

SPELLBOUND 121

Chapter 121 - No!

"I will stay," Evie said as she gently smiled. However, Gavriel could see the pain and sorrow reflected in her eyes as she gazed at him. He understood her and the reason behind that look in her eyes very well. It was a look borne from her thoughts that they would be separated from each other very soon.

He grabbed her wrists – though desperately, he was still gentle with her – and his jaws clenched tightly. Then he shook his head, his eyes intense. "I will never leave you behind, Evie." He told her straight and firm. The tone he used indicated that there was no one – not even Evie herself – could change his mind. "No matter what happens, I am going to take you with me, do you understand?" Evie could tell from the tone he used that he was dead serious and there would be no further discussion on this matter anymore.

Evie nibbled the inside of her lip nervously. She remembered how Zolan had looked at her before he left, and she understood his point of view on asking her to convince Gavriel on his suggestion to be carried out. She really understood and could not blame Zolan. Focusing back on Gavriel, the dangerous and desperate look in Gavriel's eyes made the corners of her eyes heat up. He had heard about what was at stake and yet he did not even seem to faintly consider the idea of leaving her behind and not taking her along with him.

"But Gavriel... if you take me along, what will happen to this city?" Evie's voice became pained. Evie was not ignorant about these kinds of things. She knew that Zolan was right, if Gavriel left and took her along with him too, everyone in this city would face the wrath of the emperor. She had heard and read many war stories in the past and these things do happen. The suffering and torture those left behind would truly be unimaginable. And she could not, in good faith put these good and blameless folks through this nightmare.

"The vampire emperor will punish everyone in this city for harboring and aiding you all this while. And... he will surely torture them. I can't... I can't bear for such a thing to happen to all those innocent people, Gavriel... not when I can do something to ensure that it would not happen. This place... I already love this place, Gavriel... I don't want it to fall into ruins. More than the place, it is the people here! We can't just abandon them after they took us in. And... and you don't need to sacrifice anyone anymore. Leave this to me, I am confident I can make everyone believe our fabricated story. Trust me Gavriel, my father adores me to bits. He will believe anything I will say. And like what Zolan said, the emperor will not have any other choice but to believe my words as well. He wouldn't dare displease my father because he still needs him." Evie tried to convince Gavriel with her impassioned speech, her large expressive eyes sparkling with emotion.

Gavriel sulked a little before pulling away from her and turned his back as he raked his hand through his hair, messing it up a little. His aura was starting to fluctuate with his emotions and was becoming dangerously uncontrollable. He gave a heavy and frustrated sigh.

"Evie... you don't understand how dangerous Lorcan is. He will harm you once he gets his hands on you! And if you stay back, I can almost guarantee that he will!" Gavriel's voice was angry. Though Evie fully understood that his anger was not pointed at herself but towards everything else that was working against their situation right at this moment.

"He won't. He still needs my father's aid to go against you. Remember?" Evie calmly reminded Gavriel in the hopes of reducing his ire.

"He will hold you as hostage to control your father Evie, I know that bastard and the way he works. He will do that! And I'm not going to let that happen! My god, how could you expect me to let you do something so dangerous like this? How could you expect me to leave without you?" Gavriel's voice was so aggrieved that it caused Evie to go silent.

Silence reigned between them for a long while until Evie finally spoke.

"Then... are you going to sacrifice everyone?" she asked him softly. She knew that such a compassionate person like him could never do such a thing. Gavriel was not a heartless monster to abandon the people who had helped him.

"No." he said. His voice now sounded like it belonged to a tyrant king. His eyes began to turn blood red and bluish aura leaked out from him. "I will fight. You will take the children and women and lead them to go hide in the dungeon. I'll kill the dragon and Lorcan."

Evie's lips parted in shock. A violent shiver ran down her spine and she could not help but hug herself.

Seeing her reaction, Gavriel struggled to make his voice less menacing. He knew what she was afraid of. "Don't worry, I will never kill your father. I will do everything to keep him alive. Since I cannot harm him, my only choice is to kill the dragon."

"No!" Evie suddenly yelled. She did not know why but the scene in her dream suddenly flashed in her eyes. Was this the decision that would lead to the dream she had? The image of herself calling for Gavriel while Dacia was on fire horrified her. "No. You're not going to fight the dragon, Gavriel!" she raised her voice as she grabbed at his shirt.

Thinking that Evie was just scared because she thought that he could not defeat the dragon, Gavriel pulled her into his embrace and whispered in her ear. "Don't worry, love. I was able to kill a dragon once. So don't worry, I will be fine and come out victorious. I pro –"

"No!" she cut him off as she struggled to pull away. "You can't. I can't let you do that. You will leave! I will sta –"

All of a sudden, Gavriel sealed her mouth with his and kissed her hard until Evie could not speak any more and she stopped struggling.

When he pulled away, Evie was crying. She just felt like she needed to stop him. Stopping him and sending him away will be the only way to stop her dream from coming true. She needed to get him to understand and go along with the plan Zolan suggested.

"Please..." her voice came out weak, pleading.

Chapter 122 - Trust

"Please..." her voice came out weak, pleading. "Don't. If you do that, my dream... my dream will come true, Gavriel. Please listen to me. In my dream, I was here in this tower while the entire Dacia is on fire." She said, as her tears run down her cheeks. "I was shouting out your name... but you never came." Evie's voice broke at the end.

Gavriel was taken aback and looked completely surprised at what she had said. With the utterance of those words from Evie's mouth and the tears that were falling from her eyes, he looked as if he was wavering now. He always looked like this whenever she cries, that look that seemed to be telling her that he would do everything, and anything just stop her from crying. And she shamelessly took full advantage of it. She did not care if it would make her less of an elegant lady. All she cared about was to prevent that horrifying scene in her dream from occurring and keeping Gavriel safe and alive.

Evie let her tears fall like small water falls as she pleaded him. She turned her large, watery eyes up at him and used them to her best advantage, knowing it would affect Gavriel strongly.

"Please, I'm scared Gavriel. I cannot take it if something bad happens to you. This is the best way to solve all the problems we are facing right now." She coaxed him the best she could. "I am not worried, my love, because I know," she tiptoed and planted a kiss on his cheek and then smiled gently, "you will come and take me back, right?"

Her last line made Gavriel's eyes widen.

"I will wait for you to come and get me back. I promise I will be alright. And I know you won't take long, right? I know you cannot bear being separated from me and so do I. That's why I am going to do my best and keep myself safe until you return for me." She added as she caressed his cheek. "Even if your wife is just a human, she's stronger than you think. You have to trust me too, Gavriel."

Slowly, Gavriel slumped to the floor as if his strength left him completely. He rested both his elbows on top of his bended knee and covered his face with his palms.

Seeing him looking so defeated, Evie knelt between his legs and hugged him as tight as she could, trying to impart some of her warmth and whatever little confidence she had. Finally, after some moments Gavriel gave in and pulled her into his arms and embraced her back.

For a long while, they stayed silent, just appreciating each other's warmth, and listening to each other's heartbeats and breaths.

Evie could feel Gavriel's agitation, and she could not help but feel her heart swell at the feel of him holding her as if he were holding a precious treasure and never wanted to ever let go. It was as though he would literally die if he left her. She could not help but feel so blessed that she was so dear to him like this.

At that moment, everything was suddenly so peaceful. Until Gavriel whispered something unexpected into her ears. "I love you," he said, causing Evie to immediately pull away and look at him with wide eyes.

"D-did you say something?" she asked.

Gavriel looked at her and then smiled bitterly. "I said I love you. I love you so much I feel like dying now, Evie. I don't know how I am ever going to go off on my own and leave you here alone."

Evie forgot to breathe as she stayed frozen before him, staring at his face.

"Was what I said that shocking?" he asked wretchedly. He could not help it. Their upcoming separation truly came as a terrible blow at him.

Evie took a moment to respond. "No, yes... cause I, I never heard you say those words to me before..." Evie replied with wide open eyes, still recovering from the shock.

Gavriel smiled as he reached out and caressed her cheek. Then his smile faded. "I said it to you twice before." His voice was soft and warm, and his smile was so tender that Evie felt as though she could melt under its influence.

"You did?! And twice? W-when?!" she exclaimed. How come she had never heard him say it? How could she have missed something like this?

"The second time I said that was when we're making love this dawn... when we were at the magical lake."

"R-really? I didn't hear a thing!"

"Because you were too dazed, my love." He smirked.

"How about the first time? When did you say it?" Evie asked again. She needed to find out when was it that he had uttered those words that she had wanted to hear so badly once she realised that she too, had fallen in love with him.

He smiled and pulled her into his embrace again. He was quiet as he rubbed her hair gently while Evie waited in anticipation. "I'll tell you once we see each other again," he said, and Evie was about to protest but she bit her lip to stop herself. She was sure he had a reason in saying it the way he did.

"O-okay... don't forget about it. That will be the first thing I will ask once you come and take me back."

"Alright," he responded, and he kissed her head ever so lovingly.

They stayed still and quiet again for a while. They knew that their time together was running out, but since Zolan had given them half the day, they would spend every second of it in each other's company like this. They will not waste a single moment.

"Gavriel?" Evie called his name again as she looked up while resting her head on his chest. Their hands were sweetly intertwined with each other.

"Hmm?"

"When did you fall in love with me?" she asked curiously.

Chapter 123 - Inevitable

"When did you fall in love with me?" Evie asked, curiosity shone forth from her eyes. Her large eyes were glimmering as she gazed at him. "You were... so nice and kind to me ever since we met. Even when the times I was being so ridiculous, you were..." she paused as she searched his eyes, "you were so patient and so good to me."

When Gavriel simply stared back at her, Evie knelt before him and looked up at that face that could drive thousands of women wild even with his icy look. She then smiled before reaching her hands out to hold his face gently between her hands. "I thought back then it was all because of the deal you made with my father and the human emperors, but now... I truly feel as if it was not because of the deal at all. Am I... wrong?"

Something strange flashed across Gavriel's eyes as Evie waited for his answer in anticipation. His large hand was already slipping through her hair and slid down to finally rest it below her ear. "You really want to know?" he asked, flashing her a wicked and teasing smile.

"Tell me, I want to know." Evie said and took a deep breath.

"Alright," Gavriel said, and Evie released the breath that she was holding as she looked down at his glorious face, "I'll tell you once we see each other again. I promise."

Evie's shoulder immediately dropped. When she pouted at him, Gavriel smiled and pulled her face towards his and kissed her tender lips lightly. His kisses were shallow but for some reason the way he was kissing her right then was making her feel even more emotional. Though the usual hunger and burning need was not present in these kisses of his, she felt that they were no less spine-tingling or toe-curling. Instead, she could feel it lance straight into her heart.

When their lips finally parted and Evie was panting slightly, Gavriel began to kiss her eyes, the bridge of her nose, her forehead and then down to her jaws as he whispered to her hoarsely. "If you really want to hear my answer... please be safe. If..." he choked a little before he struggled to continue, "if I find even a scratch on you once I come to get you... I'm not going to tell you the answer to any of your questions, do you understand, Evie? So, please promise me... you will not do anything dangerous... I feel like I'm going insane right now just by thinking how you are going to be out of my watch where I cannot protect you -"

This time, it was Evie who silenced him with her kisses. She kissed him so thoroughly and deeply until Gavriel helplessly surrendered and kissed her back. They both ended up being so caught up in kissing each other that it was some time later that they parted.

"I promise..." she whispered as she broke their kiss, "I am dying to hear the answers to my questions... So, fine..." she smiled confidently, "I promise that I'll never let anything, nor anyone inflict even a single scratch on me."

Gavriel caught his lower lip between his teeth and then threw his head back. Evie was confused and wondered what had caused Gavriel to behave in such a manner. Did she not already promise him what he wanted from her? Was he still unsatisfied? Gavriel then ruffled his own hair and then out of nowhere his hands slipped around her thin waist and before Evie knew it, she was already placed on top of him in a straddling position. He hungrily seized her mouth and before long, the two of them were kissing again, with all the passion and love in the world, as if there was no more tomorrow.

They were breathless when Gavriel finally released her. "Alright, let's go, before I change my mind and kidnap you against your will." He growled low, though it seemed as if he was not saying those words to her but more to himself. Though Evie empathised with him, she knew better than to say anything else. They both knew that this was the best option possible at this moment though they were loath to be separated from the other. Thus, Evie just held on tightly to Gavriel's hand and squeezed it tight, sending him her feelings through that one meaningful gesture.

He swiftly lifted her and in no time, they were back in the castle. When they arrived, the duke and the duchess and all the leading officials were already gathered in the throne hall. All of them were gathered upon the summons given out by Zolan after he left the discussion with Gavriel on the top of the watchtower. As Gavriel and Evie walked towards the throne hall, they heard everyone discussing amongst themselves on the reason why they were summoned in such a hurry.

They were by the door of the hall when Zolan approached them. Gavriel told Zolan about his decision and the man sighed in great relief. But the tactician was a little uncertain when Evie told him that they do not need to kill anyone anymore. That was one thing in the plans of Zolan that Evie would not compromise with whatsoever. She would never condone the killing of a few just to save the majority. To her, every single life is precious and worthy to be saved. So there was no way that she would go along with the plan if it means they end up killing innocents in the process.

Even though Zolan had fought and already killed countless lives in his lifetime, he was never a fan of killing innocent people. However, as a tactician, he knew that sacrifices were unavoidable during times of war. Unfortunately, something like this always happens in wars, just like how the kings and generals sacrifice the lives of their soldiers to win a war and save the majority. Sometimes, it was just inevitable.

Chapter 124 - Braver

The reason why he wanted to insist on this plan was because he knew what kind of person the emperor was. He was not a man easily fooled. And that was why they needed to take drastic measures to kill off any major doubt that might arise.

However, when Evie told him about her plan and after seeing the confidence and strong will shining fiercely in her eyes, Zolan could not respond. It was happening again. Zolan was feeling that same thing he felt towards her when she was insisting to enter the dungeon. This seemingly frail woman just had an indescribable power to overpower others with her sheer will and determination. Zolan had thought how terrifying would this woman be if she were not just a mere human?

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Zolan could only sigh as he faced Gavriel. "Does this mean you already approved of Her Highness' plan?" he asked, and it was Evie who answered him.

"Yes. We already talked about this." Her voice was firm as she tightened her hold on Gavriel's hand.

"I see." He then relented and they finally entered the throne hall together.

As they walked in, the atmosphere was a little tense. Gavriel walked to the front with Evie and sat down before raising his hand, indicating that all should be silent as he was going to speak. When Gavriel revealed everything, everyone was shocked to their bones. But as Gavriel continued to elaborate on the plan, their reactions immediately changed. Everyone was ardently determined to support the plan as they knew they do not have a choice at this point. If they mess this up, Dacia might be wiped out from the map soon. They cannot bear even the thought of their home being destroyed.

By the time Gavriel told them about Evie, the vampires were all a little worried. Feeling their anxiousness, Evie suddenly rose from her seat and spoke.

"Please be rest assured that I will do everything I can. I am not only doing this for my husband. You might not believe me, but I truly adore this place. For me, Dacia is a magical place, and I will never want it to fall into ruins." She said with that same confidence and strong will she showed to Zolan earlier, that everyone was silenced.

The corner of Gavriel's lips pulled up at the sight of his wife becoming braver and more courageous. It was almost hard to believe that she was that same trembling little bunny he had

brought here to the land of the vampires. Yet look at her now. None of them ever expected Evie to speak up in front of so many vampires.

Gavriel could not help but feel so much pride surging within him. Despite the fact that he was still in a terrible condition, seeing Evie standing so bravely in front of his people gave him a little reassurance that she would be fine. Because it appears she was not the same trembling little bunny that he was so worried about anymore. She was stronger now. And somehow, he felt like this wife of his still have so much room to grow.

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"You were so amazing just now Princess." Zolan mumbled, grinning at her, as everyone finally left the throne hall to be prepared for what was going to befall them very soon.

"What are you trying to say? Huh? Zolan? Isn't my wife always amazing?" Gavriel was the one who responded as he wrapped his arms around Evie's waist and raised a brow at Zolan.

Zolan nearly rolled his eyes at that, but he let out a sigh instead and relented. "Right, Her Highness is always amazing." Somehow, Zolan was glad that the prince was still able to act normally like this. He expected him in his worse mood right now, so he was thankful that he was calmer than expected.

The group then headed back to the walls. They were in a serious discussion for a while in Gavriel's command quarters until Leon spoke.

"I am... going to stay here too?" Leon asked, pointing at himself as though he was a little confused.

"Yes, you will stay." Gavriel said. "You will tell them I tried to recruit you to my side, and you faked your loyalty to me. But since your real master is coming, you didn't escape with us."

"Oh, I see... I understand Your Highness." He nodded, though he looked as though he did not quite understand why they were leaving him behind.

"You will stay with my wife. She would be your sole responsibility now." Gavriel ordered him.

"Evie will talk to her father and Lorcan that he wanted you to guard her. Since you are half-human, it would make more sense to the emperor in the reason why she wanted you to guard her. Since Evie is supposed to be wary of vampires like she used to."

"I see... I understand." Leon seemed relieved with the explanation. Everyone understood his hesitation because his expression alone told them that the poor half-blood thought that he was being abandoned by his Lord. All because Gavriel did not intend to take him along with them.

"You will keep my wife safe while I'm away Leon." Gavriel told him, his gaze burning dangerously as he stared at Leon. But he was not looking at him with threat in his eyes. Gavriel was giving him a command more important to Gavriel than his own life. "Once I come to take her back, I want you to be there because you will be coming back with us as you're already one of us."

Leon fell on his knee and bowed.

"I will protect the princess with my life, Your Highness!" He vowed and Gavriel heaved another quiet sigh of relief.

"Rise, Leon." Gavriel approached him and clapped his hand on his shoulder, "I am putting my trust in you." He added and gave Leon's shoulder a squeeze. Leon only nodded at him determinedly.

Once everything was finally settled, everyone was about to head out when Zolan made them halt.

"I almost forgot, Your Highness. About the necklace..." Zolan said and brought out the necklace from his pocket.

Chapter 125 - Why Not?

Gavriel immediately walked over to Zolan. "Did you find out anything on the necklace?" he asked curiously as he took the necklace back from him.

"First things first," Zolan replied as he brought out two more necklaces and one ring – all of them having a similar feature – with the same black stone, "I need Her Highness to put these on."

Hearing Zolan's words, Evie quickly made her way to Gavriel's side and stared at the jewelleries in Zolan's hands. The two necklaces have an even larger black gem set in them compared to the necklace that they had bought from the jewellery shop back in the town.

"These are the only items with the same jewels from the forbidden land that I could find in the entire city. This largest one is owned by the duchess and these other two are from two other noble women. I'd like you to try them on, Your Highness." Zolan said.

Evie looked at Gavriel and though she saw a hint of hesitation flashed across his eyes, he eventually nodded. He took the duchess' necklace and put it on Evie.

Everyone watched in curiosity. To their wonder, the duchess' necklace also reacted the same way it did with her own necklace. The gemstone changed its colour into a vivid amber. Evie could not quite see the changes in the necklace but watching the faces of others around her looking that way, she could only guess that most likely the results are the same as her own necklace.

Gavriel's brows were creased into tight knots as he immediately took the necklace off her and put on the other one. And as expected, the same thing happened with this one as well and when they repeated it with the ring, the same reaction happened.

Awe and questions shone in everyone's eyes just like the first time they saw this happened last night.

"It seems all the black gems that came from the forbidden land is reacting to you, Your Highness," Zolan said. "These three jewels are quite old compared to the necklace His Highness just bought for you. The duchess' necklace is even more than three hundred years old. So, my conclusion is all gems that are from the forbidden land, regardless of their age and which part of the land they got the jewel from, will still react the same way when you put them on. And you are the first creature to ever cause this strange reaction from just wearing the gems on your person."

"B-but... why?" Evie's eyes were filled with questions and confusion. Why? Why are these gems reacting on her? She remembered the lake in the forbidden land as well and her gaze flew at Gavriel.

"I couldn't find any relevant information on this. This gem has no magical powers whatsoever. It has been a normal precious stone that only reacts with the moonlight since the day the vampires found them and brought them to the vampire empire. This is truly the very first time this happened." Zolan explained, causing Evie to tear her eyes off her husband and looked at Zolan. "What I suspect is... perhaps it's related to the fact that you are the daughter of the guardian. As the guardian has the power to summon a dragon, and this dragon is from the forbidden land. This is the only explanation

that makes sense right now. Because you and your family have a connection not only with the dragon but perhaps with the forbidden land itself. Though I could be wrong since I don't know if this gem will also react to your father. If this gem reacts to the guardian as well, then my theory might be right. But if it only reacts on you..." Zolan paused and glanced at Gavriel for a moment, "the only explanation I could think about is that there must be something special about you."

Evie blinked. "Me? There's something special about me? But I'm just a human. Yes, I am part of the Ylvia family but I'm a girl. Girls don't inherit any powers to summon a dragon. I don't think I feel anything strange in me as well."

"Well, I guess for now, this will remain a mystery to us. But I strongly believe that there must be a reason behind this strange occurrence. Humans always believe that everything happens for a reason, isn't that right princess?"

When Evie reluctantly nodded, Zolan smiled confidently. "I believe it too. There is always a reason behind every change. And on what that reason is, I believe we will be able to find out whatever it is in the near future. Don't you think so as well, Your Highness?" Zolan shifted his gaze to Gavriel, seeking his affirmation too. However, the lines on the prince's forehead simply deepened. It could be seen that Gavriel was also concerned with how the gem is reacting specifically only to his wife, though it seems his worry was still stronger.

"For now, I'll take these gems with me. I have already asked the owners to lend them to me, so I won't need your necklace anymore Princess." He added as he put the other jewels back into his pocket for safekeeping. "Anyway, I suggest that we put this aside for now as we have a much bigger problem to settle right now." Zolan directed all their attention back onto the matter at hand – regarding the upcoming arrival of the emperor, the dragon guardian, and their armies.

When the men finally stepped out of the quarters, Gavriel and Evie stayed back.

Knowing that the time they have together was now running on short supply, Evie threw herself onto him and hugged him tight.

Gavriel hugged her back, kissing her head again as his grip on her tightened.

"I want the necklace Gavriel." She whispered to him when Gavriel pulled away and stared into her eyes. "It will be a momento of us and the memorable times we spent together."

He lifted his hand and stared at the gem for a moment. "Alright, you can keep it. But I don't want you wearing it, okay?"

Evie slightly tilted her head at what he said. "Why not?"

Chapter 126 - It's Time

Evie tilted her head to one side, wondering why Gavriel would make such a request out of her.

Gavriel took her hands in this and put the necklace which was already inside a small purse on her palm. "I don't want anyone, especially Lorcan and his men, to know about this. You understand Evie?" he said seriously. "Never let them see this... you can't give any more additional reasons for them to take interest in you. Not that they are not already interested in your person..." he hissed under his breath, sounding quite aggravated again. Evie could see Gavriel clench his teeth together in aggravation.

Feeling his aura becoming uncontrollable again, Evie quickly gripped the gem and then secured it in her pocket. Then she held his face with both her hands.

"You can be rest assured, I will never let them see it. I just wanted to keep it with me along with the dagger you gifted me." She told him as she smiled at him gently. "I just felt like these things you gave me are like my good luck charms. I feel that they can keep me safe as well."

As Evie hugged him tight again, a knock came and indicated that it was almost time for them to part. Their grip on each other tightened but eventually, they both let go. Gavriel interlocked his fingers with hers after fixing her coat and then he led her out of the quarters.

Everyone was standing at the top of the wall. The duchess and the duke were there too.

Zolan was busy talking to the duke and duchess while they waited for the prince. He leaned in on the duke and duchess when there were no vampires close enough to hear them and whispered.

"Hear me my lord, my lady... you both must do everything to protect the princess. Keep in mind that she could be bearing His Highness' child right now. So no one should be able to know that the prince and the princess had already consummated their marriage. You need to make sure that everyone would believe the circulating rumours about Her Highness kicking the prince out of their chambers. All that everyone else need to do is to just support the princess' claims."

The duke and duchess were nodding intently, understanding what Zolan wanted them to do. The mention of the heir already possibly being conceived by the princess had made their reactions even more determined. This heir would be the hope of all their people who are supporting Prince Gavriel. As he is the last pure-blooded royal, it was imperative that the royal bloodline be secured as soon as possible. And if Evie does conceive, and providence playing a hand in it as well, the heir would very well be a mixed blood of a pure-blood royal and a human. Just the thought of that gives them the chills as there would be no telling how powerful the child would turn out to be. Thus, Evie's safety is of the utmost importance to them right now.

At that moment, the rain came a little heavier as Gavriel and Evie finally joined everyone.

Gavriel's grip on her hand tightened as they both fixed their gazes towards the gloomy and empty horizon where their enemies and her father would soon appear from.

A group of vampires then arrived. They were the watchers who were stationed at Darcia's border. With obvious fear in their faces, the soldiers immediately reported back to the fortress.

"T-they're coming, Your Highness!" their voices shook in fear and Evie felt Gavriel's body stiffened, and its not because of fear towards anyone but because their report was as good as them saying its time for them to part.

"And... and... the humans are with them! We believe the... the dragon guardian has come along with them too! Hence this strange rain that does not turn into snow!"

"Are you certain that the dragon guardian is with them?!" the duke questioned when another pair of vampires arrived, their faces looking even more horrified than the first group.

"Yes, My Lord! He's with them!" The second group just confirmed the news brought by the first scouting pair.

"Quickly! Follow after me!" the duke ordered, and the soldiers left the wall with the duke.

Evie swallowed and she tried her very best to calm the turmoil that surged inside her chest. She squared her shoulders. She cannot, must not waver now. Not in front of Gavriel. She must not show any doubt in front of him.

"G-gavri –" Before she could even face him, she was already yanked against his chest. And the first thing she felt the moment their bodies collided was the little tremors running through his body.

That was when she realized how terrible the impact of this parting was to them both. It was not just her that was affected this much, but Gavriel was as well. Evie's lips trembled despite her struggle to stop it, even going as far as to bite down on them as hard as she could, to the point of almost drawing blood. It was as if, at that moment, their souls were being ripped apart.

They were not truly going to be separated. It was just a temporary measure to overcome the problems they were facing with the emperor and her father. And despite knowing that, what she was feeling right now was beyond what she had expected. This was the first time Evie felt this kind of pain. She didn't know parting with someone you were madly in love with was this painful despite all the promises that you both will meet each other again.

As if they never wanted to part from the other, they embraced each other as tight as they could. Until Zolan's voice echoed in their ears. "It's time now, Your Highnesses." He said and Evie flinched. The lump in her throat was making it harder for her to speak but she swallowed and forced herself to.

"Gavriel..." she called out as she used every ounce of her strength to pull herself away. But he did not want to let her go. "It's time now, love." She added, caressing his back. "I'll wait for you." She forced a smile, "This wife of yours will wait patiently for her hero, so go now, Gav. For me."

With so much struggle within and without, Gavriel finally let her go. He gently bumped his forehead against hers as he held her shoulders. His eyes so intense as he stared hard at her, as if trying to burn her image into his retina permanently.

His throat worked up and down several times and his hands trembled as he spoke. "Wait for me, Evie. I won't take long... I promise." His voice came out hoarse and Evie smiled at him.

"I will. Promise."

The instant those words came out from her mouth, Gavriel's lips gently pressed on her forehead and then like a blur, he disappeared from her sight.

Chapter 127 - Even Greater

With a shaky breath, Evie steeled herself and looked ahead. She was not going to cry. This was the time for her to be strong because Gavriel wasn't beside her now. And she promised him she'd be fine. So she will not cry and crumble because she knew Gavriel was doing the same, knowing how much he struggled for him to leave her. She took another steadying breath and straightened her back, gathering all the courage that she had and looked ahead with a determined gaze.

'You can do this Evie. Everything will be alright again...you just need to be strong and weather through this...' she was whispering to herself when she felt a light tap on her shoulder.

When she turned, the duchess was smiling at her. "Don't worry too much Princess. Everything will be alright. All of us here are vouching for you and will stand behind you." She said with a motherly smile and Evie took another deep breath before smiling back at her.

The rain came down even heavier and later, dark figures slowly started appearing along the white horizon. The human and vampire army now slowly filling the once empty and pure white meadow.

She felt everyone along the wall tensed up. Evie could feel their fear and dread and she realized how the Dacrians fear the emperor, or was it the dragon guardian the main source of their dread? Whatever it was, the collective fear on this side was rising and even she could sense it and felt somewhat agitated by it.

"I will be going ahead to meet with them now. This needs to be done before the imperial army infiltrates the walls and cause any unnecessary bloodshed. That is what we are trying to avoid." The duke said when the duchess stepped forward.

"I will come with you. I know the emperor's temper. He might behead you right there on the spot before you can get a single word out." The duchess held on to her husband's arm as she spoke with firmness. Her determined tone and sharp gaze told the duke that he would not win this argument if he decided to go ahead and debate on it with her.

"No, Aurora. Stay with the princess and leave this to me –" the duke still had to try at least once to convince his wife otherwise.

"Duke Henry," Evie suddenly spoke, "you will stay here with the duchess, I will go."

Everyone's eyes widened. Even Leon reacted as though he could not believe what he had just heard. No one expected this statement to come out of the princess' mouth. They were expecting that the duke would be in a slight argument on this with the duchess. However, what Evie said stumped all of those present.

"Your Highness –"

"It's alright. Nothing will happen to me. In fact, I believe this is the best move for us to take for now. They must hear everything from me first and foremost. Not from anyone else." Evie's gaze was intense as she spoke, and no one could say a word. What she said made a lot of sense and was good argument. "Now open the gate for me. I will go alone. Everyone will stay here and wait for my good news."

Even the duchess was surprised at her expression and the tone in her voice. She had thought that this woman was incredible for a human when she spoke in the throne hall but her speaking like this without Gavriel by her side made the duchess' mouth part in awe. She had thought Evie was only brave because of Gavriel's support but now that the prince was gone, she gave out an even stronger determination! Evie certainly has set herself apart and won the respect of the many vampires there that day.

At that moment, the duchess could not help but smile at the thought that this woman who was now enveloped with an aura of an empress even greater than her daughter's, was going to be the mother of the most awaited and longed-for heir.

"But... princess," the duke was hesitant but when Evie stared at him, he held his peace and was unable to object. The duchess tugged his arm and after a deep, uncertain sigh, the duke ordered the men to open the gates.

Evie did not bother to waste a moment further and she walked past them. Leon, who was standing guard by the stairway looked on anxiously. It was obvious he was torn between stopping her or not.

"Y-your Highness... I... I am not included with the 'everyone' you talked about, right? I can come with you, right?" he asked, almost fidgeting before her.

"Yes, you are included Leon," Evie told him, and the man's shoulders drooped, his face becoming even more anxious.

"B-but... prin-princess I..." he remembered that he was supposed to be her personal guard, ordered by Prince Gavriel.

"You will stay here Leon. Trust me. Remember you are not supposed to be my guard yet so don't appear before me for now. Wait until the emperor summons you and assigns you as my guard before doing so. Do you understand?"

Leon took a while to digest that command, but he eventually nodded and stepped aside so she could pass.

"Alright, I will see you soon, Leon." She patted the man's shoulder before turning around and descended the stairs.

When she stood by the opened gate, Evie gulped down the lump of fear that was lodged in her throat. She squared her shoulders and then confidently walked out of the large gate, heading towards where the enemy was.

The rain came down at her. The pitter patter of the rain drops against her coat and the icy ground for some reason sounded so incredibly quiet in her ears. It was as if there was no army approaching and it was just a normal rainy day.

Evie stood alone in front of the huge fortress. She could now see horses that were so familiar to her. That lone silvery horse stood out in the midst of all the black figures, and she knew who was it that was riding the horse. Her father had arrived.

Her heart started to beat rapidly against her chest as the entire army of both vampires and humans halted right before her.

Chapter 128 - Damsel In Distress

Evie pulled herself up to her maximum height, straightened her back and clenched her jaws. Pulling her hood over her head, Evie bravely stood before the approaching army. Her silvery hair had been drenched by the cold rain, but she could barely feel the cold at that moment. Her focus was all on the army before her and how she could achieve her aim with them.

Now that she had a close up look at the army, Evie was glad about standing firm on her decision in being the one to meet and talk to them. From what she can see now, all the ones in the frontlines were humans and it seemed as though that the vampires were all lined up behind them.

Evie gritted her teeth. Was this the emperor's plan? Was he actually planning to sacrifice the humans in this battle while he and the vampire army stayed at the back and just watch? Does he think of her father and his army as his mere pawns?

A flash of anger crossed Evie's eyes. 'I am not going to let you use my father, Lorcan.' She vowed inside her head. Her eyes blazed with a fierce fire that was not there before.

When Evie could finally see her father's figure as he rode forward on his iconic white horse, Evie felt her hands tremble. But she quickly got ahold of herself and clenched them tight before she took a deep breath and yelled as loud as she could.

"Father!"

Lucius immediately halted at the sound he had heard. His eyes scanned the horizon before him and when he saw that the woman standing alone before them was actually his very own daughter, his eyes widened. What had happened for her to be out here?!

He urged his horse, and it immediately trotted forward and halted right before Evie.

"Evie!!" he called out in surprise and then jumped off his horse before it could even stop. "My god! What are you doing here?!" he asked as Evie rushed into his embrace and hugged her father tight. She had missed him so much.

"Father..." Evie could not help but began to feel emotional. She could not believe she was hugging her father again. How long has it been? "I missed you so much." She breathed in deep, and his familiar sandalwood scent comforted her heart as her muscles which she did not realise was tensed finally relaxed.

Lucius returned his daughter's embrace lovingly. "My dear daughter. It's alright now darling. Your father is here now. Are you alright?" he pulled away to check on Evie, checking over her body with his eyes from top to bottom, as if Evie had just come out from a dangerous war zone.

Before Evie could respond, she saw a group of vampires landed next to them. Caius looked obviously surprised at the sight of her there with her father.

"Lady Evielyn, what... what are you doing out here?" the vampire prince asked curiously, and Evie could already see suspicion in his eyes as his gaze fell towards the fortress' opened gate. "Where is Gavriel?"

Evie forced fake tears to fall from her eyes as she clung on to her father, turning her head so that half her expression could not be clearly seen. "He's gone. When he heard that my father is coming, he escaped and left me behind. He must be afraid that father would come after him if he took me along with him." Evie worked hard to make her voice tremble and sound faint as she spoke, as though she were distressed even at the thought of it.

"What?!" Caius voice came out very loud, anger already flashing fiercely in his eyes as he stared at the wall. He literally exploded on site and Evie grinned wickedly in her mind. "Fuck. These f*cking Dacrians will pay for this! They will face the punishment for helping that traitor and letting him escape! Get ready men! We will destroy them all!" Caius yelled and panic immediately surged in Evie's heart.

"Wait!" Evie's sharp call made the prince halt. At that moment, the emperors had also joined them. "The truth is," Evie started, her arms clinging tight to her father, but her voice and face was serious and was looking scared. She was throwing her all into acting as best as she could. Many lives depended on it. She had to show them that she was still her usual self, that she was still scared of the vampires. "I was... I was the one who stopped the duke when they tried to stop my husband from escaping. Since... since I know that they cannot stop him anyway. I was scared that Gavriel will take me with him again against my will once a fight occurred.... So, I stopped them." She made her voice small and as frightened as she could, playing her part of the little damsel in distress.

Everyone fell silent. Evie hid her face on her father's chest to act like the scaredy cat that she once was, so she could not gauge what the vampire's reaction were on the matters that she had told them.

"The duke and the duchess had been so nice to me. They and the citizens are the reason why I am still sane right now. The children there gave me flowers when I am so homesick and being imprisoned in the castle. Father, tell them this is all Gavriel's fault. He threatened the duke when we arrived here. He held all of us hostage and made the duke order the soldiers to support him in the previous war that happened here." She mumbled as if she was telling it to her father alone. She knew that the vampires could hear her whispers loud and clear. "I don't want to see any more bloodshed father. I can't... I don't want to see any blood anymore." She cried as her body trembled.

Lucius soothed his daughter. "Alright, darling Don't worry... I don't think there is a need for a fight to break out here now since the real enemy had already escaped, right emperor Lorcan?" Lucius turned and asked the vampire emperor. Lorcan was silent for a moment. His gaze was sharp, and Evie did her best not to let any fear grow as she waited for his answer.

Chapter 129 - This Won't Take Long

"He is the traitor, and this city is only forced to aid him, I believe because of their fear of him since you yourself told me this prince is a monster the vampires can't even manage to kill." Lucius continued when Lorcan remained silent. "It's hard to blame the citizen for aiding him. And instead of destroying them, why not use this city's army to your advantage to help us hunt this prince? You yourself, told me that this city's army is formidable."

"Alright, we will continue this discussion in the castle." Lorcan finally gave in and Evie barely stopped herself from sighing in relief.

...

Inside the castle.

After Evie, the duke and duchess, and all the official's confessions about everything that had happened in Dacia, Emperor Lorcan eventually decided not to punish anyone. Though Evie could feel the emperor's doubt, it relieved her that at least he listened to her father's advice of using the Dacrians to gain his purpose instead of simply disposing them.

Somehow after that, everything went on smoothly and that night, both humans and vampire armies set up camp in Dacia.

Upon leaving the throne hall, Lucius accompanied his daughter to her room. Evie had refused to part with him but since it was time for them to plan for their next move, she was not allowed to be there during the discussions. However, considering how 'traumatised' she was, Lucius decided to be a bit more understanding and walk her to her room.

Evie remembered that her father always does this to her. Whenever the human emperors came to their castle, Lucius would send her away, saying that their discussion was not something a woman should hear about. This was one thing that she felt strongly against.

"Father. I don't want to be alone again. I'm scared you might leave me again." Evie had said while they were passing through the hallway where many imperial armies were situated.

"Don't worry Evie. I'm not going to leave you alone. The reason I came here was because of you. I'm here to take you back home and away from that monster." Lucius voice became menacing at the

end of his sentence. Evie had to try hard not to react to his words and maintain her current frightened and weak act. This was not the time to slip up and let the cat out of the bag yet for now because Evie could tell that Lorcan's men must be hiding somewhere and listening.

"You already got me back, father. Can you take me back home now? I want to go home now. I am missing mother a lot." Evie whined. She found it very hard in acting like a spoiled princess, but she had to. She must in order for all of their plans to succeed.

"I know darling," Lucius held his daughter's shoulder, "But we cannot go back yet. Because your husband broke the truce, Lorcan came to us to offer a new truce. And this truce will be the ultimate effort to finally end the war between humans and vampires."

"Gavriel broke the truce? Is it because he kidnapped me?"

"Yes. And god knows what else he did to you while he imprisoned you here!" Lucius exploded when he thought of how badly his daughter was treated by that dastardly vampire.

"He's..." Evie had to bite down on her lips as she felt the presence of a vampire following behind them. Her time in Dacia had made her more sensitive and aware on how to detect the presence of a hidden vampire especially when she started walking back and forth along these corridors. "But... Gavriel... he is very strong, father."

"I know. But your father is stronger, Evie. Don't forget. I have a dragon on my side." Lucius said confidently and smiled at her tenderly, like a proud father that he always was. "Don't worry, this won't take long at all. Furthermore, now he does not have anyone to aid him anymore so it will only be a matter of time until we find him. And once he's been dealt with, we can finally go back home. And this time, we won't have to worry about wars anymore." Lucius' explanation was full of vigour and self-assurance which came from the conviction that having the dragon would be the ultimate game changer.

"R-really? Did emperor Lorcan give you the promise on not to attack the human lands ever again?"

"Yes. Lorcan is a good emperor unlike the real royals of this empire. He is the only vampire emperor who ever approached us humans first. He's not a monster. And that's why he had come seeking for our help to annihilate the royals who are the ones that are angry with those who have human blood. So, after this, we will finally enter a new era where vampires and humans will unite and live at peace with each other."

"I... I see..." Evie managed to stammer out a reply as she forced a relieved smile as they finally arrived at her room.

"Alright, I am going back to the throne hall for now Evie. You go get some rest. I'll come get you once I'm done with the discussions."

Evie clung onto her father and showed some hesitation. "But I'm afraid to be alone now. Can you send me a guard to accompany me?"

"Alright, I will send my general to –"

"But a human general is not powerful enough to protect me against..." she burst out before stopping as though she had just thought of a great idea. Evie then looked at her father with shining eyes.

"Father, I remember that there's a powerful half-human I saw here. I think his name is Leon. When I met him, I didn't feel scared of him even though he's so powerful. I think it's because he's a half-

human. I'd feel safer without you by my side if he'll be the one to guard me." She requested smoothly and her father patted her head.

"Alright. I will talk about this to Lorcan. Rest assured Evie, the emperor won't say 'no' to my request."

"I'm glad." Evie was rejoicing in her heart as so far things have been progressing as planned. She just hoped everything would continue to go on as smoothly.

"Now go inside and fix yourself. You might catch a cold."

"Okay."

After the father and daughter finally parted, Evie entered her room and took a deep breath. This was easier than expected but also at the same time harder than what she had thought. It seems Lorcan was not an easy person to fool – as expected of the emperor. She had expected him to remain doubtful, but she did not expect him to send someone to follow in hiding and listen in to their every conversation. Such a sly personality. How could she find the opportunity to tell her father about Gavriel now? She must think of a plan on letting her father know!

Chapter 130 - Bad Feeling

Several hours later.

When the door opened, Evie nearly burst out in a smile at the sight of Leon standing tall and stiff next to her father. But she immediately bit down on her lip instead because someone she did not expect came along with them. The crown prince was also here! What was he doing here?

Not forgetting to continue on with her acting, Evie was quick to greet the vampire prince.

"Greetings to you, Your Highness." Evie addressed him with a small curtsy. She hoped in her heart that her actions showed enough respect mixed in with the slight fear that she supposedly had of vampires.

"I am really relieved that you are fine and well, My Lady," Caius smiled genially at her as he reached out and took her hand and was about to kiss it when Evie suddenly snatched her hand back. She was caught off guard at what the prince just did. Her eyes were wide and showed a slight alarm in them.

"T-thank you," she forced herself to smile. But deep within her, she was worried her reaction was a little bit too much. She cannot give them any hint to doubt her at all! Not even the slightest. "I... I am sorry, Your Highness. I... I... was just..." she pretended to stammer in fright, and started to cling on to her father, resuming her acting once again. "It seems I am used to reacting like this now every time a vampire tries to t-touch me –" she said, as her voice shook a little as if she was just remembering something awful that had happened to her.

Caius retracted his hand and straightened. But his expression that was sullen and slightly darkened suddenly lit up again upon hearing Evie's last line of explanation. It seemed as if her excuse and acting worked well enough to convince him of her reaction to his touch.

"It's quite alright, Lady Evielyn. It must have been such a traumatic experience for you. Don't worry, Gavriel can never touch you again." He said a confident voice. "We will make sure of that. Won't we, Lord Lucius?"

"Prince Caius is right, Evie. You don't need to be so afraid anymore. I'll never let anyone else hurt you any longer." Lucius consoled his daughter as he hugged her and patted her on her head as though she were still a little girl in need of comfort.

"I guess what you need the most right now is just time to forget about your traumatic experiences with Gavriel, Lady Evielyn." Caius said magnanimously as he stretched out his hand towards her again. However, this time he moved slower and did not encroach on her personal bubble, giving her the space to retreat if she wanted to. "I will help you forget about it. After all, we have already danced with each other back then in the capital, right? If you would permit it, take hold of my hand, My Lady. I will gladly help you get over your fear."

The smile on Caius' face made Evie's inside nearly churn. She had a bad feeling about this. What sneaky plans do you have up your sleeve, Caius?

Evie's grip on her father's arm subconsciously tightened as she stared warily at Caius' palm. What was she supposed to do with that offer? She absolutely did not want to touch that hand at all, but would this prince get angry and become suspicious if she adamantly refused?

"Crown prince, Caius, I appreciate your offer to help my daughter, but I do think it's still too soon for her to do this. I believe we must give Evie a little more time to adjust for now." Lucius said after Evie kept silent for quite a while. This caused Evie to sigh in relief in her head. Thank you so much, Father! You're truly the best!

"Oh, right. I might have been too excited in my wish to help." Caius relented as he nodded, and he finally retracted his hand again. However, his smile at Evie and his overly friendly gesture and gaze on her only further made Evie feel uncomfortable. She did not like the way he was looking at her. It just gave her a bad feeling.

"By the way, I was surprised that you wanted this person to be your guard, My Lady." The prince initiated a change of topic as he looked at the quiet Leon and Evie clearly saw how his gaze sharpened the moment he shifted his gaze from her. Was he doubting Leon?

Evie nodded. "I find that I'm not as scared of him as compared to the other vampires. Maybe because he's a half-human?"

"I see. That does make sense."

"Did... did the emperor agree to my request?" Evie asked her father in a timid manner and Lucius smiled widely.

"I told you, emperor Lorcan will not say 'no' to me." He said proudly, "So here is the guard you had wanted with us now. From now on, he'll be responsible for guarding you."

"Thank you, Father."

"Crown prince Caius also helped me convince the emperor. So, you should thank him too, my dear daughter."

Evie nearly let her smile fade but she somehow managed to widen her smile in gratitude as she looked over to Caius. "Thank you so much for your help too, Your Highness."

"Don't mention it, Lady Evielyn. All I wanted is to make you feel secure and safe now that we are here." He smiled and then he faced Leon with a strict face. "You must bear in mind all the things I

have told you earlier, Leon. If something happens to Lady Evielyn, you will pay with your life, understood?" his voice was hard and broke no arguments.

Leon bowed. "I understand, Your Highness," he said and then Caius sent him to wait outside the door.

"Evie," Lucius held Evie's shoulders and looked straight into his daughter's eyes. "I am going to leave at daybreak."

"Why? Where are you heading and are you going to leave me?" Evie panicked.

"We will be going out to hunt Gavriel down, Lady Evielyn." Caius was the one who responded.

"We will definitely kill him once we find him, so you don't have anything to worry about anymore. He will pay for what he did to this empire and the humans, especially to you."

"Yes, Evie." Lucius added. "So, you are going to stay here for now and wait patiently for my return. After I settle this, we will finally head back home. So just hang in there, okay?"