

## SPELLBOUND

### *Chapter 6: Unbelievably*

The sight of her surroundings made her swallow and goosebumps crawled on her skin. It wasn't just because of the biting cold, it was mostly because the valley felt absolutely eerie. In fact, eerie might still be an understatement to describe the place. All the countless trees were coal black and leafless as if they were all scorched to death. Black ravens were settled on the tree branches and they all looked like they were staring straight at them. Evie couldn't see any plant that seemed to still be alive.

A thick layer of snow had iced the ground. The fog was also thick that even though it was still morning, it already felt like twilight. It felt like the darkness would soon settle in and she imagined those notorious beasts suddenly appearing from the thick mist surrounding them.

"I- I think we should go on," she stammered.

Gavriel's head whipped around to face her.

"But you're clearly –"

"I'm fine."

"You're not."

Evie met his gaze and was surprised at what she saw in his moon-like eyes. She saw worry in them, a very intense one that Evie froze for a moment. But then she quickly reasoned to herself that this prince must have been worried that she might die or something. She was such a fragile thing in his eyes after all, judging from the overly careful and gentle way he had touched her.

"It's... cold here... outside," she murmured and without waiting for her husband's approval, she turned around and climbed back inside the carriage by herself. She would rather endure being uncomfortable inside a moving carriage than stay in a place like this. All she wanted that moment was to finally cross this valley and reach the village, where it was safe. And besides, she had told him the truth; it was freezing. She already felt the biting cold that made her shiver from just stepping out for a moment.

As she sat in the carriage, she looked at Gavriel and she saw him run his fingers through his hair before he told the coachman to keep going.

And thus, the journey continued as they rode together in stoic silence. The brutal journey stopped her from thinking and the temperature kept on getting colder and colder as they wound their way deeper and deeper into the Dark Valley.

Gavriel had wordlessly wrapped her up in a quilted blanket somewhere along the way upon realizing she was starting to shiver. But it wasn't enough. Evie was from the Southern Empire, where it was normally warm and sunny. She was not used to being in extreme cold temperatures. She had actually never experienced this level of coldness. The blanket definitely wasn't enough to warm her up.

The extreme cold swallowed Evie's fears and reservations and she burrowed even further into the depths of her husband's coat.

"I'm relieved," he said.

"Hm?"

"It seems you're not that scared of me anymore."

Evie froze in his arms. He was right... along the way, her heart had stopped hammering with nervousness and fear and she was actually snuggling herself closer to him without reservation now. She was shocked.

"It seems you have also shocked yourself."

She felt his chest move beneath her ear in what seemed to be a huff of amusement which made her glance up at his face.

"Let me warm your hand," he offered as soon as their eyes met. Evie felt her cold ears heat up and averted her gaze but she eventually lifted her hand slowly.

Without a word, Gavriel took her hand in his and began to rub her palm and cold fingers. His hand was strong, velvety and... warm.

"You are... really warm. A-are you really a vampire?" She snapped her lips shut upon realizing what she just said.

Gavriel's hand also stilled and Evie bit her lip, nervously. "I'm sorry. I... it's just... I'm just \_"

"I am, Evielyn. There's a reason why my body is warm. But I am undoubtedly a vampire."

Evie didn't know what to say. She wanted to speak more but she was afraid to offend him or upset him. She didn't want to anger him. She didn't want to see his eyes turn red

or for him to bare his fangs. She thought she might not be able to survive this journey if that happened. She might die from both fear and the freezing cold.

The feeling was so good that Evie managed to doze off just before he ceased his playing. Still, he kept her fingers folded in his.

However, after enjoying the blissful nap, she was jolted awake because of the sudden and violent pause of the carriage. Even though Gavriel had held her firmly to stop her from getting hurt by the violent movement, Evie still yelped in shock.

And then, there was an eerie silence. She looked at her husband with wide eyes but the man remained calm. He held her shoulders and whispered, "don't be afraid. Just stay inside. I'll get rid of them. Don't even try to peek because you might not like what you will see."

Before she could even make a sound, Gavriel had already opened the door and swiftly jumped down, closing the door firmly behind his back.