

Hellbound Heart

Chapter 291 Snow

A few moments ago...

'Snow?!' Elle could not believe what her eyes saw. The wolf before her looks just like Snow... but why was it that he seemed to have become so much bigger compared to the last time she saw him? Could there be another wolf that is similar to Snow?

Looking behind her, Elle could not sense any other unusual presences. There seemed to be no one else that was chasing her.

She returned her gaze to the large wolf, still not daring to move. The wolf kept his eyes on her. Those eyes that were gleaming with intelligence now looked even more mystifying to her. It did not look like the eyes of a mere animal anymore. And it seemed obvious that he could see her!

But the funny thing was, Elle did not feel any unease or fear towards him despite her new observations. Like always, she felt drawn to him.

"Snow?" she whispered. The wolf took measured steps closer to her in response to her calling.

When he approached, being only three steps away from her, Elle's jaw dropped seeing how large the wolf truly was. W-when did he grow so big?!

"W-what are you doing here?" she stuttered for a bit due to disbelief. Inwardly, she even considered doubting that this was her Snow. But after coming closer, she could pick up the little characteristics that told her he truly was Snow! She just knew it was him! "Are you here to rescue me? I'm trying to run away from this place before my kidnappers capture me again. You know the path towards the nearest town, right?"

The wolf lowered his head, moving it closer to her face. He was careful, as if he was trying his best to not startle her.

Elle could not help but hold her breath because of his sheer size. Though she honestly did not know how it was that she could not feel any fear. It should be normal for her to back off a little and feel fear when an animal this size was this close to her. He could really snap her head effortlessly! And yet, she trusted him.

"What is it?" she asked again in a low whisper. "How about you just walk ahead and I'll follow you?"

Snow moved his head even lower until he halted. His snout stopped inches before her forearm and sniffed.

Elle looked down at the spot that he nudged and her eyes widened at the sight of the small line of blood, only about half an inch long. She got scratched!!! Oh no!!!

Her heartbeat raced. This was a huge problem because she could not just wipe it off. Alicia had told her that her scent will still linger on even if she had wrapped it with a cloth bandage. That was why Alicia had prepared a few special witch's patches that could completely block her scent from escaping.

Frantically searching her pockets, Elle could not find any of the prepared patches on her. Did Zeres take it away? Or did it drop out of her pocket when she was kidnapped?

Gritting her teeth, Elle frantically tried to think of an alternative when Snow stuck his tongue out. Elle thought that he would lick her wound, but the wolf looked up at her first, as though asking her for permission. And Elle did not know what had gotten into her, but she nodded without a doubt.

What happened next had her freezing to the spot.

Snow backed off after licking that small amount of blood and an ashen smoke appeared around him, lifting off his fur as it weaved upwards in a wavy spiral. He made a low growl and then she watched him turn... into a human!

An ash-grey haired male now stood right where Snow had been standing just moments earlier. Her Snow had turned into a... man!??!

"W-werewolf..." she stammered.

He was kneeling on one knee, completely naked as he bowed his head at her. When he looked up, a beautiful face with electric blue eyes and sharp, well-defined jaws had her surprised. But still, she immediately thought that he still somehow resembled Snow even in this human form! He was the perfect human version of Snow!

"I don't have much time to stay in this form, Princess. So forgive me for going straight to the point before explaining." He began before Elle could recover from the surprise at his transformation. "The small amount of blood I've licked off from you is what turned me into my human form for just a few moments. Princess, please come along with me. I will bring you back to the place where you truly belong. I promise we will protect you and explain everything to you once we're there. So please follow me, Princess. Please ..." he gritted his jaws and he only managed to utter "please, come with me" before he transformed back into his wolf form right before her eyes. His back hunched over and white fur sprouted over his skin and it was as though suddenly, he was back as Snow as she knew him.

The entire scenario that played before her eyes had her paralyzed. She heard the sound of bones cracking and low growls emanating from him as the transformation occurred. It was a sight that could have shocked her brains out and should be enough to make any normal human pass out or doubt the reality of life.

Now she truly felt like she was no longer a normal human after all that she was told she had seen. Because the sight of it did not faze her in the slightest. At all.

Snow stared at her before he took a step back. His blue eyes asking her to follow after him. The look in his eyes were so compelling and filled with so much begging that Elle felt her heart softening at it.

And when the wolf turned around, walking away even as his head was looking back at her, Elle found herself voluntarily stepping forward, following after him.

To My Dearest Readers,

I would like to say sorry for constantly failing to update lately. I think burnout had long caught up on me. And I felt like I needed to really take a breather for real this time or I'll regret it. It has been really hard for me to even finish a single chapter a day lately. I tried to pressure myself to not miss a day of update because I know lack of updates might make my readers leave and will also definitely affect my income. The truth is the days I've missed before were not because I was resting. I wrote during those days too but I just failed to reach enough wordcounts no matter how I forced myself. I want to say this here because I know some readers might think I am losing interest or something. Please don't think that. Writing is my full time job now and if I don't update, I won't earn. In fact, failing to update stresses me out because I know all the risks. And that's why I kept pushing myself. But I think I've reached my limit lately.

I am not planning to stop or take a long break but I just decided to not pressure myself too much anymore by forcing myself to finish a chapter everyday. I am planning to really rest this time and take my time. I want to write in a way that it's alright if there's a day or two that I only managed to finish 500 words. That it's alright if all I did in one day is scribble very short scripts and ideas on my notebook. I felt that this is going to help me a lot and it is really working. Right now I am starting to feel better. So I would like to ask you guys to be more patient with me. One day for sure, I will be able to go back to my usual schedule. I promise this won't take too long.

So for now, I'm asking you guys to go easy on me (singing Adelle's song lol) if my updates are irregular. Kidding aside, I really really hope that you guys will patiently wait. I really wish and hope that you will continue to support me despite my decreased update.

Thank you and I love ya'll. <3 <3

Kazzen

Chapter 292 Who... Are They?

A gush of wind made the quiet trees dance above her, pulling Elle's attention away from Snow.

Looking up, she watched the leaves twirl about their merry dance to a song that she could not hear. This feeling... she could not quite put it into words, but the feel of this wind was just different. It was just not normal to her. It instantly reminded her of that night when Alexander...

Elle's eyes stretched wide as she whipped her head towards the direction where she came from. Alexander was here?!

Suddenly, she was caught in a dilemma. Should she turn around and head back? Or should she continue to follow Snow?

She did not have evidence that Alexander was indeed here. But her gut feeling told her confidently that it was so. The thought that Sebastian might be with Alexander right now had her taking a step away from Snow. The possibility that she would be able to see Sebastian again was too strong of a pull for her.

The wolf growled lowly and silently. It was not one of an angry growl but one that was surely asking her not to leave.

Turning to Snow, Elle's expression was apologetic. "I'm sorry, Snow. I really need to go back. Will you come with me instead? Let's go meet with Alexander and Sebastian together."

Snow did not immediately react. His intelligent looking blue eyes stayed focused on her, unblinking.

"And I can't just go with you without telling Sebastian or my friends. I can't let them go risking their lives looking for me." She explained earnestly, hoping to convince Snow into following her. "Can't you just come with me, Snow? My friends... They are all good people. They would never hurt you."

When Snow still did not make any movements to go with her, Elle chewed on her lower lip. "Alright, if you don't want to come with me, wait for me here, okay? I'll definitely return here to look for you. Can you wait for me until then?"

After saying that, Elle slowly turned around. She looked back at him over her shoulder once more and then she started to run back to that small house.

She had already moved quite far off from it, so she ran as fast as she could.

When she knew she was finally close, Elle belatedly realized she was not feeling the tiredness she had been expecting. It was of course a normal response from her body after running so fast like this. So why...

The surprise that gripped her made her feel both amazed and utterly shocked at the same time. How cool was this?! Was this really happening?! She was not tired at all? Was it because she was invisible right now?

She could not help the smile that was tugging at the corner of her lips. It was just simply unbelievable... all these discoveries. And it seems, she could no longer stop herself from enjoying the thrill of this completely new and magical world she had somehow come across into.

No longer feeling any fear and worry, Elle finally let herself revel in the feeling of being someone that would be considered as supernatural. And she found herself feeling so amazing and free that it was insane!

Her eyes were gleaming with bliss as she continued running. Part of her was also excited to show Sebastian all of these new and improved sides of her that he had yet to know of. She already felt like he was here. Her gut had told her too.

And she was getting closer, the feel of that familiar dark and heavy presence she was approaching solidified her suspicion that Sebastian was indeed here.

Feeling mischievous, Elle decided to surprise the man for a change. Usually, it is always him who was giving her the surprises. Despite her longing to go and throw herself into his arms, she held back and slowed down to hide her presence.

She had wondered many times how Sebastian would react if he found out about her ability. Or could it be that he had known something was up already?

A surge of that dark and heavy aura pulled Elle from her thoughts. She hastened, unable to keep herself stalling any longer. This strange and mysterious darkness Sebastian was exuding just would not cease from pulling at her, like a magnet.

"It's not like Isabelle'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!"

These sharp, deadly words were what welcomed Elle the moment she rushed in with anticipatory excitement. However, after hearing that, she stood there frozen as her smile slowly faded.

"Isabelle 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 and Elle dragged her gaze from Zeres to her lover's form. He was finally here. Her man. But... just what was... going on?

Zeres chuckled, causing Elle to look at the miserably beautiful man holding the unconscious Iryz in his arms. "I wonder how Izabelle would react if she learns about the truth â€" that the real reason you took interest in her in the first place was because of the heart that is within her â€""

Elle heard Sebastian roar. But Elle could barely understand the words he had said because her mind had suddenly started replaying that night she first met Sebastian in that room. The image of him staring, touching the place over her heart filled her mind. And then she remembered all the strange and incredibly painful episodes she had gone through not too long ago that had started with extreme chest pains.

"That heart belonged to your late girlfriend from a long time ago and that's why you cannot let another woman who's not yours to have it! That heart is supposed to be for Iryz!!! Kiel, your brother stole it from Calliste after killing her!"

'L-late girlfriend? Kiel? C-calliste? Who... are they?" Elle could only ask within her mind as her world seemed to start turning dark again. Deep inside her, she wished she had not returned. That she had continued on, following after Snow to where he wanted to lead her. She wished everything she had just heard was just a joke, that it was just another bad dream.

"I... Iza?" Sebastian's voice suddenly echoed.

Dearest Readers,

Thank you for your patience. And happy valentines day guys. Sorry i can't give a lovey dovey chapter for today. :(and sorry but the Zeke and Alicia valentines special i promised before will be postponed. I am hoping for your continues understanding.

And i just want to thank you guys again for all the encouraging messages you left me in the previous chapter. I really really appreciate your supports. I used to really fear getting abandoned by my readers so even when i'm sick and tired af, I force myself to write. I still fear it now not gonna lie. But I finally accepted the fact that there's really nothing more important than putting my health first.

I still have so many stories I want to tell so I want to go easy on myself and slow down a bit more to fully recover. It's been 4 years of nonstop writing since I started writing so I think my body is really demanding for a bit more longer rest. So right now, i can't promise a daily update yet guys.

Thank you once again and hoping for your continues patience.

Chapter 293 Answer Me

Elle felt like her heart was on the brink of shattering into pieces. She desperately refused to believe everything that Zeres had said.

But as much as she tried to convince herself otherwise, a doubt so strong lingered in the back of her mind.

With desperation evident in her eyes, Elle faced Sebastian. But as soon as she looked at him, a sudden fear surged like tidal waves within her. A sinking feeling pooled in her stomach.

Her feet unconsciously took a step back. A strong denial hit her like a tonne of bricks. Part of her was screaming internally to ask, to demand for the truth. But that fear she felt, had her chickening out. Would she be able to bear the consequences if all that she had heard was indeed the truth?

"I... Iza?" Sebastian's voice suddenly echoed out. He sounded distraught. The rage that was emanating from him was now replaced with panic as he looked around.

The look in his eyes told her that he could already sense her presence around. However, he still could not see her.

"Iza..." he called out once again, his feet taking a step forwards, moving towards where she was. Even though his eyes were still wandering about, desperately trying to catch a glimpse of her, his sense of instinct on where she was frighteningly keen.

Elle wanted to just throw herself in his arms and no longer think too much about what was happening. She wanted to be blissfully ignorant of how things were panning out. It was merely days since they got separated, but Elle felt as though it had been weeks and she missed him so bad. She wanted him to hold her again, kiss her, and tell her that everything would be alright. That what she heard was at least not the whole truth. That there was a reason why things were the way it was right now and it was nothing as bad as it seemed to be.

"I know you're here, Iza." Sebastian continued taking small but sure steps forward, somehow still able to move even closer to her. "Let me see you, please" there was a trace of desperation that Elle could pick up in his tone.

"Please tell me that Zeres is lying." Came Elle's strained voice after a long moment of silence.

Sebastian's eyes stretched wide as he froze at his spot for a moment. He looked like he had already known about her ability, but was having a bit of a hard time believing it was real for a moment there.

"Answer me, Sebastian." She pleaded. All she wanted was for him to deny it.

But Sebastian seemed unable to respond in the manner that she had hoped he could. "Iza... please show yourself to â€œ"

"Answer me first." She cut him off, stepping back as Sebastian swung his long arms out in a sweeping gesture, trying in vain to reach out for her. If she had not taken that step back, the tips of his fingers would have grazed the edge of her clothes. "Please tell me Zeres is lying, Sebastian. Please..." That last word was spoken in a broken whisper.

Zeres' sardonic laughter echoed from his corner when Sebastian struggled to respond to her pleas. "Of course he can't answer you, Izabelle. Because what you just heard is the whole truth â€œ"

Before Elle realized it, she found herself already turned around and running swiftly away. Back to the woods where she came from. Everything in her felt like glass that had been shattered by a heavy blow. And the cracks were still spreading, threatening to crumble into a million tiny shards.

She could not help but think back to all those times when she had felt how mysterious it was for the Reigns to suddenly arrive in the Eves palace that night. She had thought then that they must have a hidden agenda, but she could not figure anything out. And then came Alexander and Abigail into the picture.

Abigail's attachment to her was a little too good to be true to her before. She only forced herself to stop thinking about it and just shrugged it off. But now... could the reason why Abi was attached to her was because of the heart that had been residing inside of her?

As emotions consumed her, a memory suddenly flashed across her mind. It was a memory so new and mysterious to her. She saw an image of a man's hand holding hers first and then the back of him. He was large, dressed in a black long coat and had dark hair. She was obviously a child looking up to an adult in that memory. Who was... he?

The next thing she saw was a door that was opened. She seemed to be peeking through it when she heard a woman's voice speaking from the side that she could not make out. There were only two words that had clearly reached her: 'heart' and 'transplant'.

Elle stumbled and fell to the ground. Kneeling on the dirt, Elle could only stare down, wide-eyed at that new memory that suddenly appeared in her mind. The memory had abruptly stopped there. She did not even manage to see the face of that mysterious man.

But what crushed her was the realization that what Zeres claimed must really be true. That this heart she had now, originally belonged to someone else.

"Iza!!!" Sebastian's voice echoed out, loud and desperate.

Slowly, she looked over her shoulder and saw him, looking around in distress, trying to search for her.

He paused and looked in her direction. But since he was not meeting her gaze, Elle figured he still could not see her.

"Iza..." his voice lowered, frantic yet trying to keep himself as calm as he could. "Let me see you... hold you... please. I'll explain everything. I promise!"

No words proceeded out of Elle's lips. She simply stared up at him as he approached her with measured steps.

"Let's talk properly, Iza..." he lowered himself before her and at last, he had managed to touch her, causing her to become visible.

Surprise and disbelief flashed across his eyes for a moment but Elle could not care less about his reactions to her abilities anymore.

"Answer me, Sebastian," she said, pain filling her eyes. "Why were you... touching over my heart like something in it was intriguing you back then during the night we first met?"

Chapter 294 Owner

"It must be because of my strange heartbeat, right?" Elle continued, her jaws clenching as she tried hard not to tear up. "It intrigued you because you realized that my heartbeats were so similar to your..." she choked despite her efforts not to let her emotions get the best of her.

"Yes." Sebastian answered in a low and serious voice. "That's right, Izabelle. Your heartbeats did catch my attention and intrigued me the moment I saw you that first time."

"And that's why you took interest in me and eventually agreed to marry me, isn't it?" Pain brimmed in his eyes as she uttered her accusation.

"That's not the only reason why I agreed to marry you, Izabelle. Your brave bargain that night had also convinced me to accept your proposal." Sebastian answered her truthfully.

She swallowed the still growing ache in her throat. It felt as though it had formed a ball and got stuck at the back of her throat. "But you... you and Alexander were there in Eves Palace not because of me, isn't it? It's because... the heart of a person who is still so dear to you guys is residing within me."

Sebastian shook his head. "F**k no, Iza! None of us were aware of the heart within you at that time. Alexander was there because of you. I had found out that they had already known you since you were little. I don't know much about the details, but all I know is that you were a very important person to Abigail. That's why Alexander was there to attend your supposed wedding."

Surprise flashed across Elle's eyes before she tilted her head, trying to recall Alexander in her memories. After some moments, she creased her brows before saying, "But I don't remember anything..."

"I don't know exactly what has happened, but it appears that you have completely forgotten about them. And since you don't remember anything, Abigail didn't want to say anything to you to avoid making things more complicated before it was time. Perhaps she just didn't want to confuse you or she's just waiting for the right time to tell you about it. Either way, once we're back, I'm sure Abigail will reveal everything to you if you ask her about it. However, I can assure you that it wasn't intentional that either of them had kept this matter from you even up till now."

Elle's burning emotions cooled down a little after thinking and considering what was being said. She had immediately felt the truth in Sebastian's explanation. That memory that came back to her just now was proof in itself. And not to mention that she indeed could not remember anything about her early childhood life. Many times, she had wondered what happened to her memories from her younger years and why they were missing. As though something had been deleted or hidden deep in her mind. She had asked her doctor about this, once a few years ago, and all she had been told was that her case was normal. And of course, since it had come from the doctor, her response was to put it aside and not worry about it. More so when there were other more pressing matters that were troubling her.

"What about you?" she asked. Her voice was now barely above whisper. "Why did you come to the Eves Palace that night? What was your reasoning?"

"I was ordered to attend. I didn't ask for any explanation because when I ended up seeing you, I realized I was definitely being set up to meet you."

"S-Set up? By who?" Elle was taken aback. Who would even dare to set Sebastian up?

"I'm not sure. Maybe by Alexander or... my... my damned older brother had already planned for this long before he even left."

"Ezekiel?" her eyes stretched wide as soon as she said that name. "Ezekiel is... the Kiel that Zeres is talking about?!"

"Yes, he's the Kiel Zeres mentioned."

"Tell me... did he really steal..." Elle paused. She did not know how to broach the subject about his missing older brother.

"By the time I was freed from the dungeon, he was already gone. So, I know nothing about the things that he has done." Sebastian's face darkened a little.

"But do you believe... he did that?"

Tiny muscles on his face twitched as he dropped his head and ran his fingers through his hair. After a stretch of silence, he finally answered. "No."

A short moment of silence passed when Elle felt her heart suddenly throb. It was not exactly painful, but it was strange. Definitely not a normal throb.

Lifting her hand, she clutched it over her chest and whispered in a saddened tone. "Whose is it? The owner of this... heart?"

"I don't... really know, Iza. I don't think any of us really knows the truth. All I know is that your heartbeat is exactly the same as... Alyssa's."

Elle's heart throbbed again. However this time, it was a little painful. Alyssa... She uttered that name in her head and she could not help the bitter and painful smile that tugged at the corner of her lips.

Those nights she had caught Sebastian calling out that name in his sleep while he was holding her, vividly flashed in her head like taunting and haunting images. And she could not help but think that perhaps... the reason why Sebastian was so drawn to her was because... Lord... she hated the very thought in her head right now. Hated it so much that she wished she could just shut her brain down like how one would shut a computer down.

"Iza..." he called out to her softly as he reached out to touch her. But she jerked her face away just before his fingers could brush her skin, shocking him.

"Right now... I don't know why my mind is... replaying those nights when you were... calling out Alyssa's name while holding me, Sebastian." She told him with a voice so weak and choked on the tears that seemed to be stuck in her throat.

Chapter 295 Would You

"Iza... that's... I'm..." Sebastian was struggling on how to answer. Fearful that he would say something that would end up hurting her further.

He was scared she would just up and disappear on him and run away again if he ended up uttering something that would worsen the situation. He still couldn't forget those times when he had said something that hurt her bad instead of making her feel better. So now he was really hesitant and careful on what comes from his mouth in a situation where she was very emotional.

But it seems his hesitation didn't do anything but worsen the situation as well.

"I know we didn't start out great at all. What we have now, didn't start with love at all." Elle's eyes gleaming with unshed tears. "I know that... but the fact that it's Alyssa's heart that's within me is making me doubt and wonder if... if you would actually fall for me if I did not have it in me at all. It's what had initially drawn you to me the very first time, after all â€œ"

"Enough, Iza!" Sebastian gritted his teeth, grabbing her wrist without warning.

"Why? You don't want us to have this conversation? You were the one who wanted us to talk, Sebastian." She retorted almost aggressively. Her overflowing emotions were now consuming her. "Tell me, if I didn't have the strange heartbeat that is exactly the same as your... would you have even taken any interest in me at all?" she gripped her hand over her chest. "If I didn't have Alyssa's heart... would you still want me? Would you have even bothered with me at all? Answer me, Sebastian!" her voice was wavering and a little shrill at the end.

"Stop mentioning that name!!" he growled and when she froze, Sebastian harshly ran his fingers through his hair and cursed. That was totally not how he wanted to behave towards her right now or ever. But she was really not making things easy for him.

"You are being ridiculous right now, Izabelle." He uttered weakly, trying to calm himself.

A quiet tear fell from her eyes as a bitter smile tugged at the corner of her lips. "Right... you're right, I think I'm really being ridiculous." she mumbled to herself, wiping her tears as she pulled her hand out of his grasp.

But Sebastian did not want to let go. He knew he could not let her go. If he did, he would regret it.

"Let go, Sebastian." She tugged at her hand again.

"No, Iza... I'm not letting you go. Not when you're like this." Sebastian even shook his head to push his point across.

"Like this? Like what?! Not when I'm being ridiculous because I am mentioning Alyssa's name and asking things that I wanted to know?" Elle burst out. She did not know what had gotten into her that she would react like this. Usually, she would rather keep everything bottled within until she couldn't take it anymore. But today, everything was just different. Her emotions... her thoughts... her feelings... everything felt out of control. As though she was not able to get a handle on her own self.

Perhaps because of all that had been happening. But still... she could not stop herself from spiraling down south and being overcome by her negative emotions. At this moment, her composure was nowhere to be seen. It was just gone.

"All I wanted is for you to answer me! To tell me that I'm wrong! That I'm just thinking too much! That you'd still want me regardless of what's within me! But you can't even answer that! Now you tell me I'm being ridiculous and growl at me for mentioning her name?!" She pushed at him agitatedly, screaming at him as Sebastian just stood still, letting her slam her palms against his chest, allowing her to spend her anger. "You're the one being ridiculous, Sebastian! You â€œ"

"How about you?" He cut her off with a deep, neutral voice. "Would you still love me if you don't have that heart within you?"

Elle froze. Her entire world seemed to halt as she stared at him.

"Such a question sounds ridiculous, isn't it, Iza?" he asked her softly.

After a couple of seconds, she could see that he had simply asked that question to make her realize his point. That it was indeed an absurd question to ask.

Somehow, she could now see his point, but...

"No..." her voice was now barely above a whisper as she lowered her eyes, breaking their gazes that were locked into each other. "It's not ridiculous. It's a valid question, Sebastian..."

When she lifted her eyes and their eyes held, it was his turn to become very still.

Whatever he saw in her eyes that moment had done something extreme in him that Elle managed to slip out of his grasp and disappeared before his eyes.

Sebastian rose in panic and desperately grabbed at the air before him.

Surprisingly, he managed to catch her before she could get away and ended up grabbing her from behind.

"F**k..." he uttered a desperate sound as he held her so tightly in his embrace.

"Let go of me, Seb..." she choked out quietly, crying.

"I..." his voice shook. "I did it again, didn't I? I caused you pain again..." he buried his face onto her shoulder, clinging onto her like he would die if he did not hold her tight enough. "I'm sorry, Iza. I'm sorry... I didn't mean for you to... f**k... I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked that." His large body trembled even as he held onto her. He knew that he had almost completely lost her that moment she slipped out of his hold.

"The first time I saw you... my heart had already been acting... strange. Even until now. When you're around, there are times when I feel like this heart within me has a mind of its own that's only responding to you and you alone." She told him with such a heartbreaking look in her eyes. "Since the beginning, I was drawn to you and I couldn't seem to do anything about it no matter how hard I tried to distance myself from you... To put you out of my heart." She smiled bitterly. "You might be right... Sebastian."

Chapter 296 Vivid

"You might be right, Sebastian." Elle felt him freeze at her words and her heart squeezed so tight, just at the mere thought that her words were actually hurting his feelings so bad.

But she shut her eyes tightly and forced her tears to stop flowing. Those words she had uttered, not only hurt him but herself too, so badly. She hated that this issue even had to be brought up like this. She hated that she brought this up at all. She should have just ignored it and told herself that it did not even matter anymore. That whatever the case was with her heart, it did not really matter at all anymore. But she had gone and let her emotions take over the reins.

Now here they were. In an even deeper hole.

That question he had asked made her question things she had never even imagined. Made her look at things from a different perspective - one that is not only on her point of view. His question had her pointing those questions she threw at him back to her. If she did not carry this heart within herself, would she even be feeling the same way she was for Sebastian right now? Was this even her loving him all on her own, or...

Elle tried to shut all these thoughts and emotions that were flooding her mind from affecting her, but she was helpless. Because these thoughts continued coming back to her no matter what. And how she apparently hated it was not all baseless. As though something in her was taunting herself, she was immediately reminded by those strange feelings she had tried hard to ignore ever since that night she first met him. It was as though the moment she laid her eyes on him, her heart already reacted strangely. She had told herself it was love at first sight. But... was it truly the case? Now that she thought about it, she remembered how she felt like there was a connection between them even before they met. She had felt many times before that the attraction that was going on between them that moment they first met was strange and seemingly not normal. She had thought it might be the so-called soul-mate thing that she had previously read in some of the novels. But now, she was questioning it again... Perhaps it never was as simple as that in the first place? Was it all because of the heart that was beating within her that had influenced everything?

She hated that she remembered everything so vividly. She hated it so much. She hated that these things were what was flashing so clearly in her mind in this situation. Why was it that everything about Sebastian, even the littlest emotions and feelings she had felt were still so clear in her mind like this? She had felt this before, that something just did not seem normal about this. Could this be another one of her abilities that she knew nothing about? But why was it responding only to Sebastian?

She wished she had completely forgotten about these things. She wished she was not being reminded of every single feeling she had felt for him in the past. But what could she do?

With a painful chuckle, Elle put her hand over his. "I think I'm really... messed up right now, Sebastian." She whispered. "I need to set my mind and emotions straight before I can face you again."

His grip tightened. But eventually, he loosened his grip on her.

Feeling his shaky breath, Elle turned to look at him. Putting it in simple terms, he looked like... hell.

"You want to leave..." he said as if he already knew she was not planning to go back to the Black Forest. "Where?"

"I don't know..." Elle replied, shrugging her slender shoulders. "But I need to go there. I want to know more about myself, Sebastian."

"And what if I don't want to let you go?" His eyes gazed into hers with desperation.

A stretch of silence reigned between them. "I will still go, Sebastian. I'm not... your wife anymore so â€" her voice broke a little at the word 'wife' as a sudden grimace of pain flashed across her face, gone too quickly before it could be registered.

She was suddenly pinned against a tree trunk.

Sebastian hovered over her as his eyes blazed with molten grey fire.

"You are still mine, Iza!!! Divorced or not!" he growled, every fibre of his being protesting that statement. His instincts not allowing that this woman was no longer recognised as his.

"I am still yours, Sebastian. But not as your possession" Elle tried to soothe his agitated state.

"I am doing this to keep you safe!"

"Sebastian!" she yelled at him, exasperated that he was doing what he did from before. Again. "Are we back at square one? We've been here before... and there is no way I would ever consent to let you lock me up again."

He fell silent at her blunt words, stunned for a moment. That accusation stung, but unfortunately, it was completely true.

His grip on her wrist loosened up as his throat worked. Suddenly, his forehead pressed over her collarbone.

"F**k...." he cursed. His voice was hoarse. "I don't want this, Iza..." He did not want to let her go. But neither did he want to hold her back against her will. He was torn, not knowing how to move forward.

She could not stop herself from reaching out and hugging his head. "I feel like this is necessary for both of us, Sebastian. We both need some space to think anyway..."

"There is nothing to think about, Izabelle." He begged, wanting her to reconsider. Hoping against all odds that she might sudden her heart and relent. Alas...

"For me, there is. A lot, in fact. I need to get a hold of myself, especially regarding this..." she trailed off, not wanting to mention anything about her heart to him anymore. Not when they have finally calmed down and are talking normally again. She would not be able to take it if he had growled at her like that again.

"Can't you just... forget about this issue about your heart, Iza?" he said, pleading. Shocking her that he had said 'your heart'. "Alyssa's dead. She's been long gone... she's... f**k... this heart belongs to you now. Everything else shouldn't matter anymore. You're telling me you need space to think about this. But hell, Iza... I don't think you'll get anything out of doing that. You will only overthink and distance yourself even further from me, endangering yourself."

Elle could not respond. She had not expected him to say all those. But despite his words, Elle just knew there was no way she could just forget about the issue regarding her heart. Yes, Alyssa's gone but... why was she feeling like this? Like she was here with her all these times? And her powers... were all these powers that she possesses now, all because of the heart within her? If that was so, how could she ever convince herself that this issue regarding her heart should not matter?

"Don't go." He shook his head slowly. "I can't handle it... you disappearing again."

Kissing the remnants of tears on her face as he murmured his pleas, Elle felt her resistance melting like ice cream by the blazing fire. His touches are so gentle and loving that it really almost broke her resolve.

Shutting her eyes, Elle battled within herself. She wanted to go. She knew she needed to go and see for herself where Snow was planning to bring her. She wanted to find answers. Perhaps, this was the only way for her to finally come to terms with herself.

Taking a deep breath, Elle cupped his handsome, ragged face. Lord... she missed him... she missed touching him...

"I'll be fine, Sebastian." She told him. "I am not the powerless human I thought I was anymore. So please... have a little faith in me and don't worry... I promise I will be alright. I'll come back to you myself once I get the answers I desperately needed. I promise."

Her lips pressed down hard on his own and just as Sebastian was about to let go of her wrists to hold her face, she backed off and disappeared. It happened so fast that Sebastian was left there with his hands still hanging in the air, touching nothing.

- Chapter 297 Tell Me!

Chapter 297 Tell Me!

Elle took great efforts to increase her speed in her attempt to get away from Sebastian as fast as she could. Worried that he might pursue her, she ramped up her speed every second as she was running off in one direction.

Fortunately, he remained in his position. He was still facing the tree trunk where she was standing earlier. His aura was blazing like the hellfires even as he was obviously suppressing himself, trying his hardest to keep himself grounded there. He was trying his utmost best to respect her decision and hope against all odds that she would return to him - sooner rather than later.

It was hard for her to watch him. Her heart was breaking even as she turned around to leave him like this. But she had to go. She must! And she felt like this was her only chance. She knew that he was forcing himself to curb his instincts in not running after her and stopping her right now. So this means he was forcing himself to understand and respect what she wanted even though he was absolutely against it.

So after inaudibly uttering 'I love you,' and 'I'll come back as soon as possible', she ran off without turning back to the man that her heart was yearning for. Her eyes were now focused and trained onto the place where she had left Snow waiting.

When he could no longer feel Elle's presence, Sebastian shut his eyes tightly for a moment, just inhaling deeply to see if he could still catch a whiff of her unique scent on the winds. However...

When he opened it again, his eyes were red like blood that was freshly spilled. Lifting his hand, he tugged at his hair, gritting his teeth until grinding sounds could be heard. "You better come back safe and sound, Izabelle." He growled low. "Because if you don't..."

His fist slammed against the tree trunk. The tree shook before falling over and the birds flew noisily above in the way nature acts when a disaster was about to come.

...

Meanwhile, back at the small house in the forest, Zeres was shaking his head. "Iryz can't be saved by using just any random heart, Alex. She can only be saved by that... that werewolf's heart." He said in a miserable voice. "Calliste knew that and that's why she'd kept that heart for Iryz. But it was stolen from her." And then he lifted his eyes, a sharp look crossing them before his lids lowered and the sharpness was concealed.

Alex did not know what to say. Disbelief danced across his eyes. "Who told you that?"

"I found Calliste's private journal. She revealed everything there." Zeres told him straight up.

Alex shook his head, not hiding the fact that he was having a hard time believing anything that Zeres was saying. "You can't be serious about this, Zeres. How could you be sure that the journal is telling the truth? How could you even be sure that the journal actually belongs to Calliste? Did she reveal it on her own volition or you actually saw her writing in it?"

Zeres smirked bitterly. "I knew it... I knew you would not believe me. Abigail and Alicia too. Just because I'm like this, every one of you are now forgetting who I am. I am a silver haired witch first before I got the dragon blood and became the immortal I am today, Alex. I am a one-of-a-kind ancient witch and I'm not the same anymore." His silver eyes gleamed with a dangerous light. "In the past few years, I started

remembering many things, receiving information from all the previous witch queens, and even the cursed and supposedly completely erased ones. No one knows more than I do in this world right now, Alex... and yet..." his voice trembled as his hold on Iryz tightened. "And yet, I still can't..."

Zeres' body trembled as he gazed at Iryz, her chest barely rising and falling with each labored breath. His silver hair fell in disarray around his face as he let out a bitter, almost manic chuckle, tinged with desperation and sorrow.

"She has already gone through her fourth heart transplant..." he trailed off, his voice barely above a whisper. "Despite knowing it won't work, we've still tried everything. But nothing's working... No matter the efforts put in, nothing works!! Not a damn thing. I could offer my own heart, but I know it won't do her any good too! None!" His whole demeanor was desperate and frenzied.

He clutched Iryz closer to his chest, as if trying to impart his own warmth and life into her frail form. His body shook with the force of his emotions, and he looked as though he might crumble at any moment.

"Why... tell me, Alex... why can't the world be good to me, for once?!" he cried out, his voice rising to a fevered pitch. "Why can't I just catch a break for once in my life? Why can't I at least keep this one person by my side?"

Zeres' hands were a blur as he tugged fiercely at the strands of his silver hair, his whole body shaking with an intensity that bordered on madness.

His eyes were wild and unfocused, darting back and forth as if searching for an escape from the overwhelming despair that threatened to engulf him.

For a moment, it seemed as though he might lose all control, his emotions spiraling out of his grasp like a runaway train hurtling towards disaster.

"How much more suffering do I need to go through?!!! Tell me!!!" He howled madly.

It was as if his grip on reality was slipping away, inch by agonizing inch, and the only thing keeping him tethered to the present was the fragile, unconscious form of the girl that was lying in his arms.

As if in answer to his anguished plea, the sky began to darken and roil with storm clouds, casting an ominous pall over the scene. The very air seemed charged with electricity, as if nature itself was responding to Zeres' agony.

Chapter 298 Miracles

"I hate this f**king world... Alex... Hate it so damned much..." his voice lowered. "You better start finding a way to end me soon. Because if I lose her..." he looked up, his gaze bleeding with just pure misery. And yet, a haunting smile tugged up at the corner of his lips. "I know I don't need to tell you anymore. You've been in my place before, after all."

Alex did not move for a long while. He just stood there watching his friend trembling. He could not help but remember that time when Zeres had healed him, taking away the poison from his body into his own and then went and hid himself behind a wall to die alone.

Alex lowered himself slowly to the ground, his movements gentle and deliberate as he positioned himself before Zeres and the unconscious form of Iryz. With infinite care, he reached out and touched Zeres' arm, his fingers tracing the contours of the other man's flesh in a gesture of comfort and reassurance. "Iryz is still with you, with us, Zeres..." he shifted his gaze to Iryz's pale face. "She's still fighting so hard... she's fighting for you. Even though she's suffering, she's willing to do it because it's for you. So, you're not allowed to think about the end like this. Because nothing is over yet, Zeres. As long as you don't give up on her, there's still hope. I fully understand how hopeless this is right now but..." a gentle smile tugged at the corner of Alex's lips. "Abigail once told me a phrase before... back when we both thought she was just human and was even sick and dying. She told me that... miracles can happen."

A breeze stirred the stagnant air around them, bringing a freshness from nature that was much needed. The rustle of leaves came as a whisper of encouragement. For a moment, silence reigned between the two men, broken only by the sound of their breaths and the beating of their hearts.

And then Alex squeezed Zeres' arm gently, his grip firm and unwavering, imparting what he hopes to be hope and encouragement.

"I had believed in her words back then. And I believe that Iryz will also have her own miracle. So, stand up and raise your head in confidence, Zeres. Let's bring her back to the Black Forest and let's all work together to save her. We can beat the impossible again like we all did many times before... just believe in it." Alexander's voice vibrated with a sincere warmth.

Zeres' shaking body eventually stilled, his breathing slowing to a measured pace. Also, his grip on the girl in his arms was gentle and the deep furrows on his brows eased up. Even the general aura surrounding him seemed to have lightened up significantly.

And then, with a deep sigh, he straightened his shoulders, his silver hair falling back into place, causing Alex to secretly sigh in relief. Though Zeres' eyes were still haunted, there was a glimmer of hope reflected in there as well, a fierce resolve to fight for Iryz, no matter the cost. Alex knew that this would be challenging as hell. But for now, the most important thing was to make Zeres remain sane and bring him back to their side before he completely falls to the other side.

He cannot let that happen. He could never just step back and watch this man spiral back to darkness again. He was done fighting against him. Against this friend of his. He would do anything to get him back on the right track. Not only because he was an important friend to him that he never wanted to fight to death with, but also because he needed him. They needed Zeres as an ally and not as an enemy.

Because right now, Alex felt like the peace Zeke had tried so hard to preserve for so many years was now seriously about to be shattered. Somehow, Alex could just feel it.

His hands were already full with Elijah and Sebastian's matters as well as Alicia and Azy's condition. If Zeres adds his problem into this too...

Sighing secretly, Alex stood, muttering to himself inwardly. 'Damn, Zeke. You better come back soon so I can finally have a one year long honeymoon with my wife!'

While Zeres was preparing Iryz and their important items needed to be move back to the Black Forest, Rion arrived.

The sight of the vampire instantly made Alex's brows crease. Rion's tight and contained expression was enough for him to tell that other troubles had cropped up.

"What happened?" Alex immediately asked.

"The prophetess wants you back in the castle. His Highness Sebastian is already on his way there." Rion nodded sharply before reporting to Alex.

"What happened?" Alex repeated, wanting Rion not to beat around the bush anymore and just spill out the spicific issue.

"It has started." Rion swallowed and spoke in a low tone. "A video of a vampire has been leaked out on the internet and is already being viewed millions of times worldwide. And it seems that humans are now starting to investigate the truth of that matter."

Alex put his hands on his waist akimbo and chuckled, shocking Rion.

"I hope these human leaders won't do anything stupid." Alex said with an anticipatory smirk.

"We aren't sure about that since many human leaders do like to meddle in other country's affairs."

"Then it seems all the world can do now is brace for an impending apocalypse."

Rion panicked. "D-don't say that, Sir."

"Kidding." Alex smirked. Despite the news, he still looked ever so calm. "Oh, and I'm not going. I have a more pressing matter to deal with here. Sebastian can handle that matter on his own."

"But Sir, they wanted you to be –"

"Those guys are underestimating Sebastian." Alex cut him off. "Go back and tell them what I said. That I'm leaving this matter fully to Sebastian to handle. Now go."

"Y-yes, Sir."

Chapter 299 Figure

Elle heard the repetitive sounds of her footsteps echoing against the hard and rocky walls as she followed Snow deeper into a dark cave. The cave was narrow and twisted and pitch black. But Elle could somehow see. She had realized this before, back when she was still undergoing her training in the Black Forest. When she made herself invincible, she could actually see everything like she had become one with the darkness. When she noticed that, her first thought was that it was camouflage on another level!

As they continued on, the cave gradually became more and more treacherous. The path grew steep and jagged, with loose stones threatening to send anyone slipping and tumbling to the ground. Elle had to put in some extra attention as she navigated the terrain here. Though they were seemingly moving forward on flat ground, she somehow had the feeling that they were heading further in, not just in horizontal depth, but vertically as well. From time to time, she would look around and try and do a general measurement just by eyeballing the lines where the cave walls meet the ground and see if they were indeed steadily moving deeper into the earth. However, her efforts were futile and bore no fruits despite trying multiple times.

Finally, after what felt like hours of walking aimlessly through the dark, they reached a dead end. Elle could feel her heart pounding in her chest as Snow approached the rocky wall and pressed her hand against it, as if searching for something. Something that was hidden in plain sight.

Suddenly, a soft but definite click echoed through the cavern and Elle watched in amazement as a hidden door slowly swung open before them. Beyond it lay a narrow tunnel, carved out of the rock and looked totally unnatural. It was a tunnel that was definitely man-made and really ancient. The entire feel of it radiated the feel of its age.

Without hesitation, Snow stepped through the doorway and right into the tunnel, beckoning for Elle to follow. Elle hesitated for a moment, her mind racing with questions and a little doubt. But when she stared deeply into Snow's piercing blue eyes, she took a step forward and followed. The gaze of Snow's eyes seemed to compel her to trust in him and move forward without questioning. At least for now.

The door closed behind her as soon as she crossed the threshold. There was only a slight swoosh that would not have been detected had Elle not been paying extra close attention to the door entrance as she had been slightly afraid it would just slam down on her.

The air grew colder and the walls closed in around them. The only sounds were the echoing of their footsteps and the faint sound of dripping water. Elle somehow could not shake the feeling that they were the only living souls for miles around.

Slowly, the feeling of unease crept up on her like a dark, foreboding cloud on the horizon. At first, she dismissed it as mere nerves, the natural apprehension that comes with entering into the unknown. But as they descended deeper into the underground, the feeling only grew stronger, prodding at her senses, until it settled like a heavy weight in the pit of her stomach. The air was heavy and oppressive, thick with the smell of damp earth and the musty scent of old bones.

She wanted to open her mouth and speak but she knew Snow could not answer her even if she asked. Moreover, she did not want to risk making any noise since Snow seemed to be moving so carefully, not making any sound at all. She did not want to be the one distracting Snow from whatever clues or landmarks he might be looking for. Right now, she told herself that all she could do was to keep trusting Snow until the end. That he was leading her to a place where she could find an answer and not to...

Shaking her head, Elle decided to be positive, but at the same time, remain alert. She prayed within her heart that Snow would not betray her. That he would not do something that would break her heart.

As she moved further into the labyrinthine tunnels, the flickering flames of ancient candelabras, casting eerie shadows seemingly having hands and fingers beckoning to her, on the rough stone walls.

She paused, her eyes adjusting to the dim light, and realized with a start that she was surrounded by rows upon rows of ancient tombs. Each looking as alike as the one beside, before and behind it, carved out of granite with epitaphs that had long since

been eroded and unrecognizable. The walls were lined with cryptic symbols and forgotten languages, marking the final resting places of countless generations of people.

As she continued to explore, Elle felt a sense of unease creeping over her once again. This was no ordinary cemetery, she realized. She felt as if she were intruding upon a sacred space, disturbing the peace of the dead and inviting their wrath upon her. For all she knew, just her presence here was enough to visit curses upon her head until her seventh generation.

Her senses were now on their highest alert. The feeling of unease reached a crescendo. She felt as if she were being watched, stalked by some unseen predator lurking in the shadows. Every sound, every movement seemed to send shivers arcing down her spine, making her skin crawl with a primal fear that she could really not explain.

And as she approached a spacious circle that looked like an altar, surrounded by walls still filled with tombs, Elle saw something that made her blood run cold. There, across from her in the darkness, sat a humano figure.

At first, Elle thought it was simply a trick of the light, a shadow cast by one of the flickering candles and added on with her own overactive imagination. But as the figure moved, she realized with growing horror that it was a man. He sat amidst the tombs, his form shrouded in shadow, as if he were a ghost risen from the dead.

As he stepped out of the shadows, Elle's eyes widened in shock.

Chapter 300 Rusted

Elle's heart pounded fiercely in her chest as she stared at the man before her, his name formed on her lips in a disbelieving whisper. "E-Elijah?" The very sound of it sent shivers down her spine. The sinister atmosphere of the ancient underground cemetery that surrounded them was now more palpable than ever. Elijah, the man who was now standing before her, was the last person she was expecting to see in this place.

Panic flooded Elle's mind as she realized that she had made a terrible mistake by coming here! And adding to that, she had come all alone!

Elijah was wearing that intricate mask of his that she had been curious about the last time. That beautiful but creepy mask he had worn when she saw him for the first time during his birthday. Just the mere sight of that mask had immediately made her believe the man was no other than Elijah, as no other person she knew would have that unique but creepy mask on.

But after a few moments, her mind began to convince her that it might not be him. That this man - this stranger, must have just worn the same mask that Elijah did.

Deep within her, she prayed and hoped that it was not Elijah behind that mask. But he made a sound and the unease that had somewhat settled for a moment, now churned so wildly in her stomach. An unknown fear gripped her tightly, like a vice around her heart. It was him. This was indeed Elijah's voice!

Fury and betrayal boiled within Elle as she turned towards Snow. How could Snow betray her like this? Was he not supposed to be her support and confidante? Her disappointment and hurt were palpable as she stared furiously into Snow's eyes, which now held regret and apology. 'Why? Why would you betray me like this?' she asked the wolf through her eyes but Snow looked away, as if to hide the emotions in his eyes from her.

Elle's heart shattered into a million pieces as she realized that she had been used as a pawn in someone else's game. Gritting her teeth, Elle suddenly felt as though she was a fool, being played into thinking she was smarter than she was. And a wave of heat and rage bubbled from within her.

With adrenaline pumping through her veins, Elle made a desperate dash towards the exit, her heart pounding with fear and her breaths coming out in short gasps. But her escape was short-lived as Elijah appeared before her out of nowhere, his towering figure blocking her path like an impenetrable wall.

Elle's eyes widened in terror as she realized the gravity of the situation she was in. She had blindly and foolishly sent herself into the lion's den, and now she was trapped. Nowhere to run and trapped like a fly in a spider's web.

For a moment, they just stood there, staring at each other in a tense silence. Elle could feel the fear and panic rising within her, threatening to overwhelm her. She knew she had to find a way out of this, but the question was, how? Her mind seemed to be running into a dead-end, not able to come up with anything useful right now.

In a split second decision, Elle tried to dodge past Elijah, hoping to catch him off guard. But he was too quick for her. Using his superhuman reflexes, he had easily reached out and grabbed her by the arm and pulled her back towards him with a force that made her stagger.

Elle gasped in shock. Could he see her? How did he manage to catch her while she was still in her invisible form? Did he anticipate her move?

Elle's heart raced as she struggled to break free from Elijah's grip, but his hold was unrelenting. She knew she had to come up with a plan, and fast--if she had any chances of getting free. She scanned her surroundings, searching for a way out, but the ancient underground cemetery had no other door except the one Elijah was blocking.

Desperate, Elle summoned all her strength and pushed against Elijah with all her might. To her surprise, he stumbled backward, caught off guard by her sudden burst of energy. Elle took advantage of this opportunity and backed off a few steps away from him, not even having the luxury to realize that she had used what could only be called as magic to break free from Elijah's earlier tight grip on her.

Elijah's chuckle echoed around them, sounding surprised and amused at the same time.

Then the sound of the ancient steel door closing echoed like a death toll. The door was massive, made of dark, rusted steel and looked as if it had been forged in a time long forgotten. Her panic surged even more as she stared at the one and only door leading to her freedom, now slammed shut in her face. She could feel the darkness closing in around her, suffocating her with its cold embrace.

Elle tried her best to calm herself down. Despite the fear that churned in her stomach, she knew she needed to stay rational and stop being rendered useless by fear. She needed to calm down and think!

"Been waiting for you..." Elijah said, walking towards her with a predatory grace that made Elle take a step back. She somehow felt that there was a smirk behind that creepy mask of his as well. Another shiver crawled up her spine.

When he reached the rectangle-shaped table-like object in the middle of the circular altar, Elijah stopped and turned to face her. "Don't you have any questions, Princess Izabelle?" he asked when Elle was still too scared to speak. She had made herself invisible once again but judging from Elijah's nonchalance, she could sense that it did not quite matter to him whether she was invisible or not. Was it because he was confident that she could never make it out by herself?

She clenched her fists and her hand brushed against the gun hidden at her side.