see her again. That monster. On the outside, it might look as though she was a lady. But it was just an outer skin that hid the ugliness and depraved monster she was on the inside. And all he had wanted was... to slaughter her. To tear and flay her into pieces without mercy. To torture her in the most painful way possible until she begs for death.

But unfortunately, he was bound by chains that had been bespelled. He was powerless against her. She was too strong to be defeated by a young vampire like him. He had tried countless times before, but had miserably failed with every single attempt he had taken.

The female monster slowly squatted on the ground and her filthy hand reached out to touch his chin. She seemed to have an intransigent obsession for him.

"Are you still stubbornly waiting for your dearest older brother who had escaped all by himself and left you behind, my little prince?" she whispered. Her voice was like disgusting slime that has been poured down his back, causing his skin to pucker and shrivel up with a nasty reaction.

"You better... prepare yourself once... he's back... you... filthy witch! He won't let you off for what you've done!" Sebastian hissed but she only smiled back at him as though his warning did not worry her in the least.

"I have news for you, my beautiful little prince." She drawled as her thumb began to caress his lips. "Prince Ezekiel has been caught and right now, he's barely even half alive."

Sebastian smirked and hissed. "You think I'd believe your lies, you whore witch?"

The woman laughed. Her sinister yet strangely melodious laughter echoing in the dungeon, before travelling further into the darkness.

"Whore..." she echoed as though that one word was something so amusing. "Now I'm even more motivated to really make you into my exclusive handsome whore, Sebastian. I had been dreaming of the day when you would finally accept this fate that you were born to become my whore –"

He spat at her face and snarled ferociously. "I'd rather die, you filthy monster!" Sebastian then pulled hard at the chains and trashed around wildly, not caring that

But the woman threw her head back and laughed somewhat maniacally. Instead of being angered, she licked off Sebastian's spit on her face, causing him to feel his stomach churn violently and the nausea rise, threatening to send the contents of his stomach decorating the floor..

"I'm never going to let that happen. Your life and body have been mine for a long while now, and I don't have any plans on letting my possession turn into bones and ashes. You're mine forever, Sebastian..." And when she moved forward to kiss him, he retaliated by biting her lip so hard and used everything he had in him to tear it away like he was an animal tearing apart a prey's flesh.

The woman's reaction was to scream out so loud. The agonized sound made Sebastian smile in satisfaction.

But his smile did not last that long because the witch had been fast to cast a healing spell on her torn flesh. And then she struck him. Hard. Until blood dripped like rain from his mouth.

And she did not stop there. She had his sister's brought before him and she had them tortured right before his eyes. They did not stop even as he begged. Even as he cried for them to stop this cruelty.

The hatred and rage... darkness and bloodlust turned his heart darker and darker as his vision kept going more and more red. He only had one wish in this wretched world and that was to torture this maniacal monster for eternity with his own two hands.

"Stop! Please... don't hurt them anymore. They'll die!" he began to beg and scream. "Please... I won't do that again. Stop... don't hurt them anymore..."

She lifted her hand and they stopped. His sisters already looked dead. The only indication that they were still alive was their ever so weak heartbeats that thumped so faintly like a bird's.

"I need you to vow, my handsome prince. Vow to me that you'll be a good boy and be obedient to me. Or else... I'll kill them right before your face." She ordered and Sebastian obeyed. His soul was dying with every word he was uttering. However, what can he do? He needs to protect his sisters. Thus, no matter how he loathed the words of the vow, he still spat it out like they were distasteful mouthfuls of rubbish.

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When the vow was done, he knew that his life as he knew it, was over. He was now nothing but a living and breathing dead now.

"That's my prince." She praised, her hands began to caress his naked me, you will be treated very well and nothing will happen to your and bloodied torso. "Don't worry... from now on... as long as you obey sisters. And..." she trailed off and touched his lips again, parting it with her thumbs in a way as though she was touching the most valuable and most beautiful piece of art in the world. "I shall have you in my room from now on. This place is not suited for a precious prince like you to stay." However, Sebastian was trying to shut her words out of his mind.

And she took off his chains and took him out of the filthy prison, just as she said she would. Only to bring him to an even filthier place, that was her bedchambers.

Sebastian could do nothing but act like a puppet. He would do anything that she wanted. His entire being was already blackened. There was nothing left to be burned and hurt within his soul any longer. He would just do everything she wanted to keep his sisters alive until his brother returned.

That was all he had to do right now.

But in his mind, he had planned that after this, he was going to die with that monster if that's what it takes. He was going to be the one to kill her. He would give everything to bring her to hell. Even if it would take his life so he could drag her there along with him, then so be it. He was willing to be the collateral for it.

He sat at the corner of the filthy room when the monster was not there and thought of nothing but how to slaughter and torture her one day. Those scenes were the only things replaying in his head the entire time when he was not at the monster's beck and call, and he felt himself spiraling down into madness.

The only thing that was keeping the last strand of sanity left in him from snapping was ... the wolf the monster had left in the room to watch over him.

The light brown wolf was used by the witch to watch over him. The wolf functioned as her eyes whenever she was away.

Whenever Sebastian started to laugh by himself like he was losing it, the wolf would come closer to him and distract him from totally losing control of himself.

The wolf was big and its fur was surprisingly soft. It stood before him and snuggled up to him, its hazel eyes were bright and seemingly expressive.

At first, Sebastian hated the wolf. He ignored it and pushed it away, knowing full well that its purpose was to serve the monster who had forcefully enslaved him. But the wolf was relentless and kept on trying to disturb his deadly thoughts. It did not fear him even when Sebastian began to threaten it.

Until before he knew it, he found himself talking to the wolf even if it could not talk back. And then one time, he found himself walking up as he was cuddling the wolf, unwillingly enjoying the very first and only warmth he had ever felt in his cold, dark, prison - figuratively as well as literally.

And as time passed, Sebastian had found a little solace in the presence of the wolf. Something that his sanity could grasp onto and allow him to preserve that last bit of that sense of self.

The wolf, he later realized, was just like himself. Both of them were slaves and being kept there against their will. And right now, in this hell, they did not have anyone or anything else but each other.

Sebastian was glad for the wolf being there because he still wanted to still be sane at least until the day of this monster's fall. He wanted to see her suffer with his very own eyes first. And to enjoy seeing her downfall and suffering, he needed to be in his right mind. So, he must hold on. He must not succumb until then.

A time came when the monster had returned without warning and saw them sleeping together on the floor, with Sebastian cuddling the wolf for warmth and companionship.

However, the monster had gotten jealous and furious that she started punishing the wolf, kicking and whipping it right before Sebastian's eyes.

Sebastian tried not to show that he cared. He put on a poker face and just stared and watched on callously and without any emotions. Because he knew that the moment he showed any form of attention, the monster would make the wolf suffer even more than it was already suffering.

"Such a little bitch!!! Your job was to watch over the prince! Not to cuddle with him like a slut!" the woman yelled and hit the wolf so hard that a gush of blood poured out of its mouth.

Unable to hold himself back anymore, Sebastian spoke up. "Are you even able to be jealous of an animal?" he said, trying his best to keep his voice and expression blank, so he would not show her how truly disgusted he was. However, his insides were churning and he so very much wanted to vomit out whatever he had inside his stomach.

"Animal?" The monster stopped whipping the wolf and then faced Sebastian who was still sitting on the floor.

Smirking villainously, the woman glanced down at the bleeding wolf and spat out something. Sebastian belatedly realized that it was a spell.

And the wolf... it started to transform.

Sebastian's lips parted slightly in shock as he watched the wolf slowly turn into a... teenage girl around his age.

A werewolf... the wolf was actually a werewolf!

Sebastian had thought that werewolves had gone extinct for a long time now. Their kind had been hunted and annihilated that not a single one of them had managed to survive. So how was there this werewolf here?

"Surprised?" The woman asked as Sebastian's gaze was glued to the now naked and badly battered up girl on the floor. She was whimpering and whining in pain, her body was slightly hunched up in a 'C' from the extreme pain she was experiencing.

"She's the last one of her kind." The monster continued. "I am planning to have her as a guinea pig in the future to make her useful to me. So I was not going to kill her just yet." She then turned back to the girl and kicked her right in the stomach, causing her to cry out in pain and curl into a fetal position. "However... you listen up bitch! If I find you trying to seduce and play around with my boy again, you're dead. You got that?!"

Grabbing her golden-brown hair, the monster made her look up at her and hissed out viciously. "Did you hear what I said, Alysa?"

Chapter 232 Nightmare [Part III]

232 Nightmare [Part III]

Sebastian had tried to ignore the wolf. He was determined to never let her get involved with him again. All for her sake.

For a long while, he never even batted an eye in her direction. Until the monster had one day arrived burning with rage and lashed out at his sisters. When Sebastian tried to fight back and stand up for them, unable to watch his siblings suffer anymore abuse from this unreasonable monster, she had mercilessly killed one of them. Sebastian had begged and cried once again but this time, the monster did not bother to listen and... killed her right before him.

The monster then blamed him for the death of his older sister and then used his youngest sister as another blackmail tool to hold him down. Though burning with anger and overflowing with resentment for the unjust murder of his older sister, Sebastian could do nothing else but gnash his teeth and swallow the curses, the pain and everything else and let them burn within him.

After that... the monster locked Sebastian with her in her chambers for the longest time ever. She usually left once morning came, but that time she did not leave. She stayed for days and nights, causing such disgust to well up in him that he felt like he was drowning in a cesspit.

It was for the longest time he had stayed in a hell made by her, that when she finally left, Sebastian was on the brink of complete insanity. In his mind, he was not even sure if he was still sane. Whatever that was left whole within him were all now cracked and damaged goods, simply waiting for the last and final blow - a blow that might even be as weak as a soft wind.

In that hopeless, breaking point, Sebastian found himself being held in the fragile arms of the werewolf girl he had been callously ignoring. Her warmth was a persistent glue desperately holding together the cracks within him that was about to fall apart.

Somehow, with that little bit of warmth afforded to him, he had held on.

He later found out from Alyssa that the monster was becoming more desperate. And she believed that it was because of something serious and things were not moving in the monster's favour.

Alyssa also revealed to him that the witch was rarely using her eyes now, which only meant that she was occupied with something else.

So, the two of them began to plan their big project. For their escape.

Sebastian was still incredibly weak. His body strength had been reduced to that of a human after all of the brutal and filthy experiments he had gone through for so long.

The monster had also never allowed him to drink normal blood. She would feed him with the blood of dead sacrifices – blood so awful and filthy that it was just not edible. They did not give him any strength at all. But it did its job to keep him alive.

So, Alyssa had offered him her blood. Sebastian refused at first but he eventually gave in and fed on her. He wanted them both to finally escape and in order for that to happen, he must regain his strength.

The day they chose to execute their plan, Sebastian and Alyssa managed to escape the innermost prison. Alyssa had killed witches in her wolf form while Sebastian worked on the thick and protected bars.

They both then managed to reach the prison where Sebastian's sister was being kept hostage.

But when they opened the prison door, Sebastian had found his youngest sister dead.

Apparently, she had been dead for a few days now and they just left her there, rotting.

Sebastian fell to his knees. And he was about to scream out his anguish but Alyssa managed to stop him. She was crying as she cupped Sebastian's face, whispering for him not to scream and alert everyone.

"We'll avenge her... we'll avenge her, Sebastian." Alyssa whispered to him repeatedly as her tears fall. That was enough to fuel to Sebastian to stand again. He picked up his weapon and stood. He stared down at his sister's body once again and made a promise before he grabbed Alyssa's hand and they rushed out of the cell.

The duo fought their way up with their lives on the line. Fighting with everything they had. They knew this was their very last chance to get out and escape from the monster's clutches. They would either come out of this dead or alive.

Until they almost there. They reached the last chambers of the dungeon. Once they get past this, they would be out of this darkness.

Sebastian gripped Alyssa's shoulders and pressed his forehead against the wolf's head and whispered.

"Don't forget our promise, Alyssa. We'll get out of here... the both of us... alive." He told her.

The wolf's hazel eyes gleamed and she nodded. However, Sebastian was too distraught and distracted by his youngest sister's death and the stress of their 13:58

escape to notice that the wolf's reaction was slow. There was a short pause before she had joined her head at his statement.

And they set out for their final battle. However, the monster returned and destroyed them both so easily. Sebastian's strength did not even stand a tiny chance against her. He had been swept aside just with a single blow from her monstrous strength.

The monster forcefully shifted Alyssa back to her human form and took control of her. Revealing to Sebastian that the young werewolf was bound to her forever and will never be freed from her snare.

"I've already warned you, my little prince." The monster had said as she held Alyssa's hair in a cruel and tight grip. "But you keep disobeying me. I told you to be a good boy didn't –"

"Please..." Sebastian's voice trembling, filled with agony. "I'll do anything... everything... I'll give you my life... even my soul... please... don't kill her..."

But the monster laughed mockingly. "You cannot give me what's already mine, my prince. This is all your fault."

_ end of flashback _

And Sebastian screamed as blood spurted out from Alyssa's slashed throat.

...

A/N: Thank you so much for your patience and understanding guys <3

- Chapter 233 Deadly

Chapter 233 Deadly

Screams.

Elle could hear him screaming. Sebastian...

Even in this pit of darkness, Elle could hear the agony and rage in his voice. It was breaking her heart into a million pieces. Because no matter how loud he screams, she couldn't seem to even do anything for him. All she could do was stay there in the dark, moving against her will. A puppet.

She had tried to fight it. So many times... she tried. She'd fought to break free from whatever this thing that was controlling, from whatever this prison she was in. This thing couldn't be a nightmare. There was no way she's just having a nightmare. Everything felt too real to be one. The only thing that would make sense was... she must be under some kind of spell.

This being a nightmare was more impossible to her than it being a spell. Yes, after everything that had happened, Elle could no longer even doubt these things that were nothing but fictional and superstitious to her not too long ago.

The world she knew was no longer the same. And it will never ever be the same anymore.

Right now, she had only one wish. And that's to at least have some kind of power... any sort of power to fight for herself and to do something for the person she holds dear. To at least be able to help.

She remembered how she had wished that this world had magic. So that she could use it to destroy people like Brandon Haze with just the tip of her finger tips. She knew now magic and supernatural beings did actually exist, and yet...

And yet, nothing seemed to change. She was still helpless. Powerless.

"I'LL KILL YOU!!!" These words roared like thunder in the dark. They sounded like they belonged to a beast. A savage beast who wanted nothing but blood and vengeance. Elle knew it also belonged to Sebastian and those words... she didn't know why but she felt like they were aimed towards her.

"I'LL KILL YOU!!!"

The agonizing scream echoed again. The faint sounds of metals in the background now loud in her ears as well. Whatever that was happening outside this little darkness she was trapped into was getting out of control. She could feel the pressure... that familiar air Sebastian exudes getting heavier, deadlier.

Her instinct told her it was time to hide. To take shelter somewhere, anywhere, or she'd get hurt. But she couldn't move her body even if she wanted to run away. She didn't want to run away. Not by herself.

Something hit her. Hard. She didn't know what it was but she was hit almost at the same time something seemed to break.

And whatever that hit her had caused her to hear nothing but loud ringing. It was so loud he couldn't hear anything else but that anymore.

She knew she was thrown away from that strong hit. And she also knew she's going to fall hard to the ground or whatever it was that her body would land into.

But the hard fall didn't happen. Something or someone seemed to catch her, stopping the fatal fall. She couldn't quite tell anymore.

She was on the ground again. Pain started to hit her, making her curl due to the intensity of it.

A strong and rough hand grabbed her in the neck. A shriek was torn from her lips as she was pinned hard against the cold hard bars behind her.

And then it dawned to her : despite all the numbing pain : that she was finally out of that darkness. Her body... it was no longer under someone else's control. Her eyes could see something now. The darkness that seemed to completely cover her vision was completely gone.

Sebastian's face was the very first she saw. He looked so wretched, so deadly. His eyes burning with an inferno of rage and hatred and bloodlust no one, not even the gods, could seem to extinguish.

And his hand... it was wrapped hard around her neck.

Elle couldn't speak. Much less breathe.

She didn't even have an ounce of strength to try to get away from his grasp. He was too strong. Trying to get away from him would be utterly futile even if she did have any strength left in her.

He was snarling something viscious she could no longer hear or understand. She knew she's going to lose consciousness due to lack of air very soon. So, she reached out to touch his face.

Everything ached. Her heart ached. Seeing him like this ached so bad. Seeing him looking at her with those deadly emotions in his eyes was crushing her heart to ashes.

She didn't know what exactly was going on but she knew Sebastian was seeing someone else in her. She could see it clearly in those eyes. And if she couldn't make him see this was her, he might end up... killing her.

But like always, she was helpless. There was nothing she could do. Couldn't even call out his name to let him know it's her.

Her tears fell as her weak hand touched his face. All she could do was hope that her touch would be enough to reach him or wake him up.

Sebastian's eyes widened. The black in them nearly swallowed all the greys.

The tight grip of his hand around her neck loosened.

He looked as though an extreme shock rendered him paralyzed for a moment. Then, he let go of her.

His hands, his body... they started trembling so hard as he staggered backwards. The rage and bloodlust now instantly replaced with something completely different. Despair and fear and hurt.

Elle gasped for air as she slid on the ground. Her coughs and pants echoed loudly as Sebastian stood there. The deafening and chaotic noises outside the bars and maybe even outside the dungeons didn't even make him glance away from her.

Sebastian just looked down at her like he was watching his whole world crumbling to ashes right before his eyes.

Chapter 234 For Now

In the darkness, two blurry figures landed on top of a building. But one of them failed to land cleanly and rolled on the floor.

Elijah turned. His face and neck were drenched with blood. Even the squirrel that was on his shoulder, its fur was stained wet with blood as well.

"I'm sorry... Your Highness. I don't think I can make it." Mike grinned rather helplessly. Blood was flowing out of his mouth as he gripped his hand over the gaping wound on his chest. "Please go on without me. Alexander might still be coming after you... trailing our blood. You can't be caught by him."

Without responding, Elijah just stared down at the man. His grey eyes dimmed as he surveyed his long-time side kick lying in an ever widening pool of his own blood.

"Go now, Prince Elijah." Mike begged again. Urgency and worry were brimming in his eyes.

But Elijah did not leave like what Mike had urged him to do. Instead, he approached him and crouched down. "Shut up, Mike. When did I allow you to order me what to do?" he said, emotionlessly.

And then he picked Mike up in his arms. Causing the man's eyes to widen.

"Prince... Elijah... don't do this. I'm already a... I can no longer survive this. So please don't burden yourself with my hopeless body anymore :)" Mike truly was worried for his Lord and did not want to be a burden that would slow his progress.

"I told you to shut up, damn it." He hissed. "I'm going to take you to a much higher building and drop you from there for an even quicker death. So just shut up!" And Mike could do nothing but zip his mouth as Elijah scowled at him.

And in the next second, he leapt along with Mike in his arms.

But time passed and he did not drop him like he had threatened earlier. Elijah simply carried him as they traveled through the city unnoticed.

Smiling, Mike sighed helplessly. "Are you satisfied with the outcome of everything tonight, Your Highness? It seems... Alexander somehow managed to arrive earlier than expected again."

"No. He came just as I expected." Elijah replied and Mike sighed again.

"If only you didn't stall too much. I sometimes wonder if you were actually doing that on purpose. Had you not wasted so much time cooking and feeding the princess, even giving her time to see to her private needs... there should be more than enough time for you to execute all your plans before Alexander's arrival."

Elijah did not respond and simply continued running. However, Mike knew that he was listening.

"So, it seems, this is a failure too, huh..." Mike's voice weakened. "I was hoping you'd at least get what you wanted from this so I won't feel like I would be dying in vain." He teased, laughing soundlessly.

"It's not a failure." Elijah replied. "I've already gotten what I wanted. So even with Alexander's interference, it does not matter. Sebastian..." a cold and heartless smile tugged at the corner of Elijah's lips. "Now he knows what it feels like..." something unfathomable gleamed across his eyes before it was concealed and disappeared from the surface. "That's more than enough, for now."

"Ah, I... see... that's a relief then." Mike's eyes began to dim even as he said these words.

And Elijah slowed. He took a turn, entered the forest and continued moving on until he arrived at an old cemetery.

When Elijah settled him gently on the ground, Mike smiled at him again. "What are you going to do from here on, Your Highness? After this, Prince Sebastian might come at you without any reservation from now on. Even Alexander might not be... able to stop him anymore." His voice now only a whisper.

"You don't have to worry about me, Mike. You know I will always survive even if they all come at me." Elijah's voice sounded unconcerned.

"Right." Mike's smile widened as he thought that Prince Elijah indeed would definitely do just fine even if he was gone. "You will be just fine even without me too... I'm relieved... I'm... well then, Your Highness... good... bye..."

Elijah quietly watched Mike close his eyes. And once his body went limp and lifeless, Elijah laid right next to Mike's corpse and looked up at the starry night.

"As long as Ezekiel doesn't come back, no one could outsmart me and catch me. So, I will continue to play with Sebastian's life while I can... Hopefully, he'll be broken beyond repair before that man ends up returning." He continued talking like Mike was still listening. "No, I will make sure that if Ezekiel ever returns, his completely insane brother would be the one to welcome him."

"I still don't understand why you changed our plans like that." A woman's voice suddenly echoed behind him. She sounded pissed and angry.

Elijah did not even bat an eyelid and continued staring unblinkingly at the sky while stroking the squirrel that was now sitting over his chest. After Mike had stopped breathing, the squirrel had then sat up and chattered for a while before jumping over to seek comfort in the embrace of Elijah.

"The plan was to torture her in front of him. If we made the prince watch her get tortured and then get killed... he should've been driven insane by now!" the female voice continued. "But what did you do? What is that crap you :"

"We are still not certain if Sebastian loves her enough that he'd go crazy if she dies." Elijah cut her off, still never moving to even look at the source of the voice. "But depending on the result we saw tonight, we will know. I already told you... I will only let her get killed if I'm certain her death would cost Sebastian's sanity."

The female sneered and scoffed. "And because of that stupid rule of yours, you lost your long-time companion. You are wasting so much time and chances, Elijah."

A tiny muscle in Elijah's jaw ticked after hearing her comment. But when he replied, there was no sign of him being bothered by the owner of that voice at all. "Don't you forget about our bargain. I'll get what I want in this first before you. I never told you that I wanted a quick result, right? I wanted a slow but satisfying vengeance. I've waited long enough for this and can wait a little more to see it done perfectly. I don't have any plans to end it in the blink of an eye. I'm not going to end it so easily for him! I wanted to drag Sebastian's torment out for as long as I can!"

The voice tsked before it finally disappeared.

Elijah shut his eyes closed and drew in a long-suffering breath after he was certain she was truly gone.

After an immeasurable amount of time, Elijah finally opened his eyes as he finally felt the presence of the men he had summoned.

Men in black appeared one after another behind him. Two of them were holding an intricate coffin while the others were holding shovels. All had their heads slightly lowered and kept silent in respect to the now still man that was lying beside Prince Elijah.

Pushing himself off the ground, Elijah took his jacket off and before he covered Mike, he softly uttered the word "Good bye".

Chapter 235 Because Of Her

Elle was shocked to find that she had been unconscious for days.

Five days to be exact.

She had woken up in Alicia's house located in the heart of Black Forest and found out that she had been brought there by Sebastian and Alexander there that very same night they were rescued.

Elle vaguely remembered anything after she broke free from that spell that had controlled her. Except for those... those heartbreaking moments. She remembered hearing Alexander's voice while she was still coughing on the ground and fighting for her consciousness.

She also realized Sebastian had not come to her before she had passed out.

The last thing she remembered was the slightly blurry sight of him looking so... so wretched... so broken. He was just looking at her and she had been stretching her hand towards him, wanting to touch him and hold him and tell him that everything was alright now. But he had not moved. He simply looked at her. He did not take her hand.

But she believed that Sebastian must be in such extreme shock and agony in those moments that he could not even make himself rush to her side and hold her. She believed that he had held her in his arms after she passed out.

"Where is Sebastian?" Elle asked Alicia. She needed to see him. She needed to know that he was alright.

"He's not here..." Alicia looked at her and replied slowly. There was a tinge of carefulness in her tone that made Elle feel even more uneasy. "He's yet to come back. He must be dealing with things related to Elijah right now."

"E-Elijah..." Elle stammered. Her eyes widened with worry and panic after hearing that name. The mere mention of Elijah was enough to make her heart shudder in fear. "I need to see him. Elijah will hurt him again."

"Please stay still, Izabelle." Alicia stopped her from climbing off the bed. "Don't worry about Sebastian. Elijah's on the run and in hiding so there won't be any fight occurring between them anytime soon. I assure you that. So be rest assured that he's not in any danger right now. Alexander and Kyle are also with him."

The reassurance in Alicia's eyes had stopped Elle from insisting on getting down from the bed and rushing off. She clenched on her blanket and tried to calm herself knowing that right now, even if Sebastian was in danger, there was actually nothing that she could do to help him fight his enemy. She knew that right now, the best thing she could do was to stay still in a safe place where Sebastian would not need to worry about her too.

Looking down, Elle silently stared at her hands and at the wedding band that was still sitting pretty around her ring finger when Abi entered the room with food for her to eat.

Seeing her awake, Abi had quickly put down the tray of food and came over to sit beside her before warmly embracing her and Elle gave into the comfort that she provided as she held onto Abi for a long time. She was still feeling fearful from the recent experience and was also upset from not being able to see Sebastian upon waking up. Abi's hug was just the thing she needed to get herself grounded for now.

After whispering comforting words to Elle, Abi then gently let go of her and told her that she needed to eat. Looking at the tray that contained steaming food that was clearly freshly prepared for her, Elle nodded her consent even though she did not particularly feel like eating right now. However, she knew that she needed to upkeep her strength and not worry the two ladies who had been so kind to care for her when she was still unconscious.

While eating her first meal in days, Elle had found out that she had been unconscious for a long time because the witches had performed witchcraft on her to break the curse that was on her. Alicia said the spell casted on her had been very powerful, so they had also countered it with an equally powerful magic. All the magic and procedures had taken a toll on Elle's body which resulted in her being unable to regain her consciousness for days.

"With my current state, my magic is not strong enough. So we had to call for Lilith to help." Alicia answered when Elle asked if she was the one who had performed all those spells on her.

"Lilith... the witch queen!" Elle's eyes widened and Alicia just nodded with a soft smile. Elle had already heard about the witch queen Lilith the last time she was here.

The news that she was now free from the spell made Elle feel so relieved that it was as if a heavy load had fallen off her shoulders. She had finally understood why Sebastian had acted that way the night of their abduction. It was all because she was being used to blackmail him without her even realizing! The abduction was successful because

Sebastian had allowed them to stab him with that syringe filled with unknown substances. And that was all because of... because of her.

Her grip on the blanket tightened. The ache in her throat stung so badly that it brought tears to her eyes. Elle felt an extreme sense of guilt as she now knew that the things Sebastian must have gone through during their abduction was caused by her being affected by that curse. Though it was not that she wanted it to happen, the fact that she had been cursed by that spell had led to Sebastian not being able to fight back was true.

"You still need a little more rest, Izabelle." Alicia's soft voice broke the silence. "Don't worry, it's just for today. Tomorrow, you'll be fully recovered, so just bear with it, okay?"

Elle nodded and thanked Alicia for her hospitality.

"Don't mention it, Izabelle. You're a family member." Alicia replied with a genuine and beautiful smile.

Watching her leave the room, Elle noticed how her beautiful silver hair looked kind of ashen right now. It was a bright shiny silver the last time she was here. What had happened to her and Azy during that time? She also could not help but notice the seemingly weaker air around her compared to before. It was as though Alicia was...

"Is... Alicia sick, Abi?" Elle asked.

Chapter 236 Question

"Is... Alicia sick, Abi?" Elle asked and then blushed in the next minute as she belatedly realized how silly her question might be. Do witches even get sick? She had learned that vampires do not get sick. Not like how humans do. Thus, she was not sure about the witches. But they should have spells and magic to cure themselves, right?

"She's not sick." Abi answered. There was no mocking or teasing manner in her voice at all as she answered Elle's question seriously. "Alicia used to be very powerful. She is the most powerful vampire and witch. But something happened to her a few years ago. She lost most of her magical abilities and even until now, her strength and magic are still deteriorating. We believe that she'd only regain everything once the gates open again."

"G-gate...?" Elle echoed, tilting her head and furrowed her brows a little as she did not understand it. She was completely curious about what gate Abi was talking about.

A soft knock on the door followed Elle's one word question and the kids appeared when the door swung open. Alexis, Alice and Azy all stood at the doorway, looking at her.

"Hello, Princess Elle." They greeted in chorus. Gladness flashing across their clear adorable eyes as they surveyed her with concern while moving into the room and getting closer to where she was. "We are so glad you are finally awake." Alexis continued.

Elle smiled at them. Her heart just never ceased to be melted by these three adorable kids.

She opened her arms wide and they excitedly, yet still very carefully, rushed forward and hugged her one by one.

"It seems that I have made you guys worry about me." Elle said, smiling widely at them. "I'm doing great now. Aunt just needs a little more rest and I would be as right as rain."

The kids rejoiced at what she had said. Alice even asked if they could bring her out of the house to their hideout again, and Elle nodded happily. If there was a chance, Elle would definitely love to stroll around in the beautiful Black Forest with these three again.

After talking to them for a while, Elle could no longer hold back her constant yawning every few minutes as she spoke. Though she tried to hide it, Abi had noticed it and ushered the kids out of the room, telling them that Elle needed to rest now.

"See you later, Princess Elle." Alexis said and they waved at her before they shut the door after they went out.

Elle was still smiling as she stared at the now closed door.

"I'm so glad, Azy looks to be alright now." She uttered.

"Yes." Abi replied. "He's doing so much better now. Though, we still really need to watch over him, closer than ever. You should really rest first, Elle. We'll continue our chat once you're no longer feeling tired and dizzy."

While Abi stood to change the flowers that were placed in the vase, Elle quietly looked out of the window. She had noticed the black tattoos on Azy's arms. Those were tattoos that were completely the same as Sebastian's. In fact, it seemed to be an exact replica.

At first, Elle had thought those were normal tattoos that he had gotten for himself when she saw it on Sebastian initially. But now she realized that those tattoos might not actually be normal after all. Because the last time she was here and remembered interacting with the boy, Azy did not have those tattoos on his arms. It was as though they magically appeared on his skin. Could it be that those tattoos appeared during that time? When Azy was screaming that night?

Elle so badly wanted to ask Abi about it but she refrained from opening her mouth. Maybe she should ask about those tattoos another time. For now, she had a burning question that she must ask first before Abi leaves the room so she could rest.

"Do you know if Sebastian will come here tonight?" she asked, her eyes were hopeful as she looked at Abi.

"I'm not sure." Abi replied. "I'll call my husband later and ask how it's going over on their side. Or do you want to call Sebastian to ask instead?" Abi offered.

Before Elle could respond, Abi had already grabbed a phone and handed it over to her.

Abi had already pressed on a button Elle guessed was his number on speed dial, but Sebastian did not answer her call.

After a second try, Elle returned the phone back to Abi, feeling disappointed that the call did not connect.

"He must be busy. We'll just try again later." Abi comforted her and Elle just nodded rather listlessly.

Once Abi left, Elle quickly fell asleep and when she woke up, it was already twilight. Still, Sebastian was not there in her room. She tried calling him once again, but he still did not pick up her call.

After freshening up, she joined the ladies and kids for dinner downstairs in the dining room.

"I spoke to Alex." Abi told her once the kids left the dinner table. "He said he'd be here tomorrow. He didn't meet with Sebastian yet today, but he informed he was on his way to where Sebastian is a while ago. I'll let you know some news once he calls me back."

"Thank you, Abi." Elle replied. Trying her best to keep her expression neutral.

"Don't worry, dear. Everything will be alright." That was all Abi could comfort her with for now.

"Can I ask you a question, Abi?" Elle spoke after a few minutes of silence.

"Of course, dear."

Elle hesitated for a moment and glanced at Alicia and Abi who were seated across from her for a moment before she finally asked. "Why was... Sebastian locked in an... underground prison for... for seven hundred years?"

Her question made Abi look over at Alicia and Elle instantly understood that the one who could give her any answer was no other than her sister-in-law.

Chapter 237 Salvation

Before anyone could say anything, Abi heard Alice calling for her, so she left, leaving Elle and Alicia alone together in the room.

The silence was heavy for a long while and somehow, Elle could tell Alicia must be weighing her options on whether she should answer that question or not. Elle could feel that the topic was something hard even for Alicia. So she just looked down and waited patiently. She did not want to pressure Alicia at all to answer her.

"Elijah..." Elle started in a soft voice. "He told me his story. On why he hated Sebastian so much. He said that it was Prince Ezekiel who had driven his mother insane until she... she killed herself. And then... he told me Prince Ezekiel had tried to drive him insane too. All because Prince Ezekiel couldn't accept that Elijah was the one the prophetess saw in her vision to be king of vampires one day."

Slowly, Elle looked up at Alicia. "Abi had told me about Prince Ezekiel. So, I am in doubt of Elijah's story. I don't know anything... it was Elijah who told me that Sebastian had been locked in a dungeon for... for seven hundred years. I just want to know... something."

Elle's voice trembled a little with emotion when Alicia reached out and touched her hand gently.

"I can't say anything about Elijah's story because my husband and I never had the chance to talk about him." Alicia said. "But... about Sebastian being locked in the dungeon... that was true."

Elle's eyes circled wide. "F-for seven... hundred years?!" she stammered as her heart quaked. Unable to even fathom how it was possible for someone to be imprisoned that long.

When Alicia nodded with sadness in her eyes, Elle's heart squeezed so hard within her. Her throat ached so bitterly that she could not speak. How... why...

She wanted to deny it. She wanted to not believe that it was true. That it was just an exaggerated story. But now that Alicia was confirming it personally, her heart was like a glass cracking nonstop. She could not even imagine why someone would get locked up for such a long period of time.

"Sebastian was a teenager when he was first put into the dungeon." Alicia continued. Her gaze remained trained on the window. "He didn't age while he was in there until his release ten years ago."

"W-why?" Elle's voice croaked. "Why must he suffer like that? Why was he even locked up for that long? Why didn't Alexander or his other family members let him out?" Her eyes were brimming with unshed tears as her throat felt swollen from the emotions she was trying to suppress.

Alicia stared at her. She had seen it in Elle's eyes ever since the first time she saw her. This lady loves Sebastian. She could tell from the first sight of her that she was the one who had brought life and light back into Sebastian's eyes. She believed that this lady was Sebastian's salvation.

Knowing Sebastian, Alicia knew that he could never tell his story to anyone. Not even to Elle. Perhaps, one day, but with all the damage inflicted onto Sebastian, Alicia doubted he could open up to her any time soon, or at all. She understood that his past was just something too hellish and heartbreaking that she could see where he was coming from and would not even blame him one bit if he wanted to keep it a secret even from the most important person in his life. If she was in his shoes, she was not even sure if she could ever talk about any of it. To speak of those memories and relive that trauma once again.

However, Alicia had been in Izabelle's shoes before. And Alicia believes that Elle must know, even if it was only a little of it. She must know at least a little of his past so she could understand Sebastian more. She also believes that if Izabelle knows, she would be able to sympathize more and help him. Alicia believes Izabelle has the power to support and hold Sebastian together. She believes that Izabelle could embrace all of Sebastian's broken pieces and darkness. She just had the gut feeling that this young lady could.

Izabelle must know now. She could not be kept in the dark anymore, especially now that Elijah had started to make his move in feeding her stories that she believed were certainly twisted and skewed to his own point of view.

Alicia knew that she could not count on Sebastian right now. Even if she could talk to him about it, Alicia felt that Sebastian would not be able to do it. Not just yet. She was the only one who could tell Elle right now.

"Long ago, my husband, Sebastian, and their two sisters were imprisoned by a deranged witch queen." Alicia's hand on her lap clenched into tight balls. "They were used as... subjects for that witch's experiment. For years... they... my husband and Sebastian were... physically, emotionally, and sexually assaulted..."

Elle immediately remembered Sebastian's rules, his reactions when he was being touched and kissed. She remembered the monster he had told her about and her heart and entire being shivered uncontrollably.

"Even after the experiment was finally completed... Sebastian was being left with that witch queen. That deranged monster didn't let them go and wanted to have Sebastian all for herself. My husband, Prince Ezekiel had an awakening and with his tremendous power, he had managed to end their misery and had killed the witch. But because of that same tremendous power, my husband was put into grave danger. Sebastian had sacrificed himself to save him. It resulted in him losing his... sanity. Ezekiel had to lock Sebastian in the dungeon to prevent him from wreaking havoc and destroying everything. My husband had tried everything to find a way to release Sebastian from his madness. Sadly, it had taken a long time... seven hundred years to be exact..." Alicia sighed and looked up sorrowfully at Elle.

Silent tears fell from Elle's eyes as Alicia trailed off.

Dear Hellbounders;

I would like to say thank you to all of you for supporting me in this golden tickets event. I'm sorry I cannot up the update for HH this month because I've been sickly this past weeks and also I am set to end Spellbound S1 this month. But by January, I should be able to focus on HH again.

As for this GT event. If we win top 1, I will be giving 10 chapters mass release and a valentines special chapters focused on Zeke and Alicia. Plus a surprise reward that is a secret for now. ^^

Again, thank you so much guys for your continous love and support.

<3 kazzen

Chapter 238 Busy

That night, Elle only managed to catch a few hours of sleep. The other time was spent staring off into space as her mind wondered about the things concerning her husband.

She had asked everything she had wanted to know. And though Alicia could not answer all of her questions, Elle knew Alicia had tried her best.

The conversation with Alicia broke her heart over and over again. But she was still thankful to her sister-in-law for revealing all those awful secrets to her. It was better for her to know and share in the hurt along with Sebastian than be kept in the dark and let him shoulder all that pain alone. She had always known that Sebastian had a dark past which was the cause of all his traumas. But the reality had still struck her like a tsunami. It was darker than what she had ever imagined. Too dark and extremely twisted that she could barely handle it even just listening to it. It was a hell no one deserves to ever go through. And yet... it happened to them, to Sebastian.

Her heart ached so much that all she wanted was to immediately run to Sebastian and hold him tight in her embrace. She was willing to do anything and everything to help him heal. She might never be able to make his deep scars disappear, but she would anyways be there for him. She would be right by his side and would never leave him nor forsake him. No matter what it takes, no matter how hard it might be, she would do it. Even if it means that she could at least ease even a faint ray of light into his pitch-black darkness.

When Elle woke up, her eyes were swollen. She had asked for an ice compress but Alicia offered to use magic. Having Alicia using magic on her was something Elle still could not get used to. It was still so surreal no matter how many times she has seen it happening right before her eyes.

At breakfast, Elle was planning to insist on leaving the Black Forest. It was because Sebastian was still not answering her calls at all.

Elle had a gut feeling that Sebastian was doing this on purpose. That he was trying to avoid her.

If she had not found out about his story from Alicia, Elle might be feeling all dejected and heartbroken by now and she might have even started overthinking again. But things are different now. Even if it was true that he was trying to avoid her, Elle would not just sit here, looking totally lost and crying like a heartbroken teenager.

She needed to speak with him. They needed to talk. The sooner the better. And it should not wait anymore. She must go and see him now, before... before things escalate down south.

But before she could express her intentions to Abi and Alicia, Alexander arrived.

Upon hearing Alexis yell from outside that his father was back, Elle's heartbeat raced and she even moved so quickly, her chair made a loud scraping sound when she pushed it back and stood.

She rushed towards the main door before Alicia or Abi could even say anything. All she wanted was to see Sebastian. Nothing else mattered to her at that moment. All she wanted was just to throw herself into his arms and hug him tightly, as soon as possible.

However, her smile faded as she halted at the threshold. She looked around once more but there was only Alexander standing outside. He was back - alone. Sebastian was not there with him.

She knew before she could even ask because of Alexander's expression.

Elle walked towards Alexander, nonetheless. Though she nearly stumbled from her wobbly knees, she tried her best to keep at least half of her composure before him.

"Why is... Sebastian not with you? Please tell me he's alright." Elle asked him. Her voice came out sounding so emotional.

"He's alright, Izabelle." Alexander replied slowly, causing her to feel relieved. But not better.

"Then why..."

"He's in the castle right now and well... busy." Alexander seems to find it hard to explain.

Alexander's response made Elle's eye twitch. She did not know why, but she felt as though Alexander had something that he could not say to her.

Clenching her fists, Elle swallowed hard and decisively met his gaze. "Is he really in the castle?"

"Yes. I left him in his study and I believe he'll be in the castle for the entire day."

"Thank you for letting me know." Elle then turned and saw Alicia and Abi by the door. She paused for a while and calmed herself before she approached the two ladies. "I'm... leaving. I need to go to him. I don't think I'll ever see him anytime soon if I just stay here and wait." She then flashed them a helpless smile.

Abi held onto both her hands with understanding brimming in her eyes.

"We understand, dear. We definitely would not force you to stay when you want to leave." Abi smiled gently at her and Elle just hugged the lady tight. She truly loves this woman with all her heart.

"Thank you!" Elle whispered and Abi hugged her back.

"But we need to have you fully guarded, okay?"

Elle nodded as she pulled away. She would not be that foolish and naïve to reject a bodyguard or even a few of them.

"Lucas and Kyle are waiting at the entrance." Alexander said. "We had kind of seen this coming, so I had them stand by the entrance."

"We'll escort the princess to the entrance, dad." Alexis butted in and the three kids stood before them with bright, enthusiastic eyes.

The adults could only agree and the kids rejoiced that they had relented and allowed them at least this.

Not too long after, Alexander, Abi and Alicia watched as Elle and the kids left the house.

Once they were out of their sight, Abi faced Alex. "What happened?"

Alex sighed heavily. "Well... I tried to force him to come but I eventually gave in. It's better for Izabelle to go see him instead."

"But what if he ends up avoiding Elle again?" Abi's brows furrowed as she thought of how stubborn Sebastian can be.

"Don't worry." Alex sighed once again, causing Abi to look slightly worried. She knew Alex would not have these reactions if things were not already at the serious stage. "Izabelle will definitely find him there."

Chapter 239 Someone

As Elle and the kids emerged from the entrance of the forest, Elle saw Prince Kyle leaning against the black car that was parked at the side of the road.

The prince was drawing from a cigarette held elegantly between his second and third finger, puffing out the smoke as though he had all the time in the world. His head was tilted upwards and his eyes were closed. The breeze was gently blowing and fluttering his dark brown hair. For some reason, Elle thought that the prince looked kind of... desolate.

But when he opened his eyes, turned around and saw them, a warm smile flashed across his handsome face.

"Uncle!" Alexis called out and the prince quickly killed his cigarette, throwing it to the ground and grinding it with the heel of his boot.

He fist-bumped Alexis and then Azy followed by Alice. One glance and Elle could tell they had done that very same pattern so many times before. It looked so smooth and natural. The four of them certainly had a very close relationship despite the age gap between them. From there, Elle could tell that Kyle must be a good uncle to them.

"How's your mom, Azy?" Kyle asked Azy after their adorable way of greeting each other was done.

"Aunty is doing a little better." Alexis responded on Azy's behalf, and Kyle rubbed the top of Azy's head fondly, as he flashed the boy a gentle smile.

"Don't worry. Your mom's very strong. She'll definitely get better soon." Looking at the reassuring and confident smile that curved across his uncle Kyle's face, Azy nodded at him.

"I've already noticed this before but..." Alexis butted in, tilting his head curiously at his uncle. "Why is it that you always stop here at the entrance whenever you come over, uncle? Why don't you just go all the way inside since you are already here?"

Kyle blinked at his nephew's perceptive question and then rubbed the back of his neck, looking rather troubled as he thought of how to answer the boy without telling him lies..

"Is there something you don't want to see inside? Or do you have some bad memories related to someplace inside?" Alexis continued while Alice and Azy looked up at him with their wide grey eyes.

Izabelle also could not help but look and blinked her eyes at him with the same curiosity.

"Well... you could ... say that." Kyle could only respond, laughing helplessly. He was surprised at how on point the boy's questions were.

Alexis glanced at Azy and when the boys returned their combined gaze to their uncle, their eyes were narrowed. "Could it be that, it's not something, but actually a 'someone'?"

Sighing, Kyle reached out and put his arms over both the boy's shoulders. "You both are truly becoming a carbon copy of your fathers." He mumbled as he led the boys back to the entrance. "Didn't I tell you guys to stop playing detective concerning your uncle's private matters, hmm?" After saying that, Kyle squeezed both of them slightly.

"Oh, come on, uncle. We're just normal kids and being curious is part of it." Alexis retorted and Azy nodded in agreement.

Kyle replied something to them but Elle did not hear it anymore. After hugging Alice, the girl ran after Azy and Alexis. And as soon as the kids waved goodbye at Elle, she and Kyle stood there and watched them return into the forest.

After a short while, Kyle sighed and faced Elle. "Shall we go, Princess?" he politely asked as he opened the car door for her.

Elle nodded and soon, their car was leaving Whitefalls.

It was a quiet trip. Elle's mind was completely occupied with the thoughts of Sebastian. She did not start any small conversation to fill the silence and Kyle and Lucas also tactfully remained quiet, purposely giving her the space to think and contemplate on her private matters in peace. Thus, the silence was not awkward. Or they were just focused and alert and did not want to get distracted by anything.

To her relief, they reached Queza without any trouble. She had been afraid and uneasy when they were crossing that forest where they had been ambushed by Elijah previously but thank god, nothing happened this time.

But now that they were approaching the Reigns castle, Elle's heartbeat started to race. She longed to see Sebastian but at the same time, she was nervous of what might be waiting for her once she met him. She could not help but think of the worst case scenarios no matter how she tried to remain and think positive. That there was nothing for her to worry about and even if there was indeed some problem, she knew that they could fix it.

When the car stopped and she finally stepped out of the car, Elle unconsciously took a big, deep breath to steady her nerves.

Kyle escorted her inside the castle until they reached the staircase leading to Sebastian's bedchambers and office.

There was no one else lingering in the corridors. No maids or even the guards. Rion and Raven who were usually around were not there as well. Did he send everyone away?

She halted right before their bedroom door and took another deep breath before knocking softly. Hearing no answer from within, she courageously pushed the door open. But he was not there.

Elle stood there quietly, looking around. The bed was made. It was as though he had never slept on it at all since they left that night. However, she could see that the couch was not the same. One look and Elle could tell that he had slept there. But why? He hated sleeping on the couch so why...?

Stepping out of their room, Elle headed to his study. She remembered Alexander said he had left him there.

As she reached the massive door of his study, Elle did not know why her heartbeat started beating so hard and racing so fast that she had to halt and put her hand over her chest to help herself calm down. For whatever reason, this did not seem to be a simple nervousness anymore.

But whatever it was, Elle forced herself to move towards the door and pushed it open.

Chapter 240 Not Anymore

A little unease gnawed at Elle's inside as she looked at him. At her husband who was half-sitting there on top of his desk with his back facing her. The window was open and the rain had started falling.

Contrary to what she had been thinking in the car, Sebastian did not look disheveled. At least in what she was seeing at the moment. He was impeccably dressed as always and his hair was combed nicely. The sight of him looking seemingly better than she had been expecting should have made her feel relieved. But no matter how she wanted to feel that, something else was unspooling so powerfully in her stomach.

Sebastian did not turn to look at her. He did not stride towards her to hold her. Nor did he say or do anything to acknowledge her.

Instead, he blew out a puff of smoke, seemingly nonchalantly. The smell of his cigarette filled the room. It had been long since she last saw him smoke.

Lately, he seemed to have stopped smoking. She had not smelt any signs of cigarettes on him, his room and study included.

The silence between them was heavy. Unbearable. She could not remember if she had ever felt like this before with him but right now, she felt that it must be the first time.

The silence between them was never this unbearable before.

Elle clenched her fists, trying to gather her composure. She must at least say something to get the ball rolling. She needed to know what... was going on.

So she called his name out oh so softly. "Sebastian..."

Sebastian barely stopped himself from completely ruining his composed façade. He had prepared himself for this. And yet... just hearing her voice calling his name almost made his body stiffen.

His chest felt so tight. So unbearably tight.

When he felt her enter the room... When he picked up her scent. When he heard her heartbeats and at last, that voice that he had been dying to listen to... he felt like the sun had finally risen. The golden illuminating light was back in his world again. And despite all his preparations and firm decision, he barely managed to stop himself from turning around, grabbing her and holding her close to him. All he wanted was to feel her body

pressed against his. He longed for her so very much. In fact, he was dying to look at her and itching to hold her in his arms again.

But he could not. He must not anymore.

Izabelle. His Izabelle. His light. His woman. His wife. He does not deserve her anymore.

He always knew that Izabelle was too good for a monster like him. A man like him does not deserve someone like her. But he had wanted her so much he had forced that reality out of his mind and heart. Now just look at what he did.

He had hurt her. Nearly killed her with his own two hands. No matter what anyone else would say. No matter how much he tried to justify it, no one could ever change the fact that he had hurt her. He nearly killed his own wife. He had laid his hands on the woman he had vowed to protect and would have given the whole world to. Even if he was not in his right mind... even if someone, even she herself, would call it an accident, none of that mattered in the end.

The result was still the same. He had nearly killed her with his very own hands. And he would never forgive himself for it.

All he wanted was to protect her. All he wanted was for her to never get hurt. To never bleed and get bruised. But he knew now that his wish was not possible.

He had known this before. When he had first met her that night. When she literally offered herself to him with that marriage, he knew she would only get hurt in the end. And not just emotionally. Sebastian had known that she could get hurt physically too. Just for the reason that she was married to him. He knew that his enemies would target her, and possibly use her against him, especially with Elijah. But at that time, he had told himself nothing would happen to her because he did not care much about her.

That was true. His enemies would not have cared about her at all had he... had he not gone crazy for her. Had he not...

But he f*cking did and he thought he could do anything and everything to protect her. And it was maddening how he ended up being the very one who did it - who hurt her with his own hands. How... just how did he not manage to stop himself and realize that it was her? How could he not have snapped out of that nightmare before he struck her? How?

The darkness in his mind smirked at him and said, 'because you're a monster'.

Right. He always knew he was. He had deluded himself that he could even be... normal or at least decent enough for her and that they could perhaps live a close to a normal life. It seems that was too delusional of him.

He was terrified that this would happen again. If he would not let her go now, she would only get hurt. And worse was that... she might...

Utter fear felt like iron chains wrapping around and squeezing his heart and neck. Because he knew it was not impossible. As far as he remembered, he had never... ever... managed to keep anyone he held dear safe. He had never even managed to... save a single one of them. And he was always, one way or another... the cause of their demise.

If he does not let go of her now, he would definitely... lose her too.

Steeling himself, his cold, unfeeling voice echoed out. "I've signed our divorce papers, Princess Izabelle."

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A/N: I didn't have the heart to post these chapters and make you sad on christmas day so I waited a bit to publish them.

I know these chapters are sad but I still wish you all happy holidays.

~Kazzen