

# The Duke's Passion

## Chapter 17 - An Odd Negotiation

"Conduct yourself as a proper human being. Hah! He should tell that to himself." I scoffed under my breath, pacing back and forth inside my small shack.

The sun hadn't set yet, and I could still see the knights outside. They replaced the usual quietness in this area with the sound of the knights building stables resonated in the air.

But I couldn't care anymore. I didn't know what plans they had for this land or when they would ask me to leave this place.

After all, this land was not mine. I was merely living in this place illegally.

"Future duchess... he should give more respect then." I mumbled, scoffing as I couldn't let my brief conversation with the acting duke go.

Although Samael frightened me to the core, he never truly belittled me to this degree. I perceived his bluntness more bearable than the words of that acting duke.

"Does it hurt his pride to be kind? Or even think that he would kneel before a peasant?"

"Silly, you shouldn't badmouth Rufus. He's crazy!"

Just as I spat my last remarks, I jolted upon hearing Samael's voice. Immediately, I faced him who was entering the shack.

"You — milord, I'm not badmouthing the acting duke." I denied awkwardly, hoping he didn't hear everything.

"But you're right. He should treat you with more respect since you're the future duchess." He grinned, casting me a knowing look.

While I was aghast. My eyes widened as my soul nearly left my body.

He heard everything!

"Say, are you saying you're accepting my proposal?" Samael crossed his arms, standing still from the entrance of the shack.

"Huh?"

"Will you become the duchess, is what I am asking." He clarified, shrugging his shoulders indifferently.

"Heh, milord," I chuckled awkwardly, gliding my way in front of him.

To my dismay, as I foolishly approached him, Samael hopped several steps back.

Was he avoiding me now? I wondered, furrowing my brows as the distance we had before was still the same.

"Don't come close. You stink." With his usual playful tone, Samael said bluntly.

Ahh... now he's suddenly sensitive about my odor. Not that I care.

I cleared my throat, fiddling my fingers against each other as I took a deep breath.

"Milord, we both know you don't plan to really marry a peasant. But... can I ask a request?"

I watched as Samael furrow his brows as he remained silent. After my brief conversation with the acting duke, I found myself talking to this crazy duke was more bearable.

Not to mention, until I've become the perfect meal, he wouldn't kill me yet. I might use his mercy to my advantage until he would devour me.

"You see... the people in the fields were like my family."

I explained, hinting my request would be about these people. The longer he remained silent, my anxiety intensified.

"Will you promise you would protect them as an exchange for my life?"

After mustering enough courage, I asked with my brows raised. I held my breath, waiting for his reply.

Since I would die, it worries me that everyone in the field would fall victim just like I was. Therefore, I wanted this duke to give me his words. I needed his reassurance that he wouldn't touch any of them.

"You make it sound like I'm taking you as a hostage." Samael frowned.

Am I not, milord?

"If I say yes, you will accept my proposal?" He asked, arching his brows suspiciously.

"Yes, milord. I would eat everything you prepare, embrace the title of being your reserved meal, and preserve my flesh the best I could." Without thinking twice, I reassured him.

I had a lot of thinking last night. I figured no one, even the knights nor the entire Grimsbanne, could help me.

Hence, I came to this conclusion. At the very least, my death would do something good for the people I cared.

"Really?" He asked suspiciously.

"You can cook me alive!" To show my sincerity, I blurted out.

"What?" As soon as Samael heard my reassurance, his face distorted.

After blinking countless of times, the corner of his lips curled into a grin and his wave of laughters followed.

Why? Am I asking for too much? Wasn't my offer too tempting to lose?

"What a silly girl you are, Lilou!" After Samael recovered from his laughters, he uttered.

I bit my lower lip, thinking of a better proposal for this 'deal'. Although I knew that I was not in the place to negotiate, I'm dying anyway.

"How did you know eating fresh meat is the best?"

My eyes lit up as soon as I detected the interest in his tone. I have a chance!

"I'm a peasant, milord. I know that simple housework." I explained with a smile.

"Haha! No, no. You misunderstood me purposely." Samael shook his head, his grin still glued to his lips.

"Huh?"

"I repeated it over and over about my intention and yet, you're so stubborn to accept it! Your stubbornness is amusing to the point it aggravates me!"

Samael exclaimed, still shaking his head as he looked at me helplessly.

I'm not stubborn. I'm merely being realistic!

I need enough reason that followed the order of the world. And this duke fancying me in a way I wouldn't want to imagine has surpassed logic.

"You would have been the duchess whether you're against it, and I could've taken advantage of you and say it's your duties as my wife. However, do you know the reason we're still here, talking?"

Samael asked. His nonchalant tone returned as he looked at me straight in the eye.

I shook my head as an answer.

"It's because I want you to accept me willingly."

"Am I not willingly accepting his lordship's orders?" I blurted out almost instantly.

As soon as I realized what I said, I bit my tongue as punishment. I should stop terrorizing myself while asking someone a favor.

"You are, but not that kind of way." He said, waving his hand in distress as if he found it hard to explain it to me.

Should I kneel? I wondered, glancing at the ground. Alas, just as I thought of kneeling, I halted as Samael spoke irritably.

"Ay! Not that kind of method." He said while scratching the back of his head.

"You know, romance, right?"

He asked. I looked at him, blinking. Obviously, I know romance. Father used to tell me how he and my mother loved each other dearly.

Even when Mother passed after giving birth to me, Father never blamed me. Instead, he poured all his love and live his life to give me a better life.

I desired that same love. The same pure romance which my mother and father shared.

"I want that." Samael uttered, and I knitted my brows.

He wanted romance, right? He told me about it, but he couldn't attain that from me.

"You're marrying me because you want romance and food?" I asked, tilting my head to the side as everything sounded so complicated now.

"You know what, Lilou? You're stressing me more than I thought." Samael cast me an eye full of disdain.

"Tsk. That innocent look on your face is infuriating, just in case you don't know."

He added, clicking his tongue in annoyance. I don't why he was suddenly acting on edge, but not that it could surprise me more.