

The Duke's Passion

Chapter 2 - Prologue II

"Don't run, silly. Won't you marry me?" he asked, almost gleefully.

Marriage? Did I hear that correctly? My brain had short-circuited. That was the only explanation for the utter confusion I was feeling. At my lack of response, the vampire still holding my wrist asked, "Have you been shocked and excited into silence?"

What wicked game was this man playing? Excited... more like terrified! Was he so oblivious as to miss the way my entire body shook under his grip? I couldn't remember the last time I felt so scared. It was like death itself was staring me in the face and all I could muster was a softly whispered, "please."

"Please?" He replied. "Are you saying I've forgotten my manners?" His grip on my wrist tightened and he pulled me closer, "Fine, please marry me," he said sarcastically. I could tell he was used to doing what he wanted and I was surprised he had any notion of what manners were at all.

I hastily turned my head away from him, hoping he'd soon get bored if I ignored him. It only seemed to make him angrier. "Are you rejecting my marriage proposal?" He seethed, obviously irritated with the delay.

I opened my mouth to retort but nothing came out. What could I even say? 'You tell him no! Of course, you won't marry him!' My mind screamed, desperate to be heard.

"Ah, you must want to get to know me first," he said happily, as if he had cracked the code to my dilemma. His constant shift in mood threw me for a loop, I just couldn't keep up.

My wrist was really starting to hurt and the other hand instinctively went to grab it. Only then did he notice his tight grip and loosened it a little. He sniffed the air, "Oh dear, it appears as though you've been injured," he crooned, his eyes closing to mere slits.

At the mention of a wound, it was as if my brain was reminded and I immediately felt a dull throbbing on my palm. I must have scratched it on the rough wooden door when I tried to escape earlier. Adrenaline was an incredible thing.

Just kill me already, was what I wanted to say in response. I'd rather the end be quick and relatively painless and I most certainly didn't need to be injured for him to take my life. He could very easily snap my wrist and then my neck, if he so wanted to. I couldn't comprehend why he hadn't yet.

He smirked and asked, "Shall I take care of this for you?" Pointing to the scratch on my palm, the expression on his face and the tone of his voice implied a more sinister solution and I pulled my wrist close and held it against my chest.

Still smiling like the devil, he straightened to his full height and I backed up against the door instinctively. He turned slightly and I flinched when he pointed in the direction of the window, "Do you see those carriages there?"

I nodded, wide eyed and wary of his intentions.

"From the putrid scent of perfume and hair products alone, I can tell that those carriages are filled with eager young ladies. Do you have any idea why they flock to my castle?" He asked, nonchalantly drumming his fingers on the oak table and quirking an eyebrow in my direction.

Most of the carriages had passed through the castle gates and what I was seeing now were just those waiting for their turn to enter the "grand abode" of the Lord. I still wasn't sure where he was going with all this but I responded with a soft, "Yes, I see them."

"Good!" he chimed, "And so they wish to marry me and gain the power of the Duke of Grimspbane," he threw his arms wide and I cringed, nearly fusing with the door behind me. He turned to me and whispered, "but I can't fucking stand them and so I'll save them for dinner and marry you instead!" He spun once and looked straight at me and winked, "So, will you be mine or shall I be yours?"

My mouth opened and closed like a fish. I still didn't believe him and I highly doubted his intentions. If I said no, he'd kill me now. If I said yes, he would most likely kill me later and I would live my life in constant fear.

"I would have you kill me now, rather than later," I said weakly, voicing my innermost thoughts out loud.

His eyes narrowed as he bent over and got closer to my face, "Are you daft? Or deaf?" His face bobbed up and down as he inspected me.

I looked straight at him and responded with an offended, "Of course not!"

"Oh good!" He intoned, standing straight and planting both hands on his hips. Those crimson eyes searched the room and found the one rickety chair. "Ah, let's see," he said and sat down in the chair. "Come here," he crooked a sharp, pointed fingernail and I instinctively walked over to him and stood between his opened knees.

"Hmm," he murmured and wrapped a large hand around one of my biceps. Then he picked me up by the waist and I panicked when my feet left the floor. I grabbed onto his arms and squeezed, like that would get him to release me. He seemed unfazed by my reaction.

"My dear," he purred, "You are much too thin for me to eat right now." The ear-to-ear smile coupled with those crimson eyes sent shivers down my spine as my feet once again found the floor.

I swallowed what little saliva I had left and looked toward the front door, a tiny part of me hoping to somehow get out of this. I jumped when he clapped his hands and said, "Then it's decided!"

He quickly got to his feet and placed both hands on my shoulders, "From now on, until you accept my proposal, I'm granting you the honorary title of being my reserved meal," and all my brain could process was the sparkle of his sharpened canines.