

The Duke's Passion

Chapter 9 - Duke

"Search the area and find that thief!"

As soon as those orders reached my ear, a few knights barged through the door of the shack. I stared at them blankly; I couldn't move a muscle.

Just what terrible luck struck my life?

Not only has this maniacal vampire chosen me as prey, but now, the knights of the Duke were here because of a crime I didn't commit.

Plead and kneel, Lilou. Push all the blame on this vampire and ask for their help. Perhaps the knight's arrival wasn't so bad. Maybe they could probably help me with my dilemma?

My last thoughts brought me courage. The slightest chance that one of them would feel sympathetic and help me out with my situation brought bubbles of excitement to my heart.

"You two!" one of them yelled, just as I mustered the courage to drop to my knees. I jolted instinctively, anxiousness creeping into my heart.

"Show your respect and kneel before Lord Barrett!" said the Knight and my heart raced uncontrollably.

Lord Barrett? The Lord overseeing Grimsbanne while the Duke is in his slumber? Why would such a person be here? Did this silver-haired vampire cause some other trouble that would make the Duke's most trusted aide search for him, himself?

The fear I had felt last night was probably the worst I had ever experienced, but this situation felt the same.

"Oh, come on!" the vampire whined, "I was just looking forward to supper stories!"

"Milord, it's not the time to act all defiant. Quick, pay respect to the Lord!" I muttered under my breath.

After saying so, I hurriedly dropped to my knees. "Pardon my humble abode, milord. I don't know why his lordship is in the house of this undeserving peasant. Please forgive me for I can't even serve tea to his lordship," I exclaimed bravely through gritted teeth.

My spine instantly shuddered when I felt a powerful gaze on me. That silver-haired vampire should kneel, but it seemed he wouldn't!

I should be glad that that vampire might inflict the wrath of Sir Rufus. However, part of me didn't want that to happen.

"There was an intruder earlier today in the Duke's manor."

After a stifflingly long time, I heard someone speak, his tone laced with an overwhelming authority that could make someone submit almost immediately. One could instantly discern a high-ranking noble just with their tone and aura. And this man, this was surely the Duke's aide, Sir Rufus Barrett!

No... that silver-haired maniac vampire should flee! I mean, he should...

I ground my teeth, feeling helpless, worrying about the vampire who wanted to kill me. I should let him be and try to save myself.

But why am I worrying about him now?

"Hey, didn't you hear us? It's Lord Rufus! Show some respect!" Again, I heard someone shout, which caused my body to tremble.

"Silence." I don't know what was occurring, but Sir Rufus intervened.

Just as ordered, the shack was shrouded in nothing but silence.

While not a single one of them spoke, my forehead and back broke out in sweats. It slowly dripped down from my forehead to the back of my hand.

It's fine, Lilou. You're prepared to die, anyway. I told myself.

Perhaps that vampire was right. I may be suicidal, as I've been comforting myself with death.

"No one has infiltrated the Duke's Mansion and left the manor alive." I heard Sir Rufus speak again after what felt like forever. I swallowed hard and clasped my hands tightly. That vampire would be executed, for sure! Serves him right!

I cheered inwardly. Yet, deep down, I know I wasn't as happy as I should be.

And before I knew it, I raised my head and hurriedly blurted out, "Milord, forgive this peasant, for I have committed a crime punishable by death. I had let hunger get the better of this peasant." I felt my heart sink upon hearing my own statements. I acted without thinking again, putting myself on death row automatically. "I deserve death," I whispered and trembled uncontrollably.

At the very end, I was, indeed, silly. Why would I have to try to save that vampire?

I hated myself for covering for him.

I stared blankly at the pair of grey eyes of Sir Rufus. I had only seen him from far away and I was surprised to see that he was extremely good-looking from this distance.

"What are you saying, peasant?" My shoulders shivered at his voice and it snapped me back from my trance. At the same time, I felt someone was staring at me menacingly.

"How silly to look at others in my presence," The silver-haired man muttered in annoyance. Instinctively, I moved my gaze back to him.

He was still sitting indifferently, disregarding the knights and the Duke's powerful aide presence. Did he have the slightest ounce of idea who oversees this land right now? I don't think so as his eyes were on me, glinting dangerously as if I did something unforgivable.

What did I do that displeased him? I was merely trying to save him and he was returning it with malice? Who was ungrateful between us now?

"My Lord, this man is no ordinary man. I could sense he is a vampire as well," said a knight as he leaned closer to Sir Rufus.

"Yes, this man is indeed, not an ordinary vampire." Sir Rufus nodded. His eyes, which bore the color of ash, glinted as he set them on the silver-haired vampire.

He should run away. No matter how capable he was, he would stand no chance against Sir Rufus!

Just as I looked away from Sir Rufus to the knight, I heard the silver-haired man speak. "Scram."

Huh? My mouth fell open at the audacity of this lunatic! Did he just say scram?! Can't he read the air?

Curious, I shifted my eyes back to him. He wasn't smiling like usual. For some reason, I couldn't recognize this vampire, who would always grin and smile unreasonably.

"Didn't you hear me?" There was not a trace of emotion in his voice as he repeated, "I said, scram. The next time I repeat it... I won't give you a chance to hear it, Rufus."

My mind buzzed, trying to make sense of this situation. Just where the hell did his audacity come from?! But what was more shocking has yet to come. I flinched when I glimpsed at Sir Rufus making movements, and to my surprised, he bent down, his fist across his chest, bowing!

"It really is you..." There was a touch of longing and relief in Sir Rufus's voice that anyone could feel. "I, Rufus Barrett, a humble servant of the Duke Samael La Crox, bowed to welcome your return, My Lord. I'm really glad to see you again, Your Grace."

And another wave of silence ensued.