

## **SPELLBOUND 501**

### Chapter 501 - Complications

Gideon's mind was a complete mess right now. He just could not believe what was going on.

When he thought back to all the things that had happened since he had woken up until now, they were all obvious signs that he could not even deny. Every single one of them were pointing to that one and irrefutable fact. The unbearable feelings he had felt surging within him the moment he realised that she had left, the intense and mind-numbing jealousy that hit him and inexplicable killing intent he had felt just by seeing her holding onto another man's arm, and that moment when she had reached out her hands to him and their palms collided... all of the reactions he had been feeling were just causing the bells within his head to ring out louder and louder. He had no doubt felt it... there was no mistaking it as anything else... he could not even lie to himself even if he wanted to! It was just as clear as day. Especially now, with him burning up like this for no apparent reason... She, Vera... she was his mate!

Dark faes are not able to sense their mates in the very instant they meet their fated ones. How it works is that the mating bond sparks between the fated ones differently for each pair. Many were oblivious about the existence of their bonds until it suddenly sparks in a certain intense moment. It has been said that mating bonds have sparked the moment an individual felt like their soul was being touched.

When a dark fae's soul is touched, a few things might happen to them to signal that they have finally met their fated one. They might end up losing their strength, or their magic might weaken for a time whenever they are near their mate, no matter how powerful they were. They might also experience effects to the extent of feeling like their bodies are producing an extreme heat until the mating bond is completed or accepted by their mates.

However, there are always the negatives that come with the positives. If in the event that the mating bond is being rejected by the other party – though this is usually extremely rare and had only happened a few times to the ones who were already happily married – it is not only the party who reject the bond would suffer certain consequences, but sadly, the rejected party would suffer the backlash as well. Both parties would be cursed to suffer the rejection of the mating bond for a long period of time. The only difference was that the one who rejected the bond would have to suffer more severely as they were the ones who wilfully rejected what the fates had willed for them. The dark faes view this as very unfair.

This was why, though having a mate was not a very common practice even in the Under Lands as many dark faes never end up finding their mates in their lifetimes, it was not something they would grieve about. For the dark faes, having a mate is not necessarily viewed as a good thing anyway.

In fact, to most, it would be more accurate to say that that they thought of it as more of a curse than a blessing. Not only it was due to the punishment of the curse the rejecting party would have to bear, but also there were certain additional difficulties they might face. The majority of the dark faes called the difficulties as 'complications'. And these complications were very hard to figure out as they vary from couple to couple, and the severity varies as well.

As soon as the mating bond is completed and solidified between the pair, some couple can 'hear' each other's thoughts in their own minds, where others can feel each other's emotional and physical

pain. There were others that could not bear it if they do not get to see their mate for an extended amount of time, and there were also some who end up getting too obsessed and possessive over their mates that they would attack and even kill anyone who dared to touch them. There were also mates who – though very rare – would end up dying together with their mates the moment their other half passes on. And this rare case was also known as mates who are being life bonded.

And the most complicated part about this was that a couple can experience more than one of these complications and there was no way of telling which form of complication would apply to them. It could be as simple as just hearing the other's thoughts or feeling their emotions. But it could also go to the extent of having their lives linked to their mate's. Therefore, the dark faes do think of having a mate bond as something that is nerve wrecking to say the least.

"Gideon? Are you listening to me?" Vera called out again as she waved her hand before his face. That action pulled him back to reality.

Gideon focussed his eyes on her, and he could barely stop himself from pulling her into his embrace. He could only growl out low in frustration as he clamped down harshly on his desires. His mind was already a mess, and now his body was acting up too. Why?! Why was this happening to him? And now of all times!

The fear that bubbled forth within his chest was even stronger now. Because he knew that with his terrible fate, he had a strong hunch that in their case, their mating bond would be the one involving the life bond. Meaning that, if something does happen to him... she... Vera might... Wait... with his luck, it might even be the rarer form of the life bond... the soul bond! If that ends up happening to them, what will happen to Vera?!

"F\*ck!" he cursed under his breath. He could not believe this was happening right now. Of all times, why was it now that the spark of the mating bond had to be triggered between them? "Why? Tell me, why is this happening?!" he had not realised he had voiced his agitation out, until he heard her weak voice apologising to him, saying sorry again in a teary tremor.

He then lifted his eyes with a silent groan within himself. But when he saw her beautiful large eyes gleaming with unshed tears, he felt as though his heart was being ripped apart into shreds. Every emotion he was feeling towards her was now being amplified many folds. It was now so much stronger compared to previously that it was almost overwhelming his rational mind.

"No, don't... Please!" he cupped her face, his voice begging. He did not know what he would do if this person started crying now. With all these uncontrollable feelings and emotions within him, he was not even sure if he could keep himself going straight or he might just end up flying off the track. "F\*ck. I should be the one saying sorry. Forgive me... no, don't forgive me! I'm so sorry..." he hugged her tight, as his body trembled again, not sure what he was saying or how he could make himself clear. He knew he was confusing her with his speech like this.

"I don't understand... why... what are you saying –" Vera shook her head minutely as her brows creased adorably. Gideon looked at that endearing expression on her face and let out a shaky breath.

"Because I can no longer let you go, Vera."

Chapter 502 - Doomed

"Because I can no longer let go of you, Vera." His voice was filled with nothing but deep emotions as he said that. And Vera was paralyzed hearing those words coming from his mouth.

Her eyes just stared at him. These were words she had been wishing for with her whole heart. However, she could not quite believe what she had just heard. Did she hear that correctly? Or could it be that she had been wanting to hear this for so long that her ears are playing tricks on her? She shook her head a little dazedly and looked at Gideon to see if he was serious. Seeing him staring intently at her and waiting for her response, Vera felt that what she heard must have been real.

The emotions inside her chest felt as though they were in a frenzy right now. She felt like she wanted to burst into tears due to too much happiness that she could barely contain within her heart. But she somehow held all those powerful emotions back, afraid that her ears might have tricked her or something. Just in case. She better double check and be a hundred percent sure before rejoicing.

"W-what..." her voice was so weak, "what did you... just say? Can you say that again, please?" She choked out slightly as she uttered that last line, hoping and praying that she was not dreaming.

And Gideon pulled away. A defeated smile gracing his handsome face as he brushed her face with the back of his fingers tenderly. His eyes were the same as that night when he had dedicated himself to her wholeheartedly. Soft, warm, and so full of love. Vera tried to hold herself as still as she could while waiting for his reply, but she could not help the little trembling of her knees and hands as she strained to hear his reply.

"You're doomed, Vera..." he said apologetically, "because I can no longer let you go. You're now stuck with me – the f\*cked up living curse – for the rest of your life." A slanted and somewhat sad smile spread across his lips. But to Vera, that was the most beautiful and precious smile in the whole wide world right now.

Vera blinked, her lips parting open, but no words came forth. And then she cried all the while smiling so wide. There was just no need for words between them right now. The look on her face that very moment made Gideon unable to continue talking and he just kept his eyes glued on her.

"Oh my god... I'm... I'm so happy!" She finally burst out and sobbed right before him, covering her mouth with her hands, trying to slightly mute the loud cries coming from herself. "I'm so happy, so... happy... Gideon... you don't know how happy I am right now!" tears were streaming down her cheeks that were lifted in a wide smile.

Then she hugged him and planted kisses on his face while whispering heartfelt 'thank you's'.

"I just said you're doomed," he breathed out in disbelief as he shook his head wryly. And following his statement, Vera's breathtaking smile became even wider as she cupped Gideon's face.

"If being doomed feels like this... if being doomed means being with you for the rest of my life, then so be it... I would love to be doomed forever, Gideon. That would be the aim of my life – to remain being doomed with you forever." She said staunchly with shining eyes and Gideon caught his lips that had started trembling between his teeth.

"F\*ck..." he cursed under his breath, "why are you... I'm not worthy..." he bit his lower lip again and as his tears fell, he buried his face into the crook of her shoulder. "I don't deserve your love..." his body shook as he said that, and Vera hugged him tight.

"You're wrong. I believe we deserve each other... I believe I was born for you and only you, Gideon. I believe this is fate. Didn't you notice it yet? No matter how you tried to push me away, no matter what you do, no matter what happens, in the end, I always end up right in your arms like

this." Vera was smiling so widely as she whispered that to him, kissing his head so lovingly as she tried to soothe him at the same time.

She made him look at her next and she gently brushed a finger over his wet dark lashes. "I still don't understand everything, but please believe me when I say I don't desire anything else in this life but you. I won't mind jumping into the pits of hell as long as I'm doing that with you. I won't fear even the darkest darkness as long as you're holding onto me like this. You already know that, right? About how stubborn I am when it comes to you?" then an impish and mischievous grin spread on her face.

There was a short silence as Gideon stayed looking at her in an utter daze, until an adorable curse suddenly came out from Vera's lips. "F\*ck." she said, causing Gideon to blink in surprise, never expecting this angel to curse at all.

Then she grinned awkwardly. "I just thought you're about to say that again. So I said it first..." Vera then laughed a little sheepishly when she saw his shocked face.

A smile finally bloomed across Gideon's face before a pleasing chuckle echoed inside the house. And Vera revelled at the sight of his face that had transformed due to his laughter. His laughter... it sounded so good, so blissful... and he just looks as handsome as hell when he laughed like this.

"F\*ck." Vera said again when Gideon's chuckle faded, causing the man to chuckle again but this time only a short one. And he covered her mouth with his when Vera was about to curse again.

"Stop it." he breathed against her lips.

"F –"

"I said stop it." His voice sounded a little more stern.

"Fu –"

"Vera. If you keep saying that –"

"But I want to hear your laughter again." She turned her large and sky blue eyes on him, pretending to blink innocently.

Gideon stared at her. And the look in his eyes made them both stilled. "The first and second were adorable, yes. That's why I couldn't help but laugh. But... the third and beyond... they sounded so mischievous and naughty it's making me want to..." his voice came out in a low growl and Vera shivered in anticipation.

"... to?" she asked, tilting her head a little, causing Gideon to swallow hard.

Chapter 503 - As Soon As Possible

"Stop tempting me. I am already in heat like this –" Gideon groaned out as he squeezed his eyes shut, trying his best not to jump Vera right there and then.

Vera's eyes suddenly widened. The word 'heat' finally reminded her again about Gideon's condition. He was having something like a fever! She had totally forgotten about it!

"R-right! Heat! Your abnormal temperature, we still need to do something about that first!" Vera placed her palm over his head, panicking again when she felt how hot he had gotten since earlier. Even though he had told her that dark faes do not get fevers, she still could not ignore this. She had

never felt him this hot before so she could only deduce even to the dark faes, this was not something normal and harmless as he had implied it was!

"I think I should go ask for help. Evie... she can definitely –" Vera muttered as much to herself as to Gideon.

"Calm down." Gideon said calmly, holding both her wrists in his large hands. There was seriousness in his eyes now. "Listen to me carefully... no one can take this heat away unless..." he paused and stared at her for a few seconds. Then he cleared his throat and continued, "... unless we complete the mating ritual."

Vera blinked. "Ma.. mating... ritual?" she stammered out, not expecting that their topic of discussion would suddenly jump towards their mating.

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Back in the castle, Gavriel had just returned inside the room after their talk was interrupted by a commotion going on outside the castle.

Gavriel had left to check on what was going on but returned immediately as soon as he realised that the commotion was not something serious.

"Is everything alright?" Beatrice asked and Gavriel nodded as he sat down next to Evie again.

"It's just the two dark fae lords horsing around and making some show." He answered dryly and Beatrice sighed as she rubbed at her temples.

"Those two..." Beatrice could only shake her head.

"I couldn't sense Gideon's presence in the castle anymore as well."

"He must have run off to somewhere again to hide. He always does that. But it's alright, at least, this time he took Vera along with him."

"But I don't think he's alright though..." Gavriel commented softly. However, his statement was heard by the other two ladies, causing Evie and Beatrice to look at him with creased brows. He saw their questioning looks and started to explain.

"I felt that he had somehow gone too weak. And... his temperature was certainly not normal just before he left. He was burning up like hell."

Beatrice suddenly rose from her seat, seemingly alarmed. "Are... are you sure about that son?!" she exclaimed, wide-eyed.

Gav nodded at her. He was certain. Gideon's temperature and that weakness he showed was certainly not normal. "Yes mother, I think something's terribly wrong with him."

"Oh my goodness!" Beatrice's expression turned into a happy surprise, and she even gave a little happy clap. That just caused Evie and Gav to look at her with confusion. Why was she happy when hearing that Gideon seemed to be unwell? "I understand now! Oh my, why didn't I think of that?! Those two... they're definitely mates! The possessiveness Gidy just showed and that bloodlust... he usually would never attack his best friend like he's going to kill him even if he's jealous. But when you mention that he's in heat, I suddenly remembered! I think this is the only explanation!"

While Beatrice was all smiles and excitement, Evie and Gav looked at each other. Mates...?

"Oh my, we must go find those two right now. They will need to complete the mating ritual immediately."

"Mating ritual? Now?" Evie asked. Was there need for such haste to complete it?

Knowing that the mating bond was unheard of on the surface, Beatrice told Evie and Gav everything about this scared bond.

"If they really are mates, I must make sure their mating bond is complete before we go back to the Great City." Beatrice said.

Evie rose as well, wondering what was with the queen's haste in rushing the mating bond. "Is it bad if the mating ritual is delayed?" she asked and Beatrice nodded.

"Yes. It will be very hard for Gideon. And I will never be in peace if their mating bond is not completed before we leave. I must make sure they complete the bond and solidify it before we leave them."

"We will leave them?" Evie asked again, surprised. They had just talked about this earlier and because of the King's summons, Gideon must head back to the Great City with them whether or not he liked it or not. Then why was the queen saying that she would leave them back here?

Beatrice grinned at her meaningfully. "We don't have a choice. After the ritual, we can only leave them alone. It would take at least a few days until the heat caused by the completion of the mating bond to subside. It's like the consummation after the wedding, just that, for two mates, the sexual frenzy will take a long time."

"Oh... I see..." Evie did not know how to respond to that information and there was a slight blush on her cheeks.

"That's also the reason why we can't delay anymore. They need to complete the process as soon as possible because of this problem waiting to burst."

Evie nodded. Beatrice was right, it would be much better if they complete the process now. And after this, Evie believes that Vera would definitely be able to change Gideon's mind on whatever that he was planning. She thought that this was probably a blessing, definitely a sign of hope for them all. Because it was just too timely. Vera's appearance at this crucial moment and now being Gideon's mate as well could not be simple coincidences.

"Alvion." Beatrice summoned and the big man entered the room.

"Yes, Your Majesty." Alvion bowed before standing at attention.

"Go drag those two lords over here. We need them to bring us to Gideon's hideout now." she ordered, and Alvion immediately moved.

Moments later, six people – Beatrice, Evie, Gavriel, Alvion, Kione and Azrael – arrived in the middle of the Monster's Forest. But the monsters who were guarding that small house came at them ferociously and a fight quickly broke out until the monsters suddenly halted as if someone had turned them all into stone.

"Stop that. Don't you dare attack them again." Gideon's voice echoed out and the monsters cowered after hearing his voice and they backed off timidly. Like obedient pets they followed his instructions

and returned to their original posts. Everyone looked towards the source of the voice and saw Gideon standing there, with Vera right next to him being held within his arm's embrace.

#### Chapter 504 - Prepare Yourself

The scene that was once chaotic and loud caused by the fight and the roars of the many fierce and large monsters just a while ago became as quiet as the night. Everyone still could not help but be amazed at how the monsters just listened to Gideon like that. The thought of how it was as though he was the king of the monsters did cross the thoughts of some of them there.

Queen Beatrice was the first to rush over and approached the couple who were still standing at the entrance to that little house in the middle of the forest.

"Gideon!" Beatrice called out and she immediately reached out and touched her son's hand as if to confirm something.

At the feel of Gideon's body temperature, she looked straight into her son's eyes. "Tell me, Gidy. The mating bond between you two has been triggered, right?"

"Yes... mother." Gideon gave a slow nod as a response to his mother's question.

Gideon's reply barely stopped Beatrice from jumping with joy right before them.

"I figured that this is the case that's why I rushed over. You already explained to Vera about this? I mean about mating-bond?" she asked as she looked at Vera and smiled at her with the warmest smile, looking at her as though she was gazing at her long lost daughter. There was no doubt that Queen Beatrice would welcome Vera as her son's wife and mate. The acceptance and the affection could be clearly seen in her face and her bearings.

A brief nod was Gideon's only answer. Beatrice clicked her tongue at her son's reticent response and had no choice but to look over at Vera again. "I hope he had explained to you clearly about what the mating bond is and how it would affect you both... Is everything clear to you my dear? Or do you have more questions you needed answers to?"

Vera blinked. The truth was she still had a lot of questions about the mating bond. Gideon had only told her enough to understand the basics and she was curious to know more about it and how does it work. But she understood the urgency on the matter at hand and with everyone present, Vera could just swallow back her questions and only shook her head to indicate that there was nothing she needed to ask.

"Oh, don't you worry about it, Vera dear. Come... you need to come with me for a little while." Beatrice reached out her hand and took Vera from Gideon's side as she turned to Gavriel and the other two lords. "Go with them and prepare yourself for the ritual. Wait... you already explained this part to Vera as well right, dear son?" Beatrice's eyes narrowed a little, knowing how this son of hers did not like to talk more than he needed to. Thus, she was a little worried he had not explained it well to his future mate.

Gideon nodded curtly again at his mother, sparing no words.

"And... the both of you have already made a decision regarding this, right?" Beatrice asked again, brows raised at the couple.

A smile bloomed on Vera's face as she looked at Gideon before the both of them nodded their assent before the queen. "Yes, we will go ahead with the completion of the mating bond." Gideon said and Beatrice finally grinned wide and her eyes sparkled like twin stars in the night sky. Even a blind person would be able to see how ecstatic the queen was on hearing this news of her eldest son getting mated.

"Good call, my dear son. I was worried you're going to try to futilely resist but it seems that I was wrong." Beatrice chuckled, looking at Vera proudly like this was all thanks to her. "However, if you had resisted this, I would have no problem kicking you in the tushie to get you to your senses." Though the queen had muttered this a little quietly, those around her still heard it and Evie could not help but chuckle a little.

"Alright, now let's get on with it. Leave Vera to Evie and me." The queen said excitedly and after giving signals to the men behind them, she called for Evie and the three ladies to enter the house.

Once the door was closed and Vera was now out of Gideon's sight, he felt his strength coming back to him again. Except that the heat did not subside. Instead, he felt that it was rising every minute that passes without them completing the mating bond.

"Congratulations," Gavriel's voice echoed out as he stood next to his brother. "I was so looking forward to a great fight between you and I as soon as we met. Never would have I suspected that something completely different was waiting for me." There was laughter and disbelief in his voice as he shook his head.

"Well, sorry about that my dearest little brother. You don't have a choice but to postpone the dramatic fight you have been planning, I'm afraid." Gideon flashed a smirk at his younger brother. His smirk did not seem to have any effect on Gavriel this time though.

Gavriel smiled knowingly at Gideon instead. "Stop acting all villainous now, my dear big brother. Everyone can tell how crazy happy you are with the way you are looking right now, have you noticed yet? The darkness around you has turned pinkish in colour?" He patted Gideon's shoulder and whispered teasingly, "just enjoy yourself. This is like your wedding day. Now you go and work to set up a stage for the ritual. I can't use magic so I can't help you with anything. I guess, I'll just go investigate your interesting monster minions for now since you ordered them to not attack anyone, I believe I'm included."

Another pat on Gideon's shoulder and Gavriel spoke one more line with a serious tone before walking away, "I'm glad you finally found your mate, big brother."

Gideon just stood there, watching Gavriel's back until he disappeared behind the bushes where the monsters were hiding themselves.

"When did that devil sprout became so polite and... talkative?" Azrael asked and Gideon finally turned to face his two friends.

"He's not the devil sprout you guys knew from back then anymore," was all he replied, causing the two of them to look at him with creased brows.

But before anyone of the two could ask, the tension rose as Gideon halted the moment he passed by Kione's side.

"She's mine.." Gideon said in a possessive tone and Kione smiled.



## Chapter 505 - Give Me A Break

"I know. It's just that I had the thought that I might stand a chance when I felt you were trying your best to resist her. But it seems like you guys are truly fated for each other. I'm not stupid enough not to realize now that I did not have even a chance since the beginning." Kione then looked at him without any anger or jealousy and put his hand on Gideon's shoulder chummily, "Congratulations... I knew that you're the only one who can make her happy."

Once he retracted his hand, Kione rubbed the back of his neck. "Though I just want to inform you that I will be having a few words with her... just for a short while, yeah? So please don't go berserk on me again, alright?"

Gideon looked at him silently. But after a moment, he replied, "As long as you don't touch even a strand of her hair, then it's fine." and he left after speaking.

While a long sigh was coming from Kione's lips as he watched Gideon's back disappearing, Azrael's hand landed heavily on his shoulder. "You'll move on real soon man, don't worry." He said and Kione just sighed again.

"I am hoping you're right." Kione truly hoped so as well in his heart.

"Who knows you will meet your mate real soon?" Azrael winked as he teased Kione.

"Bloody hell. Give me a break. I want to go back to my usual life. My life before I met Vera was definitely far better for me." Kione sighed again.

...

Inside the house that was carved inside a large, crystalized tree trunk, Evie and Beatrice were busy with Vera. One of the noble ladies were also with them to cast magic on Vera and dress her up using a special kind of magic as per the dark fae's mating ritual tradition.

Beatrice explained to Vera that she, the queen of the dark faes will be the one to officiate and lead in the ritual. Because in the Under Lands, only female nobles and royals were allowed to oversee and guide the connecting and completion of the mating bond. It was because common dark faes could not withstand the magic that the mating bond will produce during the ritual. It was one of the queen's duties to perform the ritual if one or both of the parties were royalty. But for the party who are not royalties, the noble ladies would be sufficient to officiate and guide the ritual.

However, if the couple involved were the king and queen themselves, the high priestess, the oldest female dark fae alive will be the one officiating and guiding the ceremony.

"What is... going to happen during the ritual? Is there... something I should do?" Vera asked, a bit nervously. When Gideon told her about this, she did not even have the time to process everything because of a commotion disturbing their talk even before she could grasp everything. She felt as though Gideon had just proposed to her and now, they are already getting married in the very next moment. Though she was extremely happy, but she was still overwhelmed as she was trying her best to understand and cope with the urgency of it all. Everything was just going all too fast for her, and she was afraid she could not quite catch up with the events. Vera also could not help but feel worried that as a human, she might not be able to match with these magical people's pace.

"Oh, don't you worry about a thing, my dearest." Beatrice calmed her as she saw how Vera was looking a little lost and had a mild panicky look on her face. She was smiling at Vera with all the

understanding and love that reminded her of her mother's smile before she fell into madness. "I understand what you are feeling right now. I certainly felt nervous too, back then because things just proceeded too fast all of a sudden. But trust me dear, you have nothing to worry about. Because the ceremony will be over quite quickly as well," she chuckled. "But it will be something that you will never ever forget, trust me."

Vera's heartbeat calmed down at the queen's words. She was just so nice, so warm, that it was impossible not to feel relaxed around her. This woman, she was amazing and powerful and shining so brightly, just like Evie.

"But I should tell you some things first about what happens right after the ritual is done." Beatrice informed and she winked at Evie and the noble ladies.

Understanding what the queen wanted, everyone left the house to give the privacy Vera needed since her outfit as well as Queen Beatrice's were all readied.

The moment Evie stepped out of the house, she saw the front yard was already transformed. The trees seemed to have been moved aside and a perfect circle was created surrounded by trees. In the middle lay another circle of eleven different crystals. The place no longer looked like the creepy Monsters Forest anymore.

But Evie's smile quickly faded when she realized that her husband was not there.

"Where is my husband?" She asked Kione who was the first person she saw, and the man looked towards a direction.

"He said he wanted to investigate the monsters while they're still docile, Queen."

"Thank you." Evie replied and without wasting a moment longer, she went towards the direction Kione had pointed. Once Evie saw Gav's back facing the huge monster that was sitting quietly like an obedient pet, she sighed out in relief.

"Gav!" Gavriel already turned before she could call his name.

"Wifey? You missed me already?" A wide, beautiful smile graced his face as he moved and met Evie, lifting her gently when he reached her before hugging her close to him.

"What are you doing here by yourself?" Evie quickly changed the topic. She was afraid she might lose her rationality if her husband's naughtiness will strike at this moment. It had been a while since they were together alone. She would not be able to resist him! She was sure of it!

"Just curious about these creatures. They're absolutely different from the monsters back in the Middle Lands." Gavriel said, going with the flow. Though Evie felt that he certainly held back a lot as well.

When Evie looked at the monster up close, she still could not get used to it and a tinge of fear crawled all over her skin. The monster was huge, taller than two vampires as big as Samuel combined. These monsters had human-like hands and feet but very long and skinny arms. The tips of their ribs literally pierced through their ash-coloured skin. They have four eyes around their head and one big mouth so wide it stretched out across their whole face as their very long tongue were sticking out that almost reached the ground. They were absolutely disgusting and... Evie was certain, they were the monsters she had seen in her dream.

"Are these the monsters the ones in your dream?" Gav asked quietly and when Evie nodded, he looked at the monster again. "And these same monsters were turned into these harmless creatures who couldn't seem to do anything on their own just because Gideon ordered them not to.." He murmured contemplatively, and Evie saw a mysterious gleam in his eyes as he said that.

#### Chapter 506 - Final Preparations

Back inside the house, Vera found herself blushing hard at the things Queen Beatrice had just finished talking to her about.

"So don't hesitate to speak out, okay? Vera dear? I'm sure Giddy will listen to you if you speak up, even though it will be hard for him, I'm sure he can survive a little restrain every now and then. I know he'd be perceptive about your emotions and feelings as soon as the mating ritual is over. But he'll most likely still miss to realize things especially when in that kind of situation." Beatrice said understandingly and a little sympathetically as she was arranging the jewels all over Vera's hair.

When Vera gave her a wilful nod, Beatrice smiled. She was quite sure that this little lady, though sometimes shy and not that outspoken, would be able to hold her own against that son of hers. She had a good feeling about her. "Alright, good. Any more burning questions, my dear? Things that you need to get off your chest before the ritual?" Beatrice looked at Vera and waited patiently as the red head lady pondered for a while.

Vera's eyes wandered around a little and hesitated for a moment. "I... Your Majesty... is there really nothing you can advise me to do during the ritual? I'm afraid I might get overwhelmed or shocked so I am wondering if you could give me more details about what is going to happen during the ritual. That way, I can at least prepare myself... I'm sorry I... I know you told me not to worry... but..."

"I perfectly understand, Vera dear." Beatrice looked at her with understanding. "The reason why I didn't say any more about it was because I am not really sure what will happen during the ritual. How it works is that it varies from couple to couple and there is no one fix way it would happen for each couple. For Belial's and my case, during the ritual, our mating bond connected us into an..." she paused for a few seconds, not sure how to describe that feeling before shaking her head, giving up in trying to find the right word. She then smiled apologetically to Vera. "...there truly is no way to describe it in words what had happened to us both. But during the ritual, we both saw each other's past. Everything that both happened to us, our darkest memories, our most beautiful experience in our whole existence... everything was shown to the other party. He knew me thoroughly and I knew him in the same way. I am not sure what will happen for you and Gideon during the ritual though. There is no saying that you would experience the same thing we did. But I am sure everything will turn out alright. Just know that after this ritual is completed and your mating-bond is completed, nothing in this world will ever force you apart ever again. And would that not be the best reassurance for you, dear Vera?" Beatrice's eyes twinkled as she looked at Vera and she nodded in excitement, her eyes sparkling as much if not more than Beatrice's.

Those words calmed Vera so much she stood and looked at the queen with so much gratitude. "May I hug you, Your Majesty?" she asked shyly and a little hesitantly and Beatrice moved to envelop her in a warm and motherly hug. The two of them were overflowing with happiness.

"You are so beautiful, Vera," Beatrice said, causing Vera to blush again. One of the noble ladies entered and gave a small bottle containing a liquid that was shimmering with different coloured

lights that seemed to be rippling as though having a life of their own. They swirled inside the bottle so mesmerizingly that if one were to just stare at it, they would be trapped in a daze until someone shook them out of it.

"Is everything ready now?" Beatrice asked the noble lady.

"Yes, Your Majesty, it's time for you to go to the altar. You need to do your final preparations for the ritual." The noble lady informed Queen Beatrice.

"Very well," she breathed excitedly before looking back at Vera. Evie also entered the room again and her outfit was now changed as well. She wore a cloak shimmering like the starry night sky on the surface. Her cloak was not supposed to glimmer but due to her magic, the cloak just reacted and created such a marvellous beauty on its own. It was the cloak all witnesses are to wear during mating rituals. Everyone, except the mating couple and the queen must put on the same dark cloaks as per the dark faes' tradition. And it's to also shield them from the magic released by the mating couple that will overflow during the whole course of the ritual. Or else, they might suffer unwanted effects.

"I'm leaving her to your care now, daughter dearest." Beatrice told Evie and at Evie's smile, the queen finally left along with the noble lady.

"You're breath-taking Vera," Evie gushed out and Vera could not help but smile from ear to ear.

"Thank you, I... can't believe this is actually happening." As much as she was happy, it somehow still felt as though she was dreaming and might awaken from this beautiful illusion.

"I know it's overwhelming but I'm so happy for you. I am finally seeing that smile again. No, you looked even more happy than ever before." Evie's smile was warm and genuine.

"Yes..." Vera's eyes caught the door opening and saw Lord Kione entering the room.

"Oh, Lord Kione wanted to speak with you for a while, Vera." Evie told her. A while ago, Kione approached Evie and asked her for a favour. Evie was surprised at the look in his eyes when he came to speak to her so she could only agree as it seems he had already asked for permission.

Vera faced the lord who now looked utterly mesmerized, until Evie cleared her throat. "Sorry to burst your bubble, Lord Kione, but you have a very limited time." Evie smiled knowingly at him.

The lord smiled awkwardly and rubbed the back of his neck as he took a few more steps closer to Vera. He stopped three steps away from her and breathed deeply. His eyes never leaving hers the whole time.

"Yes, My Lord? Is there something I can do for you?" Vera asked, smiling at Kione.

Chapter 507 - Garden In The Dark

"This would be the last time you'd call me 'my lord'..." he started and when Vera looked at him questioningly, he gave her a quick explanation. "The mate of a prince would become the crown princess. It doesn't matter even if you're not yet officially wedded. But the thing is that as the prince's mate, you would naturally be of a higher rank than any of the lords."

"Oh..." Vera blinked after hearing what Kione said. She looked like she did not quite know how to react about this new information fed to her and bit down on her lips unsurely.

"And I..." Kione's expression then abruptly changed. There was a tinge of tension that rose up as he took one long and quiet deep breath. "I just came to tell you of my feelings."

Even Evie blinked in surprise. Wait, what?! What the hell is wrong with him now?

"I like you... no I, I have fallen in love with you, Lady Vera." He continued with difficulty, as an ironic smile curved on his face. "You must be wondering when I even fell for you..." he laughed slightly, a tinge of helplessness in his voice. "I can't tell you when as well... as I don't know it myself. But... it did happen." Looking at Vera, he shrugged his shoulders at her helplessly.

A long silence passed between them as Evie looked on silently from the side.

"I'm... so sorry." Vera uttered, her voice weak and sad for him. And the expression on her face made Kione smile a little sadly but knowingly. She looked as though she was hurt for him, and it was because she knew exactly how hurtful it was when someone you love does not love you back but ends up loving someone else.

"No, don't." Kione shook his head gently. "I knew all along since the beginning that your heart belongs only to Gideon. I just wanted to express this. I honestly thought back then, doing this thing is unnecessary and was just some bullshit. But I guess this is indeed the right thing to do. I always believe that bottling things up is unhealthy anyway, so here I am. We have to tell what we feel to the person we love isn't it? We have to say it anyway even if it doesn't turn out the way we want... and I think that's alright." His smile became wider and more genuine now. His shoulders were also more relaxed as if some heavy burden on him got lifted.

Vera smiled back at him, glad that he did not seem overly saddened by the fact that she could not respond positively to his feelings.

"You're... an amazing man, Lord Kione." She could only say that. Looking at him in a way that made Kione's heartache felt much better.

"I don't think so but... since you're the one who said it... I'll believe you." he replied, looking away now. "And... I wish you nothing but happiness in your life with the person you love, Vera."

"Thank you..."

"No, I should be the one thanking you. Well then, I'll go join Gideon now." And Kione walked out the door as silently as he had entered.

As soon as the door closed behind him, Evie was still speechless as she stared at the door. What just happened? Seriously? Kione actually and truly fell in love with Vera? It was not an act from their plan anymore?

"Are you alright?" Evie finally snapped out of it and asked Vera when she heard her take in a deep breath.

"I'm fine." Vera said and nodded, "I know he'll be alright. He's a very honest man." A smile was spreading across Vera's face as she said that, and Evie could not agree more.

The door opened again, and another noble lady came in.

"It's time for you to come out, Lady Vera." She said and Vera's attention and mind was now fixed onto nothing else but Gideon and their mating ritual again. A deep breath escaped her lips and Evie

held her hand tightly. She could feel Vera's hands were slightly cold to the touch and she smiled reassuringly at her.

"Ready?" Evie asked and as soon as Vera nodded, the two of them walked towards the opened door.

The moment she stepped outside the door, Vera's eyes widened in surprise at the scene before her. There was a circle made of eleven different colours shining brightly in the middle of a bigger circle. And inside of that circle of crystals stood Queen Beatrice. Vera could not see her clearly because of the light emitted from the crystals but she did not need to see clearly to recognise her.

There was a long aisle from the house to the circle and Vera thought that the aisle was made of white crystals as well. The scene was just so bright and beautiful. A crystal garden in the dark. Just perfect for carrying out their mating bond ritual.

She could not see Gideon. But she could see that the aisle was extended further ahead opposite of her. And she could only deduce that Gideon was at the other end of this aisle as well. She was told to just walk ahead after the queen's song started until she and Gideon meet inside that circle of crystal where the queen was standing.

Queen Beatrice's voice then echoed out with an otherworldly trill. A sweet, spellbinding song that seemed to make all the crystals glow brightly and the even colours surrounding them seemed to dance and twirl in a joyful frolic around the set-up of the place.

Vera's heart was pounding harder than ever, and she felt Evie squeeze her hand in comfort. She did not realise that Evie was gone as her senses began to concentrate on only one thing right now. Gideon. She wanted to see him, meet him there, in that circle, that place that was going to be the sacred grounds for the completion of their bond.

When the queen stretched her arms wide to opposing sides, one hand towards her and the other towards Gideon, the two finally took their first step and started walking forward. Counting each step as their hearts drummed wildly in their ears, their eyes finally met as they came closer to the queen.

## Chapter 508 - Irrevocably

Gideon caught his breath when he saw Vera coming from across him, down the aisle. Her movements were so elegant and slow. It was as though she was deliberately walking in such a way that was trying to seduce him into jumping her right there and then. Of course, he knew she was not doing this, but it was just his perception and him wanting her so much that is causing his eyes to see things that way. His heart skipped a few beats as he revelled at the sight of her. The gown she was wearing was purposely chosen that it would be the exact colour of her eyes – a mesmerising azure sky blue and there were those gleaming jewels tastefully chosen and fastened securely into her fiery red hair to complement the beauty of her locks. Her dress was a lacy mermaid dress with thin shoulder straps that widened as it cut deeply down the chest area and dipped right down to her upper abdomen. There, the dress was gathered in little folds and cinched snugly around her waist with an elaborate gold and black buckle. The design of the dress allowed her curvaceous cleavage to be quite exposed as the ritual would need the area of the heart to be exposed. A delicate but yet intricate choker necklace with the similar jewels placed in her hair adorned her pale and lovely neck. A few more strings of the same jewels were attached to the choker and were draped across her dainty collar bones and bare upper chest, fastened to an intricately designed shoulder necklace that drew more attention to the beautiful lines of her neck. And to complete the whole ensemble, a single

strand of glimmering head chain made of precious mithril was placed across her forehead, with a single waterdrop jewel made of sapphire was dangling between her brows.

And looking at her... the whole effect of her look was just so stunning and breathtaking that he could not even find the right words to describe how beautiful she was. This was to be his mate. His other half. The perfect one to complete him. She belongs solely to him!

He knew she still could not see him, but he could see her very clearly and his heart continued drumming away like crazy as he looked at her. There was still a slight disbelief reflected in his eyes. It was still a bit hard to believe that this was happening. But Gideon could no longer fight it and the fact that Vera's going to be cursed if this mating bond is not completed drove him to this decision. He could bear anything... everything... all the pain in the world that would pour out on him. All was possible only if this person was kept safe and free from any suffering.

Just the thought of her going through a long time of suffering all because of the curse was unbearable for him. He just could not bear even the remotest thought of it. It was as though his very own heart was being cut out of his own chest.

When they started to walk towards each other, Gideon felt all his emotions overflow inside of him, wreaking havoc in his heart. Unspeakable love, happiness, desire, awe, fear, doubt, and also... guilt.

And he shut his eyes closed before he was near enough for Vera to see. He wanted to see her in his mind, Leah. Hoping to see her image like he usually did for many years every time he closed his eyes so he could speak to her. He had tried to picture her since he made the decision, but he had failed. And even now, it seems as though she was no longer going to appear anymore.

The last time he had seen her was that night. When he had called out her name while he was with Vera.

It was at that moment when he had realised that he was in love with Vera. After that realisation struck him, he had watched Leah's image slowly blur out until it completely disappeared from his mind. He had tried to reach out, to hold her, and he had felt so much guilt consuming his body until he had trembled as though being frozen in ice. But the last vision he had was of her just her smiling at him before disappearing like the dew in the heat of the sun. Since then, he could no longer see her in his mind.

Her image had lived in his mind for so long, for every second, that he had gotten so used to it as though it was another part of him. Or an extension of himself. But it was only that way until Vera came into his life and he had started to forget about her. His heart started to beat for this red headed woman no matter how much he denied it. It was true that Vera's eyes were exactly like hers. But he knew in his heart that he did not just desire her only because of her uncanny resemblance to Leah, even though he had tried to make himself believe that that was the case. After going through many internal debates with himself, he finally gave up and admitted to himself that he had irrevocably and undeniably fallen for this little human girl.

He had fallen for Vera as just herself. And this feeling that his love for Vera was much stronger than the love that he had felt for Leah caused this strong guilt to bloom within his heart. But he was not planning to set the guilt aside and tell himself that it was time for him to forget about his first love. There was no way he could do such a thing. He was not going to forget her. He could not. She was a part of him. A part of who he is as a person. They grew up together and experienced many things together. Therefore, to deny her... to forget about her would mean to deny and forget about who he

was and the man that he had grown to become today.. He would?keep her together in his past and honour her memory deep within his heart.

Chapter 509 - Mark

As Gideon opened his eyes, the very first image he saw was Vera's. She was close enough now, and a soft smile was gracing her beautiful face. She was smiling at him, her eyes so alive, and so full of hope. And his mind, heart, and soul were just fully captivated by her again. Right then, her light seemed to have reached through every nook of him, leaving no room for any dark thoughts.

Her smile was so beautiful it shook his heart into a frenzy. This woman is just too amazing... and the power she had over him. She could reduce him senseless with just one smile.

The song ended and Vera and Gideon stood right outside the circle. Their eyes never leaving the other.

Vera could not stop smiling despite the butterflies stirring up a storm in her stomach and the crazy beatings of her heart. She thought to herself that Gideon could not be any handsomer than he already was. But at that moment, she was speechless at the sight of him and the outfit that he had on. She usually sees him wearing a dark cloak that would be covering his entire body that she could not even tell what kind of clothes he wore on the inside. He always looked like a rogue angel of the dark. But tonight, he had a cape on instead of a cloak. Therefore, his clothes were clearly visible to Vera, and oh...did she like what she see! He had donned a fitting long sleeved black shirt with a high collar which similarly had a wide opening at the chest area and deep cut down to the waist. His exposed pectoral muscles were drool-worthy, and Vera flushed just by gazing at them. There were two one-inch straps fastened from his shirt at the collar bones diagonally across to the mid-abdominal area, resulting in a cross pattern over his perfectly toned washboard abs. Over his shoulders, he wore shoulder armour that were tastefully crafted – not only were they refined and magnificent, but they were functional as well. Around his slim waist, a black belt was wrapped around and clasped by a silvery buckle also made of mithril. The cape that was fastened to his neck and draped elegantly down his back and ended at mid-thigh level only added to the lofty appeal of his overall look. To Vera, he still looked like the dark angel that he was, only he was more regal now.

This man... she could still hardly believe that he was going to be hers. Fully belonging to her alone. Her mate. Her perfect other.

She was going to have him all for herself, for the rest of her life. And if there was another life they would live, she would look for him again and love him in that life as well, forever and ever.

Queen Beatrice stretched out her hands, each facing the two of them.

Vera and Gideon stepped inside the circle and as the queen began to chant out words that sounded like spells, Gideon placed his right hand on the queen's hand as Vera placed her right on the queen's other hand.

"Vera, do you accept Gideon as your mate?" the queen asked.

"Yes." Vera replied, her gaze gleaming as she looked at Gideon.

"Gideon, do you accept Vera as your mate?"



"Yes." He uttered and their hearts felt as though they were about to burst with the intensity of their emotions.

The queen then pulled their hands together as the couple took a step closer. She placed Vera's hand over Gideon's and as she spoke more magical words, she poured the content of the bottle Vera had seen in the house. The magical shimmery liquid dripped onto her middle finger, then flowed down to Gideon's middle finger as well.

Vera's heart then began beating even faster, harder, setting off what seemed to be violent currents rolling about within her. She then saw the magical liquid moving on its own, wrapping itself around her ring finger and Gideon's too. This feeling... there was just no words to describe it.

And the magic did not stop there. The next moment, something that felt like tension rose as she felt something inexplicable crawling under her skin. She saw the liquid continued moving from her ring finger, spreading to her hand up to her arm like a vine branching out across her limb. She saw the same thing happening to Gideon's arm as well, with the exact same pattern of rose vines with no thorns being magically tattooed over his skin too.

The vine like pattern continued spreading out and she looked up at her mate.

He lifted his free hand and touched the side of her neck.

"Don't be scared," he murmured lovingly, tickling her ear, as he stroked her so gently, his fingertips lightly moving over her skin.

She relaxed at his reassuring touch. "I'm not. Just a little bit nervous. This... is like our wedding ring, right?" she commented, and a smile curved on his face.

"It's our mark. A mark that proves we are tied together, a mark no one can erase."

"It's... so beautiful..."

"It is..."

And as the moving liquid settled over their hearts, they both subconsciously closed their eyes. Something... a charge as strong as a lightning was produced within them, flashing before their eyes despite their eyes being tightly closed.

They both reached out to something, something they both wanted to touch. They reached out as far as they could despite not knowing what they were aiming for. And when their fingers finally touched each other – not their physical body, a shining moment occurred.

In the outside, Beatrice watched them subconsciously moved, entwining each other's fingers with the other as their foreheads gently pressed against each other.

The lights from the eleven crystals began to circle them. The queen knew it was happening. That Gideon and Vera were going through that inexplicable thing now. She wondered what they were seeing right now. Were they seeing each other's past just like what happened to her and her husband? Beatrice couldn't help but watch them expectantly. She honestly hope they both see the past. She wanted Gideon to know Vera is Leah. She wanted him to see all the things Leah did just so she could stay with him that she never gave up on him. And that even death couldn't make her leave him. Beatrice wanted Gideon to see that Leah never left his side, that she had been with him

all those times, following him around. She wanted him to see it all and then eventually know that Leah was finally back in his arms as Vera.

Outside the circle, everyone present could only watch as different colours danced around them. They could no longer see the three people inside that crystal circle. All they could do was to stand there watching in awe as a magical show of lights was displayed right before their very eyes. Even the crystals above glowed and shone brighter as if giving their blessing to the mating couple down below.

"It's so beautiful," Evie muttered when Gavriel pulled her close to him. He hugged her from behind and let her settle her head back onto his chest. Gavriel did not say anything, but Evie lifted her hand and stroked the side of his neck as they both continued watching the spectacular show. Both of them wondered what exactly was going on within that circle.

#### Chapter 510 - Memories (Part I)

Gideon began to see the past, like they were a dream flashing before his eyes. And this past, as he continued watching, he realised that it was not his. This recollection of occurrences did not belong to him. It was hers... Leah's. It was with this realisation that he was taken aback. Why? Why was he seeing Leah's past in this moment? Was he not getting his mating bond with Vera? So why was he seeing the past related to Leah?

Guilt rose within him again, and this time, it crashed into him, much stronger than before. Though he had decided that he would leave his past behind, to move on from Leah as she belonged with his past, he could not help but be affected when something like this happened. The fact that he was seeing Leah's past and not one of his mate's threw his mind and heart into utter confusion.

But the longer he watched and observed the flashing memories, the confusion and guilt slowly turned into pain as he realised all the times that she had been with him. From those moments he never thought that she had deliberately arranged just to be able to see him when they were younger, sneaking from her room to take a glimpse of him when he visits Azrael, until those little moments of her just looking at him from afar, admiring him, all the while when he did not even spare her a glance. The things that she had done for his sake were innumerable and his heart ached for her.

He never thought that Leah had liked him that much even back then when they were still children. He had thought Leah only developed romantic feelings for him when she had grown up and was a little bit older and more mature. He had assumed it all started only when he had saved her that night during their training in the abyss.

And as the memories continued to flow like a quiet shining river, the dull ache within him continued to grow until it became a sharp pain. He began to see her struggles through this past memory of hers. He saw her cry in silence that time when he had ignored her and told her to go away. Gideon remembered how she had smiled at him as if what he did to her was nothing wrong, and she had easily brushed it off as though it did not hurt at all. However, now he was looking back at the memories, and seeing her sobbing her heart out when he was not there to witness her tears is just hurting him so bad right now. He did not realise the magnitude of her love for him.

The beautiful memories they had shared together as a couple then appeared next and Gideon wanted this flow of memories to stop now. He already knew what was coming. Why must he see that dreadful moment again?

But the memories continued rolling along and no matter how he tried to shut his eyes or look away, they still appeared in his mind. There was no way he could escape it. He was going through that nightmare again. He was going to witness it happening all over again.

Gideon began to see her running in the woods. She was all by herself. He knew that route so well, like the back of his palms. She was heading towards the abyss of darkness. What was she doing there? And why was she all alone? The pain in his heart was mixed with fear now. As if this was not something that had already happened in the past.

He knew that this was during that fateful night. The night he had lost her... no, killed her. He saw himself killing her.

That night, Gideon had decided to deal with the monsters all by himself. Leah and many others had gotten poisoned by a certain monster that had come out of the abyss. Many young dark faes had fought back and died and he had nearly lost Leah as well, if it were not for the queen's help. His fear that the monsters would endanger his loved ones again made him rush to the abyss to deal with it. He wanted to protect his loved ones from coming to harm. And the only thing he could do to protect them was to stop the monsters from coming out of this cursed abyss. He had a strong belief that he was the only one who could end it, that the purpose of him being born with these tremendous powers were for this sole purpose. Therefore, he had decided to try. He had thought everything was working in his favour until an explosion of darkness overwhelmed him and everything went dark.

When he opened his eyes again, he was somehow lying on the ground without any recollection on what had happened during the entire time that the darkness had seemed to consume his vision. And it was then that he found out that Leah was gone. She had disappeared just like that. He had jumped into the abyss to find out where she was, and he saw her being killed by monsters. He saw her die right before his very eyes and incinerated herself before taking her last breath. He did not see anything else before that, but he just somehow knew that at that moment, she was right by the abyss. Gideon immediately realized something had happened in the duration while his vision and everything else darkened. And he could only deduce that he must have lost his mind in that moment and had just stood there, letting her get killed and unable to control himself. He was there, but he had let her die, and he would never ever forgive himself for that.

After seeing what had killed her, Gideon did not bother looking at anything else. He did not even question why she was there by the abyss in the first place. Because trying to know more of it was like trying to find excuses for himself, as though there was someone else to blame for the disaster that befell her. There was no point in that. As he could never bring her back anymore.. And there's no one to blame but him.