

## The Vampire 44

### Chapter 44 44: Turning The Tables

For a moment, Ashlynn struggled against Kaefin's attempts to drag her towards him. She kicked at his hands as she slid across the rumpled bed sheets, but Kaefin only took it as a game, leering at her and yanking harder.

Ashlynn tumbled across the beds and Kaefin leaped forward, reaching for her tunic like a falcon swooping on its prey. Still, Ashlynn fought back, knocking his hands away as he tore at the fabric of her tunic, snapping the laces of her bodice in his attempts to strip her bare.

The next moment, however, she planted her feet firmly on his bulging gut and shoved, kicking free of him and gaining enough space to scramble back to the nightstand. Quickly, she snatched the jug of wine from the nightstand and rounded on the knight, bringing the jug crashing into his face with all the strength that Thane had helped her to develop.

Kaefin's eyes rolled back in his head, the world spinning and his ears ringing with the force of the impact. Shards of the jug cut into his cheek and jowls, spilling blood onto the rumpled sheets and blankets when he fell heavily on the bed.

Ashlynn didn't wait for him to regather his senses before she struck out again, this time, with another bit of sorcery.

"Helpless. Afraid. Obey," she snapped, her emerald eyes glowing green as she imagined her power taking the form of Zedya's Mesmerizing Eyes. Compared to the vampire who could mesmerize an entire room full of people at once, Ashlynn's sorcery was still lacking, but for someone as feeble and weak-willed as Kaefin, combined with the pain and disorientation from being struck in the head, it was more than enough to bring him under her sway.

"You, who are you?" Kaefin stammered, unconsciously mimicking Ashlynn's earlier movements as he scrambled away from her until his back pressed up against one of the bed posts. "What are you?"

As soon as Kaefin put hands on her, Ashlynn had faced a decision. She could have fought back and escaped. She was certain that she was strong enough to resist him in the hallway and fast enough to outrun him. It would have brought her mission to an end, but escape wouldn't be impossible.

Instead, she allowed him to drag her here, outside of the hallway where she could use her sorcery on him without being seen by others.

"Kaefin," she said, snatching the dagger that had hung from Kaefin's belt and pressing the blade up against the terrified steward's throat. Her sorcery was strong enough to overwhelm his senses, leaving him too frightened to fight back but if she wanted to get answers out of him, she was afraid it wasn't enough.

"You're Owain's right-hand man. You will answer my questions," she commanded. "What happened to the real Ashlynn Blackwell? Tell me why Owain is parading around an imposter."

"She was poisoned by assassins," Kaefin said, his voice trembling and his eyes fixed to the blade in her hands. "The Marquis is hunting her killers," he said, his mind racing to figure out a way to escape this terrifying woman.

Suddenly, it occurred to him that she might be one of the assassins sent to kill the real Ashlynn Blackwell, that she didn't know until now that the first attempt had succeeded!

"I, I don't know anything about the assassins," he insisted, hoping she would believe him. "But, but if you let me live, I can be your spy for you. I can find out what the Marquis knows and tell you. I can be your inside man," he insisted.

"So you don't know the truth," Ashlynn said bitterly. It seemed like Kaefin was trusted enough to be let in on the scheme with the imposter but not enough to have been told about her mark of the witch or who actually tried to kill her the night of her wedding.

"What happened to Sir Tommin?" she asked fiercely, changing the topic. "Why isn't he here with Owain?"

"Tommin's a traitor," Kaefin said, a sour expression forming on his battered face even as the question confused him. Why would the assassin care about Tommin? But when he thought about her strange glowing eyes, even more pieces of the puzzle began to fall into place.

"He claimed to have had a vision of the Holy Lord of Light," Kaefin said quickly. "Tommin said he received a calling to serve the Church. Lord Owain knows that he's running though. He went straight to Lord Loman and the Inquisitor. It's you he's running from, isn't it? He's afraid of your powers."

"I'm the one asking questions," Ashlynn said, pouring more energy into her magic, her emerald eyes flashing with an eerie green glow as she tried to keep him under control. Already, she could feel him pushing back against her, fighting for a way to escape her grasp.

"Why did an Inquisitor come to Lothian in the first place?" Ashlynn asked sharply. "And why aren't there any clergy traveling with Lord Owain?"

"I, I don't know," the helpless steward said. "Lord Owain won't say. Only that he was only bringing people out here that he could trust, or..."

"Or what?" Ashlyn asked, pressing the dagger against his neck.

"Or people that he didn't care if he lost," Kaefin said quietly, suddenly wondering... if he died here, at this demon woman's hands, would Owain put him in the second category? Kaefin's palms were slick with sweat as he clutched the bedsheets, trying to think of a way out of this nightmare.

If he cried out, she could kill him before help arrived. His only hope, the only thing he could think would work, was to tell her everything she wanted to know and hope that she would leave him alive afterward. As long as she did that, he could tell Lord Owain everything and then they could turn the tables on this horrifying assassin.

Right now, he just had to keep talking and convince her that he was more valuable as a living pawn than a dead man. As long as he could do that, he could find a way to turn the tables and have his revenge for this humiliation!