

Beauty and the Immortal: It started with a dig

Chapter 21 - Blood and Boundaries

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12

Mallory stood outside Hadeon Van Doren's chamber, tray in hand, holding a glass of blood. She suppressed the urge to question where the blood came from. After all, ignorance was bliss.

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With cautious steps, Mallory carefully entered the vast room, covered in darkness as the curtains concealed the windows. Placing the tray on the nearby surface, she made her way to the windows. She then pulled the curtains apart, letting the sunlight stream through the window and illuminate the figure sleeping on the bed.

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Wasn't sunlight supposed to harm vampires? Mallory asked in her mind. At least, that is what people said during Hallow.

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She carried the tray to the bedside and set it down. Her gaze lingered on Hadeon, who slept in bliss and without a worry in the world. Why would he, when he was the master of stress giver, not its victim. The man turned people into his victims of torture.

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Mallory couldn't forget the memory of how this scheming vampire had duped her into signing that contract. Unable to resist, and in a moment of rebellion, she found herself leaning closer to Hadeon, her hands inching towards his neck as if tempted to give it a good squeeze.

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But then, to her horror, Hadeon's eyes snapped open, fixing directly at her, leaving her frozen in place.

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"What monkey business are you getting into this early in the morning?" His brilliant gold eyes narrowed at her.

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Hoping to snuff you with my hands! Mallory retorted in her mind, while she watched Hadeon subtly narrow his eyes. She offered him a sheepish smile and mustered,

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"I was, ah, going to fix your hair."

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"Talk about being creepy first thing in the morning. I know you're my number one admirer, but this is a bit over the top, even for you," Hadeon's tone dripped with dry amusement. His gaze bore into Mallory's, and for a moment, she felt like a bug under a magnifying glass.

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"..." You and your underlings are the one's who are creepy! Mallory silently yelled at him. As Hadeon's gaze lingered on her, she could bet she was almost able to hear the crickets chirping in the awkward silence that followed.

"Something smells exquisite this morning," Hadeon murmured. Mallory remembered she had brought him a glass of blood so that he could have the strength to annoy her more, she sarcastically thought to herself.

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"Yes, Master Hades. Delicious blood of an innocent soul just to your liking, I believe," Mallory offered him a fake polite smile. She pulled her hands away and said, "Let me gi—"

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But as Mallory reached for the glass of blood, Hadeon swiftly seized her wrist, pulling her onto the bed. Her eyes widened in alarm as she found herself at the mercy of the vampire, his golden gaze gleaming with mischief, who hovered above her.

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"Ah, fresh and warm from the source," Hadeon purred, enjoying Mallory's growing unease.

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Mallory stuttered, grasping for any excuse. "Th-there's a much tastier option waiting for you in the glass," she managed. She was too young to die!

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"Why settle for second best when the real feast is right here?" Hadeon's grin widened, his fangs glinting dangerously.

5

As he leaned in, Mallory panicked, and she rolled off the bed with the blanket in a clumsy escape attempt, hitting the ground like a sack of potatoes. She quickly gathered the blanket all around her and continued to sit in the same position, as if a mere quilt could save her from turning into a luxury breakfast.

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"What are you doing, monkey?" Hadeon questioned, and a sly smile danced on his lips as he watched Mallory's attempt to escape. As he got out of bed, it lightly creaked, which only made her clutch the blanket tighter. "Trying to be part of the circus for my personal entertainment?"

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"Master Hades, I think it's time we establish some ground rules," Mallory started, her voice muffled from under the safety of the blanket. Her heart raced with the memory of almost turning into his breakfast. "For instance, I'm more than happy to serve you, but biting is strictly off-limits! You see, when I was little, the physcian had diagnosed me with a severe shortage of blood. It's practically a medical condition!"

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"Hm." Mallory heard Hadeon hum, and his footsteps padding on the ground. "Is that your way of saying you need to drink blood? Looks like someone's eager to broaden their food choices."

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How did he jump to that conclusion?! Mallory was flabbergasted. She retorted, "I don't want to drink any blood! I am a human! I eat normal food."

"Tsk, picky child," Hadeon remarked before a smug smile appeared as he noticed Mallory clinging to the blanket. "You know, if you want to smell me, all you have to do is

ask. There is no need to hug my blanket as if you cannot live without it. I know I am irresistible, but we need some boundaries here."

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Mallory gritted her teeth and released her grip on the blanket before Hadeon would make anymore comments, as if she were obsessed with his narcissistic self. Standing up, she caught him picking up the glass and drinking the blood with one tilt of the glass. He then extended the empty glass towards her, his gaze fixed on her. She cautiously approached him, reaching out to accept the glass from his outstretched hand.

She grabbed the glass and made a swift retreat, ready to bolt before Hadeon could decide he needed a second helping for breakfast. "I'll, uh, go and get some work done then," she informed him, trying to sound casual.

2

But Hadeon cocked his head, a quizzical expression on his face. "You will stay right here. Your work is with me," he remarked casually, his tone tinged with amusement. "Besides, I have a question for you. When you opened my coffin, what were you looking for in the graveyard, apart from dirtying my coffin space?"

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Mallory pursed her lips, contemplating her response. "My grandmother mentioned something about an artifact buried there... A powerful weapon of sorts," she finally replied, her tone cautious.

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"How exciting! An artifact with power," Hadeon mused, his expression turning serious. "It does seem peculiar that my coffin was opened again behind a church, particularly since I recall getting in the grave elsewhere. A visit is needed."

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"The graveyard?" Mallory questioned with a frown.

"Always with the graveyard. You must have been a grave keeper or a coffin maker in your past life," Hadeon tutted her. "You are right, though."

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They were interrupted by a knock, and Hadeon granted permission to enter the room. Ivy soon appeared inside the room with an envelope, prompting Mallory to realize that

she hadn't sought permission before entering Hadeon's room. Her eyes widened slightly as they turned to him, only to find his lips twisted into a smile.

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"I have come to realise that you haven't greeted my morning to be good since you entered. Rudeness has no bounds, does it?" Hadeon questioned. Yet Mallory noticed how he didn't seem angry, but his eyes twinkled as if his mind was already scheming on how to make her already miserable life worse.

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"I didn't know you needed my wish when your day shines as brilliantly as you," Mallory nervously smiled.

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"Ah, the rays of your adoration are blinding me. Though I do enjoy some sprinkle of flattery in the morning," Hadeon hummed with one corner of his lips pulling up. "But remember, too much flattery can make one suspicious."

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"..." Did he think she was really complimenting him?!

"Lord Hadeon," the maid offered a deep bow before raising her head. "You have a letter from Lady Chevaliar."

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Hadeon took the letter and tore opened it to read it. He remarked,

"It seems word has already spread about my return. Prepare the carriage," he instructed. Then, casting a glance at Mallory, he added, "We shall be having lunch with some of my old *acquaintances*."

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More vampires? Mallory dreaded by the thought of it. How many were there?! She highly doubted Hadeon had human friends. Even if he did, they would have been one of the oldest residents in the graves. The name of the lady somewhat sounded familiar, she thought to herself.

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"Yes, Lord Hadeon," Ivy responded brightly compared to the dark maroon walls they were surrounded in. The maid turned and swiftly left.

Mallory was still preoccupied by her thoughts about the number of vampires walking around her, which might have gone unnoticed until now. That was until her attention was suddenly drawn to Hadeon. His slender fingers had begun to undo the buttons of his shirt.

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Her breath was caught in her throat when he removed his shirt, unveiling the sculpted contours of his broad shoulders and well-defined muscles, where his upper body tapered into his trousers. His arms were toned, and inked, but one moment it was there, then it was gone. With his golden eyes staring at her like a hawk and his hair spread on his shoulders, the man ozzed raw masculinity.

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"Are you waiting to bathe me with hot water or..." Hadeon teased her, dropping the shirt to the ground that he had balanced with one of his fingers.

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