SPELLBOUND 671

Chapter 671: Message

At Vera's side…

"Your Majesty… Princess… our second division army have all successfully entered through the second dark wall." A commander of the second division saluted and came reporting to Beatrice and Vera.

Nodding in acknowledgement, Beatrice then dismissed the commander so he could return immediately to his post.

Vera on the other hand, stroked the side of Azure's neck, indicating to him that they too should advance now. According to Evie and Zolan's strategy, they were to divide the entire army into two large divisions to move forward and attack in a pincer formation.

Evie's first division army would attack from the East while they would be taking the West. They would both be communicating via their dragons and dragon riders who were able to communicate with the dragons they command. That was why there were both fire and ice dragons in both the divisions of armies.

"Remember everyone, move together with your company. Watch each other's back. These flying monsters are hell to deal with but we could finish them all!" Queen Beatrice's voice boomed out as she gave the orders and the armies made a thunderous sound filled with fighting spirit. Vera was so glad that the queen was with her at this crucial moment. She didn't have any experience in wars so she didn't know how to raise her voice like that or motivate the army the way the queen was doing.

Queen Beatrice spoke with so much confident, like a real warrior queen. She stood there like she had fought a thousand battle before. There was not even a tinge of hesitation and weakness in her voice and expression, just courage, hope and fighting spirit. As Vera looked at her, all she could think about was becoming like her one day. Both Evie and Queen Beatrice were truly amazing women. They just truly gave the feeling of someone born to be queens.

With a small smile on her face, Vera took a deep breath and fixed her gaze forward. She wanted to become like them one day. She knew she still had a long way to go but she aspired to become even stronger. For now, she must save her beloved and fight with everything that she had.

"Fight everyone! Keep pushing forward!" Azrael's voice thundered next as the battle raged on. He was at the front. With him also here, Vera had him act as her spokesperson. Not only was he an accomplished general of war, he was also naturally loud. And to top it off, he was the person that had led the scouting party in the first time to survey this place. Thus, making him the most suitable person to lead.

…

In the midst of the intense battle, a message from Evie finally came.

"Vera… can you hear me?" Evie's voice had suddenly sounded in her mind. The mind-link communication she had with Evie was only possible due to a special spell Evie had casted to send message to her. However, due to the immense usage of magic needed, Evie could not use this method too often unless it was of utmost importance.

"Evie…?!!" Vera's only reaction was the slight widening of her eyes.

"Yes. I'm using a mind-link spell to communicate with you. I can't use it long, so I'll make it short. Listen carefully, okay?"

"Alright." Vera promptly responded.

"Send out the orders that we need to aim for the darkest core, a black sun-like core, you can find. On my side, we're headed northwest. So I assume on your side, it should be somewhere northeast. I have a strong feeling that is where we need to be…" Evie paused for a while before continuing. "I think… Gideon should be inside it."

Vera's whole heart shook hearing that. Her mind was suddenly jumbled up upon hearing her husband's name. But she quickly fought for calm and replied, "Alright. I'll get to it."

"Stay safe, Vera. I'll see you there." Evie's voice was gentle and comforting as she said and ended her message.

Once the mind link was cut, Vera didn't waste a moment and turned to Queen Beatrice. The queen was still fighting fiercely at the monsters coming at them but she asked Vera to go ahead and tell her the news.

"Evie had just communicated that we are to head for a certain black and sun-like core in front of us. She said it should be in the direction of northeast. She and the first division have already adjusted their directions and are moving that way. The entire army will reconvene there if everything goes right." Vera reported all this to Queen Beatrice, all the while keeping the channel of communication between her, Azure and Sweetie open. Sweetie would then pass on the information to Azrael and he would then relay the message to the rest of the second division army.

The queen sung her sword, fast as a lightning at the last two three winged monsters. Then she jumped right above Vera, slashing another monster that was coming from Vera's blind spot.

When the queen landed, her long black hair danced behind her, as her red-eyes shone like a pair of red moons. Vera couldn't help but gape at how cool she was.

"Okay. I'll scout it out to confirm the exact direction." Queen Beatrice gave her a nod and Vera quickly instructed Azure and the dragon dove lower. They needed to fly just a little over the ground to avoid the swarm of enemies in the air. She needed to give the Queen a quiet and safe moment to focus her attention to the core they were searching. It was still a mystery to them though on why the flying monsters seemed unable to go to the ground. They had received reports that the ones that fell on the ground immediately fly again even though there were soldiers near them.

Once they were low enough and no more flying creature in sight, Queen finally relaxed and shifted her superior vision and searched for that darkest core which Evie had wanted them to head towards.

Chapter 672: Danger

Evie, Zolan and Kei did not need to speak as they continued to coordinate their attacks from the back of Onyx. The dragon himself was in an even absolute understanding with his rider as he flew forward – slowly but surely. A huge fire ball shot to the right. A crushing downward swipe of his powerful tail at the rear. A couple rending swipes using his front or rear legs equipped with long, curved and deadly claws at those unlucky monsters that tried to get past their defense from the bottom. Onyx coordinated his attacks beautifully with the three who were on his back, making the

four of them an undefeatable team. The flying monsters were dying and falling like rain as this team pushed forward, leading the rest of their army behind them.

"We're doing well! Keep it up!" Evie took a couple seconds to rally her teammates and encourage them. "Just push forward a little more, Onyx. We're almost to the core."

A reverberating roar came from the rest of the first division army that had moved with them. They had heard the words of their Queen and were fired up. They had been fighting with all that they had to push forward and at the same time keep their losses to a minimum. So far, it had been good. And they were very close to that dark core they were aiming for.

"Your Majesty, something seems to be off with that place we are heading to…" Zolan had been doing his routine checking but found that there was something wrong. Something was different about that core he had decided to call 'black sun' they were headed to.

"What do you see?"

"The darkness around the core seems to be…" Zolan paused for a moment to find the right word, "…wavering. I can't quite tell what might happen." His voice was worried while his gaze was still trained hard at that one spot.

For some reason, he had a bad feeling about it because the black sun was just… it seemed as though it was alive.

"My queen, I think you should warn the others to be careful and strengthen your shield just in case." Zolan said, narrowing his eyes at the black sun they were approaching.

Hearing the seriousness in Zolan's voice, Evie immediately did as he had said and warned everyone.

'Onyx, you heard Zolan. Be careful. Also, inform the rest of the dragons of the matter as well.' Evie spoke to Onyx through her mind communication before casting another layer to strengthen the protective shield around them. Just as she was done…

"Danger!!" Zolan shouted out.

However, the warning came too late. Onyx suddenly let out a loud roar as he reared back, wings spread wide open as he tried to flap backwards.

"Onyx!!!" Evie screamed, her fingers clawing at the thing that had shot at them out of nowhere and was now restraining her dragon.

Evie did not expect that her shield would be penetrated through so easily – right after she had strengthened it too. A pitch-black tentacle-like ray was currently wrapped around the middle of Onyx's long neck and was in the midst of pulling him toward the core. It was so dark that it still looked black against the dark scales of Onyx.

Evie snapped her head up and looked at the darkest core, that black sun they were aiming for was now right before them. She could see the outer circle of it moving and undulating as though the surface was covered with a den of snakes. The writhing and twisting movement only sent a disgusted shiver down Evie's spine. Looking down again at her hands which were grabbing onto that dark ray, Evie could feel the areas of her skin that touched that thing chilled and numbed.

Immediately, Zolan aimed his sword and slashed across the rope-like thing that was pulling Onyx nearer to the black core. However, every time his blade sliced across it, the solid tentacle wavered

and dissipated into smoke when cut, only to solidify immediately after. Onyx roared again and trashed, pulling back on the tentacles holding him captive.

Gritting his teeth, Zolan gripped the hilt of his blade and put more force into his attacks. "Blades seem to be ineffective on this thing, Your Majesty!" Zolan was exasperated after slashing away at it a few times without success.

Evie then lifted both her hands above her head, palms cupped together as she narrowed her eyes in concentration as her lips muttered out a short spell.

"Step back and shield your eyes!" Then a sudden eruption of dazzling light lit the surrounding area as though a miniature supernova occurred.

It seemed as though thousands of blades, each the length of a person's middle finger, slender and razor-sharp, all formed purely out of Evie's light magic and were just floating above her. Each and every sharp point was glinting brilliantly with the intensity of the power being transmitted into it. The brilliance of those thousands of blades grew so dazzling until in the next second, Evie swung her arms down in a swift and sharp gesture. That move sent those needles speeding down, converging on one particular point on the tentacle that was wrapped around Onyx.

At the same time, Onyx who was mentally connected to Evie, launched his own powerful and concentrated blast of fire column at the apparent source of the tentacle – the black core. Both this joint attack had the dark tentacle wrapping around Onyx to explode in a smoky detonation, causing the immediate area to be cloudy and for some short seconds, vision was cut off.

Kei and Zolan heard a whizzing sound speeding past them, as though wanting to drive through and impale them. They realized it was another dark tentacle sent from the black core as a retaliation for the earlier destroyed tentacle. The two immediately realized the tentacle headed straight to their queen.

"Queen Evie!!!" they both yelled as they jumped towards Evie.

Chapter 673: Never-ending

As the light fae opened her mouth to speak, what emerged was a shrill scream.

"Kei!!!" she heard Queen Evie's yell. And then she found herself looking at Queen Evie and Zolan who were in shock, as she was flying further away from them, her body being pulled horizontally. Wait… why is she moving backwards? She had only seen her world spinning as she felt herself flipped and pulled. Twisting her head back with much difficulty, she saw the problem. There was the same dark tentacle she had avoided, now wrapped firmly around her ankle. And she was being pulled towards the black core.

Evie could only watch as she watched. Her hands still held out but holding nothing. Kei was gone. It happened all so fast. Too fast they didn't have any moment to save her.

Slowly, Evie's face crumpled as she fisted her hand. Letting her head fall down, as her hand returned to her side, Evie said in a monotonous voice, "Onyx, turn back." They needed to regroup. This thing was dangerous. They needed to find a way on how to deal with this thing first. Or else they will be doomed.

"Your Majesty…" Zolan started but trailed off as he saw and felt the cold aura that had washed over his Queen. He had no words of comfort. What was there to say? This was truly unexpected. Instead,

he kept silent, clenched his jaws, and increased his guard. He would not let anything happen to Queen Evie while she was under his watch, even if he had to die trying.

As Onyx turned around, what greeted their sight was another big blow to them. It seemed that their intention for warning the rest might be too late. There were other dragons and their riders who were already caught and battling the dark smoky tentacles that had been shot out from the black core. The entire sky scape was a picture of chaos.

As Evie looked around, trying to decide who should she go help first, she then heard a piercing dragon shriek. Turning to the direction where that shriek came from, she saw Fir trashing around as he was trying to get free from the dark smoky cords that was coiled around him.

"Luc!!" Evie called out and Onyx, hearing her cry, sped over to his direction.

There were no others on Fir's back. The other three people whom she had assigned to be on Fir were nowhere to be seen. She immediately reasoned that they must have been thrown off due to the frantic flailing of Fir trying to get free.

As they got closer, Luc was ultimately thrown off Fir and was free falling through the air. Zooming faster, Onyx managed to get beside him and Zolan grabbed onto Luc's shirt before pulling him to safety atop Onyx – albeit in a rather unflattering position with his face down and rump in the air. However, he was saved. That was all that matters.

"Thanks, Zolan. Thank you, Your Majesty!" Luc heaved out breathlessly as he got up.

Evie had no time to respond to him as she was looking helplessly at her other dragon being pulled rapidly away from their grasp. Refusing to just watch like this again and let that thing take away her dragon, a strong beam of light shot out from Evie's palms. It hit the tentacle pulling Fir.

As Evie's attention was fixed on saving the dragon, another dark tentacle came at them.

"Look out!!!" Zolan yelled. He and Luc jumped in to protect the queen.

Onyx breathed an inferno of fire colliding at the coming tentacles.

Soon, a blast of light spread out. Fir was freed from the tentacle and immediately flew back.

Evie stumbled a little as she let her hands fall to her sides. That had scared her. She thought she'd fail and won't be able to save the dragon.

"My Queen! Are you okay?" Zolan looked at her over his shoulder worriedly so Evie smiled at him.

"I'm fine." She assured even as she felt her fingers trembling a little.

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"Azure! Hang on… don't give up!!" Vera was screaming as she raised high the dagger that she had whipped out from its sheath tied to her waist. Frantically slashing at the dark tentacle that had shot out of nowhere and caught Azure unawares, Vera knew that it was futile as the dark cords dissipated and solidified on and off when she tried slicing through it. But no matter how pointless her attempts were, she still continued as she did not know what else to do. It was times like this when she felt so useless and wished that she had magic like Evie or supernatural strength like Queen Beatrice.

They were initially progressing well as their whole second division army were fighting and supporting each other well. Those on dragons were fiercely slicing down and eliminating the flying

monsters in the air while those on the ground were bravely pushing their way through the swarm of monsters that came at them in a seemingly never-ending stream.

Their whole second division were close to the darkest core and Vera had gotten reports from the vampires atop the dragons that they had caught sight of the first division army led by Queen Evie in the forefront. That had sent a wave of thrill over their division as they were looking forward for the entire army to unite and fight as one again. But it was then that there was a sudden flood of flying monsters attacking their aerial troops, making things descend into confusion for a short moment.

It was then when Azrael had proved his mettle in warfare and experience in dealing with this sudden attack and had shouted out a series of commands that had the aerial troops falling back into formation. But just as they were about to get things under control, that was when panicked shouts echoed all around, sending things into chaos.

"Vera!! Watch–" Queen Beatrice yelled out, but her warning got cut off as she and Vera were almost thrown off Azure's back if not for them holding on tightly to their mount. Azure had been jerked forward due to a dark tentacle that had managed to wrap itself around the base of his neck.

Chapter 674 Over And Over

Vera had screamed out, feeling the shock and slight pain that travelled through her mind link with her dragon. Looking closer, Vera noticed that the tentacle was tightening itself around Azure, as though trying to strangle him on top of already pulling him towards the black core. He was straining as he fought to pull back and resisted the smoky cords that seemed hellbent on dragging him away.r

"Azure..!!"r

It was not an exaggeration to say that the skyscape on Vera's corner of the world was in complete chaos. Countless dark tentacles crisscrossed the sky, each had its end twisted and coiled around a body part of a dragon. Some tentacles even extended their reach to those on the ground. All these smoky cords had shot out from the same dark core both army divisions were aiming for. r

Everyone around were trying their best to cut through these tentacles that were slithering yet confounding. With every vicious strike across it, the tentacle would waver and dissipate as though it was mere smoke. But the very moment the attacking blade or dagger moved past it, the tentacle would immediately solidify and increase its punishing hold on its victim.r

And this was what Vera and Queen Beatrice were trying to deal with at the moment. The tentacles seemed to have a grudge on Azure and now, more than one had coiled around him â€" one around his left hindleg, one more just behind his jaws around the upper neck and another one midway around his tail. Azure was truly struggling to free himself but to no avail.r

"Vera!! We aren't making any progress. I've been cutting and slicing away at these tentacles but..." Queen Beatrice was huffing and panting as she was out of breath from continuously slashing at the cords to free Azure and at the same time protect Vera.r

Queen Beatrice had realized the tentacles weren't just aiming for Azure but Vera too.r

"... these things just can't seem to be cut!!" Due to the critical nature of how Azure is being pulled as though magnetically to that black core, Beatrice had lost her composure and steady breathing. r

"I... I don't know what else to do!" Vera half shouted, not bothering to turn back to look at Beatrice as her attention was all on that largest tentacle that was still wrapped around Azure's neck and

tightening ever so slightly. She wanted to free the dragon. It was getting strangled. She didn't even realize the wetness in her eyes as she frantically slashed on the tentacles. At that moment, she was truly panicking. r

Azure screeched and roared as he trashed around, trying his best to dislodge the annoying tentacles keeping him restrained. Thankfully, Azure was a huge and mighty beast and that gave him an advantage in fighting back against the pull of so many dark tentacles dragging him forward. And Queen Beatrice was like a blur and might as well be some goddess of the shadows. She moved as fast as the shadows that no tentacle had managed to even go past her. r

Vera knew that without the queen, she didn't know if she was still even here riding on top of Azure. The tentacles must have long taken her to that core!r

Her red eyes were like gleaming bloody jewel in the dark as she relentlessly went against all these tentacles by herself. She looked so invincible. But how long will she be able to keep this up? She's been at it for a long while now. r

Gritting her teeth, Vera clenched her fists tight. She can't just sit here like this. She must think of something before the queen gets too exhausted. But what was it that she could do? r

Suddenly, Vera felt her mind being 'nudged' by Azure and an idea took shape in her mind. He was telling her to try using this method to fight back against these tentacles!r

"Your Majesty! Get ready to chop off the tentacles! Azure wants to try this method!" Vera turned around only to shout out this statement before turning her attention back to attack. r

"Got it!" Queen Beatrice did not know the specifics, but she had enough combat experience to know that in the next few seconds, any change that happens would most likely be Azure's move and she was poised to attack at will.r

Azure threw his massive head back and spread open his jaws before letting out a thunderous roar that could shake the heavens. Vera and Queen Beatrice immediately saw the slight shimmer around Azure's before the whole surface of his body was coated with a thin but freezing layer of bluish white ice. r

Little ice crystal patterns formed on the tentacles that were around his body and immediately spread outwards, causing the smoky cords to remain solidified. Understanding sparked in both the ladies' eyes and Queen Beatrice slashed down swiftly on the tentacled closest to Azure's body.r

"Yes! It's working!!" Beatrice shouted with joy.r

Vera placed her hand on the one coiled around Azure's upper neck and the tentacles melted like water.r

Queen Beatrice also worked fast and slashed and sliced through the two tentacles coiled around his hindleg and tail. r

But just as Azure turned his head around, another three new dark tentacles shot over and coiled around the same places that had been vacated by the destroyed ones. It was as though the dark core was mocking them, sending the exact same numbers of tentacles to replace their predecessors.r

Over and over, Azure called forth his freezing spell. Over and over, Vera and Beatrice slashed and melted them. However, every time one was disposed of, a new one quickly took its place. Vera, who

was not trained nor experienced, crumpled in a heap as she sat unmoving on Azure's back. Her eyes shone with a helplessness that Beatrice could not do anything about.r

"Vera! Take a break and I'll take over. Just watch out for yourself!" Beatrice could only pick up the slack as she knew Vera must have exhausted herself.

Chapter 675 Last Second

Beatrice' impossible speed and strength had kept them hanging on for a long time. Vera gritted her teeth again and placed her hand on the tentacle. She can't give up when everyone was fighting with everything they had. She can't rest while her mother-in-law was fighting to the extreme without any moment of reprieve. She needed to hold on. At least, Azure was not riddled with injuries and still had some strength to fight back. No matter what happens, she needed to keep fighting along side everyone.

"Vera!" Beatrice tackled the girl that they both were flat on Azure's back. A smoky projectile had suddenly shot at Vera. Her reactions were not fast enough but queen Beatrice was there to save her. Again. This had already happened more than once. Their situation worsened as Beatrice was starting to get overwhelmed from protecting Vera and zipping around, cutting the tentacles off from different areas of the dragon.

Beatrice was certain now. These tentacles were truly focusing on Azure or Vera. It was as though whoever was controlling these nasty things were aiming for them all along. She couldn't ask for help as the other who had tried to come aid them were now also dealing with the other tentacles.

The situation was becoming hopeless. The dragon was also getting weak as it had been struggling and kept pulling away to keep themselves from getting pulled forward. It was already so incredible how this Azure was able to hold its ground for this long. But... the dragon has a limit too. And she could feel that limit was so close now. What should she do?

There was one thing left to do in her mind. She needed to get Vera off Azure. That's the only way they could get out of this situation.

"No... Azure! Hold on. Please! I'll continue healing you." Vera was trying to heal the dragon again, trying to make it recover its strength. Vera had almost drained herself dry using up what little reserve of power she had. Helplessly, Vera and Beatrice could only keep at it as Azure started to get dragged towards the core.

The next time Beatrice jumped to protect Vera against two tentacles coming at her, she lost her sword. So she had no choice but to use her nails to slash the tentacles before they could wrap themselves around Vera and take her.

Beatrice screamed as she twisted and turned like a blur. Her nails lengthened and bled as it slashed against the tentacles.

 With her, she had decided. They needed to leave Azure now. As much as she hated the thought of abandoning the dragon that had put in so much fight with them, she could not just watch as her daughter-in-law get harmed or even killed!

'No. I must find a way to get Vera off Azure!' Beatrice told herself firmly as her eyes darted around, finding a way to go about it. They could no longer hang on as the tentacles were hellbent on getting them into the core.

"Vera! Queen Beatrice!" Azrael flew in from behind with Sweetie. His other teammates were not there as he had already let them off on the ground where it was relatively safer.

"Azrael, don't come over! It's too dangerous. These tentacles are aiming specifically for the dragons. Since you've escaped them, don't get Sweetie caught up in it!" Vera ordered him. However, it was obvious from her faint voice that she was not in a good condition.

Looking meaningfully at Azrael, Beatrice held onto Vera's arm, planning to use this chance to jump off and leave the dragon. She had seen Azrael's small nod in response, understanding what she wanted to do. If she did not seize this short window of opportunity, it would be too late. They were very near the core.

Felling Beatrice pulling her away, Vera widened her eyes.

"No! I won't leave Azure to fight alone!" Vera leaned her body back, digging her heels down as she lifted the other free hand to clamp it down on Beatrice's wrist. Shaking her head, she flashed a watery smile at her mother-in-law. "Please... don't make me abandon him." Her voice was trembling as she pleaded Beatrice to let her go. Her large blue eyes were clear and unclouded, showing that she was not confused and knew what she was talking about.

"Vera, dear... How can I let you be? How would I answer Gidâ€"" her voice broke here but her eyes continue pleading with Vera. How could she just stand aside and watch as her son's beloved woman get swallowed by that dark core? There was no telling what might happen in there.

Tightening her grasp on Vera's arm, she used her vampiric strength to forcefully pull the younger woman along. She was fully intending and all set to jump across to Sweetie and Azrael who had aligned their flight parallel to Azure.

Beatrice did not wait anymore and took a powerful leap, sending her and Vera soaring to Sweetie. That was supposed to be the case. But a split second later, Beatrice realized her hand was empty. Whipping her head back, she saw Vera's outstretched hand with her fists clenched pointing towards her.

Vera had, at the last second, used her power move where she would blast the ice that her dragons create by clenching her fists. But since there was no ice, all it did was produce a propelling force that sent Beatrice hurtling to Sweetie even faster. Beatrice panicked and shot her arms out, but it was a futile attempt to grab onto Vera. She only saw her daughter-in-law's gentle smile and her mouthing out 'Sorry!' as both her and Azure were dragged swiftly towards the core.

"NOOO! Veraaaa....!!" Beatrice screamed as her last view was of Vera disappearing with Azure into the darkness.

Chapter 676 Silhouette

Vera did not know what had gotten into her.

All she knew was that she refused to just leave Azure behind. He was her mount and they had already gone through so many life and death situations together while fighting this war. He had always been by her side ever since they had first met. So how could she even think of leaving him now, when he was the one in trouble right now? Also, there was something in her gut that seemed to be pushing her to make this one reckless and suicidal move. She did not know what she would even accomplish with what she was doing. It was not like she could save Azure even if she tagged along

with him. She knew that she had no attacking powers to fight like how Evie could. She had also seen the look in Queen Beatrice's face as they got separated and her heart was already filled with guilt. The queen, her mother-in-law, did everything that she could to protect her. Only for her to make this heartbreaking decision in the end. Vera was sure that Beatrice must be panicking right now.

But no matter what she thought about now, it was already a done deal. She and Azure were already being sucked in by the dark core. "I'm sorry…" she could only whisper apologetically as she remembered Evie and everyone's trustful faces.

It was so dark that she could not even see anything anymore. All she knew was that Azure had used his body to protect her. His massive bluish tinted wings were like a huge protective tent as she laid dependently on her dragon's chest, holding onto him as they were being dragged forward forcefully at an impossible speed.

"Gideon…" she called out helplessly, her quiet tears falling unseen in the deep darkness. "Where are you? Why aren't you here yet?"

Suddenly, Azure rammed and crashed into something solid – that Vera could only deduce it as being the ground. The impact was so strong that even Vera herself was thrown into the air from the force of the crash.

With a high-pitched yell, Vera free fell onto the ground, half-

expecting that the rather violent fall might even kill her. But she landed into something that felt like an incredibly thick layer of leather. Azure's wings had shot out and caught her by wrapping protectively around her before she could crash onto the ground. If she had hit the ground directly, she would have definitely died.

Gasping, Vera forced herself to her feet despite feeling the aches from the rough tumble. She knew that if not for Azure's save, the pain would have been more than she could bear.

"Azure? Are you okay? Please tell me that you're okay…" her voice was trembling a little as she scrambled in the pitch darkness, moving in the direction that she thought Azure would be in from the sounds.

To her extreme relief, a light suddenly appeared. It was Azure who was breathing out ice crystals before him, creating a white crystal field with bluish fire-like balls in its core that were creating a bluish glow in the pitch-black darkness.

Finally, being able to see Azure, Vera rushed tearfully over to her dragon's head and touched its snout. The dragon's wings were badly broken from the fall.

"I'll heal you…" Vera said, slightly panicking when Azure started to growl at her.

The dragon was forcing itself to rise as he looked behind Vera. There seemed to be something that was behind her.

Slowly, Vera looked over her shoulder. There really was something ahead of them! A silhouette of a…

Her eyes widened as she looked at the outline of the figure approaching them. Her heartbeat raced as she realized how familiar it was. There was only one thing in her thoughts at that moment. Gideon. Her beloved husband. He was here!! Was this the answer to her prayers?

Immediately rising to her feet, Vera carelessly ran towards the dark silhouette, ignoring Azure's distressed growl. She did not hear nor notice about anything else around her any longer. Her mind was fully focused on the possibility that it was her husband that was coming towards her.

"Gideon!" Vera called out. "Gideon?! Is that you? Please answer me!" her calls sounded more desperate the more she called out.

A gasp was torn from Vera's lips as something dark suddenly shot forward and wrapped around her, pulling her towards the dark silhouette.

Azure made a rumbling sound from his chest and a bigger crystal was created, illuminating their surroundings a little brighter, making Vera finally able to see the face of the silhouette that was now holding her captive.

Her heart stopped beating for a few moments as she felt the blood running through her veins slowed down as well.

"G-gid…" she uttered in trembling lips. "Gideon… it's really you…"

Silent tears fell copiously from Vera's eyes as she lifted both her trembling hands to touch his face, not caring about the tight hold of the dark magic that was still coiled around her. She did not care that Gideon's eyes were both completely pitch black and more terrifying than the deepest darkness.

12:04

He was shrouded with a thick and black miasma. His upper clothes had been torn and ripped apart, leaving only his trousers on him. His veins had turned completely black, and they had crept all over his body, looking as though someone had tattooed them on him deliberately. He looked like someone who had risen from the very depths of hell itself. What had happened to him?! Vera felt her heart ache so much as she saw how Gideon was so lifeless and had no reaction towards her. What was it that he had to endure since he had left her? Seeing him this way, Vera could guess that it was not only nothing good, but it must have even been a long string of horrible and nasty things to reduce him into this.

However, his magic was tightening its hold around her, making it harder and harder for her to breathe.

"It's me, Gid… Vera… your mate, your wife, can't you recognize me?"

Chapter 677 Only chance

"It's me, Gid… Vera… your mate, your wife, can't you recognize me?" she asked, begging him to hear her. Her trembling hands were still trying to reach for his face. She had missed him. So very much that it hurt like hell. It had not even been that long. It had only been days that had passed since she last saw him, but it felt as though months had already passed.

Just as her hand was about to reach and touch his face, her vision suddenly blurred as she was rudely yanked away from him. And then she was thrown back onto the ground. Hard.

Vera groaned and gasped from the pain of her fall. But she immediately looked up and when she saw him tugging at his hair as he growled lowly at her, she forced herself to stand. It was then that she realized it was him who had pushed her away.

"Stay away, woman!" came his rumbling voice. It was a voice she could barely recognize. It sounded as though it belonged to her Gideon but at the same time, as if it also belonged to someone else that she did not recognize. "If you come closer, you're dead!" the threat came out as a growl, surprising her.

Something in his tone had her heart wrenching painfully. Before he had thrown her back from his person, she could almost feel his magic strangling her to death. He had thrown her away before the instincts from his darker side could kill her. Her beloved Gideon was still in there somewhere… a part of him could still recognize her.

Hope bloomed brighter in her heart, replacing the dread and uncertainties that had almost overwhelmed her optimism. Her sky-

blue eyes blazed vibrantly as she lifted her chin from that encouraging sign. She could wake him up! No… she would!! She would pull him away from that dreadful darkness that seemed to have drawn him in like a pit of quicksand and was consuming him quicker than she had imagined it would. She was not going to let go of him. Never. Because he was hers. He belonged to her alone. Not to the darkness. The darkness has no claim over him. Even if it thought that it did, she would show it. She had literally gone through hell to come and fetch her man back. It would be a cold and snowy day in hell before her man would be claimed by anything or anyone else other than herself! That means, it was never happening. Not if she still breathed and was able to fight.

Taking a step forward, Vera smiled at him through her crystal clear, watery eyes. It had been a long time since her baby blues had held a shine like it has right now. Though she had tried to be strong and kept up her fighting spirit, she could not deny that daily, it was wearing her down. And she was daily being worn down by the never-

ending battles and fights with the enemy forces. However, she had persisted only with the sole thought of that every single enemy they cut down, it was one enemy less for her so she could be closer to Gideon.

"I'm here for you now, Gideon… let's go home, Gid… I've missed you so much. Let's go home, my most beloved husband." She continued whispering to him as she walked closer and closer to him again, not caring if he was listening to her words. She just wanted to get her intention across.

"Yes, come over. Come to me…" his voice sounded so completely different now. It had changed to the other voice that she no longer recognized. It was so sinister and dark that it made Vera pause in her advance to him. Shivers crawled under her skin as fear was aroused within her. That was not her Gideon's beautiful voice. Still, Vera chose to keep going. She continued taking steps forward, trusting in her faith that her Gideon was still within his body. She wanted to believe that he was also fighting from within to get out to her.

She had finally found him. There was no way she would be willing to back out just because she was scared. No amount of fear would make her leave him alone. Nothing on earth or in hell would stop her from advancing!

"No! Stop right there! I'll kill you!!!" he growled louder, warning her as his dark magic was a wave of miasma lashing out uncontrollably around him, threatening to scare her away. But the voice she was hearing this time… it was Gideon's.

That had confirmed it. Gideon was trying to fight the darkness back that was within himself and that was why there seemed to be two voices coming from him, as though they were fighting over for full control of himself.

When she did not stop advancing, he shouted and lashed his dark magic crazily around him as though he was creating a protective shield around him for her to not get close to him. He looked like a mad man, losing his mind. However, it was said that none of the lashes of dark magic hit Vera even as she advanced.

Watching him fighting so hard with himself broke Vera's heart over and over. But listening to him and stepping away also was not an option for her. She could feel it in her gut that this was the only chance she would ever have to get Gideon back with her. She felt like if she failed her attempt this time, she would forever regret it. It would be over for her.

The things she saw in that moment during their mating ceremony came back to her and she used them as oil to fuel the fire that was already raging within her. She was not going to lose him like what she saw in her vision. She was not going to go through all that pain of losing him. Never again. She would do anything, everything. Whatever it takes. She was not going to come out of this alone. It was either they came out together or not at all.

"Gideon…" she called out hopefully.

As Vera bravely approached the wall of dark miasma that he had created around him and tried to cross it, he lashed his magic straight towards her.

Chapter 678 Stop

As Vera saw the powerful whip of dark magic arcing towards her, she could not help but wince a tiny bit and her eyes fluttered close halfway. However, she could not be faulted for behaving in such a way as every place that the lashes of Gideon's dark magic hit, it left a gaping gash in its wake. On top of that, the gaping wound on the ground would be seeping out black wispy trails of smoke, as though there were some corrosive attributes to his attack. r

So, though it had not hit Vera yet so far, she was still afraid of the attack â€" more so it was now headed directly for her. As it drew nearer to her, Vera suddenly lost her nerves right at the end and her eyelids tightly squeezed shut. r

"I'll still stand strong. For Gid, I will not avoid his attacks!" She whispered fiercely to herself, even as her whole body was trembling with the anticipation of the attack connecting with her flesh. Though she closed her eyes due to the fear, her feet were anchored to the ground, not moving from the place where she stood.r

A strong blow hit her. Although she had expected and already anticipated that the lash of dark magic this time would most surely hit her, the real blow still took her by surprise. r

She tumbled onto the ground due to the impact. Just with that one hit, Vera could feel as though her internal organs were being sent into total chaos and were on the verge of exploding. If it were not

for the angle of her fall to be advantageous to herself, the injuries might have just caused her to kick the bucket and expire right there and then.r

Suddenly, Vera was sent into a violent coughing fit. She coughed and wheezed to catch her breath to the point that she had a fleeting thought that perhaps she might even cough out her own lungs. After barely stopping from coughing, another bad news seemed to have greeted her. Bright red, life-giving blood began to flow from the corner of her lips. Yes, flow. It was not a small trickle, but a large amount of blood flowing out of her.r

Though Vera was taken aback for a moment when seeing so much blood running out of her own body, she composed herself and her emotions very quickly. In the next moment, she still rose to her feet, though a little ungracefully, but with a spirit filled with fighting aura.r

"Stay back!!!" Gideon shouted at her, his tone strangely sounded as though he was begging her. "You will die if you continue to advance!" r

She, however, did not stop even with his ferocious warning. Another wave of magic surged mightily before being thrown out. Again, it was aimed right in the face of Vera.r

Azure had appeared seemingly out of nowhere and was in time to perfectly block the magic that had been aimed at Vera. But with the results of that actions, the dragon was so badly wounded. r

Gideon kept stepping back. Even though he had been warning Vera to not approach, his steps almost mirrored hers. With every step she took towards him, he took two steps back in order to avoid her.r

Seeing that her approach to him was being met with his retreat, in double time, Vera started to get concerned. It was to the point that she could no longer hold back and screamed out for him.r

"Gideon!" Vera cried out. She cannot let him leave. She must not let him leave! As her initial gut feeling had told her, if she failed getting him to return to her side this time, it might mean that she would lose him for good. And that was something that she was not okay with. Even if she had to sacrifice much, she was not going to allow him to just back off and leave her. "Gideon... STOP!!" Vera exclaimed loudly as she shot her hands out, as though wanting to hold onto his arm.r

Her sudden move must have given Gideon quite the shock. Because, immediately, he sent a strong wave of magic sweeping down her way. And again, the ever-dependable Azure jumped forward and blocked it for Vera, causing the dragon to fall into a stupor. This caused Vera to be so aggrieved for Azure that she had shrieked out in worry. Azure was a very large and very powerful ice dragon. But no matter how powerful a dragon was, it was still made of flesh, blood and bones, and they could be injured. All it needed was for an opportune timing and a whole lot of vicious attacks. And the mighty and powerful dragon would also succumb to its injuries. r

Vera was incensed that Azure was continuously being injured only for her sake. And to make it worse, the perpetrator was her very own mate! Gideon! Panic and anger for her dragon mount began to rose within her.r

"Stop!!!" she screamed. Azure was already so badly injured from the battle outside this dark core and that dangerous and deadly fall as well. His wings was battered and he wasn't even trying to fight Gideon. He was merely protecting her.r

"Gideon! Please!!!" she begged. Unable to watch Azure getting hit anymore.r

But Gideon continued lashing out at the dragon with his full attacks. However, it was as if he was redirecting the hit from Vera towards the dragon now, instead of attacking her.r

Gideon did not seem to be showing Azure any mercy and his attacks were intense and aggressive. Out of five attacks, three would lethally hit Azure. Vera cried out and exclaimed every time an attack landed on her dragon's body. r

Feeling her dragon's pain, and feeling like this next blow would surely kill Azure, Vera's eyes suddenly turned blurry and the next thing she knew, she was standing there. Right in front of Azure. Her arms spread wide as she bravely blocked the dragon with her very own body. r

Time seemed to stop for a moment and as her vision darkened, she heard her name finally being called by Gideon.r

"Vera!!!!" r

Chapter 679 Name

Vera felt as though she had fallen into a lake of fire. Her body seemed to be burning, then it suddenly went numb. She was currently suspended in the air. Yet she felt as though she was falling. Falling endlessly.r

That last arc of dark magic had hit her. And it had stuck her point blank since she had purposely put herself in the path of the attack, hoping to receive as much of the blow as possible so she could spare Azure from it. She had succeeded in her attempt. And now, her consciousness was leaving her. Her heartbeats had already been slowing down a while ago and had been beating in an irregular rhythm, seemingly threatening to stop. r

'Gideon...' she called out weakly in her mind. Was this the end of her? Why could she not get through to him? Were her desperate calls not enough to pull her Gideon out from his own depths of darkness? Why could she not make him stop? What must she do to help him be able to break free from the darkness that seemed to have consumed him? Why was she still unable to do anything properly? Even now, as the last descendent of the guardians of the ice dragons, she was still powerless in achieving what she had set out to do. Why was she so useless? Why was her fate so wretched?r

Hopelessness surged like a massive tsunami and swallowed her entire being. It seemed that even if she gave up her own life, she still could not do anything to change their fate. Was it because they were not fated to be with each other forever? Was it because that they were fated to be separated in the end?r

Vera had been determined to change that future she saw in her vision, but... it seems that no matter what she did, no matter what the outcome, one of them would still end up going. This time, it seemed as though it was her...? r

There was no way she would survive this. She had been hit straight on by his powerful magic. And she just... could feel like she was really going to die. Why... why could she not be with him and be happy together forever? r

A happy future with him... them together... was that really just too much for her to ask?r

Tears filled her eyes, and her vision started to darken from the edges. She was falling... dying... r

She then fell onto something solid yet pliable that had sent her body bouncing a little. Azure... her lovely big dragon... he had caught her again. 'I'm sorry...' she uttered in her mind. 'I'm so sorry.'r

As Azure slowly placed Vera back down onto the ground, Vera had been momentarily pushed up into a sitting position, causing the blood flowing from her mouth to drip onto her chest that had been exposed now due to getting hit by the powerful magic. That attack had seemed to have burned off her clothes and even singed her skin. r

The blood dripped down onto her mating tattoo and the black ink suddenly turned blood red. It spread out, following the patterns until everything turned into the same bloody red. r

Then Gideon started to scream. He fell to his knees. His hands flew into his hair, and they fisted tightly, tugging them hard. His mating tattoos also started to turn into the same blood-like etching that could be seen on Vera. Exactly like what was happening to Vera's tattoos.r

He screamed out in agony and the sounds were unearthly and had traces of mania. Anyone hearing it could understand that the pain was killing him and tearing him apart â€" from the inside. His screams were so moving that it even had the dark core pulsating along with his agonizing screams, as though a drum beating along with the rhythm set by the conductor. r

The dark magic that was seeping through him, also started to pulse violently around his body. Every scream that came from his mouth seemed to push out whatever darkness that was living and had settled so resiliently inside of him. At the same time, his mouth kept opening and closing as his lips twitched and pulled in certain shapes. r

"Veraa!!!" a name was finally formed. His lips had managed to form the correct moves and all the screams finally took shape into that name that he had screamed out. But that one word seemed to be the key to finally stop his agony. r

Again and again. Gideon continued to scream out Vera's name, treating it as though it was some kind of holy mantra, not stopping from uttering that name even though he could feel the vessels in his throat burst and bleed from the effort of his screams. He could not stop... No, it was as if he did not want to stop? r

Something complete dark was being forced out of his body as he continued screaming out that name. However, the effort of it was so immense, so much so that it was causing the core to tremble until it seemed to threaten to burst. r

Gideon's eyes which was purely as black as coal, now had turned back to its normal blue again. And the first thing that he saw when his eyes cleared up was his... his beloved Vera... his beautiful mate... and she was there... lying on a pool of blood. What was worse was, that pool of blood was her own!!r

His eyes dilated and he rose from the ground shakily. r

'No... no...' this word echoed repeatedly in his head as though he had no control over it. All the while, he was approaching her with leaden steps. His body started shaking more violently the closer he got to her. 'No... please... no... don't do this to me...' the more he looked at her still form, the more his vision shook, and a cloudy haze seemed to cause his vision to turn blurry.r

When he finally reached her, he fell to his knees as he reached out to gather her into his arms. r

"No!!!!"r

Chapter 680 Order

Outside the dark core, the fierce battle against the strange black tentacles continued on. Vampires, dark faes, fire and ice dragons alike, all were giving their all in this battle. Everyone somehow had that feeling as though this would be the final battle that would bring them to the end of this ongoing war that had been going on for too long. Though in actual fact, it was not that long. However, the strain and toll it had taken on the minds and morale of the allied forces was just too immense. If not for some key people who were continuously rallying the rest of the armies through encouragements, through healing magic, through fighting alongside them and even just by staying alive, the soldiers would have long since given up and fallen in battle.

Now, Onyx flew faster than an arrow as Evie who was mounted on his back slashed viciously at the dark tentacle-like thing with her light magic, freeing the caught dragon. Evie had condensed her light magic into the shape of a long blade, having the light edges of her blade sharpened on both ends, making it a double-edged sword, able to kill no matter which way she swung her blade.

The dark core had pulsed twice in a row now. And that pulsation had not been similar to the ones that sent out those strange black tentacles that were causing everyone troubles for now. Both pulsations were strong and sent an abnormal wave of feeling through every single member of the allied forces. Everyone knew that something was going on inside the dark core and Evie believed that it must be related to Vera. When she had received the news that Vera and Azure had been sucked into the core, she was not overcome with devastation. And somehow, that instinctual feeling alone was enough for her to be sure that Vera was still alive, wherever she was in there. Perhaps, she might have even found Gideon.

When the core started sending out strong pulsations, Evie was now even more certain that her earlier hunch was true. Vera was very likely with Gideon right now, and she must be having her very own fight to save her man.

So, Evie rallied everyone to keep putting on a good fight. She reminded them to put their trust in Vera. And indirectly, in Gideon. Though unsaid, everyone knew that they were here to bring Gideon back to them.

After much struggling, with blood, sweat and tears, they had finally completed the job that they had set out to do. They had finally annihilated every single monster around them as Gideon had instructed Vera to do. But though this major goal had been met, they could not even stop to celebrate it yet. Their fight was not completely over just yet. The battle with the monsters had finally ended, but there was still Gideon himself. Gideon, who was now the commander of the dark forces that the core â€“ the darkness itself â€“ had designated for him to be. Evie believed that the answer to destroy this core and ending this battle for good, lies in the hands of Gideon himself.

Evie believed that the rest of the actual fight from now on would solely lie in Vera's hand.

The rest of them could not approach the core even if they had wanted to. They could only support Vera and Azure through prayers and waiting patiently for them to come out victorious from the other side of the dark core with Gideon alongside them.

According to the report that had come from Azrael, Vera was protected by Azure before they were forcefully pulled in by the black tentacles into the core. Evie believed that Azure's body must have been able to withstand the deadly dark magic of the outer wall of that core. Evie did not forget the fact that Azure himself, was an ancient ice dragon. Not only that, but he was also the biggest, and

most powerful of his kind that had managed to stay alive up till today to pledge their loyalty to the last of the guardians of the ice dragons – Vera. Its skin that seemed to be made of magical crystals were probably one of the best materials as a shield – ever! And from the reports that stated Azure had actively protected Vera, Evie was quite certain that nothing would have happened to Vera as they crossed over through the wall of deadly dark magic, and into the other side of the dark core. Even if Vera was injured, it would most likely only be superficial wounds on the surface that would not affect her that much.

As Evie thought on this, she also acknowledged that the only other dragon who could probably do the same thing as what Azure did was her very own Onyx. But Evie knew that it was too risky a thing for them to attempt the same thing that Vera and Azure had done. Maybe not for her, but for Onyx and hers and Gav's precious little child that was still growing within her womb.

When the wave of the third pulsation throbbed and spread from the central area of the dark core, outwards over the armies that had surrounded the area, Evie did not know why, but her heart trembled a little. That latest pulsation had sent icy cold shivers crawling down her spine. Something just did not seem right with that last wave. Though it felt the same as the other two from earlier, Evie trusted her instincts that told her something unpleasant must have occurred over on Vera's side.

"Vera..." she uttered. "Please... please be alright..." Evie whispered out, as though saying a prayer.

Clenching her fists, Evie's eyes looked back at the core that was now suddenly acting strange. Something seemed to be about to happen. And whatever it was, she was convinced that it would be something... deadly.

"My Queen!!!" Zolan yelled from behind her. "We need to retreat!!! Now!!! That core, it's behaving exactly the same way as what had happened with those exploding monsters right before they explode!!! I believe that the core is about to explode!!! Please order a retreat right this instant!!!"