

27 Numbers from Hell 12

As Mallory's footsteps faded down the hall, the vampiress remarked, 1

"Humans are always so interesting. Her thoughts are as delightfully chaotic as her actions in the past. It's just a shame that I can't decipher you yet as I can her." 13

Hadeon's laughter resonated with a silken darkness. "Indeed, what fun would it be if you could read me?" He then arched an eyebrow, clicking before he said, "Still testing to see if you can read my mind. You haven't changed. Always prying—scarcely the demure lady one might expect." 13

Being one of the original pureblooded vampires, Rose Chevalier was bestowed with the ability to read minds, which only failed with Hadeon Van Doren. Her smile now held the grace of centuries as she responded, 4

"Just a harmless little attempt. But I must admit, I'm rather surprised to find you've been in Riddleford all this while." 2

Hadeon licked his lips contemplatively before speaking. "Not continuously. Someone disturbed

my resting place, and something else was moved to where I was. Tell me, Rose, have you heard about any artefacts of considerable power? Something that might currently be in the king's keeping?" 12

"If you mean the Hellbinding Grimoire, the king possesses it," Lady Rose let him know. Hadeon rolled his eyes, clearly unimpressed as it wasn't what he was looking for. 7

"That's what Royce was babbling about?" Hadeon let out a laugh that echoed around the room, its tone laced with dark amusement. He shook his head, a wry smile playing on his lips. "I should arrange an extra molten bath for him in Hell. Truly, these turned vampires seem to not know that original purebloods are not bound by mere pieces of paper. We should pay the king a visit." 13

Lady Rose shook her head at the thought that Hadeon had only woken up and was craving drama with violence. She murmured, "Leave me out of it." 14

"Hmm," Hadeon drawled, his gaze lingering thoughtfully on the vampiress. "Out of the first four originals, you always did play the gentlest. A black sheep." 10

"Talking about sheep, you should be careful with that one, Hades," Lady Rose cautioned lightly, her eyes darting at the door through which Mallory had exited the room. "She isn't easy to tame." 15

"I've always had a taste for the untamed," Hadeon remarked with a sly smile. "If you ask me, we're getting along perfectly well." 19

Outside the room and in one of the corridors of the Chevalier Manor, Mallory walked. She caught a couple of paintings, which were rather interesting. Not because it was the lady's portraits like Hadeon, but because they were angelic scenes, as if to give a glimpse of heaven.

"It barely feels like I am in a vampire's manor," Mallory muttered in disbelief. 1

"Lady Rose made sure that the manor looked as welcoming as possible for the humans," came a voice from one end of the corridor. "She likes to maintain peace around here."

Mallory's head whipped to the side, and she caught sight of a man in his mid-twenties. He had red eyes, his expression blank. Seeing a vampire there, she searched for words before blurting them out.

"Tooth extractor Master Hades!" 39

"What?"

The vampire fixed his gaze on her, his voice flat, his expression blank, despite the youthful appearance granted by his tousled, dirty blond hair. After a pause, realisation seemed to dawn on him. "You won't be harmed here," he assured her. "My mistress and your master are allies. It's an unspoken rule among us—servants of pureblood vampires do not harm one another, not unless explicitly commanded. And none dare cross a master as infamous as yours." 1

Mallory's shoulders relaxed and the man slowly approached her. She introduced herself, "I am Mallory—"

"We have heard about you," the man responded, and Mallory realised she was a world-famous murderer even in the house of a pureblood. "Your slap echoed all across the hall last year and during tea time. The humans wondered who you were going to slap next." 24

"..." Her reputation had plummeted far into the ground, thought Mallory to herself. More than George's ill manners, it was her slap that had turned into talk of town. 1

Mallory grimaced inwardly. *So much for keeping*

a low profile, she thought to herself, my reputation has dug itself a new home—six feet under. 4

"I'm Wallace Jones, at the service of Lady Rose Chevalier II," the man announced with a formal bow, suggesting an almost ceremonial pride in his position. As he straightened up, Mallory's gaze was drawn to his eyes. 5

"Your eyes are light red. Do they turn golden too?" she inquired with curiosity.

"No," came the brisk response from Wallace.

"Golden eyes are the mark of the purebloods. My lighter shade indicates my past as a human. But there are different shades of red in the vampire hierarchy. The darker the shade, the stronger the vampire."

"How interesting," Mallory murmured, slightly fascinated by this fact, which she had never heard about before. "So... since how long have you been serving Lady Rose?"

"Must be around seven—" Seven years? Seventy years? "—centuries," Wallace responded. 14

"That's a lot of years..." Compared to the people around her now, she was a chick in the egg! No wonder it was hard to outrun Hadeon, who had a

minimum of seven centuries of experience, along knowing where to press one's button of annoyance. 7

"Come this way. The back garden might interest you," Wallace suggested before beginning to walk. Mallory quietly followed him, looking at the white walls that made the room bright, unlike the Van Doren's Castle, which was dark and gloomy. 9

When they stepped out, Mallory asked in a lowered voice, "Were you made to sign with your blood too?" 1

"I have been sired to Lady Rose," Wallace answered, and noticing Mallory blink as if it went above her head, he added, "She personally turned me into a vampire."

"I see," Mallory murmured. Entering the garden, she found it to be beautiful and there was a maze not far from where they were. She was tempted to walk through it, but at the same time, she was worried about getting lost. She asked him,

"Do you know who put Master Hades inside the coffin?" Knowing Hadeon would spin another absurd and woeful tale, she decided to get the

truth from someone else.

"Himself." 5

"Himself?" Mallory repeated. 7

"Lord Hadeon chose to take a nap and voluntarily stepped in the coffin," Wallace answered. 9

Mallory should have guessed that, considering this was Hadeon in question, only he would willingly do something like that. Did he get bored of annoying and torturing people and decided to take a break? 10

The more she spent time with Hadeon or learned about him, the weirder he turned out to be.

Mallory's curiosity deepened as she processed the implications of Wallace's words. "You mentioned Lady Rose Chevalier II earlier," she said, eager to understand more about the cryptic title. "Was there an ancestor with the same name?" 4

Wallace seemed unsure for a moment. "No, the two isn't a generational marker," he clarified, sensing her confusion. "It's a designation from Hell." 6

Intrigued, Mallory asked, "What exactly does the

number signify?"

Without changing his expression, Wallace educated her, "It indicates the sequence in which the pureblooded vampires were created. Lady Rose was made second, while Lord Hadeon was the very first one." 16

Mallory's feet paused.

She took a moment to digest the information that Wallace had just shared with her. She remembered how Hadeon had claimed that he was made by the Devil himself, but she hadn't considered that there was a register number for the pureblooded vampires made. 2

It was known that when something new was made, it was never perfect and was in its raw state, which needed to be shaped after practice. And this here involved the devil. 8

Hadeon Van Doren I. He was literally the first pureblooded vampire or vampire made. 19

