

SPELLBOUND 411

Chapter 411 - Regrets

Deep within the monsters' forest and kneeling on one knee, Zanya panted as she leaned her head against her bloodied knuckles that were wrapped around the handle of her sword. She was trying to catch her breath and her snowy white garments were already heavily tainted with the dark coloured blood of the monsters she had killed – too many that she had long since lost count of them.

Her pale skin was also covered with wounds and blood – some from her own and some from those creatures that fell prey to her. It had been days since she had gotten lost in this forest filled with creatures she had never seen before. She could not use her healing magic to cure her not too lethal injuries because she did not want to use whatever little energy that was left in her. She must find a chance to rest and recuperate but the monsters are not giving her any chances to even take a breather. All she did was run away if the enemy was too large and too powerful, and she only fought and kill the ones that she knew would not take too much toll on herself. Every single decision she made now in this weird forest was calculated to ensure the maximum potential of survival using the minimum amount of magic spent from her.

Flying was also useless in this place as there were bug like creatures that had been chasing her whenever she escaped into the skies as well. When Zanya was captured and brought over to this place, she had found the chance to escape from those dark faes and barely managed to evade them. She thought she could finally rest when the dark faes stopped chasing her the moment she entered a strange forest so different from the forests that were on the surface. But to her utter dismay, the monsters in this forest were more dangerous and much deadlier compared to the dark faes that had been on her tail. There were a couple of times that Zanya even thought that perhaps having the dark faes chasing her would be better than these monsters that were looking to rip her to shreds.

Zanya did everything she could to survive longer minute after minute, but she knew that if she could not get out of this forest, very soon she would end up as another source of fertiliser for the trees or food for the creatures of this forest here. With limbs still shaking with exhaustion, Zanya forced herself to get up. She stared at the three headed boar-like creature she had killed and went straight to the path ahead. She had tried to cross this forest and get over to the other side, thinking that it would be safer there than where she had come from, but Zanya changed her mind midway through because she found that the deeper she went into the forest, the deadlier and bigger the monsters she encountered.

Thus, she could only turn around and return from where she came. She had reached the limit of fatigue and exhaustion that a light fae could handle. Her strength had dwindled to the point that it was as if she was already almost withered now. But she stubbornly told herself that refused to die here. No way that was happening! She refused to...

As she stumbled along and ran like a wounded warrior, Zanya bit on her lower lip at the thoughts that were continuously surfacing in her mind. She could not believe that it was that vampire's face which was the first one to appear in her mind while she was in this precarious situation. Her heart was yearning to see him. Was he looking for her? What was he doing now? Was he thinking about her right now and wondering where she was? It felt as though it had been so long since she last saw him.

And for some reason, just the thought of him was enough to give her a bit of extra strength – just to boost her for a little while longer. Maybe it was because she knew that there was no way he or anyone else would suddenly appear and come to her rescue. She knew that at the moment when she was brought to the Under Lands, it only meant that the chances of someone following her here was close to impossible. No one was coming to rescue her. If she wanted to survive, she could only rely on herself. Thinking of this, she could only grit her teeth and push down on that slight wisp of disappointment that suddenly appeared in her heart as she forced herself to keep moving.

Finally, she could sense that she was nearing the exit. She remembered this was where she had first entered the forest. She looked back and saw that a pack of ferocious vulture-like creatures were now chasing after her. They were determined to reach and capture her as their prey.

Zanya used whatever little energy that she had left to push herself in that last lap, because she knew that the moment these creatures reach her, they would tear her into pieces.

Gritting her teeth, she forced herself to run just a little faster. Faster. Her heartbeat was like thunder booming in her head as she felt them getting closer and closer, almost catching up to her, she could already feel the touch of their nasty breaths at the tips of her hair. No! She shut her eyes tightly together but never stopped running for her life. Please... she pleaded. Not here.

And then, her knees gave way and she tumbled into a hard roll onto the ground. Everything went quiet and Zanya gritted her teeth. "I'm sorry, my queen..." she mumbled as she waited for the beasts to sink their claws into her and tear her apart before devouring her whole. At that moment, Leon's face appeared in her mind again and she smiled, a single tear making a clear track down her dusty cheeks from the corner of her eye. "I regret not going all out on you that night. Had I known that it was going to be the last time... I should've done more to you until you would cry so hard for me."

Zanya let out a sigh. Then her smile widened, unable to believe the kind of thoughts she was having in the last moments of her life.. But somehow, she was glad she would not leave this world feeling so miserable and wretched, just regrets that she was leaving a little too soon and in this way.

Chapter 412 - Forgive Me

As she surrendered herself and prepared her mind to accept her upcoming death, that death somehow was just not coming no matter how long she waited. She frowned even with her eyes closed, thinking that death should not be taking that long to happen, would it not? Feeling that something must have gone awry, she slowly opened her eyes and was surprised at the realisation that she was now out of the forest. What? How could this happen?!

She jerked her head and turned to look behind her. The forest was just a step behind her. Her eyes widened in disbelief. Did she managed to make it out of that place because she fell and tumbled down?

A wave of relief came crashing over her but before she could even let out a breath of relief, she heard a voice. And that voice just caused her whole body to stiffen in alarm.

"Tch, tch, tch... How admirable. I can't believe you are still alive." The voice drawled out and Zanya turned back and looked up.

Two dark faes stood before her, dressed in all black. Zanya could tell in one glance that they were at the same level as those soldiers whom she had fought to escape. If she had enough strength left, she

could have beaten these two dark faes black and blue within seconds. But right now, she could barely get herself to stand up. She had exhausted all her energy to the last drop.

"This woman is really strong to be able to survive this long in the monsters' forest." The other one said.

"That's true. She must be a high noble light fae just like the high nobles in the Great City."

"Right." one of them squatted and pinched Zanya's chin and tilted her head up for a better look at her face. "And this one is truly a beauty!" His gaze became lecherous as his gaze trailed from her mouth down to her ample cleavage.

Zanya's eyes widened in outrage, and she jerked her head back and out of his grasp. But the dark fae was quick to grab the back of her head. "Don't waste your time light fae." He licked his lower lip then looked back at the man behind her. "No one's going to believe us anyway if we report that this woman is still alive."

The man behind him smirked and Zanya could already tell what were on their minds and the plans that they had. Fear crept through her as the man walked closer as well and held her shoulders from behind.

"Exactly. Since the idiot monsters failed to devour you, we'll gladly help them complete the job instead. Don't worry, this devouring will feel much, much better." He whispered lewdly and when Zanya opened her mouth to protest, the dark fae in front of her quickly gagged her with his dark magic.

The next moment, she felt her back being pressed against the cold and hard ground. She screamed inside her mind as she was unable to speak.

As the other man pinned her wrists above her head, the other one reached out and began to rip off her clothes, as they laughed like lunatics that were hungry for sexual gratification.

Zanya teared up again as she tried to summon her strength. But it seemed that she was truly out and these dark faes were too strong for her to fight back in this weakened state. Help. No. She would rather die.

She heard the sounds of her clothes ripping and she could only shut her eyes tight as tears fell from her eyes when she felt the man restraining her legs.

Their laughter became loud and raucous as she felt the man force her legs wide open. She screamed in her head again when suddenly, the hands on her legs and wrists were gone. It took her a second to realise that she was no longer physically restrained. The gag placed on her mouth was also gone and she could speak.

Her eyes flew open to make sense of what was happening right now. She could hear sounds of fighting now. Trembling hard from both fear and weakness, she struggled to sit up, covering herself with her hands and legs before lifting her head.

What she saw next made her body froze.

A man was now slamming the dark fae on the ground over and over, like he was nothing but a rag doll. She saw the other dark fae lying to the side, already unmoving – dead. His severed head that

was sitting beside his body still had his eyes opened wide, not knowing what happened while he died.

Zanya looked at the man again and hot tears just poured down her cheeks. Was she dreaming? What was he doing here? Why is he here? How did he even come here?

It took him a long while until he finally stopped slamming the dark fae over and over into the ground. When he finally stopped, there was a huge depression in the ground where the mangled body of that dark fae was left in. When he turned, Zanya saw the utter rage in his eyes. The purple was so dark now that it was like the eyes of a beast.

He rushed towards her and knelt on the ground. She saw his hand trembling as he reached out to touch her face. She could see fear in his eyes as he looked at her.

His lips trembled as well, then he pulled her and hugged her to him so tightly. Neither of them spoke. They just could not. They both just trembled in each other's arms.

"My god..." Leon finally spoke, still gripping her hard. "I'm gonna kill them over and over again." His voice was dark with utter rage. "Forgive me. I'm so sorry I'm late I'm... my god." He gently pushed her shoulders to look at her over again, checking to make sure she was alright. Zanya lifted her head weakly and her lips touched his in a featherlight touch.

"Kiss me Leon," she whispered hungrily, and Leon devoured her mouth. He kissed her so deep, and so wildly that the paralyzing fear that had gripped Zanya's body started to melt a little. His warmth was slowly washing away the ice.

When their mouths finally parted, they were both panting hard. "Did they... my god, Zanya..."

"You came before they could..." Zanya tried her best to stop crying and began explaining now, knowing that they must find a place to hide now, before the other dark faes find them. "... these wounds I got were from the monsters in the forest. We must... we must hide for now."

Leon seemed to understand immediately what she wanted, and he took his dark cloak and swiftly put it on Zanya. Then he hastily threw the bodies of the dark faes in the forest. With the creatures in there, he need not spend the extra effort to get rid of the evidence.

And without wasting another second, he gathered Zanya carefully in his arms and disappeared into the darkness.

Chapter 413 - Something More

In a river under a bridge connecting the Monsters' forest and the city of Yryzia, if anyone was observing, they would be able to see Leon holding Zanya in his arms, dipping her into the water. The reason why he was doing this was because this river seemed to have the same properties as the healing river that was found in the Middle Lands. So, he had rushed and brought Zanya over to soak in it without any hesitation. He needed to have her wounds cured. After all, he had thought that if it was not true, the worst was they would just get wet, and he would just use the opportunity to clean off all the blood stains and dirt on her.

However, to his great relief, the river seemed to be as miraculous as the one in the Middle Lands and Zanya's wounds really began to heal and close up.

Zanya had also stopped trembling and her body began to recuperate as well.

They stayed there sitting in the water, with Leon not letting her go. He had kept her tucked against him as if he was afraid that she would get swept away by the river currents and disappear from his sight once he lets go. He had already tasted the anxiety of knowing how it felt like losing her during those few days after he got to know that she went missing. And he did not want a repeat of that. Therefore, he had absolutely no intention of letting go of her anytime soon.

Seeing that the place seemed safe for the time being, as the bridge above them manage to cover them sufficiently from the sights of anyone who happens to be flying above, Zanya relaxed. And she was secretly enjoying the feel of being held so securely and possessively in this large vampire's arms. She never thought that there would be a day that she would think so. However, after all the adversities she had faced, she somehow had a change in thinking.

"How did you find me?" she asked, voice soft and relaxed as she rested her head back on his sturdy chest. It was still unbelievable to her that this man was here with her now.

All her life, she was not the type to be the one being saved and rescued. If anything, it was she who was doing the saving and rescuing. Also, she was used to saving herself and getting out of difficult situations with her relying on her own capabilities in the past wars until the war in the vampire's land. All this while, she had survived without relying on anyone else. She did not know if it was because she made herself believed that no one would come to save her but this time, someone actually came for her, even though it was supposed to be impossible for him to find her in this new and alien place. The feeling she had now was just inexplicable. But she knew for sure now that this man is already now someone more than just a knight in shining armour or a comrade or any other common label that he could just be simply tagged with. He already meant something more to this heart of hers that had been cold and solitary for many thousands of years roaming alone.

"While we're searching around the lake, I picked up on a certain strange scent. It reeks of dark magic, so I thought it might belong to the dark faes. We followed the scent and it brought us to a tunnel. The dead end of the tunnel turned out to be a portal leading to the Under Lands." Leon explained, his hand gently caressing her now wet and glistening hair.

"That must be the scent of the magic of the dark fae who had caught me." Zanya murmured. "While you passed out, I had planned to go and look for your clothes... but who knew, while searching in the area, I met three of them. They had caught me off guard and they used a dark magic to immobilize me before I could fight back. Thankfully, when they brought me back to the castle, they made the mistake of freeing me right before the gates of the castle opened. That was how I managed to escape and the dark faes had chased after me. I ended up in that strange forest and..." she trailed off and Leon pulled her head close to his chest and she felt his lips coming to rest against her head.

"Thank you," his hoarse voice echoed, a little shaken, "Thank you for holding on until I arrived. I was... I so was terrified that I would be too late. I thought I was going to go mad when I found out you were missing. If I didn't find you... if I was too late... I'm sure it would have killed me. This is the first time I am feeling anything like this... it was so unbearably nerve wrecking to the point that I could die."

Zanya had pulled away to look at him and she was shocked at the expression on his face. His tantalizing and one-of-a-kind purple eyes were so deep and dark due to the emotions that had filled them. She realized how dishevelled he looked now compared to the last time she had seen him. Even though it was not even that long. At least for her because time in the Under Lands seemed to move slower. She had heard the dark faes who abducted her talking about that.

Her hand gently caressed his strong jaw, and he caught his breath. Her eyes studied his handsome face as she remained silent for a long while.

"Don't you think that... it was the bond that made you feel this way?" No matter how her heart felt so touched and happy right now, she had to clench his shirt to stop herself from kissing him. Zanya did not dare jump to her own conclusion immediately. She must not forget that this man was under a spell. He was bound to her against his will. Unlike her, he desires her because of the bond formed between them.

To her surprise, he shook his head. "No, I –"

He broke off and all of a sudden, he grabbed her shoulders and then they were underwater.

Chapter 414 - Wait For Us

Though shocked at the sudden movement, Zanya trustingly held onto him, already realizing that he must have had sensed someone coming and they had to hide now. He looked at her, then his lips came pressing against hers. She immediately kissed him back, smiling in her mind in disbelief on how the hell was she still being able to be so turned on and could not even refuse him in this situation.

When he broke their kiss, he swam towards a certain direction, pulling at her wrist. Their heads slowly emerged from the water behind a crystal stone.

They breathed as quietly as possible, while listening in to the voices that had appeared on the shore. Leon was glad he immediately jumped into the water with her. Had they stayed there for even a little longer on the shore, he was certain those people might have picked up on their scents.

"They're now here too. Do you think those idiots really went into the forest?"

"They can't stop thinking about that beautiful light fae. Knowing those two, they really might really go there to look for her."

"Tsk! How idiotic."

"And also... I think maybe because His Highness had ordered to stop the kidnapping of the light faes now."

"What? Already? We only got like so few of them!"

"I think it's because he had caught their Queen already."

"Really?! He already caught the light fae queen?! You mean she's here now?! Holy...!!"

"Yes. I saw him personally escorting her into the castle yesterday."

"Damn, our prince is amazing! Isn't the light fae queen supposed to be like crazy strong? No offense to His Highness, but how in blue blazes did our prince even manage to catch her so easily?"

"That could only mean one thing. Our prince is stronger and the light fae queen is not as powerful as rumours have it."

"Right."

The voices faded off as the dark faes left the area. But Zanya and Leon's face were now pale and stricken at the recent information they had just accidentally heard. They looked at each other with almost the same expression. Damn!

"The queen is caught? How?" worry etched immediately on Zanya's face and on Leon's too. Their emotions and focus were immediately diverted to the queen. They knew that this would only spell disaster.

"I don't know. When I found the portal, I immediately sent the light faes to go and report to her about the portal. And to think it wasn't even long since I myself entered the Under Land and she's already here?"

"What should we do? We must... we must save her!" Zanya's voice was shrill with worry.

Leon nodded at her without hesitation. "We will." He said and after looking around, he took her by the hand, and they left the water.

Looking at her again, Leon took off his wet shirt and handed it over to Zanya. She quickly received it, thanking him as she only now realized that it was only the cloak that was covering her nakedness. When she took the cloak, Leon suddenly turned around, causing Zanya to smile mischievously.

His shirt was so big it even reached below her knees. "You can look now," Zanya said. "Though... it's not like you haven't seen me naked already." Zanya could not help but tease Leon. She loved how he was so easily embarrassed and blushed at the littlest things.

Leon cleared his throat and look around. Seeing the bright flush on his face made Zanya thought that he was super adorable. Such a big man and still blushing like a kid.

"I am doing my best not to be seduced in this situation." He told her in a serious tone and Zanya could only chortle with glee. She used her magic to dry the both of them up.

"You stand out too much." Leon complained adoringly as he picked the dark cloak and put it on her, even pulling the hood over her silver head. "We need clothes. Preferably a dark fae soldier's clothes to enter the city. That would give us enough cover to slip in unnoticed."

Zanya agreed with him, and the duo then came up with a plan.

They both chased after the two dark faes they overheard talking a while ago and they found them near the forest again. And in just a matter of seconds, Zanya and Leon took the dark faes down with swift cat-like moves. They were so perfectly in sync that their single attack was just incredibly deadly.

Nodding at each other, they removed the dark faes clothes and then threw their bodies into the forest, confident that the evidence would be destroyed by the creatures of the forest that were starving for flesh.

In no time at all, the two of them headed back to the city, wearing similar all-black outfits and black cloaks covering them.

"No matter what happens, never show your wings." Leon reminded her in an urgent whisper. "And... don't ever get separated from me."

The intensity of his voice sent ripples through Zanya's body as she stared into those mesmerizing purple eyes.

"Are you listening to me?" he touched her cheek with the back of his hand and Zanya caught her lower lip between her teeth, realizing that he seemed to be more and more attractive to her by the minute. His gaze alone could immobilize her.

Suddenly, she grabbed his hand and bit two of his fingers, shocking Leon as he froze and became a statue. "I refuse to be the only one being rendered immobile like this." She muttered under her breath, then she smirked at him as she licked his fingers then let go.

"Now, now," she averted her face from him and looked at the towering castle from afar. "It's time for us to focus. No flirting from here on, Leon." She looked at him sideways, blatantly ignoring the fact that she was the one who initiated their little flirting stint just a few moments ago. "We must save our queen first."

Leon half bit his lower lip, barely stopping himself from biting her fingers back in retaliation, and faced the castle as well. He did not speak anymore knowing that she would retort again. But in his mind, he muttered the words 'prepare yourself once everything is over Zanya.'

He smiled for a moment then his smile faded. Both their gazes were more than serious now. They were gazes only found on warriors.

"Wait for us, Queen. We're coming to save you." They said and they finally moved forward.

Chapter 415 - Until I Return

Inside Gideon's castle.

Evie was relieved and shocked at the same at what she found out from listening in to the conversations that were floating about from the vampires Gideon had imprisoned. All of the vampires that she and her men were looking for all this time were accounted for, not a single one was missing. The most surprising thing was that they were not actually inside a cell or in a place that was of poor condition. In fact, to Evie's surprise, it was the exact opposite. The hall that they were held in was actually a magnificent looking ballroom that was lit up with magical bluish lights everywhere. It created a somewhat calming and safe environment for those who were kept in here.

The vampires had since updated her on their situation without delay. They mentioned that since Gideon had them brought here and locked them within this castle, he did not allow other dark faes to even catch a glance of them. There were only two dark faes who were in contact with them consistently. One of them was a female and the other was a male who came at designated times just to send food to them and they were even allowed to cook for themselves and fend for themselves.

They had told Evie that Gideon did not come to see them again after the first time, so they were not even sure what was the actual purpose of him bringing them back to this land. At first, they were terrified, thinking that they would be used as hostages or be killed. However, time passed and nothing of the sort happened they even began to let their guards down and relax. Some of them even attempted to escape from this prison hall, but it was all futile. They knew that the entire castle was protected by a strong barrier that was formed by dark magic. Moreover, they were also warned by the two dark faes who brought them their food that the outside of the castle was a very dangerous place. And that if they do not want to die or be violated, they must obediently remain within the castle walls.

Evie could only fall silent as she listened to them. She even went to the extent of checking through all of them all to find if there were any signs of abuse, whether its physical or emotional. But no

matter how she checked, she could not find a single trace of hurt on a single one of them. In fact, the children were even playing in the hall like they were not prisoners at all.

All these made Evie felt confused again. And she could not help but remember how gently he had handled her. That man had only spouted threats and restricted her power, but he never actually did anything bad to her nor handled her recklessly so far. What exactly was his intention then? Was it really true that his only purpose in bringing these vampires here was to test the portal? If he was a villain, why was he treating his prisoners so nicely like this? Could it be that he was merely treating them like this and trying to make them feel safe so he could easily gain their trust when the time comes?

Despite being relieved that Gideon did not harm any of these vampires – especially the children, Evie still did not dare drop her guard. She could not forget that fear inducing look in his eyes just a while ago. Gideon... that man was no doubt a very dangerous person and she was more than certain of that. Therefore, she would not be letting her guard down and take it for granted that he was a kind and benevolent person just because no one was hurt.

...

Meanwhile, at the castle's spacious entrance, three men covered in black garments stood facing each other. Gideon was one of them.

The other two were tall, handsome, and bronze-skinned as well. Though their faces were not like Gideon's exotic and unnatural striking beauty, the other two men's feature still screamed with handsomeness.

"I honestly think you shouldn't go to the surface again, Gideon." The one dressed impeccably and perfectly groomed spoke. There was just a slight crease of his brows as he said that.

"Stop doing that Kione, you know he'll never listen." Said the man with thick short black hair and Kione just threw a sharp look at him.

"I know that Azrael. But I will still tell him my opinion regardless of him listening to me or not." Kione responded and Azrael, the extraordinarily fit man with a powerful physique and the tallest among the three could only shrugged. He had done his part and it was up to them to listen or not.

"I'm leaving my sister-in-law in your care for now, Kione." Gideon finally spoke, completely ignoring what Kione had just said. "Do not leave the castle until I return." He added and Kione knew from that tone alone that it was a serious command.

"I know. But you should return as soon as possible. You said it yourself, she's powerful. I might not be able to contain her if she decides to put up a fight and tries to leave the castle." Kione warned but Gideon remained unfazed.

"If she tries to do that, just threaten her. Like I said, she's powerful but she has a weakness she would never compromise on for now." Gideon looked so sure as he said it that Kione could only nod, knowing that Gideon would almost never go wrong with his judgement when it comes to a person's weakness.

Gideon then turned and headed towards the door.

When he was out of the large door, Kione faced Azrael.

"Try to stop his plan." Kione said, his gaze now serious and the large man sighed again.

"I will try."

"Do everything you can. I'll do my job here. Just don't let him go to the vampire's land."

"I know.." Azrael then followed dutifully after Gideon even though he was against it, until the two of them were out of the portal and had once again reached the surface.

Chapter 416 - Lord Of Goshen

After the talk with the vampires, Evie could no longer stay still and sit around as a damsel in distress, just waiting to be rescued. She wanted to do something on her own, and she wanted to do it now. The thought that her people might now be in a panic, looking for her, had already made her feel the urgency to get out of here and return to Crescia the fastest she could. Moreover, she was worried that Gav had already heard about her going missing.

Evie knew Gav was still caught up with his responsibility. If he heard about what had happened, she did not even want to think about what he would do. And knowing that Gideon was doing it specifically just to lure him, Evie was certain that Gideon would use her against Gav.

She was not worried because she did not have confidence in Gav. It was just that Gideon seemed to always respond with underhanded schemes like blackmailing and that was what worried her most.

When she finally made up her mind after much debating, she headed towards the door. She immediately noticed that there was a prison barrier surrounding the hall. But Evie did not even think twice before calling forth her light magic. Her body glowed like a sun in the darkness and the vampires watched with their mouths agape.

This barrier, she knew she could break it.

Shutting her eyes, the light beam coming from her palm thickened and then her fingers moved, as if to grip something.

The moment her fingers curled into a fist; the barrier shattered like glass that had been hit.

Gasps of awe echoed in the hall and Evie pushed the door open.

But before she could take a step forward, she saw a tall and lean man – a dark fae – standing before her as if he had been expecting for the door to open sooner or later.

There was a glinting smile in his alert blue eyes as he grinned at her, flashing a startling row of white teeth in his swarthy face. Evie thought that this dark fae had the ability to beguile a woman with just his smile.

"Good time, Queen of light faes." He greeted, smiling politely at her. "I thought that it would take you a while before coming up with something, but I guess I was wrong. And you actually broke a prison barrier so easily like that."

Evie's gaze sharpened as she observed him and his casual approach. Though the man was polite and there seemed to be no malice in his eyes, Evie would not dare to trust him.

"Pardon my manners, my queen. I should introduce myself to you first. I am Kione, the Lord of Goshen." He said and a bit of curiosity gleamed in Evie's eyes.

"Lord of Goshen..." she echoed and Kione nodded.

"I am one of the ten lords of the Under Lands. Each of the ten lords rule a duchy and my Duchy is called Goshen." He explained.

Evie just stared at him, trying to scrutinize his expression. This man seemed to be very intelligent, therefore she should not look down on him. The look in his eyes reminded her of Zolan. Evie thought that perhaps, she could find out some valuable information from him.

"I heard from Gideon that this place is the city of rebels and is meant for the exiled dark faes," Evie started questioning and then her eyes narrowed at him, "this means one of the Under Land's lord is a rebel. Or did King Belial exile you too, Lord Kione?"

He flashed a beguiling smile at her words. "So, you really have met with His Majesty... I am really awed. But you're wrong Queen, I am not a rebel nor an exile."

"Then what are you doing here? You're Gideon's ally and you both are trying to betray your King, right?" Evie questioned again.

Kione shook his head slowly. "I am indeed on Gideon's side because he's my friend, but no one betrays King Belial and stays alive. If I dare betray him then I'd be dead by now." he sounded so serious as he said that that Evie could not help but crease her brows in confusion.

"You're saying that all these things you and Gideon are doing, kidnapping vampires and light faes, and threatening and kidnapping the queen... crossing the portal as you wish... isn't betrayal? Or are you saying King Belial is aware of this and is allowing you to do this?"

"No, no." Kione firmly shook his head, causing Evie to feel a tinge of relief. It would break her heart if that man, that incredible father-in-law of hers had allowed all these to happen with his explicit permission. "Don't get the wrong idea, Queen. King Belial has nothing to do with all this."

"Yet you say you are not betraying him. Is siding Gideon not the same meaning as betraying your King?"

Kione's gaze held hers, but he did not speak for a while.

"What makes you think that being on Gideon's side means betraying the king?" he asked, looking genuinely curious.

"Isn't Gideon planning for rebellion, hence he is here and is even calling a city of rebels and exiles as his city? He is luring my husband to come here, so he could... so he could eliminate a potential treat for his throne. And when he has achieved his goals, his next move is quite obvious. And that's to take the throne of the king, is it not?" Evie said, anger now gleaming in her amber eyes.

But when Kione remained silent and Evie saw a peculiar look in his eyes, she slowly calmed down. Why did he look like everything she had said was totally off the mark?

"Queen," he called out softly, and after moments of hesitation, he looked at her with a seemingly genuine seriousness. "I have something very important to tell you. This is about Gideon and the reason why he is doing all this... and why he is trying to lure his brother here." he added and Evie subconsciously s

wallowed, feeling as though she was about to hear something that will change everything.

Chapter 417 - Little Poor Prey (Please Refresh)

On the surface.

The two dark faes were moving so silently and fluidly in the dark as if they were one with the night. Appearing and disappearing every now and again, even if one were to catch a glimpse of them, they would only chalk it up to a shadow or something they might have mistakenly seen.

When Gideon felt that they had stepped out of the border of the light fae's land, he halted.

"Are you certain that this is the vampire's land?" Gideon's deep voice echoed around them.

"According to Kione, all we need to do is head South and we'll reach the vampire's land for sure." Azrael replied.

"South..." Gideon echoed, and then his gaze sharpened as he glanced at Azrael. "Isn't it supposed to be the North?"

Azrael's eyes widened with an 'ah' look of realisation. And when he realised Gideon was narrowing his eyes at him, he sheepishly rubbed the back of his neck with one hand, laughing a little embarrassedly.

"Aahh... right, right. Now that I think back on it, I think I remember Kione did say it is the North." The large, striking man replied while feigning with an apologetic grin and Gideon's eyes immediately turned deadly as Azrael sensed a flash of lethal aura before disappearing the next second.

Gideon did not say anything anymore and just turned around to leave.

Azrael quickly appeared before him. "This land is definitely the humans' land. Don't you want to see the so-called humans? I heard from the light faes in the castle that they are extremely weak. Aren't you curious to find out how weak are they?" he asked him in a serious tone.

However, Gideon seemed to already realise what Azrael was doing. It was obvious to him that this friend of his was trying to stop him from going to the vampire's land. If it was just the incident with them headed for the exact opposite direction they were supposed to, then he could still excuse that as an accident. But now that Azrael was pushing him to try and visit the human lands, he was sure that it was all a last-ditch effort in trying to distract him from going to the lands of the vampires.

"You know I can only tolerate your interference... twice, Azrael." Gideon's voice became venomous now and though Azrael's expression did not show any changes outwardly, it was apparent that the man understood Gideon more than anything. He sighed in surrender, knowing full well what Gideon would do if there was a third time when he tries to stop him.

Just as Azrael was about to step aside, they both sensed a presence. Something was coming their way. And whatever it was, it was something they had not seen before. They could only tell that they were creatures... but not like them. Neither were they like the vampires nor the light faes. These ones were weaker... far weaker than any other creatures they have seen before.

Only one possibility came to their minds – humans. They thought these must be the so-called humans. The weakest race in the entire land. From what they could pick up from their presence, the humans seem to be weak – dismally so. The both of them had not thought that the humans were so weak to this extent.

They immediately concealed their presence as they just stood there, not even bothering to find a hiding place. These creatures were so pathetically weak that they were quite sure even by standing

here and concealing their presence, they would not be detected at all. After which, they faced the direction where the noise was coming from.

They were just at the edge of the woods near a road. Seeing through the darkness, Gideon spotted someone running towards where he was. A girl. Her hair that was fiery red and wavy stood out as her most prominent features. There was someone coming after her, a man.

It was obvious that the girl was being chased. Gideon could sense malice and lust in the air.

Azrael just looked at Gideon, waiting to see what he would do. He could only hope that this would distract him even a little and he would not turn around and leave. Azrael already knew that time ran differently on the surface, and it passed faster than in the Under Lands. He needed more distractions to happen so their time would run out quick.

Following Gideon's line of sight, Azrael's gaze fell on the girl. She had a head of hair with the brightest shade of red. He had never seen a creature with hair colour like hers before. Though her skin was not glowing like how the light faes were, she was very fair and... the overall effect she presents was such a beautiful outcome.

But the beautiful little creature was obviously in a pinch. No, it was more right to say that she is in grave danger. She looked utterly horrified, like a poor little prey running for her life.

One look and Azrael could tell she would not be able to escape the predator chasing right behind her. But the girl futilely continued running no matter how many times she fell. She immediately rose and frantically ran off again.

Just by watching, even Azrael, a man who had been in countless battles for many years, could not help but feel pity for the little poor prey, knowing that her effort will never save her. No matter how much she tries, she would not be able to win against someone more powerful than her.

Azrael looked over at Gideon again and to his relief, this scene seemed to have really distracted him. It surprised him how intent his gaze was as he watched the chase. It nearly looked like he wanted to see how long she would be able to hold on or what will happen next.

This made Azrael narrow his eyes.. He did not understand the look in Gideon's eyes because to him, the outcome of this was already very obvious. Was he actually expecting something else to happen like perhaps for the little prey to suddenly magically win against her predator?

Chapter 418 - Mysterious Stranger

A slight smirk curved on Azrael's face, finding that thought funny. Unless the red-haired human has a secret magic or hidden trump card, her, turning the tables around was just impossible.

Time ticked by and the little prey had actually managed to reach where they were hiding. But she was just ten steps away from them when the man behind her caught up. He grabbed her fiery red hair violently.

A painful yelp escaped the girl's mouth, but she nimbly turned and tried to kick him in the groin. But the man seemed to have anticipated that move from her and caught onto her ankle, keeping her stuck in that awkward position.

"Whore!" the human male scoffed, and he swung her away. She fell on the ground. Hard.

Once again, Azrael looked at Gideon. Still there were no signs of him doing anything soon. Should he just step up and interfere? He would not be able to stand watching this any longer. One thing he hated the most were beings who abuse weaker, helpless creatures.

Usually, he would have already rushed over and beat the nasty human male the moment he violently grabbed the girl's hair, but he stopped himself. For some reason, he had the feeling that Gideon would actually interfere. He wanted Gideon to do something. Because he thought that maybe, just maybe, something will change in him if he saves this poor little creature. He did not know why he had thought that way, but he will willingly hold back even his principle even if it meant creating a chance for something positive, even just a little, to happen to this friend of his.

Clenching his fists tight to stop himself from launching at the human male, Azrael kept himself rooted to the ground.

They both watched the human male grabbed her feet as she tried to scramble on the ground to get away. He dragged her back to him like she was some lifeless thing.

Then he straddled her back as her stomach was pinned to the ground.

The girl did not cry nor scream for help. Why? Why would she not scream for help? Azrael thought that it would probably make Gideon move if she begged for someone to help her. But she did not do that. All she did was struggle, futilely doing everything she could to save herself. And her struggle was just...?the scene was just getting tedious it was unbearable even for a man like him to watch.

"You dare escape, you bitch? Your mother already received my money. You are sold to me starting tonight. You are my whore now! I wasn't planning to ravage you in the woods, but you need to learn a lesson, whore." He then spat at her before he began to undress.

Azrael's jaws worked hard, and he had barely stopped himself from launching himself at the wretch. However, he had noticed Gideon's fists slightly curved into a loose fist. This only proved that he was being affected! Though his expression did not show any changes, that simple movement gave Azrael a tiny tinge of hope.

When the man started to unbuckle his trousers, Azrael almost wanted to shout at the human girl to ask for her. But he saw her hand now gripping something, a sharp stone. Wait... is she trying to...

Just as the human male grabbed her skirt to lift them up, the girl slammed the stone hard onto the man's head. But it was not enough to knock him out. It appeared that the girl was too weak.

The human male blazed in rage, but the girl had already moved to pull at his sword. She pointed the sword at him as she sat on the ground, her entire body trembling hard.

Speechless, Azrael barely stopped himself from laughing out loud. What in the blue blazes just happened? Did the table just turned?! Really? What a miracle! This little red creature seemed to be something not to be underestimated!

He looked at Gideon and saw his hands were back to their relaxed state again but for some reason, there was a sudden complexity in Gideon's eyes.

When Azrael returned his gaze to the girl, he saw her now circling around the human male. The blade was still trembling in her tiny hands, but Azrael somehow felt that she was now prepared to kill. It might only take a slight provocation from the brute, and she would slash right across his meaty neck.

"Drop the sword, Miss Ansley. Do you think you will be able to get away if you harmed me?" the human male warned, stepping aside while the red girl came after him.

She did not speak. She simply stared at him with those pale blue beautiful but seemingly emotionless eyes. She had the eyes of someone who had lost all faith and hope in life itself. Her hands were still shaking but unyielding. That moment, Azrael had realized how awful she looked. She had small wounds and bruises all over her, not to mention the concealed part of her body. Most of her wounds were still very fresh and bleeding. Even her full and luscious lips were torn and bleeding.

"Trust me, once that sword draws even a small drop of blood from me, you'll die. So, I am giving you a chance to drop it now." the human male continued, and she stopped. He smiled maliciously at her. "I knew you'd never be able to kill a person yourself, Miss Ansley. An innocent soul like you can never kill."

And suddenly, he launched himself at her in a bid to snatch back the sword. She shut her eyes tight and suddenly swung the sword in a wide arc. And everything stopped. Her hands were shaking so hard now.

Slowly, she cracked open one of her eyes, expecting to see horror. She was a murderer now. But to her surprise, something... no, someone was right before her, his one hand was holding her sword and the other hand was wrapped around the man's neck. She then heard a sharp snapping sound and in the next second, the man's dead body tumbled to the ground in a heap. She only stared at the unmoving body in silence.

And when the mysterious stranger turned his face and looked at her, a pair of blazing blue eyes rendered her immobile.

Chapter 419 - Take Me With You

Vera held those blazing blue eyes for what seemed like a very long time until the man broke the stalemate and stared at his hand that was still gripping onto the blade of her sword. Never had she seen eyes so blue and electrifying as his before.

She followed his line of sight and her large eyes widened at the realization that he had literally caught her blade with his bare hands and now his blood was dripping onto the ground.

He huffed and just let go of the blade without making much of a fuss. It was as if something had snapped her inner support system, and her legs quivered before she fell on her knees. She could feel her body just sagged as if all her bones had been crushed into ashes.

But despite the utter weakness she was feeling, she refused to pass out. She had already gone through so much to just simply faint here. She lifted her face again and looked up at the blue-eyed stranger who had stepped forward to stop her from becoming a murderer. If he had not stepped forth, she would have killed a man by now. And she knew what would have happened next if she had succeeded in killing him. She would be hunted and once she was caught, the punishment for her was to be killed as well. No one was going to save her. No one would be willing to help her. She had nowhere else to go, and there was no one for her to run to.

Vera was the only daughter of Lord Ansley, an earl in the Eastern empire of the humans. The house of Ansley was once one of the richest families in the Eastern empire. But their family had fallen into poverty since her father, the earl, had passed on. She was an only child and since there was no son

to inherit the lordship, the title was passed on to one of her close male cousins. Her mother who was used to a luxurious life could not handle their financial descent into poverty and she began to blame her, because she was not born a boy, telling her she was the star of misfortune in her life. And as years passed, she only grew to be crazier. She had been under her mother's abuse for many years. And now, her mother had even sold her off to this rich, married viscount without her knowledge.

But the fact that her own mother even decided to make her own daughter a whore just for the sake of having that extra bit of money did not even break Vera's heart anymore. She could not remember nor count how many times she had been broken before there was nothing left to break in her anymore.

She had long stopped screaming and calling out for help because she knew that no one would come for her no matter how loud she begged, or no matter how many times she cried out for help. She learned how to survive by herself without relying on anyone's help. And this time too, she did not dare hope nor pray someone would come to her rescue... because she knew that no one will, and yet...

Someone actually came.

And she could hardly believe it. It felt too good to be true. And this man... he had a look that was too good to be true as well. She had never seen a man this good looking, not even in her imagination. If he ends up telling her he was a dark angel, she will not even hesitate to believe it. There was no way such an unreal beauty belongs to a mere mortal human.

When he averted his gaze from her, Vera looked at his bleeding hand again. She wanted to touch him, just to check and see if that this was not a dream.

Without a word, he began to move. She thought he would stretch his hand out to her, but he did not. He only walked past her, and Vera panicked at the realization that he was about to leave. He was going to leave her alone with this dead body.

Her gaze fell to the viscount's dead body, and she quickly scrambled to stand up. Using all the strength she had left, she launched herself at him and she ended up hugging his waist from behind.

She felt him freeze when her arms encircled him. She did not know why she had hugged him, but she could not care less about it anymore. All she wanted now was to leave this hell and follow behind him. She was already way past caring about who he was or what he was or where he lives anymore.

"Take me with you..." she said, gripping him hard, terrified that he would push her away. "... please!"

He felt warm despite the strange, suffocating air around him. She was certain now that he truly was not normal. But again, she did not care. She could not afford to. Not only due to her desperation or because her body and mind were numb now but also because she could not make herself care about whatever he was. All she knew was that she wanted him, this man, to take her away from here.

"Take me... please... don't leave me here." she began to tremble due to weakness and desperation. She would not know what to do if he set her aside and disappears, leaving her all alone.

"Let go." A voice as chilling as the darkest song she had ever heard echoed around her. "You don't know who you are making your request to right now." His gaze turned dark as the air surrounding

them became heavier. He thought that she would definitely not make such a request if he knew who he was.

"I don't care who you are." She did not even flinch. Instead, she tightened her grip on him even more with all the strength that she had left.. "Just take me with you."

Chapter 420 - Offer

"I'm not here to pick helpless creatures up and I won't bring anyone along even if you beg. Now let g –"

"Then buy me." She cut him off. She was not even sure what she was saying anymore. But she would say anything just for him to take her with him. Because if he did not, she knew that this would be the end of her. "I'm... I'm selling myself to you. I won't cost much. Food and safe shelter are enough for me –"

"Safe shelter..." he echoed. "That would be a problem, little red." He then began to peel her hands off him, causing Vera to struggle not to let go. But she simply did not have any strength left to even hold onto him.

He faced her and his dark angel face bent a little closer to her. "Safe shelter is something I don't have. Do you know why?" his gaze became cold as ancient ice. "Because I am not safe myself, not only to you but to anyone else –"

She shook her head. "I don't believe you. I know I will be safe if I go along with you."

A short deafening silence reigned then suddenly an almost sardonic laugh burst out from his mouth. He shook his head slowly as if unable to believe what he had just heard. He even stared at her as if trying to scrutinize her, whether she was feigning her bravery or not.

"I promise I will be good. I can do many things. I am a fast learner too, so you can teach me anything. I will serve you well –" Vera rattled off a few things, hoping to get him to agree.

"Enough. Do I look like someone who would be short of servants –"

"Then take me as your wi..." She cut him off again, but she bit off her lower lip at the mention of the word 'wife'. What made her think that a man like this was short of a woman? No human even want to marry her because she was poor... all of them only want her to be their whore! One glance at this man and she knew that many women would willingly shed their clothes before him. He could have been married already or he might have had a lover. The little tinge of hope in her eyes began to dim, dying completely, knowing that she was just a plain poor little human who had nothing left to offer.

Of course, why would a man like this even want to take someone like her along with him? He must have been just a passerby and coincidentally decided to kill that man for her. Maybe because he was a man with those kinds of principles, and he was forced to intervene for the sake of his conscience. That must be it. There was no way he did that because of her. Who does she think she is?

Vera bit down on her lower lip harder, not caring that the cut on her lip bled even harder as she stared at his chest. She had long stopped being bothered by any kind of pain. So why did she feel so hurt now? Her hand which was gripping his dark cloak trembled again.

But all of a sudden, another voice, deep and gravely echoed from within the forest itself.

"Come on my lord," the voice said, and Vera saw a large, handsome man, exuding so much masculinity of a warrior walked over them and stood next to the dark angel. "Why don't you take her offer? You are unmarried and don't have any official lover. All you have are endless flings –" he pointed those things out.

"Shut up, Azrael." A dark warning came from the dark angel's mouth, but the large man seemed unbothered and when Vera met Azrael's eyes, he had winked encouragingly at her. His gaze seemed to be telling her not to give up.

Despite the confusion, Vera's dying hope suddenly lighted up again and she looked at the dark angel with expectation.

"I... I can be your bed warmer ." She blurted out when she saw him about to turn around. "You must be not short of a woman, but I am certain not one of your women want to be just your bed warmer, right? I am more than willing to do that for you."

The atmosphere seemed to become utterly silent at what she said. The dark angel looked like he was rendered speechless while the large man seemed to have choked upon hearing what she had blurted out earlier and he began clearing his throat.

Vera knew how absurd the words she had blurted out sounded like. Even in her own ears, those words sounded so harsh and demeaning. But sadly, that was all she could think about at the moment.

"I promise I can do that job well. I promise I won't be a bother to you." she added, hoping that he would give in with her stubbornness.

She stared into his blazing blue eyes and for a moment she that she saw the ice in them thaw. The hope in her eyes were gleaming now but suddenly, something seemed to awaken him, and he stepped back.

The next thing her eyes were welcomed with was dark smoke swirling slowly around him. Then she saw massive wings extending and unfurling behind him. Vera's eyes widened at what she saw, and it seemed that it was not the end yet. A pair of dark horns grew on his head as well and his blazing blue eyes began to change their colours. They darkened, from the royal blue diamond now turning into a blackish pearl and then back again.

He then slowly walked closer to her – as if giving her the last chance to regret her decision and run off before it was too late – and when her feet subconsciously stumbled back due the strong force that was coming from him, a smirk curved on that mesmerizing face of his. That smirk seemed to tell her the words 'as expected'. His smirk then faded and without a word and without averting his gaze from hers, he slowly dissolved into the night until he was gone like the wind.