

SPELLBOUND

Chapter 4: Come here

The inside of the carriage was enveloped with silence. The prince simply remained still, closing his eyes as if he had shut himself down.

This was the first time she had travelled by night, but Evie knew she had to endure this. Her wedding was a secret and only the royals and her family knew about it. Common people didn't even know that vampires silently set foot in their midst. That was why their wedding happened at midnight. Now they needed to cross the border before daylight to avoid alarming the citizens who might spot the vampires who were with her.

So, she couldn't complain. This, too, was part of her duty, a duty she needed to endure.

The carriage rolled on and on, until suddenly, the carriage bounced and Evie nearly fell on the floor. She was instantly startled and she lifted her face, just to find out that strong large hands held her shoulders, steadying her. Gavriel had kept her from tumbling to the floor.

Still, she flinched and stiffened the moment their eyes met. His face darkened and he immediately let go of her. "You're not going to tell me I broke the deal because I touched you without permission, are you?" he asked in a cold but deep and mesmerizing voice. She couldn't believe that even his voice was too perfect. Why did nature bestow all these perfections to a creature like him? It wasn't fair!

Evie shook her head like a rattle. "No, of course not. You saved me. T-there's no need to ask for permission in such circumstances."

His expression somewhat mellowed as he surveyed her.

"I think we should look for an inn –"

"No!" Evie cut him off and when she realized how she answered him, she lowered her gaze. "I-t's okay. I... I'm fine. I am used to this. Besides, we need to cross the border before daylight."

The man fell silent but Evie felt he was staring hard at her.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I would prefer a sleepless night rather than be the cause of a fight breaking out."

She heard his quiet sigh. They again both sat in silence. Evie couldn't help but peek at him and she noticed the deep lines on his forehead getting deeper the more the carriage bounced. It occurred to her that he must hate riding a carriage. Vampires, she heard, were faster than any creatures, even faster than birds. They were able to reach their destination many times quicker than humans. She hadn't witnessed any vampires in action so curiosity suddenly hit her.

"Is... is this your first time? Riding a carriage?" she asked.

His gaze fell on her and stared at her. "No, but this is the longest I have stayed inside one."

"Oh." She noticed that there seemed to be no one left of the numbers of vampires who were with them in the palace. They must have left them long ago. "How many hours would it take you to reach the imperial palace if I wasn't with you?"

"Just a couple of hours."

Evie's eyes widened. She heard that it would take two days to reach the vampire empire. For a moment, her eyes flickered with amazement. She thought that to be able to travel like that would be amazing! She would not need to endure the uncomfortable and tedious carriage rides. Looking at him, she wondered if he was dying with impatience because he was forced to endure travelling at such a slow pace because of her. He would have been in the imperial palace right now, resting.

"You really don't need to accompany me –"

"Do I disgust you so much that you don't even want me inside the same carriage as you?" His eyes narrowed. Though his expression remained calm, Evie felt chills as soon as she looked into his eyes.

Shaking her head, Evie spoke. "No. That's not what I meant. I just thought it must be very uncomfortable for you to... stay in a carriage because you're not used to it."

The displeasure in his eyes was quick to disappear causing Evie to sigh in relief. Gavriel looked so calm and still, literally like a harmless, perfect statue. His appearance, Evie thought, must be the sole reason why she can speak to him like this without trembling in fear.

But she had also heard that vampires could become savage when angered so she was being very careful not to anger him. She didn't want to see this man with his eyes red and his fangs bared. Evie didn't know if she would still be able to speak calmly to him like this once she saw him in that state.

"Are you saying you're used to this?" he asked. "You don't look any less comfortable, Evielyn. I would rather carry you and get this trip over and done with, but I doubt you could withstand the cold outside this vehicle."

"C-carry me?"

"Yes. The others must have reached the capital by now if they travelled at full speed. I'd have to go slower if I was carrying you but even so, we would probably get there before daylight, but..." he surveyed her. "It's way too risky for you," he concluded.

Silence reigned between them once more because Evie's eyes began to become heavy again. The rain that Evie was dreading had also come. It was already cold as it was and now it was raining too! She drew her cloak closer against her chest as she began to feel the dropping temperature when...

"Come here," the vampire prince said suddenly, causing Evie's head to whip towards him. "Lean on me and sleep."

Evie blinked. She didn't expect his offer at all. And her shocked expression sold her out.

Gavriel's face became a few shades darker again at the sight of her reaction and she saw his jaw clench slightly. "What's with that look?" He narrowed his eyes but in the next moment, he leaned in so close to her that Evie almost gasped. "Even if you think vampires are cold-blooded monsters, I am not just some vampire to you now. Let me remind you once again," his voice hardened, "that I am also your husband. So stop expecting me to treat you like you're my enemy. Are we clear? Evielyn?"

His words made her swallow and her heart pounded, but she eventually nodded, and he moved away and ran his fingers through his hair.

He looked at her again and spoke. This time, his voice was gentler and there was a welcoming expression in his eyes. "Come, wife. Don't worry, I don't have any plans to eat you."