

# Bara no Konrei

## The Vampires' Prelude

Von Flokati

### Kapitel 2: Rising

The funeral next morning passed for me as if I didn't belong to the world I was in. My thoughts went their own way and it made me worried, that even in mind, I could neither be with Mary's mother, nor with her sisters and friends. I didn't feel pity, or at least not strong enough to realise. The people threw some undefinable looks at me. Only the young master casted me a gentle smile. And just like yesterday, my heart started beating in a quicker rythm. I felt getting sick. I decided to hurry back to my room once Mary was at peace, because I wanted to avoid meeting him. I didn't want to give him more chances to discover more about me.

This is all I remember about Mary's funeral, absent in mind as I was. I can't even tell if her mother cried or not. I also escaped Kouji. I made a promise to myself, that I would visit Mary's grave the next day again in silence, so she would not feel disappointed in heaven about my behaviour. But this day I couldn't. I felt even more useless to the world than the day before. Locked in my room I was reading in the bible, when sleep creeped into my body so fast, that I was knocked out within seconds for not having slept much the night before. By the time I woke two hours later, I had a headache as if my head was about to burst. Touching my forehead, I felt it was sweaty. So was the rest of me.

I cursed. On the way to the lavatory some of the other sisters passed me and they looked as if the just had seen a ghost, namely me. A look in the mirror told me I really looked like one, my skin paler than it was anyway, empty eyes and sweat. I looked as I felt – miserable. I filled water in the basin I carried with me, took one of the towels and a little piece of soap. My room was also my bathroom. The danger to be caught naked was to risky. I could not allow anyone to see me. Having collected basin, towel and soap, I went back to my room to clean myself. Glad of meeting with no other nun and not being needed, as it seemed, I spent more time than usual for washing my body. Maybe to get rid of things I couldn't see or maybe the very things I saw. It didn't matter, in the end, I did not get rid of either.

Before Kouji had let me know love could cross borders like these, I was afraid of my shape everytime again. But on the other hand, I couldn't imagine being from the opposite sex, being a real woman. To be honest, I was fluttered when being told I was a beautiful nun. And no matter how big my sin was, it was part of my being and God must've know it. I believed, that if he was displeased with me, he wouldn't have made me live. I still try to believe it. Maybe it's foolish.

I dressed myself for the night and looked a last time in the mirror on my bedside

table. It took some moments to realise what I saw. I let out a toneless scream and backed away. For a second, I had seen myself with red eyes. I hardly dared to take another look, but I did, and found myself having the blue eyes I used to see. Relieved, I sighed. I guessed I must've been tricked by the tiredness, that still lingered in my muscles. That I was already having hallucinations ... yet, it made me worry. But to be honest, I didn't remember the incident a little later, as sleep had won its fight against me and I sank smoothly into darkness.

One thing I could not ban from my thoughts were Mary's dreams. They haunted me, although everything else had turned back to normal. I had visited her grave, just as promised, and I even came back to pray for her the day after.

I tried my best to ignore the young master and it was cruel to see him disappointed and suspicious because of my sudden coldness towards him, but I did not know how to handle it otherwise. I got hurt in this as well, I wished I wouldn't have to treat him like this. Of course I could not escape at every occasion and soon, he had discovered that the best chance to meet with me almost alone was waiting after sunday's prayer up in the church where I helped the old man climbing down the staircase. I hated him for knowing about it. But what could I say? We met there first, of course he knew I'd be there. The old man, on the contrary, was even happier having two constant visitors every sunday. He and the young master talked most of the time, I rather kept my mouth shut, but I watched them both very closely, espacially the young master. And everytime I grew uneasy, being aware of how unjust my behaviour was. I learned so many things about him. The young master had a good and caring heart and he proved not to be the meany little heartbreaker I thought he'd be. He also played the pipe organ very well, what must've been because of his piano lessons in his youth. I liked his palyng. I liked watching his hands tapping on the keys, I liked the look in his eyes, when he was absorbed into music and I even liked the smile he showed me, everytime he finished playing. But he seemed unhappy. His mouth was smiling, but his eyes were not. They beared sadness and then I felt sad as well. But he never accused me, never asked why, he just played wonderful pieces, as if he tried to express himself though the music. And I got lost so easily in its magic.

One sunday, the fourth after Mary's funeral, the old man was ill and the young master had volunteered to play for him instead. Great Sister Ann appreciated it. The only one worrying must've been me, but not because of the young master's skills. Should I go up there afterwards? I told myself no. What reason did I have to go there? The old man was ill, no one needed to be helped. So for once, I could do as Great Sister Ann wished and follow the regulary schedule. I did - and felt miserable. Every attempt to tell myself not to have a bad conscience was in vain. By the end of the day, I had decided I should apologize next sunday. It was enough to calm my conscience, that I would at least say I was sorry.

The evening of saturday before, I sat together with Sister Catherine in the church and wrote on a blackboard the numbers of the songs to be sung the next morning. As far as I remember, we had never talked more then had been necessary in all the saturday evenings we had spent together. She had been one of those who had first tried to persuade Great Sister Ann to send me away. She regarded me as I was disturbing the order. But I knew better, she was afraid, because she could not handle the way I was. Even after Mary's death, she claimed that I could have had something to do with it, because I had been the last who had seen the girl alive. Nobody really listened to her, for they were all to shocked to realise, but sometimes she had a talent to manipulate

people with words and hadn't she been the second mysterious death, I bet she would have succeeded to make people believe I'd be the guilty one, if she just could have gone on speaking against me. Looking back, I must say that by this time I had already been caught by the claws of darkness for sure and no one really could prevent the misery laying ahead of me. It wouldn't have made any difference at all with Sister Catherine dead and silent or alive and speaking against me, my path was leading me straight to the cross and into the open arms of my lord.

I left the church shortly before midnight and went back to the dormitories alone. Sister Catherine had wanted to stay a little longer to rewrite my blackboard, for she was sure nobody could read that terrible handwriting of me. I let her do as she pleased, I hated arguments.

I unlocked the door to my room and entered. Peaceful silence of the night. I enjoyed it. I took off my cornet and let my hair down. I was fond of its nice brown colour and its slightly curled tips.

I made myself ready to go to bed and fell into a heavy sleep almost immediately. It didn't take long until I believed laying awake in my bed and next to me was standing a man. He had long black hair and wore an elegant cape and blouse, but mostly I felt attracted to his eyes. The eyes of a devil. Dangerous and red like blood, but also so endlessly beautiful. I felt a wave of heat and excitement rushing through my body, I was unable to take my eyes off him. I got lost, his presence being my greatest pleasure. I reached to touch him. He just smiled a witty grin and then bared his teeth ... I woke startled.

Sweat on my forehead, trembling fingers and my body as cold as ice. I swallowed. I reached for a candle and lit a small light in my darkened room, that was only illuminated by a veiled moonlight. I sank back into my pillow. Who had been that man with the devil's eyes? Closing my eyes, I tried to remember every little detail of what had happened in that nightmare. Hopefully it had just been a nightmare. I tried to focus, but I hardly made any process. But then a stroke of panic hit me. I had known that dream. I had been told and now ... could it be possible that I was having the very same dream? Did it, by all coincidence, mean, I would be next? But then, I had never been told how that man looked like, nor could the man in my dream fly. Despite the fact that humans never ever could fly. And everyone had nightmares, there needn't to be connection.

I rubbed my eyes, then stared at the window. Closed, just as I left it. Again, I sighed. Of course I couldn't sleep anymore, so I rolled from one side to the other until daybreak. I got up with a headache and first washed my face with the water in the basin, that stood on my bedside table. I took a fresh robe from my wardrobe and dressed. As always I reached then for comb and mirror to pull my hair back up so it would fit in the cornet.

I exclaimed disbelievingly, letting the comb fall down and reaching for my hair with the hand that had been holding the comb before. My hair ... my beautiful brown hair wasn't only brown anymore. The lower half of it had become blond. I twirled it between my fingers, touched it – it was my hair. It had become blond over night. It appeared to be real, but ... how? I was already in disorder about the nightmare and now this? What for a cruel game was played with me? What was happening ...?

I had no more time to think about it, because I had to get ready for prayer. Inside, I was already hoping nobody would find a reason for me to take off the cornet. I didn't dare to imagine how the people would react at my new haircolour, not to mention that I would not be able to explain how this had happened. Fighting the upcoming

panic, I went down in the kitchen to get some bread and butter for breakfast. I ate it on the way to the church, so I could sit and pray alone for everyone's health and for help. God had always given me comfort, it was just natural I would turn to him first. Occupied with my own worries, I didn't realise someone was already waiting for me. The moment I entered the church's yard through the irongate, I heard footsteps advancing and with a look to the entrance, I saw the young master. I stopped abruptly, but he kept hurrying towards me and once he had reached me, he embraced me.

„Thank God, you're alive!“ he said and his voice revealed that he had been worrying very much about me, it seemed. I couldn't move a single bit, my body was simply frozen. After what seemed an eternity to me, he let go and looked rather embarrassed now. I looked back, but with demanding eyes.

„I'm sorry.“ he said. „It's just ... I don't know how to say, but I ... I dreamed you died. It seemed so real.“

I stared at him, my look getting menacing.

„I saw a man with red eyes, he was next to you. He looked like the devil and he – Mana?“

I felt a dizzy spell all of a sudden. I had closed my eyes and laid my hand on my forehead, shivering. The young master was holding me again. Who would be surprised if I was feeling sick when being told this? As for my part, I wasn't.

„Mana ... are you alright?“ The young master settled in front of me, his hands on my shoulders. In his beautiful eyes was fear I could drop dead every second. I contributed him with a pitiful smile, nodding. I simply had to smile, no matter how feeble it was. He had called me by my name for the first time.

He smiled back, a smile I had never seen before, although he smiled so often to me. There was something else in his eyes I was unable to grasp, but it affected me. He had reached my heart, to say the truth. Yet at that time, I was too oblivious to understand it.

The sound of someone clearing his throat loudly made us both jump apart. It was the old man.

„God, never give me such a heartattack again in my life!“ the young master complained.

„You're young, sir, you won't have a heartattack.“ the old man answered, having an undefinable look in his eyes. „Did he treat you right, Mana?“

„Oh .. oh yes. I'm fine.“

It was then when I realised how odd it must've looked, as the old man had seen the young master and me together. He thought he could have wanted to lay hands on me.

„You look so pale, Mana ... are you really sure?“

„Really, it's nothing.“ I insisted. I admitted, that probably I could not fool the old man with my indifferent face, I was still shivering lightly and I surely had no healthy skin colour right now. I reached in one of the pockets in my skirt and pulled out the keys for the wooden entrance door of the church but I stopped once I had put the key in the hole.

„What?“ the young master asked.

„..... nothing.“ I opened the door and let us three enter. The door had been unlocked. Had Sister Catherine really forgotten about it? I couldn't imagine, she was picky and took every chance she got to show us how much attention she paid to the rules. The bad feeling in my stomach grew constantly bigger. But before entering the heart of the church, the young master and I helped the old man to climb up the stairs. Every

step upwards felt like additional weight on my whole body. Once we had reached the small podium, where the pipe organ was, I lead the old man to the bench and sat down with him, telling him which songs had been chosen for today. The young master just watched us. But he was restless. After some moments, I heard him walking up and down behind us. I couldn't stand the sounds of his walking, so I got up to talk to him.

„Sir, please. I'm not going to die right away.“ I whispered to him, not wanting to be overheard. „You probably had just a nightmare, that happens to everyone.“

„I know, but ... Hell, it seemed so real! I was worried ...“

„Don't worry about me, please.“

He hesitated, then: „Will you promise to be fine?“

„I promise.“ I answered, not knowing if I really could keep it. Yet the young master calmed down for the moment.

„Holy Father in Heaven ...“ I heard the voice of the old man say shockedly and turned around. He was standing next to the pipe organ on the railing and looking down to the altar. The young master and I came over to him to have a look ourself.

By what I saw, I clapped my hand on my mouth. The young master's eyes widened disbelievingly, just as terrified as the old man looked.

She was not laying there as Mary did in her bed, looking peacefully as if she was sleeping. She was laying there on her stomach on the altar, arms hanging lifelessly from its sides. Her skin wore the colour of death and her robe was drenched with the red liquid, that once had run through her veins. Her cornet had been taken off and strands of her black hair glued on her face. She looked like a mistreated doll of a mischievous child.

Once I had overcome the first shock of the scenary hell had confronted me with, I attempted to run down to her, but the young master grapped my arm and held me back. I struggled with him to free myself in vain, his grip was stronger than mine.

„Mana, you can't do anything anymore, she's dead!“ he said in sharp tone. I also knew for sure that she was dead, but bearing stubbornly hope until a doctor would have really confirmed it, I refused to believe it.

„Mana, please, stop!“ the young master called to me. I was still fighting to get free. The old man could just watch the fight and slowly but surely my powers left me. The young master, realising the struggle was over, loosened his grip and let me sank slowly on the ground. Head on my knees, I didn't know what to think anymore, I just heard the young master say the old man should watch me, he'd go fetch someone, but who, I had not understood. Then, he lifted my chin with his hand gently, so I had to face him.

„Stay here until I return.“ His voice was so soft now. I nodded feebly. „I'll be back in no time.“

The young master got up and left, my eyes following him until he was out of sight and even then, I kept looking at the little corridor that lead to the stairs.

I waited. For sister Catherine, as cruel as she must've died, I could not feel any compassion or pity. For every other person, I was sure, I would have already spoken a prayer, but somehow ... I did not think about it. I just sat on the ground, back to wall, gazing nowhere with empty eyes and waiting. My mouth was dry, I didn't want to talk. The old man didn't want to, either, it seemed, but he was mumbling words, but I didn't catch anything of it. Every now and then, my eyes wandered back to the corridor. How much time had passed since he had gone? It couldn't have been so long, but for me time ticked away incredibly slow. My headache returned and sleep wanted to take power over me as well and I was only too tempted to give in, getting carried away by

nice dream, far away from where reality began. At first, I didn't even realise the loud voices crying and the feet trampling towards the building. Just as passive as I had been during the funeral, I kept waiting until someone would tell me to raise, go to wherever I was supposed to go or do whatever I should do.

It was another sister, who came to us in the end. The young master had not kept his promise, he had said he'd come. Sourly, I got to my feet again and advanced the railing one more time to look at what was happening down there. Sister Catherine had already been removed from the altar and was laying next to it, a white cloth drawn over her body. I recognized Great Sister Ann, who gave instructions, trying to get hold of the situation. People were buzzing around the building, shouting, begging, praying. I saw the young master down there as well. On his shoulder lent a woman, from who I concluded it might be sister Catherine's sister, because she had the same features in her face and she was sobbing desperately. He had laid an arm around her, comforting. My grip on the railing tightened, my eyes narrowed. I turned on my heels, following the sister and the old man downstairs and out of church. Once we were out, upset people incircled us, searching for certainty and God's protection. They reached for my fellow sister and me and I found myself half-struggling with the people – they didn't see I was just a human, too, after all. Everytime I withdrew my hand from one, it got caught by another. Suddenly, I panicked. Not despite the fact that I hated crowds and had paranoia of it. But because the thought of my hair had jumped into my mind from nowhere and I didn't even dare to think about it if someone got hold of my cornet. I heard myself yelling that they should let go of me, feverishly trying to push them away. I had no control anymore, panic was responsible for my actions and I almost hit an old woman in her face and those who had seen it, stepped back, casting irritated looks at me, almost as if they believed I had gone insane.

„Stop it!“ someone called from behind me. „Let go of her!“

Whoever called, I didn't believe it would help. And yet a few did as they had been told, but three or four still clinged to me. „STOP IT!“

The young master seized one man by the collar of his jacket and pulled him away, then freed my arm that was held painfully by the fat and fleshy hand of a woman, who was twice as big as I was. I was lifted up from the ground by the young master and he carried me, arms around my waist and chest to chest. Eyes closed, I clenched my fingers in his shoulders for support, letting it happen, only to get away, away from those madmans. My heart was racing, hot tears gathering in my eyes, it had been too much. That dream, the young master had apparently shared, the change of my hair, sister Catherine's death, the crowd – I would have appreciated it to pass out. But unfortunately, I did not.

I was carried to the house of the local council. Even after the young master had set my feet back to the ground, I could not bring myself to let go of him, he was the only one in reach, the only one who did not treat me like some sort of messiah. He did not push me away, on the contrary, he gently put his arm around me as we sat down on a bench and soon my head was also resting on his shoulder.

„I'm sorry.“ he whispered gently. „I should have come with you in the first place.“

Again a lonely tear rolled down my cheek, drying away as it reached the fabric of his jacket.

„Shall I take off your cornet?“ he asked and even though I knew, he just said it because he wanted to make sure I was comfortable, he had hit a nerve again and more tears found their way to the surface. I didn't sob or anything, I sat there probably like a statue, but yet, I was crying. The young master must've understood that I would not

want my cornet to be taken off and started caressing my shoulder with his thumb. How long we sat there, I cannot tell. But his presence calmed me and made me feel safer.

Later, Great Sister Ann, the mayor and the sheriff from the police station entered. Reflexingly, I lifted my head from the young master's shoulder, facing them as they advanced us.

„I'm sorry to tell you, sister Mana, but we have to interrogate you again.“ the sheriff said. „I've been told you and the murdered had been together yesterday to choose the songs for today's prayer?“

„Yes.“ I answered with an hardly audible voice.

„You must still be in shock, but I have to. I'm sure you understand?“

„Yes, I do.“

„Mana? Is it really ok for you?“ the young master interfered. I nodded to him with a shy smile on my lips, then got up and followed the others in the next room, where I had already been after Mary's death. Except a table and some wooden chairs and three small windows, there was nothing else in the room. An empty and cold chamber, just perfect for interrogations.

I was told to take a seat and I did, while all others kept standing. I already wished it was over.

„Sister, did you realise anything strange, when you were in church with her yesterday night?“ the sheriff started.

„No, it was just as usual.“

„Did you talk to her?“

„We hardly talked to each other. Just the necessary.“

„Weren't you on good terms?“

„We had differences ever since I arrived here.“

„I see. True?“ he addressed Great Sister Ann.

„As far as I can tell, Catherine and Mana had always had different attitudes and views. I don't say either was bad. They've fulfilled their tasks always as God pleased.“

„Fine then.“ he turned back to me. „Why didn't you leave church together?“

„I left around midnight I guess. Sister Catherine wanted to stay longer.“

He turned up his nose. „Did she say why?“

I hesitated. „She wanted to pray.“

„In the middle of the night?“ the mayor asked, sounding as if he didn't a word of what I answered. Well, he was right, but I wouldn't have let him know she had critisized my handwriting.

„Does a nun need a reason to pray?“ I replied.

„..... No.“ He turned, and walked a little. „It's just a bit funny, don't you think, sister?“ I kept silent. I knew exactly what he was going to suggest.

„The young girl drops dead without a warning and you're the last who has seen her alive. Now a sister of yours is found dead in church, brutally killed. And again, you were the last one who had seen her alive.“

„It could be coincidence.“ Great Sister Ann objected. „I don't believe sister Mana could have done this.“

„How did she die?“ I asked, relieved that Great Sister Ann did not join in the mayor's assumptions.

„Broken neck. But, just like the young girl, she had those two small wounds. So it's likely the murderer is the same.“ the sheriff provided. „Only someone powerful could have archieved that.“

„There you go. Sister Mana would not have been able to.“

„Yeah, yeah, you're right.“ the mayor quickly said. „I didn't want to charge her.“

My inners clinched. If he knew I was just as capable of it as he was ... it made me nervous, although I had done nothing wrong. My secret seemed to become an even bigger burden than it was anyway.

„I guess that has been all for now?“ Great Sister Ann tried to finish the interrogation.

„Yes. Thank you for your co-operation.“ the sheriff thanked me.

„I've just done my duty.“

Slowly I got up from my chair and the mayor and the sheriff left the chamber. Great Sister Ann did not. I realised, she wanted to say something of which she didn't like the other two to hear. So I waited as well until they were out of sight. She sighed.

„Mana,“ she began and her voice was heavy. „I beg you to be honest.“

„I will.“

She paused, apparently weighing the words she was going to use. „Don't bring yourself in any more trouble. You've heard it. The mayor already suspects you.“

„I know. But I swear to God, I have nothing to do with the deaths.“

Great Sister Ann sighed again, then came over to me with a mild smile on her lips, yet her eyes looked at me sternly. „Don't give them a reason to harm you. Raging humans don't make any differences if it comes down to revenge.“

„Thank you. God bless you. I will watch my step.“

„Being close to the young master could be such a reason, sister Mana.“

My mouth opened a little in surprise. Great Sister Ann continued.

„I don't want to accuse you for anything.“ She laid her hands on my shoulders, looking directly in my eyes with her ice-blue ones. „You are a nun. God is the only one you chose to love.“

„I know.“

She took my face in her hands, apparently pleased. „You've always been reasonable.“ Then she turned on her heels and opened the door to leave. Although I only saw her back, I know she didn't cast the young master the same look she had just showed towards me. The young master had waited for me and entered the room as Great Sister Ann left. Of course this didn't do her suspicion any good. He looked very puzzled to me and I was still standing there, motionless, with my head so full of confusion, that I didn't know to do. Being told to stay away from the young master because it would prevent me from getting pushed into the light of murderer was one thing, but what really made me feeling sick was that it contradicted what I wanted. God gave me comfort, but he never could put an arm around me.

„Mana ...? Shall we go?“ the young master asked carefully, guessing my thoughts weren't here in the small chamber.

„You will go without me.“

Now he was puzzled even more. Of course, it hadn't been the first time that I rejected him, but my voice made the difference. Toneless, monotonous, cold. I had never spoken to him that way. Of course I wasn't indifferent to this in the least, but what choices did I have? Being human includes hoping to make the best out of something bad or turn it into something good. But it doesn't always work. Humans are unpredictable, so are their actions and so are their successes. If I had known it wouldn't help me, I might have given up resistance, had thrown myself into his arms and maybe shamelessly loved him until someone got to know of it. But the belief this tragedy would end for the better sooner or later made me struggle and took all my spirits.



„Mana, I think it's better if someone accompanies you ...“ he tried it again.  
„No. I'm fine on my own.“ I would not allow him to have a chance in this.

One night, Kouji has told me how much my words had hurt him back then. I knew it myself, but words were the only protection I had left. Sharp knives, mercilessly hitting where it had the most painful effect. For a brief moment, I had even thought of I was being given a favor. He wouldn't discover more about me and I had a reason to maintain a certain distance, what more could I have asked for? ... That's what reason made me think. But part of the human misery is also the natural circumstance, that we are not only lead by reason. We all have a soul and a heart, providing us with a conscience and emotions, fighting endlessly with reason until we die. And reason is the only thing that survives. Death is a fact. Even if your family and friends feel sorrow and miss you, for you only death remains a an unescapable certainty.

I, naturally, did not know my death lingered right behind me, just waiting for the best opportunity to rip life out of me. And even if I rejected Kouji that day in the chamber after sister Catherine's death, I think different about it now ... I should have let him hold and kiss me as long as we could feel the warmth of vivid lips.

„Mana ...? What's wrong?“ the young master tried a third time and while he asked me, he approached me.

„Nothing.“ I told him, just as cold as before.

„Nothing!“ he exclaimed. „Do you think I'm a fool? Nothing? After what has happened this morning? Never.“

For a while, neither of us said a word. Silence hovered between us and its pressure got heavier every second it continued.

„..... I can't meet with you anymore.“ I spoke to him honestly. His features relaxed a little, now it was being said.

„Did they say why?“ I could tell he was angry. Angry with whom I wasn't really sure about.

„Sir, I'm a nun. I cannot meet with young men just as I please. I made a vow, I'm sure you're aware of it.“

„I am.“ the young master's voice was still angry, but also bitter and sad. „I've just wanted to make sure you're fine. And from what I can tell, this affects you a great deal. You're just perfect in restoring yourself a stoic appearance.“

„Maybe I am.“

„Well then, are you still saying you're fine on your own?“

„I do.“

„You are like a stubborn kid.“

He was right. I could admit I liked to go with him. The young master continued giving me some kind of a lecture.

„Why should it be wrong, if I just walked beside you, until you reach your room, so I know you won't be bothered on the way home?“

I sighed. „Because they see us together. Haven't you noticed the look in the eyes of the old man?“ Now it was his turn to keep silent. „It wouldn't take long until there were rumours.“

The young master started walking up and down. As far as I remebered, he always did walking when something worried or upset him.

„You're right ... it's just ...“

„Yes?“

He faced me again, came over to me and reached out to stroke my cheek. Being surprised, I retreated, but he followed my move and so his hand was still resting gently on my skin. „I say it again, I only want to know you're fine. I'm very well aware of whom you have promised to serve all your life.“

I nodded. He had half-confessed his feelings for me, but I tried my best not to react too much. Yet it had melted down the coldness I had shown to him since he had entered.

„I don't want to see you in trouble, either. But being with me will inevitably result in trouble, so I want you to stay away.“

The young master didn't answer with words, he responded with his body, pulling me and a soft embrace. I let it happen once more, I wasn't able to resist the warmth.

„They suspect you, don't they?“

„You shouldn't do that.“ I said, maybe it was a try to make him stop – and me. And of course, I wanted to avoid the subject. If I told him, he might want to help me. „And it's not your business to bother about me being suspected or not. Please ...“

„I can't change your mind.“ He let go of me and his voice had a final tone.

„Understand it, please ... I do not want to be a reason for you to get charged as well. It's not that they had any proves. A mere suspect.“

„Will they find proves?“

I shook my head slowly, eyes closed. „No. My conscience is clear.“ Inwardly, I thought different. Great Sister Ann was right. As long as the murderer kept on killing so carefully without any traces remaining, they will seek for another scapegoat they could condemn instead. Might as well be me.

„Well then ... I guess I'll leave you be.“

„I thank you for your care. God bless your good heart.“

The young master smiled weakly, then left the room. I sighed heavily.