

SPELLBOUND

Chapter 14: Odd one

Exhilarating yet melodious Baroque-style music could be heard coming from the huge doors. It was apparent that there seemed to be a ball going on inside and that the event had long started. Did the vampire emperor throw a party to welcome her? Evie quickly shook her head and berated herself for the thought. There's no way they would do that. She was their enemy and Evie thought that everyone in this empire knew that. Even if this party was held because of her, she could only think of one reason. The emperor was probably planning to make her feel like she was wanted and welcomed in his empire and then make her drop her guard down.

"Scared?" that glorious voice yanked her from her deep thoughts and the moment Evie lifted her face, she stumbled back in surprise because he had bent so close Evie thought their faces would collide. He caught her waist with his strong arm.

Once Evie regained her balance, she took a step away from him. "Please stop surprising me like that." She muttered under her breath. Gavriel tilted his head, acting as though he had not heard her.

"My wife, we can go back if you're not ready yet," he said gently and Evie's eyes widened. W-what?! Was he really telling her this now? Why didn't he tell her this before he took her to this place?

Evie found herself tongue-tied. But she was more surprised at herself for actually not blurting out a big YES immediately so they could finally go back. She was very nervous and she knew she was never going to be prepared for this, so why was she hesitating?

After a long, motionless minute of indecision, Evie looked at the opened door. Her hands clenched under her cloak and reluctantly pointed out, "But we're already here," she uttered without looking at him. She didn't see how the corner of his lips curved up slightly in pure amusement.

"Right, the emperor must be getting so impatient now." He agreed and he moved in front of her. "Let me help you take your cloak off, wife."

Evie dropped her gaze after she nodded, determined not to break the rule she had just set for herself. However, she was curious as to why the prince was the one doing all these menial tasks for her. He had obviously introduced and brought the butler along with them on this trip, so why wasn't he letting the butler do this job instead?

She valiantly fought against herself on the temptation of wanting to peek at him and to her delight, she managed not to look until he finally took the cloak off her. Though was it

just her imagination that she felt like the process of just removing the cloak seemed way too slow? It must be, she thought. The thought of it being something else just frightened her that she shied away from it.

After giving Evie's cloak to Elias, Gavriel offered his hand to Evie. His gaze not leaving her face. The fiery dress she was wearing created a beautiful contrast with her long silver hair. He thought she was like an exotic red rose under the moonlight.

When they finally entered and walked through the huge door, Evie could do nothing but look around and appreciate the lavish luxury inside the imperial palace. The place was nothing like she had ever seen. She thought all palaces were almost exactly the same but this one had surpassed every palace she had ever seen. Just how rich were these vampires?!

Finally, they stopped a few steps before another huge door that appeared to be the entrance towards a massive ballroom. Evie looked at Gavriel, curious as to why they halted.

"If anything troubles you or causes you to feel uncomfortable, don't hesitate to tell me." He whispered, causing Evie to blink.

She could only nod, biting the inside of her lower lip. When they stepped forward, the music became louder in her ears. The lights of the massive chandeliers were a feast to the eyes. Just as she imagined, the ballroom screamed of nothing but magnificence and elegance. It was a dream place. Ladies in beautiful gowns and sparkling jewels were moving so gracefully while the men moved so gallantly in tandem with their partners. Everything and everyone truly were a breathtaking sight to behold.

The party was lively, and the atmosphere wasn't heavy at all. She could see the vampires enjoying themselves – smiling, talking and dancing. At that moment, one thought came to Evie's mind. These vampires' behaviours and actions truly were like humans. She surprised herself even as that thought arose in her mind. Had she ever thought what kind of life the vampires had aside from killing humans and drinking their blood? Never. Until now. Now that she thought about it and even witnessed it with her own eyes, she never would have thought they could even smile and laugh like her too.

As a strange emotion began to bloom inside her, she felt Gavriel's slight tug. "Let's go." He said and Evie nodded. She took a deep breath as she subconsciously tightened her grip on his strong arm.

The vampires began to notice them and Evie felt as if more and more eyes were being trained on them as they proceeded further into the ballroom. The uplifting and gentle music continued playing and the couples on the dance floor didn't stop, so why did it feel like the atmosphere suddenly became heavy? Evie's expression slowly changed. She could only think about one thing that moment and the fact that she must be the reason why the atmosphere changed. She was the only outlier there – the only odd one

out. The vampires didn't welcome her presence. But they knew she was coming, didn't they? The vampire emperor himself was the one who invited her.

An announcement acknowledging the presence of the second prince and his wife reached Evie's ears and she further tightened her grip on Gavriel's hand.

The slow march towards the emperor's throne was one of the most unnerving march Evie went through ever – perhaps only second to her own wedding march down the aisle! She wondered if Gavriel could hear the loud thumping of her heart against her chest. It seemed as if he did because he was already leaning closer to whisper to her.

"Relax, wife. I am here." He said and Evie wondered how just his words could so easily made her heartbeat mellow out a little.

"I am pleased that you came tonight, Lady Evielyn." His voice sounded like deep flowing waters over the riverbed – quite unexpected looking at his big build.

Flustered, Evie bowed and greeted him. "The pleasure is all mine, Your Majesty." She managed to say it all out without stammering. And after a few exchanged of words of pleasantries, Gavriel led her to their designated seats.

Evie felt relieved but as soon as they were seated, she could still feel that the atmosphere remained somewhat slightly tense. She finally looked around and when her eyes caught Gavriel's men, her brows creased. Something was off. This was a ballroom, why were they all armed and even looking alert?

She looked at Gavriel, and she finally realized that the man never spoke to the emperor. Why can't she remember the emperor throwing even a single glance towards her husband ever since they approached him? Did Gavriel even greet His Royal Father? He didn't!!

That realization shocked Evie. She looked around again and she couldn't help but think that perhaps her presence was not the main reason contributing to the change in that weird atmosphere in the ballroom. She didn't know why, but she had a gut feeling that the culprit wasn't actually her but her vampire prince husband – Gavriel. But why?