

## The Vampire 65

### Chapter 65 65: Luxurious Treatment

Ollie's eyes were as wide as saucers while he followed after the beautiful Lady Ashlynn through the halls of the demon, no, Eldritch castle.

Harrod had corrected him several times on the journey and he was trying to change his own thoughts on the matter but it wasn't as easy as scrubbing away food stuck to a pot.

The thought instantly brought him back to Lady Ashlynn. Just a few days ago, they'd been up to their elbows in dirty pots or piles of freshly slaughtered venison in the Summer Villa. Now, she wasn't just the noblewoman who was supposed to be married to Owain Lothian, but she seemed to have a whole other identity as a powerful noble among the demons, er, eldritch!

"Um, your ladyship," Ollie said hesitantly. "Where are we going?" They'd already ascended several stone stairways and the twisting path they were taking made him feel like they'd entered one of the hand-shaped fortress's massive towers but he had no idea which one or what it might signify.

He'd heard of a baron who imprisoned his wayward children in a high tower, but surely they weren't planning to imprison him somewhere like that... right?

"I've had a room prepared for you," Ashlynn said with a smile. "It's just down the hall from mine. You're on the other side of the tower though," she admitted. "So you have to deal with facing the rising sun."

Ollie stumbled when he heard what she said. A room on the same floor as a noblewoman? What kind of thing was this?

"Here, take a look," Ashlynn said, opening the door with a childish grin of anticipation. At the moment, she felt much the same as she had when she surprised her little sister with a birthday gift and she eagerly watched Ollie's expression as she led him into his new room.

It wasn't as large or opulent as hers but the four-poster bed with a feather mattress and soft blankets was still a luxury beyond anything the kitchen boy had ever experienced. Combined with a personal room for washing, a large hearth, and a small writing desk, the room easily met the standards of a knight anywhere in the Kingdom of Gaal.

"This, this is for me?" Ollie said, turning around in disbelief.

"There's a change of clothes for you in the wardrobe," Ashlynn added, smiling in delight at Ollie's reaction. He'd suffered so much for helping her that she couldn't help herself from feeling anxious about he must resent her for upending his life.

She knew that a room and a wardrobe couldn't make up for tearing away from everything he knew but she hoped that it made the transition to life in the vale at least a little easier.

"I'm going to leave you here with Justus," she said, placing a hand on a stout, horned servant. "He'll serve as your personal attendant while you settle in. You should wash and change quickly though," she added. "You don't want to be late for dinner."

"Oh," Ollie said, deflating slightly. "Back to the kitchens then?"

"Only if you want to," Ashlynn said with a smile at his misunderstanding. "I'm sure that Georg wouldn't refuse the help. But Ollie," she said, stepping close and reaching up to put a hand on his shoulder.

"From now on, you're not just a kitchen boy. You're my friend," she emphasized. "You helped me more than once in the Summer Villa. Let me help you now. You don't have to decide what you want to do in the future just yet, you can take time," she suggested.

"But you've earned a reward for what you've done, so keep that in mind and think of what you want," she said before turning to leave a speechless Ollie alone with Justus.

"Is this real?" Ollie said, turning to look at the short, horned man.

"Our Seneschal is different from all of Lady Nyrielle's progeny," the servant said, a brilliant white grin showing from behind his bushy beard. "But in a good way. I'll fetch hot water for you so you can wash before dinner. Do you want a shave or are you trying to grow a beard of your own?"

"A beard?" Ollie asked, scratching his rough cheek. "No, wouldn't that make me look sloppy in front of her ladyship? I wouldn't dare!"

"As you wish," the short man said with a laugh. His new charge might be human but he seemed to be a decent enough fellow who truly respected the Seneschal. As long as that was true, there was no need to give the man trouble or report back any concerns to his superiors. That didn't mean he trusted the boy yet, but he was happy to give the young man time to show his true colors.

Elsewhere in the vast castle, Ashlynn prepared for what she hoped would be a dramatic turning point for the captives. She'd spent several hours both talking with Thane and practicing on her own for this moment and she believed that she could do what she planned.

Whether it would have the desired effect or not, however, remained to be seen.

In order to awe her guests for the evening, she'd prepared a special hall that had seen little use in the castle in recent years.

The ancient castle had stood for hundreds of years before Nyrielle's grandsire became a vampire and claimed the Vale of Mists for himself. Before that, it had been ruled by an Eldritch Lord from the Horned clan, and the lord before him had been a member of the Clan of the Great Claw.

It wasn't until Torbin that many of the newer areas of the castle were dug into the walls of the cliff itself, moving reception halls and formal dining into rooms underground where no daylight would ever enter.

Now, Ashlynn had one of the old halls prepared to host a formal dinner with her captives. Her footsteps echoed off the bare walls of the hall even though she was wearing soft-soled shoes. Normally, for a formal dinner, rich tapestries should be hung in the hall to help trap the warmth of the large hearths and deaden the sound.

When Ashlynn looked at the available tapestries, however, she'd found mostly scenes depicting glorious victories of battles fought against humans attacking the vale. Even the ones that lacked a human presence still displayed the strength and power of the local Eldritch clans. For what Ashlynn intended tonight, such tapestries would send entirely the wrong message, so she left the stone walls of the great hall bare.

A heavy oak table had been placed near one of the hearths for warmth but Ashlynn kept the table far enough away that it was still deep in shadow, particularly when an iron screen was placed in front of the flames to help radiate heat from the fire.

The sun was already setting and the hall should be brightly lit by torches and chandeliers overhead but she'd ordered that nothing be lit until she gave the command, allowing long shadows to stretch across the hall as the sun sank toward the western hills outside the windows.

With this, her stage had been set. Several servants waited just outside the hallway, ready to spring into action as soon as she gave the command. Commander Bassinger had also stationed a few of his most trusted men outside the doors, just in case any of Ashlynn's 'guests' reacted violently to what she was about to do.

She firmly believed that the protection was unnecessary but there was always the chance that he was right. If that was the case, especially if most of the captives turned hostile, then she would welcome the protection. The result, however, would be a one-sided slaughter that she sincerely hoped to avoid.