

SPELLBOUND 681

Chapter 681 Retreat

Evie looked at the core and gritted her teeth. It seemed as though what she had been afraid of had happened. She mourned at how accurate sometimes her instincts and gut feeling could be. It was almost prophetic to a degree. And now even Zolan was advising her to call the troops to withdraw.

"RETREAT!" she shouted out using her magic to amplify her voice so it could reach the ears of all the members of their allied forces. Everyone was swift and immediately moved to retreat as per the orders given by Queen Evie, even as they did not understand what was going on. In their minds, they had already secured the victory as all the monsters had been slain. They were just delaying the victory celebration until Vera and Azure returns with Prince Gideon. Thus, even as they were running back, retreating as they had already determined on if they ever needed to retreat, their minds were still in chaos and confusion.

The soldiers on the ground flew back as they tried to get as far away as possible from the core. Since their leader had already spoken, they only needed to obey and follow.

Just as everyone was trying to retreat, the core once again, acted strangely. The tentacles that had been dormant after all the monsters had been killed off, now lengthened at will, as if it did not have any intentions on allowing anyone to escape.

Many were caught and could not escape. The dark tentacles' movements were just too quick and swift that even with the orderly retreat from the armies, one after another were caught and fell prey to the clutches of these long appendages. Frightened screams and panicked shouts rang out across the battlefield that was only for a short moment earlier, quiet and calm.

Evie could only turn around, shooting out light beams in order to free everyone. Her brilliant light magic lighted up small sections of areas in the darkness, along with Onyx's horizontal columns of fire that was being breathed out and controlled in cylindrical, concentrated streaks. Everywhere that Evie's light and Onyx's fire shoots out at, their allies were released from the entrapment of those wicked dark tentacles. However, there were only the two of them, but numerous tentacles had shot out to take their people captive. Still, Evie and Onyx did not stop, and the other fire dragons and their riders also tried to help by emulating Queen Evie and Onyx in helping their own people who were caught.

Queen Beatrice had already gone berserk, after watching how the armies were being toyed with by the tentacles. She zipped around, tearing up the tentacles using her sword like a deranged warrior with just one strike. She continued on that way, flashing from left to right, from the front to the back, freeing up as many dragons and soldiers as she could with each strike and slash of her sharp blade.

The soldiers kept yelling at Evie to leave and escape, to not bother about them. Even Zolan had expressed his wish for the queen to just go, but of course, Evie did not listen to them. How could she?! Could she just up and leave these fellow comrades whom she had fought alongside with and shed blood and tears for in this bloody war? No way! She could not... No, she did not have the heart to leave anyone behind, and from what she saw of her mother-in-law, so does Beatrice. They both had zero intentions of running off and just saving themselves.

Evie was at ease and wasn't afraid for her and her child. She was confident that her protective shield was able to withstand this impending explosion. She is the Queen of Light. She would withstand this! She should! But the others. The dragons and soldiers couldn't.

Meanwhile, on the ground, Laiza kept looking up, trying to keep track of Queen Evie's situation, as she started to escape along with everyone else.

She couldn't quite see what was going on up there as she was flying low but she could still see her light and the fires. She could tell the queen was not retreating.

A dragon flying a little lower than the usual height it would be at caught her attention. Immediately realizing that it was the dragon that Levy had been on, she could not help but stop and looked up at it for a longer time. Her eyes scanned from the head of the dragon to its tail, trying to identify that familiar figure that she was looking for. This dragon had turned back to free an ice dragon that had been caught and trapped by a dark tentacle. But now, it was the one that was caught. And there was no one near who was there to help them out of their predicament.

Laiza could see that the dragon was really struggling. Three tentacles had wrapped around it. It was three tentacles too many. Three tentacles were just too much for it to fight against.

She gritted her teeth and flew closer to where the dragon was visibly struggling. The tentacles that were holding the dragon down had emerged from below them and she noticed that the tentacle was thinner when it was near the ground, compared to when it was up there and wrapping itself around their prey. They have multiplied in size! She could slash at that with just her sword!

Without any hesitation, Laiza headed towards it by herself. At the back of her mind, she kept asking what the hell was she doing? And alone, at that. But she could not make herself return and run away. With a disbelieving smile on her face, she went forward at full speed ahead.

Up above, Levy and Luc were cursing. "Shit!!! We're not going to make it at this rate!!!" Luc yelled as the two of them kept on slicing desperately at the thick tentacles. They were both already weakened from the long and fierce battle earlier on. And Levy had also lost his damned sword!

Chapter 682 Dumbass

Hopelessness and despair began to get to them as they could feel the severity of their situation the longer that they fought against the three vicious tentacles. They could almost feel the determination of the tentacles that were attacking them. Levy and Luc were doing their best to hack at these infernal things. But every time they managed to rid themselves of one tentacle and moved on to the next, the previous one would have regenerated and resumed attacking them when they were done with the next.

This pattern continued on, but both the men could not do anything else but to fight on. The only other option was to stop – but they obviously would not – which would spell certain doom for them and the dragon they were on. The dragon was also getting exhausted and slowly being strangled the longer they tried to maintain the status quo. All Levy and Luc could do was to keep themselves from getting caught by the tentacles themselves.

"Shit!!! Seems like this is the end of the road for us!!!" Luc yelled as he viciously sliced at the oncoming tentacle. But another tentacle had shot in from Luc's blind side and wrapped tightly

around his thighs before pulling him with a strong yank. Luc screamed in pain as he felt as though the tendons connecting the bones in his thighs to his hip tore. A sharp piercing pain flared up at the base of his hip. That sudden pull had sent him off balance and he nearly fell off the dragon's back. "Damn it! These things just don't quit, do they?!" he yelled exasperatedly through his pain, eyes watering slightly.

Levy caught him just in time before he dropped off the sides. "Damn it, you, dumbass! Hold on to me, will you?!!! I'll pull you up! On three!" Levy called out and counted while creating momentum to swing Luc back onto the dragon's back. Levy had to put in almost all of his strength to swing Luc as Luc was in so much pain that he could only focus on holding onto Levy so he would not fall off.

The moment Levy pulled Luc back onto the back of the dragon, a sudden movement jolted them both, causing Levy to fall over this time around as Luc cried out again. That jerk had aggravated his injury just as he was about to check on it.

However, though in pain, Luc managed to catch Levy. The both of them were grasping at each other's forearm, hanging on for dear life. But due to Luc's utterly weakened state, he could not even lift Levy back up onto the dragon's back. Sweat dotted his forehead as he was on his belly, one hand clutching onto the seat harness that was attached to the dragon for the riders to ride on while his other hand tightened his grip on Levy's forearm. His eyes that were looking at Levy who was dangling over the side of the dragon were filled with panic and worry.

"Just hang in there, dumbass." He smiled and Levy saw that his smile did not reach his eyes. But Levy smiled back in his usual silly way before winking. It was then that they realized the dragon was somehow free from the restraining tentacles and had already turned in the opposite direction and was flying away from the dark core.

Eyes wide, the duo looked at each other in surprise. Both had the same questions in their eyes. What had happened in that split second? There was no way their dragon mount would have been able to free itself from the clutches of those tentacles-like things. So who was it that had saved them from the tentacles?

Levy did not know why, but the first thing he did was to look down. And it was then that he saw her, and his heart felt as though it had fallen into a deep dark icy well. Down there, she was all by herself. Laiza... was she the one who... No, it should be her that had saved them!

"Luc... Laiza is... Laiza is left behind!" Levy immediately turned back to look at Luc, his eyes quickly filling with panic and fear. However, the panic and fear were only for the little female that was left on the ground and growing smaller as the dragon flew further away.

Luc knew what Levy wanted to say. Before Levy could open his mouth, Luc cut him off with a shake of his head. "We can no longer go back Levy. We... even we just barely escaped! Our dragon is barely hanging on too!"

Levy's eyes shook a little after hearing his friend speak. He pressed his lips together as he lowered his eyes. No one knew what was going on through his mind at the moment. But in the next second, he lifted his head and Luc saw his eyes. It was clear and unclouded, as though he knew what he wanted to do.

"I'm sorry Luc... I... can't bear to leave her alone there..." Levy spoke slowly and apologetically.

"L-levy..." Luc had a bad feeling. Though Levy was smiling and looking like his silly self from before, something was still off.

"I'm sorry. Please convey my apologies to Queen Evie. Please tell leader and everyone else too..." Levy laughed in his usual silly manner. But there was a gleam of regret in his clear eyes as he did not say the next words. 'I would miss you guys...'

"Levy... please don't... I know you care about her but..." Luc tried to persuade him. But Levy only shook his head.

"No... I love her, Luc." Levy said it simply, his eyes shining bright with that confession and a gentle smile crossed his lips.

"You... dumbass. You two had just met..." Luc's weak voice tried to deny his friend's claims.

"I know. I'm a dumbass after all." He grinned and laughed good-naturedly at himself. "But this dumbass really loves Laiza. I'm sorry..."

"You, dumbass..." Luc teared up. The pain at his hip seemed to have been magnified somehow. A bitter feeling filled his chest and his nose felt stuffy.

"It's okay, Luc. Perhaps, there might be another miracle like Zolan? I can't allow him to be the only hero there is, right?" Levy cracked a silly joke, hoping to lighten the blow. "But it is goodbye for now, Luc."

"Levy..." Luc could barely choke out his name.

"Thank you for everything. And I love you, Luc! Please tell everyone and Queen Evie that I love them. Bye!"

"Levy!!!" Luc frantically clawed with that one free hand, trying to grab onto whatever part of Levy that he could.

Levy had let go of Luc's hand and was falling down, smiling.

Chapter 683 Found Her

Laiza could no longer see the dragon. Her hand was pressing down hard on the circular wound that was on her bleeding abdomen. After she had slashed through the last tentacle, it had regrown and launched a sneak attack on her. That hit had struck her hard, throwing her back like a rag doll being flung off carelessly.

The impact was so strong that she had been sent flying many meters away and landed in a rolling heap, resulting in more cuts and bumps that would definitely bruise " if she managed to stay alive, that is. She had thought for a moment she was quite lucky as that hit had actually sent her further away from it. That way, she might still have, even the slimmest chance to escape. Well, that was what she had hoped would happen. But she was wrong. Luck was apparently not on her side at all as always.

She had fallen back onto a heap of spiky crystallized ice, causing it to pierce straight into her back and its tip protruded through her abdomen.

Blood trickled from her lips as she forced herself into a sitting position. Her weak magic could not even do anything to heal herself nor stop her bleeding. Thus, resulting in the reason for her putting pressure on her seeping wound. She then looked around. Her surroundings were so dark and quiet. The desolate ground looked so creepy and lonely too.

Alone. She was all alone in this vast darkness. A bitter, almost hysterical smile curved on her lips as maniacal laughter was bubbling at the back of her throat, just waiting to be released. It seems like her death was just as what she had imagined. She was going to die alone. Just like this. And then... after her passing, she would quickly be forgotten. Like how the dew would disappear as the day brightens or like how the snow melts when the sun rises. It would be as though she had never even existed in the first place.

She had thought that she was more than ready for this. Because she had known that this was coming. This was the inevitable fate of a rogue warrior like herself. But damn... why did it have to be so sad...? She had never thought that the ending of her life would be this sad. She did not think that it could be this painfully sad to die alone. With no one to accompany by your side.

Lifting her head up, the image of that dragon and Levy's annoying face flashed unbidden in her mind. At least, her death was not going to be in vain.

Right now, the only thing that she was so thankful for was the fact that she was not regretting what she had done. At least, her demise would not be for nothing. That dragon and those vampires were more precious and useful to the queen than her. They could do more things that were beneficial than a rogue like her. At that comforting thought, her mocking smile gentled and a soft light filled her eyes.

Forcing herself to stand up through her pain, Laiza moved her feet to walk through sheer will alone. Every single movement caused her to cough and blood continued flowing from the corner of her lips. But she still pressed on. She knew that it was hopeless. She was not walking ahead because she still naively believed that there was a chance that she could make it. She just did not want to sit in one spot and obediently wait for death. She would rather keep on moving stubbornly, fighting to the end. Where it was possible, she wanted her death to be one that was on her own terms rather than being passive about it.

She really was not expecting for any miracle to happen. Because so far, she had been so unlucky. Things like miracles and luck had never once played nicely with her. It was as though she was a deterrent to miracles and luck. She just wanted to move because she would rather continue feeling the physical pain and know that she was still half alive, than feel the loneliness and misery of dying all alone.

A faint yell echoed. She thought that she might be hallucinating due to her significant loss of blood and the pain that was causing her to feel lightheaded.

"Laiza!!! Laiza my love!!!"

Nope. She definitely had heard someone calling her. And it was curiously a very familiar someone.

After some moments, Laiza's eyes widened at the click of realization to that familiar voice she had thought was just a figment of her imagination. But then, she stilled in shock. Her mouth dropped opened at the sight of a vampire running happily and eagerly towards her.

"No... no..." she uttered to herself as she watched him ran towards her with that wide and silly smile. And he was somehow looking at her as though he had found some hidden treasure that he had been dreaming of for his entire life. Laiza could feel sweat beading on her forehead as she was frozen for a moment as she stared at his approaching figure.

She then shook her head. This man...!! He had chosen to come back for her! An awkward yet ecstatic feeling seemed to be bubbling deep within her heart. However, as he got nearer, Laiza got agitated.

"W-what the hell are you doing down here! You, dumbass!!!" she screamed at him. She could not explain what she was feeling. She definitely felt happiness at the sight of him but at the same time, there was also a tinge of despair. Seeing his situation, she knew they could not move away fast enough to escape. She could not help but tear up at the thought. Why? Why did he have to come back? Why was he throwing his only chance of survival to come find her? Though she wanted to scream out these questions, she could only bite down on her lips and stare at him.

He grinned apologetically at her as he finally reached where she was. He didn't ask anymore. He simply smiled gently, lovingly. Looking as though he was so glad and happy he had found her.

And then, he scooped her up as careful as he could and held her in his arms.

Chapter 684 Goodbye

"Put me down and run!!! Now!!! You, dumbass!!!" she yelled at him, tearing up. It was bad enough that he came back for her. She did not want him to be held back and die because of her.

"Sorry, Laiza my love... but I can't bear to leave you alone. We'll get out of this together." He reassured her, looking at her tenderly as he struggled to walk away with her in his arms. "Hang in there, okay? It's not over yet. We still can make it."

Laiza shook her head, she still couldn't believe he's here. Her vision blurred as her eyes welled up with tears. "You're such a dumbass... a big dumbass... you should've been in a safe place by now..."

"While you're left here alone and by yourself after saving us? No way!" Levy's smile became so emotional. "Sorry, but this dumbass will not be able to bear it. If I didn't come back, I don't think I would be able to ever get over this regret for the rest of my life. I just know that your image, being left behind after you had saved us, would haunt me forever." He forced a grin again, stumbling a little as he continued moving forward as fast as he could. He wasn't even half as fast as he used to be. He was obviously hurt too and she guessed it must be because of his fall from such height. "So here I am... Please don't worry about it, Laiza. This is my choice. This is what my heart wants."

When Levy fell from the dragon, he had been smiling by himself in disbelief. A small part of him had been telling him 'what have you done? Are you really sacrificing yourself like this for a woman? How about the queen? How about your brothers?'. He had imagined his brothers calling him 'dumbass'. The tears in Luc eyes had him feeling hurt. He didn't want to make them sad and leave them behind. But...

His body started running, looking for her and the moment he saw her, alone and badly hurt in the dark, Levy felt that he had done the right thing... for himself. His heart... it ached and rejoiced at the same time. The excruciating pain just evaporated and all he wanted to do was hold her, be with her, stay with her. His heart was filled with so much emotion there was no room for regret. Nothing at all.

Her tears fell. She had always heard this person confess his 'love' to her. But it is not until this instant that her heart was truly touched and filled to bursting at his confession through his actions.

The earth suddenly shook, causing Levy to fall on his knees. But he still held onto Laiza, never letting her out of his arms.

They turned back and they felt it... the end...

Time seemed to stand still as they felt the change in the air around them. They could just feel it... the explosion was going to happen soon.

Their eyes met and locked together. Laiza teared up. Fear and sadness filled her eyes. She had thought she was going to die alone. But here she was in the arms of the man who claimed that he loved her.

"Don't be scared, I'm here... Laiza... please don't be sad." He told her as he wiped away her tears.

"Do you really love me?" she asked even though she already knew. She had thought he was merely infatuated. But if this was infatuation, he would not come back for her and be willing to die with her. If this was not love, she really did not know what is. It still sounded impossible. She had thought that falling in love at first sight was something impossible. But this man proved her wrong.

"I love you." He told her, smiling tenderly. This time, the silliness and playfulness were all gone. This was a serious Levy who was confessing his heart to her. "The moment I saw you, my heart was shaken so violently like never before. It might sound silly and unbelievable to you, but... I know my heart. I knew I loved you because my heart had told me so."

"You're... such a hopeless... little... dumbass, Levy..." she mumbled in a broken voice, laughing even as tears rolled down her cheeks. Her heart was full. It was filled with those loving words and the gentle look in his eyes.

She had never thought her end would be this emotional. Before this war, she had always thought, she would get killed one day in the battle and that was it. She was not even afraid of death. To her, it was something that would be as easy as getting knocked down by an opponent. Only that she will never be able to regain consciousness again.

But here she was, crying and smiling in the arms of a beautiful "yes, she had acknowledged now that this man was really handsome" man. Most especially right now. No, right now, to her, he was the most handsome man. His brown eyes gleamed brightly and had pierced her soul.

And she reached out to wrap her arms around his neck and kissed his lips. Shocking him. She was happy but so sad at the same time. Sad that she had only found him now at the end of her life, and even sadder that he had only found love in this hopeless time and place. This man, she thought, deserves better...

"If there ever is to be a next life..." she whispered against his lips as she cupped his face lovingly, "Please come find me again, Levy... come find me early. I promise... I will give you my heart and love you as you deserve."

Levy's smile widened and he tightened his grip on her.

"I promise, Laiza. I will definitely find you. I love you." He told her and as thick miasma of darkness came at them, he bent and kissed Laiza's mouth with a kiss full of nothing but love and eternal promise.

...

Evie saw Levy. She felt the connection that she had left in him. But she couldn't go save him. It was... too late as she had gone to shield Beatrice along with Onyx and herself.

'I'm so sorry Levy, I couldn't â€'" Evie mind-spoke to him. The magic she had placed to the vampires could only be used once.

'No, my queen. I'm the one who is sorry. I failed to keep my promise to you. Please don't worry and don't be sad... because I'm together with Laiza right now. I'm not alone. Please take care, my queen... please tell my brothers 'I'm sorry'... tell them not to be sad as well. I will just be here, watching...'

Evie teared up as a smile tugged at the corner of her lips. She saw an image of Levy and Laiza kissing. She felt his emotions through the connection and though it was painful, she understood him. How could she blame him? She would choose the same path if it were Gav and herself in this same situation. She would run towards him too.

'Don't worry about the others. I will take care of them....' She told him, her tears flowing down her face like rain.

'Thank you, Queen Evie. You're the best queen ever! Goodbye...' Levy replied one last time.

'Goodbye Levy, please watch over us.'

And then Evie watched him hug Laiza close to him, not breaking their kiss even as the darkness slowly turned them both into dust.

Chapter 685 Cruel Reality

Outside the wall of darkness, King Belial was already prepared to move out when a strong wind blew towards their encampment from the wall of darkness. It was such a strong gust that the wind managed to blow and reach all the way into the capital.

"Beatrice..." he uttered in a tight voice. However, though whispered just below his breath, if anyone were to be close enough to hear, they would have picked up the trace of worry and fear King Belial had for his beloved wife's safety lacing his words. Drawing in a deep breath and holding it in for a couple of seconds, King Belial took that time to contemplate and single-mindedly made up his mind. Following that decision, he then finally entered the wall, unable to put off taking action any longer.

Upon passing through the wall of darkness, to his surprise, he could feel that the darkness was no longer like it was before. He clearly remembered how oppressive and dense that wall of darkness was when the armies had first crossed over into it. At the time, even he had serious misgivings and doubts on whether their allied forces together with Evie and Vera's visions would be able to overcome it. But currently, it had felt as though the height of the storm was now over and the darkness that was so thick and heavy had reduced its severity and turned into mere smoke that could be waved away with just a couple of flaps from the dragons' wings.

And with such an encouraging occurrence, King Belial hastened forward as his army followed behind him. Some of the lords who had been so adamant in stopping the king from rushing towards the darkness were now silent as they could also feel the immense change. They even actually felt that the war was over and many of them could hardly believe it!

When they reached a little deeper, they saw the soldiers. Everyone was standing still, facing towards the source of the explosion that had happened far away from them.

One look and Belial could tell that the soldiers had managed to escape.

The king's heart raced within his ribcage as he rallied on ahead with his army hot on his heels. He did not bother to ask any questions regarding Beatrice's condition or safety because, knowing his wife for as long as he already had, she would most probably be one of the very last ones to retreat! She had always been like that. Even in the many battles and wars she had previously fought together with him, she had always been in the thick of things, never expecting to be protected behind defensive lines. It is more probable that she would be right at the frontlines, fighting alongside those who face the threats of direct attacks from their enemies. And he was quite sure it was no different this time - more so when it involves his two daughters-in-law, especially with one of them pregnant with their future grandchild!

Soon, he spotted the vampires along with the fire dragons who were all now on the ground. They are all pretty battered. The damages on the dragons were more than enough for everyone to know the severity of the battle.

He noticed one of them was crying. And that sight had his worry escalate. He prayed in his heart that everyone was alright. His wife and his daughters-in-law and also his son.

King Belial was not made aware that the reason behind the vampire's tears was because one of their comrades had fallen in battle.

Luc was weeping silently, furiously wiping his tears away every time a new stream trickled from the corners of his eyes and down his cheeks as he stood there, shaking his head in disbelief and denial. He still did not want to accept the fact that Levy was gone, just like that.

"That dumbass..." he kept whispering hoarsely as tremors shook his entire frame, while Samuel was squeezing his shoulder, hoping that it might lend some support.

Reed and Leon were also there with them. They were quiet but sorrow was also gleaming in their eyes. They had personally witnessed with their own extraordinary vision how that dark explosion had literally incinerated the few soldiers who were unlucky and did not manage to run off far enough from the central area where the explosion had detonated. The moment the explosion occurred, they had been turned into dust.

It was then that they knew they had really and truly lost their comrade Levy. That the usually silly fellow who would laugh and joke around would no longer be coming out of that crisis anymore. There would not be any clownish person appearing so dramatically before them no matter how long they stayed put there and waited for him to emerge. It was... devastating... losing a friend, a brother... It was heartbreakingly unbearable.

And Luc, who had always been the one who was bantering and fighting with Levy, was unable to hold himself back anymore and just wept right there. They were not so delusional to think that there would be another miracle happening like how Zolan had 'come back' from the dead. As much as they wished with all their hearts that Levy would reappear like how Zolan did, they knew better this time. They had personally witnessed his demise.

Unfortunately, this was what war is like. There is bound to be loss of lives. They had been lucky that they had not met any irreparable losses to their core group so far. But... now, when the war is reaching its climax, a life has been claimed from amongst them. It was the most insane war they had been through. Even they actually felt that it was such a miracle that not half or even a third of them had already fallen. They knew that it would be too unrealistic of them to expect for no one to lose their lives in such a merciless and brutal war.

So, no matter how much it pained all of them at the loss of Levy, all they could do was to accept it as a fact and move on. There would always be battles needed to be fought even if this war did end. Lives need to be protected and later on, life still would go on. That was the cruel reality of life for warriors like them.

Chapter 686 Great Dragon

After moving forward at a rapid pace, King Belial finally spotted Onyx. It was not hard to identify the large extremely black dragon amongst the other vampires, dark faes, ice and fire dragons. The dragon was currently seated on the ground.

"Beatrice!" the king called out for his wife. Relief flooded through him like a flood as he rushed up to her, pulling and crushing her in his embrace. After some seconds of tightly hugging her, he grabbed her upper arms, pushed her at arm's length and gave her a quick scan from head to toe. Seeing that there were nothing more than some bruises and superficial cuts that had bled and were now dried up and healed, he sighed out heavily. Though he was unhappy with the numerous wounds she had on all over her, in this situation, he knew that this was already the best condition that she could be in. In fact, it was almost a miracle that she only had this amount of injuries with the way she had been fighting and going against the monsters at the frontlines.

"Belial!" The couple pulled again at each other before being enveloped in a tight embrace. Queen Beatrice was as ecstatic, if not more, at seeing her husband here with her. She knew how much he would worry every time they separated and fought at different sections in a war.

"Are you alright, my queen?" he asked as he pulled away and checked on her again, as though to double confirm that she was definitely alright.

"I'm fine." She replied hurriedly to reassure him and then the two of them looked ahead. "Evie was quick enough to call up her protective barrier and had shielded me during the explosion. But Vera and Gideon... they're... they were inside the black core..." Beatrice's voice softened a little before cracking as she relayed the news of her eldest son and his wife to Belial.

Hearing the shocking news, everyone that had come in later with King Belial turned to look ahead. The dark core was already gone and nothing seemed to be left of it. All they could see now was a thin wispy trail of smoke that was also slowly dissipating.

The ice crystals formed by the ice dragons had now started to become the source of light in the dim darkness. Though it was not as bright compared to the light from the sun, it was sufficient for everyone to see and make their way around in this area of perpetual darkness.

And it was then that they realized that they were looking at Gideon who was kneeling on the ground, holding onto Vera in his arms.

Evie rushed towards them and then suddenly halted at the realization that Gideon was now looking no different from a living dead. He was not weeping. He was not showing regret or sadness. He was just bent over on the ground there, frozen still, looking down at Vera's face.

Evie's eyes trailed along Gideon's gaze and her hand suddenly flew to cover her mouth at the sight of Vera. She did not... seem to be breathing anymore.

She fell to her knees and was about to stretch her hand out to hover over Vera's chest when Gideon growled at her. He acted no different from an animal who was prepared to kill anyone who would touch his beloved.

"It's me, Gideon. It's Evie... I will try to heal her!" Evie coaxed. His still blackish blue eyes dilated when he heard her voice and when his expression changed, Evie slowly stretched her hand out again.

Nothing was working. Her magic was not working on Vera! Was it because it's too late?

King Belial came forward as well and tried healing her with his dark magic. But it also didn't work.

Vera's heart had stopped.

Hopelessness crushed over them. Beatrice began to tear up. Evie as well. But Gideon did not. They knew with one look that he would not be able to accept this reality. This reality that there would no longer be a Vera in this world. He would never be able to.

In the midst of the crushing and devastating situation, Evie's attention was pulled towards a faint dragon sound. Lifting her defeated eyes, she saw a dragon lying on the ground not too far away from them. When she recognized that it was Azure, she had caught herself from gasping out loud. It had taken her a couple of seconds to register in her mind that that dragon was Vera's mount. The dragon was dying as well. The great dragon was completely battered and was now lying in a pool of his own blood. That was how much blood had seeped out from the numerous wounds riddling his entire body.

Evie's heart clenched at the sight of the poor dragon. But when their eyes met, she suddenly stood and approached the dragon.

There was something Azure was trying to say... The fact that Onyx also moved closer to the dying dragon confirmed it.

With the help of Onyx, Evie understood what Azure was trying to say to her. She used her magic to lend the dragon one last move as he had requested.

She didn't know what the dragon would do but as Azure gathered all of his waning strength, and supported by Evie's magic, the great dragon struggled to rise from the ground.

He made sounds and its body glowed with a bluish light. He looked as though he was casting his very last spell.

And then they watched him rip out his own heart with his claws, squeezing as he roared out his dying cry. A roar that made the entire ground tremble with the intensity of what felt like emotions flowing out from the dragon.

Azure crumbled to the ground right after, but he still managed to lift his claw - the claw he used to crush his own heart.

He moved his claw above Vera and then his blood dripped into her mouth. Everyone watched, holding their breaths.

When Azure's claw fell heavily to the ground, Vera began to glow with a bluish light exactly the same as what Azure had emitted just a while ago.

And then... her eyes fluttered open.

Chapter 687 It Was Done

Everyone was silent as they watched Gideon hug Vera. His body was trembling hard as he held her tight against him. However, it seemed as though Gideon was not even aware of his own body's reactions. He was still blank and emotionless as he clung tightly onto Vera even though she was already out of danger.

Beatrice teared up silently as she watched the heartbreaking scenario of her eldest and his mate. She was so glad Vera could be saved. That she did not leave Gideon again.

The fear Beatrice felt when she saw Vera's lifeless body was so intense that it had shaken her entire being. Even now that Vera was saved, Beatrice could still feel the lingering chill in her and she was sure that it would take some time to dissipate. She was terrified of what would happen to Gideon if he ended up losing his love once again.

So, seeing Vera opening her eyes, alive, and not leaving them again, had Beatrice crying hard in silence. She just buried her head into her husband's chest while Belial held her, caressing her back so gently. He completely understood why his wife was behaving this way. Those tears were ones of relief and thankfulness. Not of fear nor worry. As he continued rubbing his hand up and down Beatrice's back, he also softly whispered into her ears, words of understanding and comfort.

"Gid... Gideon..." Vera uttered as she looked up at her husband's disheveled and ravaged face. Droplets of tears were falling as rain from his eyes.

Vera could see the utter grief and agony melting and turning into torrents of tears coursing down his cheeks. It broke her heart, seeing her beloved cry like this. He was such a powerful and proud prince. For him to break down and cry like this in public...

Vera knew that she was the reason why he was bleeding in pain. She knew she had scared him to death. She had broken his heart and soul into pieces.

Unable to bear the sight of him shedding tears anymore, Vera reached out and caressed his face.

"I'm here now, Gideon, my mate... please don't cry... I'm here now..." she consoled him gently and Gideon only bent over and held her tightly in his arms again, burying his head in her hair.

But Vera soon pulled away from Gideon as she finally began to wonder how she was brought back to life.

'Azure...' she muttered to herself as she looked around, searching for him.

The great dragon's body was on the ground, and Evie and Onyx were next to him, their heads lowered in grief.

Vera instantly felt her throat constrict and throbbed in pain. Giving Gideon's hands a reassuring squeeze, she stood up with trembling knees and approached the dragon. Her dragon. Every step she took closer to Azure was heavy. So heavy as though they were filled with lead.

Slowly dropping to her knees beside Azure's head, Vera's trembling hands reached out to touch her dragon's snout, caressing it lovingly as her eyes locked onto his eyes. Hoping against all odds that he would blink and communicate with her as he used to do.

But she broke down in tears as she looked at Azure's still opened but dead eyes. Hugging the great dragon's snout, Vera cried out with heartrending sobs.

Everyone stayed very still with their heads bowed low, while the ice dragons all around the battlefield started to make a keening sound, as if they too were mourning and crying along with Vera for the passing of a mighty dragon.

The army beyond the now dissolving wall of darkness immediately felt gooseflesh crawling down their skin as they looked ahead towards the source of that sound. They all thought that the Light Queen's army had won the war when they saw that the wall of darkness started to dissolve. But now, upon hearing those strange sounds, they started to feel doubt and fear. What had happened? Had they won or not?

Just as the duke - that King Belial had assigned to take the command - had entered the wall and was about to give the command for the army to move, a messenger arrived, stopping them, telling them that the battle had ended.

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The King's army began to emerge from the wall of darkness that now just looked like a faint cloud of dark smoke.

They had with them many injured soldiers. The dragons had also suffered major injuries.

And following them, countless dead bodies were being carried out. Sadly, there were also dragons among them.

The sight of the lives that were lost was enough to tell everyone just how intense the battle they had gone through within that wall. But there was no one who dared look at the survivors as well as the dead, with pity in their eyes.

The soldiers lifted their heads high up as a salute to the heroes that had sacrificed their life to fight for this hard won peace. And they began singing their song of victory.

All the soldiers who were too weak and were looking withered, lifted their heads. The sound that welcomed them seemed to have awakened them, making them realize that the battle had indeed ended and they had... won.

The soldiers who initially had their heads hung low, now lifted their arms and then they too, began to cry out.

The King and Queen, the Light Queen and everyone who were the last to emerge stilled at the song of victory being sung as it were being carried on the winds, melodious yet full of passion and zeal.

Evie swept her gaze over all the soldiers celebrating their victory. Right... they had won. They had seen it themselves that the heart of the abyss, that strange well, was now sealed. And not a single monster had been left alive. Yes, they had won this war.

Looking up, Evie allowed her eyes to slowly close. At long last... it was done. The war had finally ended. A smile filled with gratitude and relief tugged at the corners of her lips. But at the same time, a lone tear escaped from the corner of her eyes.

She brushed it away immediately, steeling herself, and continued marching forward with her head held up.

Chapter 688 Always Remember You

A few days after the end of the war, Evie had told King Belial of her desire to go back to their homeland.

The King and Queen could do nothing but to give in to what their daughter-in-law desired. Even though they truly wanted her to stay with them, maybe at least until she gave birth, they knew that they could not possibly stop her from leaving. Deep in their hearts, they also understood why she wanted to return to her homeland.

And thus, the day soon arrived when the Light Queen and her people were set to depart.

Evie and the group of her vampire elites had traveled back to the graveyard first and foremost to visit Levy and Vermillion's grave. There was no way they could leave without bidding their farewells to those beloved ones who had fallen in battle. Their loss had carved a great hollow in everyone's heart.

Dropping to her knee, Evie placed both her hands palms down onto the ground. White flowers began to grow and immediately bloomed. The tiny flowers spread out all the way to the dragon's grave and also to Laiza's final resting place, which was thoughtfully placed right next to Levy's.

As the vampires watched the tiny flowers creep and spread all over the barren ground of the empty grave, changing the dark and desolate place to become one that resembled a glen that could be found in fairyland. Luc began to tear up silently as he stared at Levy's tombstone. At least now, the place looks much more lively and cheery - just like how Levy's personality was. He would always be cheerful and just a little silly, enough to bring smiles and laughter to the people around him. With Queen Evie casting her magic over their graves and granting them such a beautiful resting place, he was sure Levy and Laiza's spirits would find much joy in it.

Samuel and Zolan quietly patted Luc's shoulders even though they too were barely holding their emotions back. It was painful to suddenly lose a comrade that had been together with them for so long. They had literally lost a brother.

Losing Levy had been a devastating blow to all of them, especially for Luc. They felt as though from here on out, there would always be something missing, a hole in their chest that would always linger forever, never able to be filled up again.

The only thing that was making them feel better was the thought that Levy was not alone wherever he was now. Because Laiza was with him.

"That dumbass better be crying too while watching over us right now. He should see and know how we are faring without him right now." Luc said in a stuffy voice as he smiled and cried at the same time.

"I'm sure he's pleading with us not to cry right now." Samuel replied with a tight smile as he squeezed Luc's shoulder gently. He knew that among all of them, Luc would be the one most affected with Levy's passing.

"That's... for sure." Reed nodded as he wiped his tears. "Knowing him, he'd be begging us all to smile instead."

Evie smiled sadly as she listened to the men talking behind her. Each was trying to encourage the other as they stood to pay their final respects to their brother. Levy had been the sunshine in their circle. He was the loudest and funniest. It was hard to accept that he was no longer with them. But they could do nothing but move on.

Shutting her eyes closed, she uttered her prayer in her heart. 'You will always be in our heart, Levy. We will always remember you.'

Taking a long and shaky breath, Evie then stepped back and let the men kneel on Levy's grave one by one. Luc was the last one to get down on his knees. He bent over and wept once again as everyone watched him from behind.

But when he finally rose and turned back to look at them, his expression somehow turned a lot better. Everyone secretly sighed in relief as Evie offered her hand to him, smiling at the man with understanding and kindness.

"Let's go, Luc." Evie told him and Luc reached and accepted his queen's hand. He would allow himself to be pampered and consoled for just this once. Just for this little while, as he is still in the process of letting go. Then, he would be strong again. Nodding his head, he squeezed Queen Evie's hand in gratitude.

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They all headed to Ferber next.

Though Evie had been going to Ferber the last few days along with the king and queen, she never took the vampires along with her.

So, this would be the very first time the men will be seeing their King's situation.

The moment they saw the massive and softly shimmering amber crystal that looked like an upside-down blade of a sword, they all froze. All of them looked up at the silhouette of their king that was kept frozen within the blade-like crystal.

The men already knew that their king was trapped. They knew he was not actually dead, but seeing him now trapped in that crystal like an angel of darkness and kept suspended in a deep, peaceful slumber, they all did not know how to explain what they were feeling. All of them had complicated and indefinable emotions surging through their hearts.

They were going to leave him behind in this situation. The mere thought of it made their throat hurt, but when they looked back at their queen, they steeled themselves. If they were already feeling like this, they could not even imagine how hard all of this was for her.

She spread her wings out and flew closer to him. They watched silently as her wings flapped steadily before she leaned her body against the crystal, right across his body.

The sight was enough to make everyone lower their heads. It was heartbreaking even though they knew this goodbye was not going to be forever.

"My love... please wait for me. I wish I could stay here so I can watch over you, but I need to go back to the surface." Evie whispered softly. "Time is slow here so I decided to return... I will come back to you, Gav. I promise. I love you... I love you..."

Chapter 689 Paradise Of Lirea

At the portal.

Everyone was gathered there. Except Gideon.

After the war, Gideon had spent a long time, a couple of days straight, just standing before Kione's grave. The news that his close friend and brother-in-arms, Kione, had lost his life in the midst of the battle against the giant monsters had really dealt a great blow to Gideon. Azrael had accompanied him for an entire day but the man eventually decided to leave Gideon alone.

It was Vera who went to him next and fortunately, she was able to make him finally leave the grave and returned to the Great Castle.

All of them had been worried for him as Gideon had not come out from their room since he left the grave. However, Vera had brought him out with her for their last family meal before Evie departed for her homeland.

Though Gideon did not talk much at all, he did look better than before and that alone was enough to make them all feel relieved. They all knew Vera must have been the greatest reason and support for him to recover as fast as he was, contrary to what the King and Queen themselves had expected. Queen Beatrice had mentioned privately to Evie how worried she was for Gideon because of the prince's tendency to isolate himself and avoid his family for so long. And now, with such a thing had happened and the loss they had to endure from the war, Beatrice was more afraid that Gideon would pull further into himself and keep everyone away at arm's length. But thanks to Vera being by his side, Gideon was somehow faring better than expected. That was the miracle of having a mate and a partner.

"I will definitely come over to visit you soon, Evie." Vera was gripping tightly onto Evie's hands with her own, smiling at her with her emotional eyes. There were shimmers of tears that could be seen in both the ladies' eyes as they held each others' hands in silence for a couple of heartbeats before a sniffle from Vera broke the quietness.

"Make sure to bring Gideon with you, Vera." Evie teased.

"Of course. And I don't think he'll let me out of the Underlands without him next to me. With how we were forcefully separated before, I think it would not be soon that we would want to willingly part from each other." Vera sheepishly and shyly whispered to Evie, blushing a little. As much as she was embarrassed to be seen going around with Gideon, as though they were a couple that were overly sticky to each other, she would rather endure the embarrassment than cause either of them the anxiety of parting.

"As he should." Evie reached out and hugged Vera in an emotional embrace. The two of them obviously did not want to part but they must, as Vera had decided to live together with Gideon in the Underlands forever and will never go back to the human lands again. Though she said she would visit and tour Lirea one day with Gideon, Vera had told Evie she never wanted to live on a permanent basis on the surface ever again. She had told her that the Underlands was her home now and Evie was happy for her friend who had finally found a place where she truly belonged.

"We will be visiting as often as possible as well, our dearest daughter-in-law," King Belial also added on and Evie nodded, giving them a smile filled with gratitude. She knew that it would not be possible for all of them to remain together as much as she wanted that to happen. Belial and Beatrice could not permanently live on the surface as they belonged to the Underlands. She could opt to live with everyone else in the Underlands at least for a few more months until she gives birth. But holding the identity as the Queen of the light faes as well as the wife and Queen of the vampires as well, how was it possible for her to abandon her people on the surface and choose to live in the Underlands? Thus, that was why she had to return to the surface. However, this arrangement that they had agreed to would be the next best thing - visiting between the families as often as possible. That way, they would still be in touch and see each other frequently enough, but still be able to carry out their duties and responsibilities to their utmost ability.

"I'll be looking forward to your visits, Father and Mother." Evie replied and embraced her in-laws as well. While wrapped in their embrace, she whispered to them in the gentlest and softest of tone. Her voice almost broke as she spoke. "In the meanwhile, I'll be leaving Gav to be here in your care. I'll definitely be back for him..." Pulling away, Belial and Beatrice saw a wide and bright smile on her face, but with tears shimmering in her large crystal-like eyes.

Soon, all the happy as well as teary goodbyes were said. Evie and her people finally walked towards the portal. Turning, Evie waved her hand to them and with a smile on her face, they finally crossed the portal.

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Three years later.

With the help of magic, the city of Crescia was finally restored to its former beauty. The paradise of Lirea was back. Though the population of the Light Faes still remained very small, their power only increased. And the increase in power was not just marginal, but by leaps and bounds.

The Middlelands have already become a place that was unrecognizable from the sad and ruined state it was from three years ago. The once dark and dangerous forest has now turned into something so magical and welcoming. In fact, it would only be right to call it a fairy land filled with light and peace. A place one would be dreaming to visit to just enjoy the beauty of both nature and magic.

Chapter 690 Humans

At the heart of Crescia lies a majestic castle. It shimmered with a white-blueish sheen that never dimmed or dulled no matter the time of the day. There were multiple towers of varying heights on the four edges of the castle with beautiful bluish turrets on it. On the main building itself, was an extremely tall tower with a long and sharp finial spearing high up into the sky, shining with an otherworldly glow. It was made of a special crystal that was only found in Crescia that could emit its own light even in the deepest of darkness - functioning similarly to a lighthouse in guiding vessels back to the harbour - able to function as a guiding light to the dragons and light faes no matter in light or darkness. Within the castle itself, there seemed to be a light shining out of it - a golden yellow that never wanes - the magical light of the Light Queen herself.

It had not been that hard for Evie to fulfill her aim of reuniting the entirety of Lirea. After giving birth to her son, Evie did not waste any time and started working on her new aim " and that was to reunite the Humans, Vampires, and Fae realms to make a better and peaceful Lirea for everyone " the goal Gav, her beloved, had promised her before. And since her beloved was now not able to, what was stopping her from doing it herself? Nothing! Thus, she had taken up the responsibility of it and worked at it. It took a lot of planning, manpower, vampire power and fae power as well as dragon might for this alliance to come to fruition.

Evie had tried her very best to do the job without spilling any blood. And she had succeeded. She had gone back to the Human realms first and met with the three Human emperors. She had initially intended to maintain her facade as just the new dragon guardian and a distant descendant of the light faes to come to a peaceful negotiation with them on the alliance. Thus, Evie had tried at first not to show them her real powers. But as usual, the emperors were being arrogant and not in the habit of listening to females speaking, she eventually ended up not having a choice and had to show them some of her powers that she knew had scared them to their bones. It was a shame that she could not have a completely peaceful discussion with the Human emperors to come to that agreement. However, after thinking about it, solving it this way was not a bad thing after all.

Evie realize that the rulers needed the push of fear to be conquered. They were conceited and full of themselves and would never bow their heads to someone that they thought was not powerful enough. And Evie understood that. So, she simply lifted the restriction she had placed on her own powers and unleashed them, showing them that she was not someone any of them could easily mess with. In fact, it could be fair enough to say that there was no one on the surface who could mess with Evie.

And with that, with the help of her right hand persons, Zolan and Zanya, Evie had successfully dealt with the human's politics. She had then decided on turning the previous separate three human empires into three Kingdoms. Once that was decided upon and agreed by the emperors and their court, announcements were made and word spread across the Human Kingdoms.

The humans in the three Kingdoms were also quick in accepting Evie as the new highest sovereign of the lands. Maybe because the humans always believed in their hearts that the Ylvias were their heroes even during the times of just having one male dragon keeper.

Evie had mentally prepared herself to accept the worst because she had thought it would take a longer time for the people to accept how drastically things had changed. But fortunately for her, she

was wrong. She had not expected how the humans had reacted when she visited the three Kingdoms while riding atop her dragon - Onyx. They cheered and celebrated and she could see the genuine acceptance and excitement in their eyes as they looked up at her flying overhead. Of course, it helped that she was riding on Onyx, who was so large and more massive than any other dragons the people had ever seen before. And Evie had also brought along Silver and Crimson as an added guarantee, who flanked Onyx as they flew in a wedge formation. And for the humans, seeing more than one dragon at a time was already a miracle that they would never dream of even in another lifetime.

However, that was not the case on the side of the Vampires.

With the help of her very strong vampire elites, Evie had very quickly overthrown the fake rulers who had snatched the vampire throne again after Gav's disappearance. After clearing off the traitors and their factions, Evie had a gathering with the upper echelons of the vampiric society and spoke to them. But despite Evie's promises, she could feel that the vampires were not willing to fully put their trust in her. They could not trust her, who was a half-fae and half-human would be able to treat the vampires with the same fairness as the humans and faes.

Many of them started to argue and even fight back, unable to accept that they would be ruled by a non-vampire, even though they knew that she was the wife of the last vampire royalty. They did not care if she was the wife of King Gavriel because she did not have even a tinge of vampire blood in her veins.

For the next couple of years, Evie had tried her best to reassure the vampires and somehow, things had finally settled down. All because Evie did not have a choice but to show them how futile it was for them to try and fight against her. She showed them that no matter how she did not have vampire blood within her, power still spoke the loudest in matters such as these.

Though she knew that what she did was not a long term solution, that was all she could do for now to stabilize the situation. r

But for now they have done the biggest rebellion since the day she had overthrown the fake vampire ruler. Resulting in the unnecessary bloodshed that she had been trying so hard to avoid all this time.