

SPELLBOUND

#Chapter 1: In the middle of the night - Read SPELLBOUND

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"Milady, they're here... the prince is here."

Evie's shoulders immediately tensed up when she heard the shaken voice of her maid. Cold sweat dripped on her back as she shot a nervous look at her mother who had just arrived to check in on her.

"Mother, I..." Evie subconsciously grabbed her mother's skirt. She couldn't help it. She thought she had prepared herself enough in the last few days but it seemed the fear and uncertainty still threatened to crash her resolve now that the moment had arrived.

"Hush, dear," her mother said as she gave her daughter a reassuring hug, but the concern in her eyes gave her away. "Don't worry, you can do this my dear," she whispered as she gently rubbed Evie's back. "Don't forget the reason you have to do this, Evie..."

Her mother kissed her head and though she didn't look shaken, Evie could sense the anxiousness and distress within her mother.

Evie took a deep breath. "Yes, mother," she replied, as she flashed a forced smile toward her mother. "I can do this."

"Good girl..." Her mother's arms wrapped around her again for one last hug and after a second, her mother nodded at her maid.

"I am going to meet the guests now while you get ready," she told Evie and after giving her daughter one last encouraging smile, Evie's mother finally left the room.

Evie closed her eyes and her maid immediately hovered around her. She tried her best to calm her pounding heart, talking to herself inwardly and telling herself it would be alright, that everything would be alright. She was so focused in hardening her resolve that she was a little startled when the maid finally spoke.

"You look stunning, milady." Evie's eyes flew towards the mirror and she studied her reflection. Her hair was so beautifully arranged; her face painted just enough to emphasize her natural, innocent, maiden features.

Evie stared at herself quietly. It had finally arrived, the day of her wedding. She used to fantasize about this day when she was younger, daydreaming about how magical and wonderful it would be to marry the man of her dreams. She had seen herself smiling with so much happiness and excitement and delight as she marched down the aisle towards her dream groom.

But none of these fantasies of hers were going to happen. Instead of excitement and delight, her heart was filled with dread and unease. Well, nobody could blame her because like most of the ladies in the highest echelon of power, Evie couldn't choose whom to marry. She had mistakenly, stupidly thought she was safe from all these things because she wasn't a princess. However, she was the daughter of the most powerful noble family in the entire Empire. In the end, she couldn't escape this fate. In fact, she couldn't believe she actually had it worse than anyone else she knew, probably even more than the princesses of any Empire in existence. At least those princesses were married off to emperors and high ranking military generals from their neighboring human empires.

Yes, she too, was about to marry a prince but... unlike those princesses, her husband-to-be wasn't human... he was a vampire. And vampires were their enemy, the human's mortal enemies.

The door at the entrance was opened for her and she stepped gracefully over the sill before proceeding calmly along the corridor. She couldn't count how many times she had taken a deep breath as she walked towards those doors, doors which looked more daunting with each step she took. With one last step, she finally stood just before the large double doors leading towards the wedding hall.

'Be strong, Evie. For the sake of your family and the entire empire,' she whispered to herself again and again. She squared her shoulders and looked up once again as she waited for the doors to open. The moon and the stars were brightly shining down on her.

In her daydreams, her wedding day always took place on a fine sunny day where she would be surrounded by falling petals dancing in the wind. Who would've thought she was going to get married in the middle of the night and to a creature of the night?

The sky was clear and calm and peaceful. The stars blinked at her but even the calmness of the sky couldn't ease the turmoil that was bubbling inside her. Her pulse was racing and all she could do was take deep breaths, again and again. Her hands were shaking and it took all her strength to keep them still again.

Her presence was then announced and at long last, the procession began.

The hall she walked into screamed of luxury and was a feast to the eyes, but contrary to all the beautiful grandeur that filled the room, the atmosphere was, as expected, tense and heavy. It was extremely rare for vampires and humans to be present under one roof. There were occasions, of course, where the two races stood under the same roof

but the difference this time was that they weren't intent on killing each other. Because of this wedding, the vampires and humans agreed to a ceasefire, the first one in history.

As she walked closer to the altar, her long, tapered fingers clutched her dress hard - an action that went unnoticed by the guests because her hands were swallowed by the voluminous folds of her gown - but Evie's eyes remained fixated on the floor. Her face was still facing forward but her eyes were trained on that single spot, always 5 feet away in front of her on the floor. She couldn't relax. She felt like she was walking on a small, thin stretch of road between vampire and human armies on the battlefield right before they collided and killed each other. Above all, she felt like a small, innocent little lamb voluntarily walking to the butcher's house to be sacrificed, despite being promised that her soon-to-be husband and the vampires would never hurt her.

The tension was so thick in the air that all she wanted to do was turn around and run away, but she didn't. She couldn't.

Evie couldn't hear anything but the loud pounding of her own heartbeat. She couldn't even raise her eyes to take a peek at her husband-to-be because she was terrified! All her encounters with vampires terrified her to the core. Granted, she hadn't seen that many of them, but five years ago, she had come across a captured vampire. The vampire had had his sharp teeth bared, snarling with disgust and rage at his captors, and his eyes had glowed blood red which was a stark contrast to his overly pale skin. This vampire's appearance had horrified Evie. The same was true of the vampires who attacked her carriage a year ago.

She was scared of all vampires. All humans feared vampires. Vampires were the villainous monsters that mothers always used to scare their children. And yet, here she was, about to marry one of them.

Lost in her own fears, Evie didn't realize that she had reached the altar and she was instantly pulled back to the present when a hand appeared in her view. She almost stumbled in shock. Staring at the hand, Evie swallowed. She just knew this was the hand of the vampire prince she was going to marry.

Slowly, she lifted her eyes, her gaze moving from his hand, up to his elbow, across to his abdomen before stopping on his chest. She breathed in silently before she continued upwards, finally stopping on his face.

And the moment their eyes met... Evie's heart momentarily stopped.