

# Hellbound Heart

## Chapter 281 Part Human

Abi froze by the door as she watched Elle thrashing around on her bed. However, just as Abi was considering whether or not to stay or enter, suddenly Elle sprung up from the bed.

The room was filled with a very strong and mysterious energy and Elle was... Abi's eyes widened at the scene that was playing before her eyes. Her beautiful blue eyes... one of them had turned completely white. It was not the silvery color that Alicia, Lilith and Zeres possess.

Elle's was just a clear and pure white that even her pupils could not be seen anymore. It seems that even her pupils had turned pure white.

She made a distressed sound and her hand flew up to cover that one eye, as if it was excruciatingly painful.

Something in Abi wanted her to keep her distance from Elle and observe quietly for a little while longer but when she made that pained sound, she could no longer stop herself from rushing over to the younger lady.

"Elle?" she called out softly, worried that if she called a little too loud, it might startle her.

The first thing that Abi had noticed was her ripped shirt. But when she looked at Elle's hands, she could not see anything unusual anymore. "Elle, dear. Can you hear me?"

"My eye... it hurts..." she cried.

At that moment, Alicia arrived.

"Let me see, Elle." Alicia was immediately by her side, gently touching her wrist.

But a shrill scream escaped Elle's mouth the moment Alicia touched her, causing Abi to panic a little. And then she abruptly stopped. Her scream turned into heavy pants.

Slowly, she lowered her hand and looked at Abi and Alicia with an utterly shocked and confused look in her eyes. Her other eye was back to the normal blue again.

"I... I don't know what happened..." was the first thing she told them. "I felt like my body was burning up and then it felt like my right eye was burning too."

Looking down, she realized that her shirt was ripped and in a very sorry state.

When Abi and Alicia could not answer her, Elle stared down at her hands. Parts of her shredded clothes were still caught in between her fingers.

She began to shiver. "What is... going on?"

Alicia calmly sat down on the edge of her bed, facing her as she reached out and held her hand. "Listen Elle..." she started. "We believe that you are awakening your powers. Your real ability is finally manifesting itself."

It took Elle a long while to manage a response. "P-powers? Wha- what are you saying...?"

"You're not a mere human as you thought you are, Izabelle." Alicia forthrightly told her, not wanting to be vague.

Elle's lips parted at Alicia's words. Then a forced breathless laugh left her lips. Disbelief filled her eyes. "That... that can't be..." she trailed off as soon as she looked at Abi and saw the expression on her face.

Her heartbeat thudded hard and fast within her. 'What was happening? Am I somehow still trapped in my dream?'

"When I first met you, I immediately felt that there was something different in you, Elle." Alicia continued. "After looking and observing you, I then realized that there was something off with your heartbeat. The pace of your heartbeats were completely different to the beats of a human, or a witch, or even a vampire's heart. Yours is something I have never come across before and I wasn't the only one who had realized that. That was why since we met, I knew you were different. That you're not just any ordinary human."

Elle's conflicted gaze fell back to Abi again. She struggled to find words to say. She even started to shake her head slowly in denial. What the two ladies had just told her was really hard to take in. It was just too fantastical! How had she suddenly, after one day, turned into a supernatural being like them?

But the look in these two ladies' eyes were more than enough to force her to stop trying to deny the things she just heard.

"Actually, during the hunt last night..." Abi spoke hesitantly. "Alex said you were literally invisible, Elle. No one can see you. Alex couldn't see you, too! The only reason why Alex had managed to catch you was only because you had come out on your own and he heard your light footsteps crushing the leaves and the grasses you were stepping on and brushing aside. He followed you with just those sounds that you made. And then

you were also wounded and he followed your scent next. That's how he managed to catch you, Elle. It wasn't because he saw you."

Elle could not even react. She did not know how to even react. But eventually, she gave out another soundless laugh. How was she supposed to react to this? Was all these really even real?

"We understand that it's going to be hard for you to even believe, Elle... and that's why we had refrained from telling you anything. But now, we believe it's about time you start to learn more about who you truly are." Alicia's eyes were serious. And no matter what she was feeling at the moment, she knew with that one look that this woman would never ever lie to her. Abi as well. These two ladies had no reason nor would they get any benefits in lying to her.

"We believe that from here on out, you're going to keep learning about who and what you truly are."

"What... am I?" she finally asked. "Am I like... Alexander? A half... human...?"

Alicia pressed on her hand gently. "We believe that you are definitely one part human, Elle. But we still could not figure out what your other part is since you're one of a kind. You are the first to have that peculiar pace of heartbeat and also the first to have that kind of invisibility magic."

## **Chapter 282 Gone**

The day passed slowly for Elle.

Everything still felt too surreal to her. And she could not help the lingering fear that coiled within her. She told herself that it was most probably the fear of the unknown, because none of them knew what her other half was.

Thankfully, that fair and beautiful man named Zeres arrived in the Black Forest again this afternoon. His presence had somehow distracted her from drowning herself with overthinking as the man had offered to be the one to play the hunting game with her while he waited for Lilith's return.

Alexander had said that she needed to try her abilities against a powerful witch this time because they believed that there was a powerful witch who was playing the supporting role behind their enemy. So since Lilith was away, Alexander had asked Zeres to come over to be her partner for this round.

Elle immediately agreed. Though there was that heavy feeling gripping her now, she decided to force herself. She wanted to know and test herself to see if she indeed had the powers Alicia and Abi had told her she possessed. She truly wanted to see it for herself.

So as soon as twilight came, Elle ran off to the forest without hesitation.

The hunt then began.

Elle felt that there was something different with herself. She had been bothered by this feeling ever since she woke up, but she could not quite tell what had changed in her until now that she was in the forest. Her body felt so light that she actually felt she could run on forever and she would still not get tired.

Zeres did not move as violently as Alexander. He was the complete opposite - sleek and stealthy. She knew he was around somewhere... but she could not see him no matter how she looked. Somehow, she felt more wary of him because she could sense that he was the type to appear out of nowhere and catch her before she could even realize he was already coming close.

However, Alexander had already instructed her of what she should do this time. That no matter what happens, she must not move from her spot. Not even to lift the gun to aim. She must not shoot at him unless they found her.

Elle knew what Alexander was aiming to test out in this round of practice session was on how long she could remain in her invisible state and undetected if she did not move at all.

Time ticked by and nothing happened. Zeres did not show himself at all.

It was already thirty minutes since she felt someone's presence nearby. And now she could not tell if he was still around. Or did he leave to look somewhere else? Or could this be a test? Was he waiting for her to make a move too and expose her whereabouts?

Steeling herself, Elle decided to stick to the plan. She would not want to disappoint Alexander if she disobeyed his instructions and ended up getting caught due to her own carelessness.

After another long stretch of waiting, Elle finally saw him. He materialized several steps away from her. It was a shocking sight for Elle even though she had already known that powerful witches had the ability to teleport. This was the first time she was seeing this happen right before her eyes!

The beautiful man did not move from his spot. He was just standing there like a perfectly carved piece of heavenly statue. The man simply looked so unreal to belong in this world!

But that was not the issue here! Was she truly invisible? She could not believe it. She was not hiding at all. She was right across from him! And yet... was this really happening?!

Suddenly, he turned and looked in her direction.

Elle fought to keep herself still. He was not meeting her eyes, so this could mean he only sensed her presence but could not see her yet?

'No matter what, don't ever move. Only move if he reaches out to touch you.'  
Alexander's strict instruction echoed in her head.

Regulating her breath to the point where she was only breathing in shallowly, Elle kept her gaze on him. Until, he moved again. His long silver hair was like floating silk, trailing behind him.

He walked towards her but his direction was a bit off. She thought that he would definitely miss her by a few inches if he did not change directions.

She felt the nerve-wracking pressure as he approached closer to where she was. Her instinct to run away was kicking in again. But she fought her body's knee-jerk reaction and rooted herself to the ground, reminding herself of her task. And he was not going to catch her. He was off the mark!

Zeres did walk past her. Barely for like two inches and stopped after maybe three more steps behind her.

Elle sucked in air as she had been holding her breath. And then she slowly turned her head over her shoulder.

A hand was reaching out.

She lifted her gun but... it was too late. She was caught before she could even pull the trigger.

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"Don't you think they're taking a bit too long?" Abi asked Alexander a little anxiously. A slightly worried look flashing in her eyes.

Alex crossed his arms around his chest. "This is Zeres, Abi. An immortal like us. I think he must have been playing the waiting game with Elle."

"Well... you're right but... I can't help but feel worried. Because you know... Zeres just returned and would not even say anything to us..." Abi had a frown creasing her brows.

Alex faced her, looking a little surprised at what Abi had said. He was really surprised that his wife actually doubted Zeres. Because he just could not. To him, Zeres was just someone he could not imagine betraying him... betraying them.

"Dad!" Alexis's frantic voice echoed out and he landed before Abi and Alex. "Azy said he couldn't feel Princess Elle's presence anymore! Uncle Zeres' is gone too!"

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A/N: Thank you so much for waiting guys! I will be releasing 3 chapters tomorrow as compensation for the days i failed to update. <3

## Chapter 283 Dearest

Ever since Azy's tattoos started to appear all over his body, the boy's power had grown even more powerful. So powerful that he could sense and even differentiate anyone's presence including the ones belonging to the animals that were within a wide radius from where he was centered at.

However, as the boy kept getting stronger, Alicia's condition continued to deteriorate. Even though her hair was silver again, Alicia's power only kept getting weaker by the day. It was as though Alicia and Azy's powers were on an inverse scale. One goes up and the other comes down.

"What is it, dearest?" Alicia asked her son when the boy's dark, demonic power appeared and swirled like a blanket of living smoke all over him.

Azy looked up at her. 'Princess Elle and Uncle Zeres... they're gone, mom!' He revealed through their telepathy. 'They're no longer in the Black Forest.'

Panic instantly colored Alicia's eyes and she immediately sent Alexis to deliver the message to his parents.

The search for the two of them immediately commenced once the news was delivered to Alexander. Isabelle and Zeres were truly gone. Alexander even went as far as bringing Azy out to sense their presence in the nearby villages and towns but Azy could not pick up their presence anymore, no matter how many times he tried.

It was midnight when Alexander brought Azy back to the Black Forest.

His expression was dark as he stood there in silence. Trying to make a decision now as fast as possible while Alicia and the other witches were trying to reach Lilith to deliver the message to her.

With Alicia's very weak magic, it had been a struggle since Lilith must be very far from the country now.

"They're about to reach Lilith." Abi said as she stood next to her husband. Though she did not sound overly distressed, he could tell from her tensed up frame that she was. "The witches Lilith left here with us are strong so it's finally working."

Alex only nodded.

It had been so long since Abi had seen her cool husband looking like this. Silent. Brooding.

She knew that he must be raging silently within himself and at the same time, trying to keep his cool and think. Abi was certain that this situation was really hard for him because he could not leave the forest and pursue Zeres wherever he was right now no matter how much he wanted to.

The aura he was exuding was not just that obvious to Abi even though he had kept his expression serious.

"Elle will be alright." Abi said reassuringly as she hugged her husband, her arms curling around his slim and muscular waist. "I'm sure she'll be okay. That young lady is very strong."

Alexander hugged her back, knowing that Abi was much more worried about Elle right now. He knew just how important Izabelle was to her.

"Yes. You're right. And with her newfound power. I'm sure she'd be able to use them to her advantage." He rubbed his wife's back gently and then sighed heavily. The dark and cold air around him gentled the moment Abi held him. "I just..." he paused and shook his head in disbelief. "I just can't believe Zeres did this."

Abi could only shut her eyes. They had been talking about this just some moments before the news was brought to them by Azy on Elle and Zeres going missing. She too was so hurt right now, all because it was Zeres of all people who had done this. Zeres was their oldest and one of their most dearest friends. He was a family. Someone whom they both could trust even with their lives. Zeres was the selfless, precious person that they could not even imagine betraying them.

"I'm so angry at him right now..." Alex said through gritted teeth. "But I'm sure there must be a reason for this. Elijah must be using him. That little bastard knows that we trust Zeres. Damn... there was no one else who could possibly kidnap Elle right on our

watch except Zeres. Just why the hell didn't I consider that when he's obviously showing obvious signs?" Alexander then clenched his fists so tightly that his knuckles even turned white.

"It's all because you trust him, Alex." Abi told him as she gently caressed his fisted hands with her fingers.

Shoving his fingers roughly through his hair, Alex expelled a deep breath. "I'm going to beat him into a pulp. That guy..."

He then ran his palm over his face and looked up. "I can't figure out why or how Elijah even managed to get Zeres to do this. Nothing has changed in Zeres' power at all. He is still strong... so how? Why did the likes of Elijah managed to make him betray us?"

"Blackmail..." Abi suddenly uttered. That was the closest reason they could think of as it was still impossible for them to imagine that Zeres simply had chosen to join the enemy.

"Yes. I believe so too. I'm bothered by the issue between him and Iryz." Alex replied. But within him, there was another possibility he had in mind. Alex could not help but remember that time long ago when the two of them had fought to the death. Zeres had been used, allowing others to use him, that caused him to cause their downfall. All because he had believed in someone else's words. Now Alex could not help but wonder if Zeres was doing something along the lines of the case like that one again. That perhaps if another misunderstanding had driven him to do this.

He would really prefer it if the reason was indeed because Elijah had blackmailed him. But... with Zeres' tremendous power, how did he even let that happen?

"Dad! Mom!" Alexis' voice called out to them and he immediately spilled the news. "They did it!"

The trio ran towards where the witches were and saw Alicia sitting there, all sweaty and spent.

"Alicia." Abi immediately went to her side.

"They're already on their way. But I can't help but worry about Sebastian." Alicia looked at Alexander. "You must go to him now, Alexander."

## Chapter 284 Fine



"I can't." Alex immediately replied. His expression remained serious "My priority right now is Azy and you. Also, this could be another trap to divert my attention. Leaving the Black Forest at a time like this is always too risky."

"But Alexander... what if Sebastian will..." Alicia's words trailed off before she shook her head slowly, keeping her gaze at him unrelenting. "There is no one else who could possibly take a hold of that guy but you. That's why you really need to go to him before something really regretful happens. You know what could happen if Sebastian ends up losing himself."

"Sebastian is a mere vampire now, Alicia." Alex stressed even though he fully understood Alicia's concern.

"I know. But still, Sebastian had been born a half-demon. His demonic powers might be gone but demon blood still flows through his veins. Anything could happen Alexander, you know that."

"You can go, dad." Alexis spoke when Alex fell silent for a moment, causing the three adults to snap their heads towards the boy. Azy was right next to him. Both boys exuded a serious and heavy aura all over them that had the adults falling speechless. "Azy and I can protect the Black Forest, dad. So please don't worry about us and just go to uncle Sebastian."

The dark energy swirled stronger around Azy as though he was using his power as the alternative to his voice to second Alexis' words. Though not speaking, his eyes were firm and intense, showing his completely similar stand to Alexis on this matter.

"Good grief." Alex sighed. "Now... now... relax Azy. Don't go around displaying your power like that. Do you even have any idea how strong the magic coming out of you right now is, huh? Zeke's kid?"

"He knows, dad. He's just trying to show you how strong he is now and that he's definitely capable." Alexis looked so incredibly serious while Azy innocently nodded, just agreeing with anything that Alexis had said.

Alex shifted his gaze back to his son. His grey eyes were bright and... they did not look like the eyes of a child right now. Sometimes, especially during times like these, Alex could not help but feel a little troubled at how much this son of his was growing and changing every day. He was only an adorable little rascal a few years ago yet now here he was, staring back at him like he was no longer a mere boy.

He was also a little concerned at how much he seemed to be influencing Azy. Since the day these two boys met, they had been almost inseparable. And as the days went by, it was almost like Azy had been completely influenced by Alexis to the extent that Azy had become Alexis' shadow, just following right behind him, agreeing and doing everything that Alexis did.

And no matter how Alex had tried to intervene between their seemingly unusual and still growing bond by separating them, it did nothing to change the relationship between the two boys. Sometimes, Alex could not help but wonder if Azy was truly following Alexis so zealously of his own free will or was he just very influenced by his son.

"I did not persuade Azy, dad, if that's what you're wondering." Alexis said, as though being able to read through his father's thoughts and directly answered Alex's doubts. This only caused Alex's eyes to widen a little before he pinched the skin between his brows. "Maybe... the two of us just think and want exactly the very same thing. That is why we get on together so wonderfully."

Again... Azy nodded. Agreeing ferociously to what Alexis had just said. Alexander just barely held himself back from rolling his eyes at the complementing actions of both boys.

"So, dad... please stop worrying and trust us just a little. I don't have the power that Azy has but I'm your son. And I'm immortal. These reasons should be enough for you to put some faith in me. Right...?" And Alexis confidently grinned at his father, waiting for the man's final word on the matter. He even looked confident that Alex was going to give in eventually.

Another sigh escaped Alex. Really... he wished that these two would act their age!

He then stretched out his hand and lightly flicked at Alexis' forehead. "Didn't I tell you not to act and talk like an old man? You know how much Azy here is following your example, Alexis."

"Just for tonight, dad. And don't we play like we're children during the day anyway?"

"Like children you say... I should really send you both to a normal school soon. You both need to see what children your age are supposed to be playing at."

The two boys simply glanced at each other.

"Also. I never said that I don't have faith in you, Alexis. So don't be putting that thought in your head. I just..." Alex sighed for the nth time. "We'll talk about it once this malarkey is over."

"Yes, dad." Alexis nodded obediently. Then he smiled sweetly.

"I had not agreed to go yet." Alex arched a brow at his son, causing the boy to blink a couple of times.

The boy's smile faltered. "Oh, come on, dad. Auntie said uncle Sebastian badly needed you."

"It's okay, Alex." Abigail finally butted in. Flashing a gentle smile at her husband. "I understand your worries, but... I am still here too. Don't you forget what your own wife is capable of." She raised a brow at him and Alex finally gave in, figuratively raising his white flag.

"Fine... fine... you all win this round. I'm going. Now, my love... I'm leaving everyone in your care." Alex said and reached out to pull Abi in for a kiss on the head.

"Count on me, my love." Abi replied and Alex ruffled his son's head next.

The father and son stared at each other and after a wordless conversation, Alex finally left.

## Chapter 285 I won't dare

285 I won't dare

Finding herself bound up inside a room, Elle was struggling to get on her feet.

Zeres had kidnapped her last night right at the end of their 'hunting game' session. He had knocked her out with what she believed was a strong spell as soon as he had caught her.

And the next thing she knew, she was already here inside this room, with her hands tied together. The room was not shabby at all. The feminine decorations and everything else inside told her that this room definitely belonged to a girl... a girl who loves books with all her heart.

She was put on a soft bed and a blanket was even draped over her sleeping form. However, she was tied up quite securely. Both her hands and feet. And the rope was even obviously not any ordinary type. The entire surface was glowing with something silvery white and it was as though those things were alive!

Every time Elle tries to wiggle and move her hands to loosen the bindings, the rope tightens. And when she stopped, the rope would automatically loosen up a little again.

Somehow, Elle could not help but laugh silently at how this captor of hers was treating her. Why did it seem like Zeres did not want her to hurt her hands?

She shook her head. She did not know much about Zeres, but there was one thing that she clearly knew. This man had kidnapped her and in doing so, that action in itself was already betraying his friends. Now she could not help but berate herself for thinking that

the man was an angel. Why was it, that it was somehow always these bad guys who had to have these kinds of innocent and angelic faces?! They were so misleading!

Elle had finally arrived underneath the windows after rolling and squirming herself across the floor. She then pushed herself up to sit against the wall before folding her knees into an upside-down 'V'. After that, using the wall as leverage and her legs already in place, she struggled to stand. When she finally peeked outside, she had found out that she was right. She was in a lone house in the middle of a forest. The trees around were lush and colorful and the surroundings did not look like a place where a villain would or could reside. It was the type of place where a simple and humble but happy family would choose to live in. There were even pretty and colorful flowers outside, so unlike the interior of the Black Forest where though breath-taking, it was not as colorful. Is this where Zeres lives? Or did he just hijack this place from a poor family?

A waft of homemade food scents made her stomach growl loudly. It was then she realised that she was ravenously hungry. It was already noon and the smell was so delicious that she could not help but salivate.

When she could not find even a shadow of anyone on the outside, she turned towards the door. She began to drag herself towards it and just as she was about to reach the wooden door, it opened. Thankfully it swung towards the outside, or else her face would have been the one greeting the door.

The silver-haired kidnapper emerged, holding a tray of warm, steaming food in his hand. It was the scent that she had smelled just a while ago.

He abruptly averted his gaze away from her and quietly put the tray down on the side table.

Then he returned for her, picking her up without a word and gently seating her on the edge of the bed. When he picked up the plate of food and began attempting to feed her, Elle finally opened her mouth and spoke. "Zeres..."

14:19

dong-ho-deo-tay-orient

"Eat." Was all he said.

CLOSE

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"I have my own hands. Please at least untie –" Elle tried to reason with him. But before she could continue, he had cut her off. However, his voice held no harshness nor anger.

"Sorry, but I can't." The words were said in a quiet but firm tone. "I'll feed you myself. Now please eat."

"What if I refuse?" she stared at him with defiance, a stubborn light suddenly lighting her eyes.

He put the spoon that was held out to her, back on the plate. "You'll just starve yourself."

Elle so desperately wanted to face palm with his straight up response, but could not. "Look here, Zeres... Can't you at least just free my hands? How can I possibly let a stranger spoon feed me? I am not going to escape, I promise you. You and I know I can't possibly escape when you're here, watching me... Right?"

"I won't dare to underestimate you. I know you're not a mere human already, Princess Izabelle."

"Are you saying that you know what I truly am?" Elle perked up at his words. Though what Abi and Alicia told her about her not being fully human was still causing some confusion within her, she still wanted to know what her other half was. She might not like it, but she was not one who would run away from things. It was always better to face it head on than run and hide, as hiding never solved anything.

He paused and then lifted the spoon to her lips again. "If I were you, I would eat, for my own sake. You need energy to deal with what's coming ahead –" Zeres' words were hinting on future things.

"Like what? Elijah? Is he coming here to get me?"

Zeres finally met her eyes. "Yes." He answered and Elle immediately felt fear churning in her stomach. "Now eat this before I take it away. Please don't think that I will do more for you than this."

The dangerous glint in his eyes forced Elle to simmer down and eat. She knew she really needed to reserve her energy to think about how to get away from this before Elijah arrives. She must not let Elijah take her away no matter what! Sebastian... he would torture Sebastian again using her!

Shivers and goosebumps crawled under Elle's skin as she ate. She would do anything... everything to stop that from happening!

Just as she was trying to concentrate on thinking about something while pretending to be busy chewing on her food, another person's presence made her snap her gaze towards the door.

## Chapter 286 Please

286 Please

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A dark-haired lady stood by the door. Her skin looked really pale and her eyes were a shade of pale green. Nevertheless, even with all the paleness, she was a beauty.

She looked at Elle with widened eyes as the room went absolutely silent. Until the sound of the spoon clattered noisily on the ceramic plate.

Zeres immediately rose to his feet, carelessly pushing back the chair that he was sitting on, creating a slight commotion. It was as though he was suddenly thrown into a panic. And that made Elle wonder who this woman was to be able to draw out such exaggerated responses from this seemingly ever cool and calm Zeres.

"Iryz..." He was before her in an instant, hovering over her as he held her arms ever so gently with his large hands. "You shouldn't be here..." his voice was so tender. So very soft as though it were wool.

"Zeres..." she pressed her palms over his chest. "I thought we'd already talked about this –" The woman that he called Iryz spoke in a gentle yet broken voice.

"Shh... please..." his soft voice cracked a little while the lady named Iryz looked at him like she was about to cry. There was a sheen of tears glistening over her large doe-like eyes that were looking earnestly at Zeres.

Elle did not know why, but the sight of them at that moment was just so... sad. She just could not help but feel her heart being squeezed while looking at their forlorn figures standing so close together.

"Please, Iryz... let me take you back to our room." He bent to pick her up princess-style, but Iryz stopped him with just a lift of her delicate hand.

She shook her head at him. Her soft eyes pleaded with him and that was all it took for him to give in. She saw him clench his fists so hard before he stepped aside and allowed her to enter the room.

However, before the woman could walk closer to Elle, the loud and fierce barking of a dog from a distance pulled at their attention. Elle wondered why there was suddenly a dog barking. But she did not pay much attention to that matter as her attention was more focused on the lady that had entered her 'holding cell'.

Zeres walked towards the window and quickly looked outside, his body glowed silver in an instant.

"I'll take care of the rest here." Iryz told him as she took Zeres' spot on the bed. Then she picked up the plate to continue feeding Elle her meal.

When Zeres looked at her with an expression Elle could not quite read, Iryz smiled slightly at him. His brows creased a little and his sharp jaws clenched before he hesitantly disappeared before their eyes.

"Hello. I'm... Iryz." Iryz introduced herself after a few moments of silence and staring at each other.

"Izabelle." Elle replied succinctly, guessing that Iryz would have already known her name anyway. "Are you... Zeres' wife?"

"Fiancee." She corrected, smiling sweetly. And Elle could only think she had a really sweet smile. "Are you okay? You're not hurt anywhere, are you?" her expression changed to be one that was filled with concern.

Elle was about to shake her head but she refrained from doing so. Now that Zeres has left, this should be her chance to...

"My wrist... it's hurting..." she lied.

Her expression turned very sad as she stared down at the shimmery rope that was bound around her hands.

"I'm sorry... Zeres did this to you..." she whispered. "I'm really sorry." Elle somehow got the feeling that her apology was genuine.

Something with the look in her eyes and her voice made Elle feel so bothered about this woman. Not in a bad way, but she did not know why her heart seemed to be aching for her. Why was she so... sad? Like she was hurting so much right now?

"If you're sorry... then please set me free." Elle did not beat around the bush anymore. She felt that without a doubt, this woman was a good person. And she was definitely a human right? She could not feel any tremendous power coming from her. In fact, Iryz felt just like herself. Perhaps because she could tell that this woman was so in love with her kidnapper. She was genuinely sorry for her lover's crimes.

Their eyes just held for seconds until Iryz looked down at her hands again.

"Please forgive him. He is forced to do this. He's forcing himself to do this." Her voice was a little broken as she tried to contain her emotions. "He never was an evil person..." she clenched her fists and then she stood and headed towards the door.

Elle's eyes widened. "Please! Help me! Release me please, Iryz! I can't be kept here. My husband... he's definitely going crazy looking for me right now! Please! Help me! I can't be caught by Elijah. He'll kill my husband if that happens. You have someone you love as well, don't you? I love him... I love my husband with all my heart, Iryz. So please..." Elle's plea went louder as Iryz opened the door. She was desperate not to lose the only person that might listen to her pleading. "Iryz! Please!"

Iryz shut the door closed behind her, leaving Elle gritting her teeth in frustration. What should she do? How could she free herself from this? Right... her powers...

They said she was no mere human! Now would be the best time for her to use it, right? But how? How could she even call on her power?! How?!!! All that was told to her was she could become invisible. But her invisibility sadly could not help her in this situation. She could not even move. Zeres would definitely find her like he did last night! Could there not be something else? Alicia said she definitely had other abilities... but what are they?!

While she was desperately trying to figure out how to bring out the powers she even knew nothing about, the door opened again and she gasped out in shock. But to her relief, it was not Zeres who entered. It was ... Iryz.

A knife and a gun were held in each of her hands.

## Chapter 287 I Don't Care

Elle only watched in shocked silence as Iryz knelt down beside her and cut the rope with the knife.

Thankfully, the knife was sharp and worked well. Elle was honestly a little scared that the rope would not budge until she saw that the knife obviously was not any ordinary knife either. It seemed to be something that only belonged to a witch, most probably Zeres.

"T-thank you..." Elle finally uttered, staring at the pale skinned lady. She could feel from the way she was struggling to cut the rope that she was physically really weak. In fact, right now, Elle felt like she was able to do this perhaps purely due to sheer desperation.

She shook her head. "Don't thank me, Izabelle..." The lady told her as she continued struggling to finish cutting through the thick rope. "Listen... you need to run away as far as you can. I believe that that vampire should be here soon, hopefully in a couple of hours. But he might be already coming here right now so don't be too lax. I think it'd be wiser if you ran straight to the woods behind this house. Avoid the road and just head on straight ahead until you reach the town."



Elle nodded. She just knew in her heart that she could trust Iryz. "Can you tell me why Zeres is doing this? You said that he is forced to do this. But why? What is it that Elijah is holding against him that he needs to do this? Or is he facing some problems that Elijah had promised some solution to? If you tell me, I'll convey it to Alexander and everyone else. I'm certain that if they know what's going on with Zeres and yourself, they would help Zeres instead. After all, he's their close friend."

The look that flashed across Iryz's face broke Elle's heart. Such sadness... What in the world was this woman going through right now to have such a heart-breaking look in her eyes?!

Shaking her head, a small sad smile tugged at the corners of her lips. "They can't help us, Izabelle. If they could... Zeres would never go as far as doing something like this to betray them."

"That can't be... if Alexander can't help, then I'm sure Alicia and Lilith... right, Zeres was looking for Lilith" Elle suddenly piped up, remembering he had come a couple of times just to look for the witch queen.

"I'm sure that was just his excuse. Not even the witch queen can help us." Iryz spoke softly as a helpless smile crossed her lips.

"Are... are you... they're powerful. I think you should try anyway. You guys would never know until you" Elle broke off when she smiled again.

"I'm dying, Izabelle. We've done everything." Iryz said in a soft voice. "But the only thing that can save me is... something I cannot accept. And at the same time, something... someone Alexander and everyone could never ever"

The bark of the dog echoed from a place that sounded nearer from previously and Iryz panicked. She gritted her teeth and gave her all to cut the rope until at last, Elle's hands were finally freed.

Iryz was already panting and breathless with just that seemingly simple action, so Elle took the knife from her and cut the rope around her feet on her own.

"Take this gun. You must run now before Zeres returns, Izabelle. I'll stop him from chasing you for as long as I can. So just run as fast as you can." Iryz frantically instructed as she shoved the gun in Elle's hand. "Now go! Go now!"

Elle turned to her one last time as she opened the door and when she nodded at her, Elle stormed out of the house and ran straight into the woods as Iryz had instructed. Iryz... she uttered her name in her mind... she wanted to save that gentle lady. She was such a good person and it was a shame for her to die so early...

Once she was in a safe place and reunited with everyone, she would then request help for Iryz. But for now, she must escape and outrun Elijah first.

Her eyes gleamed as she entered farther into the forest. She would never let anyone catch her this time. She would do anything and everything to ensure that it would not happen again.

...

Back in the house, Zeres rushed towards Iryz who was already slumped over on the floor.

He gently helped her up and seated her on the bed. Extreme worry filled his eyes. "Are you okay? Damn it, Iryz... didn't I tell you to..." he trailed off and finally realized what she must have done. He bit on his lower lip and did not say anything, save from the clenching of his jaws.

"Don't chase her." She told him. "I'm begging you, Zeres." Her voice broke.

And he squatted down on the floor before her, lifting his hand to his hair and grabbing a handful of his silvery locks.

He dropped his head down miserably and leaned his forehead against hers. But then he breathed out shakily and clenched his fists so tightly.

Just as he moved to stand up, Iryz grabbed onto him, straddling him as she wound her weak arms around his neck. "I won't let you go. Over my dead body, Zeres..." she told him in a broken voice.

"Please... don't do this to me..." he begged. Every breath he was taking seemed unbearably painful.

"I'm so sorry..." she hugged him. "I'm so sorry..."

Zeres shook his head. Something so deadly, so wildly dangerous that it might as well border a little on madness, flashed in his eyes now. "Everyone has been telling me to stop being selfless, Iryz. To stop sacrificing myself, hurting myself for someone else... to stop trying to be the hero..." his voice turned wintry and hard. "I've given up too many times in my long life... sacrificed myself over and over for someone... but never again, Iryz. Never again... I can never give you up... never... I'll save you even if it means sacrificing someone else's life... I'll willingly take on the mantle of the selfish and cruel villain if that's what it takes for me to keep you alive and in my arms."

He pinched her chin and stared deeply into her eyes, willing her to understand his point of view. She was silently crying and shaking her head at him slowly but desperately.

A heart-wrenching beautiful smile graced his angelic face as he wiped her tears that were pooling in her eyes. "You've loved me for so long... even when I was busy chasing after someone else and never spared you a glance. You were there and held me when I had nothing left... you became my home when I had nowhere else to go... loved me when I wasn't even sure if i still have the heart to even love even myself... Now tell me, Iryz... how can I give you up? How could you tell me to just let you die?" He cupped her face and kissed her pale lips, his eyes gazing into hers aggrievedly. "I'll sacrifice anything, anyone... I don't care if this is madness. I don't care if I'm a monster now. As long as you're with me... I don't care if the entire world falls apart."

## Chapter 288 Here We Go Again

"Sir, I think we should take another route." A man in black suddenly swirled and blocked Elijah's path.

They were on their way to meet with Zeres and they only needed to cross this city and they would finally reach their rendezvous point. According to the message they had received not long ago from Zeres, the prince should be in the forest around this time. So, they absolutely could not stall anymore!

"Move, Lio." Elijah said nonchalantly.

"But Your Highness...!! This part of the street is really dirty. Let's take another route instead. We're going to be late so we should take this â€œ"

Elijah craned his head to the side to look at what Lio was blocking with his large and bulky body. But Lio matched his speed and still managed to block his view.

Narrowing his gaze, Elijah craned his head to the other side. Again, Lio blocked him.

"Haha..." Lio forced a nervous laugh. "Oh, come on Your Highness... we really don't have time to play around like this. Zeres had reminded us that we should hurry â€œ"

"Relax Lio. Whether we get there early or not, nothing will change."

Lio blinked. "Huh? What does that even mean?"

The prince's hand landed on his shoulder. And with just one touch, the bulky and massive guy froze while Elijah casually walked past him.

Upon seeing the desperate looking girl holding a flyer with a picture of a dog on it, Elijah paused.

"Good grief..." Lio groaned and could only follow after him. He had tried to not let this prince see that girl right there because he knew what this prince would do! Damn... he could already tell they were definitely going to look for the freaking missing dog first! This prince would always do this kind of sh\*t that he could never ever understand!

"I'll help look for the missing dog, Your Highness." He could only propose as he sighed internally. He must not let this prince go astray or he would be damned once that woman interrogates him of what really happened! "So, you go ahead before me and â€"

"I don't think she's looking for a missing dog." Elijah cut him off and he began to approach the girl, causing Lio to slap his large palms over his face before dragging them down exasperatedly. 'Here we go again, damn it! Why in the freaking world is this prince like this?! Can't he just act like the cold-blooded man that he usually is?' Lio could only yell within his own mind, knowing that he could no longer do anything to drag the prince out of this. Not until the problem with the animal was solved!

"Why are you crying?" the vampire prince asked the girl. His tone was gentle and coaxing. She was a young lady with a really pretty face but the type that had the resting bitch face.

"I'm not crying. I'm just begging." She replied straightforwardly. Before Elijah could speak again, the girl eyed him from head to toe. Not in a dumbfounded and lustful kind of manner though. The girl did not seem to be fazed by the prince's almost unreal look. "Are you rich, Mister? You are, right? You definitely are, right?" She looked closely at him, her eyes moving over his clothes and his bearing.

"No. I'm actually poor." Elijah replied blankly.

"Liar â€"

"Yes, he's very poor! So don't waste your time, pretty girl." Lio butted in. "This man here only spends money on animals. Now let's go, Sir!" Lio grabbed the prince's arm and began to drag him away when the girl jumped onto Elijah's feet and hugged both his legs.

"Then please save the dogs!" she cried. "Please adopt them! They're all going to die, sir. They're going to get euthanized today, Sir because no one's adopting them! Please save them! They're a bunch of lovely and beautiful babies! Please, I'm sure you'll love them once you've adopted them! Please, handsome, sir!"

Elijah's aura darkened, causing the girl to suddenly swallow in fear.

Slowly, she looked up and met his devilish eyes. She had never seen eyes like his before. It was like she just saw a vision of hell in there.

"What did you say? Euthanize?" he asked with a shrill voice.

The girl forced herself to nod and spoke despite all the chills that were strongly gripping her. "Y-yes... s-sir. It's... the rules and..."

"Bring me there. Now!"

The girl scrambled to stand and as though the fear had been long forgotten, she grabbed the man's hand and dragged him away, leaving Lio standing there uselessly. His sharp jaws might as well be on the ground now. "For the love of... are you crazy?! What are you doing? Letting a girl drag you away?! We have a mission here! We're not here to rescue those damned pesky animals!!! Do you really only care about animals? How about me? How about my life?!! Your Highness!!!!"

But his yell only caused people around him to look at him like he was crazy. "Goddamn it!!!" the bulky man huffed as he could only follow after his prince.

...

Meanwhile, Elle strategically hid herself behind a tree trunk to rest a little. She had been running for a long while now yet she still did not seem to be reaching the town Iryz had told her about.

She was not sure if Zeres was chasing after her. There was still no sign of a pursuer. Did Iryz manage to stop him back there?

Elle shook her head, refusing to be too optimistic. Zeres was a silver-haired witch and he could be on par with Alexander. He might even be chasing after her now without being detected. So she must continue running and bear with it a little.

But just as she was about to move, a waft of cold breeze blew past and the leaves rustled above and around her. Her heartbeat raced. Wait... had her pursuer already caught up?! Lord... this could not be! That was just too fast!

Swallowing, Elle did not dare turn around to look behind her. She knew better now that one wrong move from her might end up being a fatal move for her. So she only moved her eyeballs to the side.

Shock instantly filled her eyes at what she saw. S-snow?!

## **Chapter 289 Tension**

Back in the shelter, Lio looked like he had aged ten years as he wiped off the sweat on his brows. He was glad that the animals were not dead yet and they had arrived exactly on time!

If they were even a minute later, the dogs would have already... good grief... he was certain he would be doing clean up for the human's dead bodies while the prince would be somewhere else, giving the animals a more than decent funeral.

"Now shall we go, Your Highness? We've wasted too much time already!" Lio was desperate. If he could, he would have already dragged the man out of the place long ago!

Elijah walked towards a window and stood there, sticking his hand out as if to feel the movement of the air. His eyes focused on the hills that were at a distance where they should have been right now! If not for that unexpected detour they had to make, they would be standing where he was looking at right now.

"We don't need to go anymore." The prince quietly replied, causing Lio to blink, not quite understanding what his lord meant.

"H-huh? What do you â€œ"

"They've found him." Elijah's neutral tone sounded as he continued staring off at that far off spot.

"What? Ze-zeres? Who is that 'they' â€œ wait... Alexander and the witches are there right now?!!!" Lio's eyes were wide as saucers as his head darted from Lio to the hills from afar.

"I don't know about the others... but I'm quite certain that Alexander's there right now as we speak. So, this would only mean that Zeres has failed." Elijah nonchalantly squatted down and petted the dogs he had just saved from sure doom.

"And that means...?" Lio tilted his head, wanting to understand clearly what his lord wanted to say.

"That means I can now stay here and spend the rest of the time we have left here with these little lovelies. I'll have to buy this shelter and turn it into their house and have that girl take care of them all... of course, I'll pay her a big salary. Mmm..." Elijah nodded to himself. "That sounds like a really good plan."

"Wait a moment, My Prince!" Lio burst out after hearing what Elijah had said. "Are you really serious about this?! We're not going to do anything anymore? At all?!"

"What... you want to step up and go fight against Alexander head on?" Elijah raised a brow at him. "Go on if that is what you wish. I'm not going to stop you. Unlike you, I

have 120 babies at home, waiting for me and I didn't even have the time to bid them goodbye when I left earlier."

Utterly speechless, Lio's jaw literally dropped to the floor once again as he looked at the prince who was now on the floor, literally letting the puppies and some bigger dogs surround and clamber over him as he gave them treats. 'Good grief...' Lio rolled his eyes. 'Could you stop calling your animals' 'babies'?!' he grumbled in his mind. 'But seriously?! Why is this prince so laidback, right now?! Why is he not even surprised, as if nothing had even happened? Wasn't his plan just ruined and failed again with Alexander already appearing in the picture? Did he have another plan under his sleeve already and that was why this is nothing to him?'

Lio could only shake his head because no matter what he did, he knew he could never understand this weirdo Prince that he was serving.

...

At the small house in the midst of the forest, Zeres was standing several steps away from the door.

He was about to leave and chase after Izabelle, but was stopped by the sudden arrival of Alexander.

The two stared at each other as the tension rose between them. Well, the tension was mostly from Zeres since Alexander still pretty much chilled as he stood there, observing his friend and then searching the house behind him.

"Is Iryz inside? She should be, right?" Alexander asked. "Is Izabelle still with her? I am wondering if Izabelle's not here anymore, maybe you just downplayed her presence with your spell" He mentioned Elle as though he was just asking for her, who was having a sleepover at Zeres' place.

"I had already made up my mind the very moment I decided to betray you and everyone to kidnap Izabelle." Zeres replied. His voice was emotionless, like a robot who was speaking without any agenda or alternative motives. "So, if you just came here planning to talk to me about her... don't waste your voice and precious time, Alex."

Silence reigned between the two men until Alex let out a heavy sigh. The words 'man... here we again' could almost be seen plastered all over his face. But just as he was about to say his piece, the door behind Zeres swung open. His eyes were automatically drawn to the small and frail figure that appeared in the doorway.

Alex's eyes widened at the sight of Iryz standing there. She looked as pale as paper and seemed to be very sick. One look at her condition reminded him of those times when... when his beloved Abigail was fighting with her illness back when she was still a human. And even now that he knew she was totally fine and healthy, he could not help but feel

the tight squeeze of his heart just remembering how weak and frail she had been back then.

"Iryz!" Zeres rushed towards her and caught her stumbling figure in his arms. "How did you... how come you're still awake?" His worried eyes scanned her from head to toe, brows furrowing when he saw how even her lips were paler than usual and there was a light sheen of sweat beading her brows.

"Alexander..." she called out, looking at Alex with pleading eyes. "Zeres is just trying to save me."

"Stop it, Iryz..." Zeres begged, worried to death. And then Iryz gripped her fist over her heart. She began to gasp as though out of breath. It was as if she were having a cardiac arrest!

## Chapter 290 The Truth

Alexander who was watching could not help but panic and approach. Zeres placed his hand over her heart and as the silverish glow appeared from his palm, Iryz slowly settled down from her trashing and fell peacefully asleep in Zeres' arms.

At that moment, Sebastian had also arrived. He and Alex came rushing in from the opposite direction as a precautionary measure, just in case Zeres was already moving Izabelle away.

Sebastian who still had his blood boiling like an inferno within him did not expect this particular scenario to be welcoming him. What is... going on? What had happened to Iryz and why was she passed out in Zeres' arms?

He had met this woman many times before, especially during the times when he was approaching Zeres to help him bring Ezekiel back. Sebastian had especially liked the cookies and coffee she was making whenever he visited their home. Iryz was so healthy then... So what had happened to her?

The rage within him that was threatening to blow like a volcano was forgotten for a few moments. One reason was because he could sense that his Iza was here. Her presence was very faint and it was coming from somewhere within the house. But for some reason, Sebastian also felt like she was somewhere outside, he just could not quite pinpoint where her exact position was at the moment because he could not pick up her scent at all aside from the faint scent of her coming from that house. It was just his intuition and feeling but...

"Iryz is dying and no, none of you can help. Not even I can save her even if I give up my life in exchange!" Zeres suddenly yelled as he stayed there on the ground, holding Iryz



in his arms. This was the first time Sebastian was hearing Zeres letting his emotions go. Usually, the man was cool, calm and collected. But he did not blame the man. If it were him and Izabelle in their shoes, he would behave similarly... Or even worse.

Zeres..." Alexander calmly and carefully spoke. "Don't say that. There will always be a way â€œ"

"Enough!" Zeres harshly barked out, stopping Alexander from continuing his words. After drawing in a deep breath, he shook his head. "We've tried to look for other ways... for years, Alexander. We've been searching for so many years but there is nothing! Nothing, Alex! Do you think there is something I couldn't or wouldn't do to save Iryz?!" His tone became more aggrieved the more he spoke.

"Still... I believe if we all work together... if you don't do it by yourself and ask for our help. That's why we're here, isn't it, Zeres? You have friends, damn it! You have me and Abigail! How could you think we can't or won't help you when you don't even tell us anything at all? We aren't mind readers to be able to know what you keep in your mind! We can do anything to help you too, you big idiot!"

Alex's outburst had everyone falling silent for a while until Zeres suddenly smiled as he lifted his face and looked at his longtime friend. The sad and almost broken smile on his face looked almost haunting.

"Really? Anything? Then give Izabelle to me, Alex..." his smile turned villainous and yet heartbreaking. "Iryz needs her heart to continue living. Can you give me that? Can you give us that?!"

And the world seemed to stop spinning.

Then Sebastian finally lost it. His initially calm and muted aura blazed crazily and the burning rage and everything else that he was holding in since the moment he heard the news that Elle was missing, was now bursting out of him.

The danger coming from Sebastian instantly reached Zeres and the silver-haired witch shifted his gaze warily to him.

Zeres' body glowed brightly as well when his power fully enveloped him, prepared to attack and defend the moment Sebastian dared to come at him. His arms tightened minutely around his wife who was still unconscious.

"What..." Zeres' gaze at Sebastian was sharp, deadly. "It's not like Izabelle's heart belongs to her, either. That heart isn't hers in the first place and I know all of you know that as well!"

Alex stepped in and held Sebastian's arm, keeping him grounded.

"Izabelle borrowed that heart too and she'd been living because of it for many years... it's about time, isn't it? That she should give it back to where it belongs â€œ"

"Shut the f\*\*k up!" Sebastian growled, incensed at Zeres' demands on Izabelle's heart. "Say anything more and I'll really kill you!"

If Alex was not stopping him and if Iryz was not in Zeres' arms right now, Sebastian was not sure what else he would have done already. He was not confident that he would be able to hold back.

Zeres smirked. "Ah..." his smirk turned to heartless chuckle. "Right... I almost forgot about the real reason why you're reacting like this. I wonder how Izabelle would react if she learns about the truth â€œ" that the real reason you took interest in her in the first place was because of the heart that is within her â€œ"

"Enough..." Sebastian's voice was barely a whisper. But it was a sound filled with nothing but danger and death.

Still, Zeres continued. As if he did not care about what would happen next. As though he was willing to let go of all civility to those he had considered his friends from before.

"That heart belongs to your late girlfriend from long time ago and that's why you cannot let another woman who's not yours to have it â€œ"

"Zeres! That's enough!" Alex finally shouted as he blocked Sebastian from lunging forward. The vampire prince was now looking simply as deadly as he stood there, a single threat was what was left to keep him under a leash. To not go ahead and destroy the man before him.

"That heart is supposed to be for Iryz!!!" Zeres roared. "Kiel, your brother stole it from Calliste after killing her!"