

SPELLBOUND

Chapter 3: Truce

"Scared?" His deep and masculine voice echoed inside the carriage causing the already tensed Evie to flinch. She realized that she was clutching her dress so hard that her knuckles had turned white. She kept her face looking outside the window, blankly staring at the palace that they were just married in, as it slowly disappeared from her view.

With a deliberate slowness, Evie turned to face him. When she lifted her face, his perfect face graced her eyes. Only one thought ran through her mind as she looked at him. If only... If only, he was human.

She answered him with a shake of her head. Of course, that was a lie. She was scared to death. It didn't help that her husband... yes, her husband was such a gorgeous creature, because she knew what was really hidden behind all that beauty and perfection.

"I... I thought v-vampires didn't ride in carriages," she stammered, saying the first thing her mind could think of that had nothing to do with how perfect he looked, in her desperation to break the awkward and deafening silence. And perhaps, also to try and subdue her rising fear. She needed to relax. There was nothing else she could do anymore. There was no turning back so it was no use being scared now. If she wanted to survive this, she needed to conquer her fear and face her new life head on. That was the only choice left to her, to willingly lay in the bed that others made for her or suffer the consequences.

When she saw a small smile curve on her husband's face, Evie almost forgot to breathe. "That's right. We usually don't need to," he replied.

"T-then why..." she trailed off realizing that it was definitely because of her. Her fear somewhat lessened, knowing that this vampire prince, her husband, was at least being considerate. But then she remembered this was part of the deal. The vampires, especially her husband, were now responsible for her. They were to watch over her and keep her safe whether they liked it or not. Still, Evie was glad that at least her husband, the prince, decided to be the one to accompany her on this journey. "T-thank you, y-your highness."

His immediate response was a soft sigh.

"Evielyn," he called out and Evie didn't know why but she caught her breath. The sound of her name spoken by him suddenly sent a strange and weird feeling through her. "Do you know my name?" he asked.

"O-of course I do."

"Then use it when we're alone."

"Yes, your...uh, I mean, Prince Gavriel."

His brows creased, causing Evie to subconsciously flinch. "Remove the title, Evielyn."

"G-gavriel," she uttered obediently as her eyes wandered around. Surprisingly, this somehow wasn't as hard as she imagined. Evie never once thought she would one day find herself married to a vampire, a creature she, and every human, grew up believing to be a savage monster. She had expected she might not be able to speak at all to her husband without trembling but somehow, conversing with him wasn't as dreadful as she thought. She was tense and stammering but she was glad, she wasn't muted because of fear and she wasn't trembling before him as she had thought she would be.

Gavriel leaned his head back against the wall and closed his eyes. "The vampires promised that no one, I, your husband, included, could lay a finger on you without your consent. Your father and those human emperors made us take that vow. I'm certain you know that vows are sacred to us. We rarely make vows because we don't break vows. We can't," he said suddenly without looking at her. His eyes remained closed. "That should be enough to ease your fears."

Evie bit her lip but before she could say anything, he continued.

"I'm your husband now, Evielyn." His voice became a little firm. But then, he opened his eyes and leaned closer to her. He stared so deeply into her eyes that Evie couldn't turn her gaze away even if she wanted to. Why? Why did he have to look this gorgeous?

"Let me remind you again that as your husband, I personally vowed to protect you. So stop flinching every time I speak to you..." he trailed off and he lifted his hand as if to pinch her chin but stopped midway. "I don't like it when my wife keeps flinching as if I'm going to attack her every time I speak."

Since Evie was a young girl, she was taught that vampires were monsters who viewed humans as nothing but food or slaves. She grew up believing they were humanity's notorious enemy.

Vampires and humans had been mortal enemies since Evie could remember. She heard that Vampires saw themselves as the superior creature and wanted to rule over the humans, treating them like they were their slaves and food.

The world they lived in was divided. The northern part of the Land of Lirea was occupied by vampires while the south, east, and western parts were occupied by humans.

There were endless wars between vampires and humans and despite the fact that humans dominated most of the Land, they couldn't defeat the vampires solely because vampires were powerful creatures. For countless years, the battle never ceased to end and vampires never once lost a war. But even so, these vampires never tried to annihilate any of the human empires because to them, humans were livestock that should exist forever for their enjoyment. Evie even heard a story from one soldier that the vampires never took the wars seriously, treating them like mere child's play.

Evie heard that humans have been under the vampires' mercy for countless years until one day, humans learned to use the dragons to fight for them.

Since then, humans were no longer inferior and vampires began to lose some battles. The tides were slowly turning and even to the present day, the wars continued. Humans wanted to eradicate the vampires with the help of the dragons but the vampires were still powerful enough to withstand a fight even against the dragons. They were powerful, tricky monsters as the humans called them.

So when Evie first heard about her being married off to a vampire, she broke down. She was so angry and terrified that she had planned to run away. But on the night that she planned to escape, her father foiled her plans and stopped her before she could even leave her room. Evie adored her father and looked up to him not only because he was the current Guardian of the dragons and humanity's hero, but because he was her beloved father. Lord Lucius Ylvia, Evie's father was also the head of the house of Ylvia, the most powerful human noble family in the entire Land of Lirea.

The so-called guardians were the only ones who could tame and control the dragons and all of the guardians came from the house of Ylvia. Once the former guardian died, the guardian's son stepped up to take his place. It had been like that since the beginning of the house of Ylvia and this was why Evie's family was considered humanity's most protected treasure - for without the guardians, the humans' only hope to stand against the vampires would crumble to ashes.

That night, Lucius spoke to Evie and told her everything. He told Evie that he and the three human emperors had proposed a truce with the vampires. They made it appear that Lucius refused to fight for the humans because he didn't want to die young like all the other guardians before him, saying that it was finally time for both vampires and humans to cease fire. But of course, that was a lie to cover the real problem. Lucius explained to Evie that humans were on the brink of doom because Lucius still couldn't produce a son, an heir, the next guardian. If Lucius died in battle, there wouldn't be anyone to succeed his power - since it was only the direct male son of the current guardian who could inherit the power to tame and control the dragons.

And then, Lucius hesitantly revealed to Evie that the vampires asked for something to solidify the truce between the two races and the human emperors suggested a marriage between human and vampire. The emperors suggested the most beautiful princess in all the three human empires but the vampires wanted her, the sole and beloved

daughter of the current guardian, to marry their prince and then be taken to the North. Of course, even if her father didn't elaborate this, Evie knew why the vampires wanted her. She'd be a more powerful hostage compared to any other princess. As long as she was in the hands of the vampires, the humans would not attack the Northern empire, especially because everyone knew how Lucius adored his daughter.

Evie refused to accept it but eventually, the emperors soon convinced her that she had no choice. They told her that if she didn't agree and the vampires attacked them, her father might die and she and her family and all the other empires would be destroyed. She would end up as food or a sex slave for the vampires, too. And thus, Evie was forced to accept her fate and become the sacrificial lamb to save everyone.

That night, her father had hugged her, apologized to her, and promised her that once an heir was born, he would definitely come to rescue her. This was why Evie made herself believe that she was just a hostage under the guise of the prince's wife. She never even thought about anything else but to survive in the vampire's land until her father came to rescue her.