

31 Another death 10

Music Recommendation: La Valse des monstres
- Lavinia Meijer 1

—
"EEK!" George shrieked as one of Mallory's knives soared dangerously close, ripping through the fabric perilously close to the centre of his pants. 15

Mallory couldn't help but internally chuckle at George's rapidly shifting emotions, from panic to sheer fury, all while trying to struggle to keep his composure under Hadeon's scrutinising gaze. 7

"It seems our knife supply is running low. Georgie, would you be a dear and pick them all up," Hadeon ordered in a nonchalant tone, while George looked like he had gone deaf for a moment. "Off you go now," he added with a charming smile. 8

After hastily collecting all the knives, George breathed a sigh of relief as Hadeon dismissed him with a wave. Mallory was ready to follow suit when the vampire stopped her with a simple word.

"Monkey." 1

Caught off guard by the unfamiliar nickname, George halted in his tracks. Hadeon, sensing the confusion, arched an eyebrow and questioned, "Is 'monkey' your name?" 15

"I... I don't know," George stammered, his uncertainty obvious as he tried not to upset this bloodthirsty creature, who could drain his body like a desert. 2

Hadeon rolled his eyes and remarked,

"Get out of here before I decide to hang you upside down on the tree to test it. Wait," he said, stopping the human. "Although you do appear quite charming, shaving your head would enhance your appearance. You're practically giving off circus joker vibes. And thanks to Mallory, you've already got that lovely shade of red on your nose. So, consider it a favor from me. I've already got Barnby on standby to help with the makeover. Aren't you lucky?" 9

This time it was Mallory, who coughed and cleared her throat to hide her snicker. The man's arrogance, once his defining trait, now lay in ruins, stripped of both status and charm. 5

George stood in stunned silence, his gaze fixated

on Hadeon's flowing black locks, a stark reminder of the patch of his own once-luscious hair that was now missing, as if someone had haphazardly grazed a garden. With a nod that resembled a broken bobblehead, he shuffled away from the garden. 1

"You're practically my neighbour, monkey. It appears that you relished your punishment a bit too much. Maybe I should reserve a grave for you right next to mine," Hadeon remarked, his smirk stretching wider as his golden eyes twinkled with amusement. 3

Why did he want to make her afterlife miserable too?! 5

"I was simply wrapping up my punishment," Mallory retorted, refusing to let Hadeon have the satisfaction of being right. Then she added in suspicion, "And why were you so concerned about his looks anyway?" 3

"There's no reason to feel jealous. You are the one and only monkey. Don't pay attention to donkeys," Hadeon cheered her teasingly with a smile that Mallory wanted to wipe off his face like the first day she had done on his portrait. 16

Mallory scowled before asking, "How is that

supposed to make me feel better? They are both animals!" 3

"Because monkeys are clearly superior, you silly woman," Hadeon murmured as if she were supposed to know it. He then continued, "Besides, I simply insist on my employees looking their best. Tell me, where else would you find such a kind and considerate employer like myself? Nowhere." 9

That was for sure, Mallory thought to herself. Hadeon was indeed one of a kind, she thought to herself. One in a million, or perhaps more accurately, once in a lifetime. 3

"Lord Hadeon," Barnby interrupted them and offered a deep bow. "There's a visitor from Ghoulsville." 6

Hadeon's eyes lit up, and he murmured as they began to walk, "Must be an invitation for dinner!" 5

"Or it must be an invitation to offer you poison to sleep in a new coffin after knowing what you did," Mallory muttered under her breath, and if it was possible, Hadeon's smile widened. 9

"Don't tease me with such delights, monkey. It sends shivers down my immortal spine," Hadeon shuddered. "I highly doubt anyone possesses the



audacity to attempt such folly. Alas, humanity's intellect is but a mere whisper."

Mallory raised an eyebrow at his lofty words. "You hold humans in quite high regard," she remarked.

"What can I say?" Hadeon placed a hand over his heart and sighed, "I am a saviour of modesty, a beacon of humility in this dim world. Even humbleness shies from me." 13

As they neared the castle's entrance, Mallory hesitated before speaking. "May I ask something?"

Hadeon's expression shifted suddenly, his voice taking on a dramatic tone. "No! No matter how tempting my sacred abs may be, I simply cannot permit you to touch them at night!" His declaration drew a flush to Mallory's cheeks, which only deepened when they encountered two curious villagers in the hallway. "Oh no, I hope you did not hear that...!" he said in a surprised voice. 22

Where was the coffin! Mallory demanded in her mind. She was going to cut the trees and build one to push him into it, with or without care of the blood bond that had been formed with him!

One of the village men who had spoken to Hadeon earlier this morning, cleared his throat in awkwardness, while glancing at the woman. He then said, with a grave voice,

"Lord Hadeon, there is something that has come to our attention. We have an inclination on who might have murdered our fellow men." The other villageman looked at the castle.

Hadeon's eyebrow rose in question, the pupils in his golden eyes beginning to narrow. Yet his voice remained calm, "Who is it?"

Though Mallory wasn't directly involved in the matter, she felt nervous by the village men's gaze, as if the truth was going to come out. As much as she wanted to push Hadeon into the coffin, she knew he was the only one who could keep her head from being severed now. Her heart picked up its pace as the silence persisted.

As she stood behind Hadeon, she noticed how Barnby's hand subtly moved behind and underneath his coat, as if prepared if things went awry. The first village man said, 3

"Vampire."

Hadeon asked, feigning surprise, "Vampire?"



"I know it sounds strange, but upon washing the wound on the neck, there were two dots on the deceased's neck. Another woman from our village met a similar fate! A few of us have banded together discreetly to investigate, as not everyone know about these forgotten creatures. We seek your aid, if you would be willing to lend your assistance," said the village man. 4

"I am ever at the service of my people," Hadeon answered, appearing to be a benevolent man, who looked as if he was ready to sacrifice himself for them. "Allow me some time to attend to matters, and I shall join you in the village presently." 4

Once the villagers left, Hadeon turned to meet Mallory's probing gaze. She questioned, "Aren't you worried about them finding out?" 2

"About what? I had no hands or fangs in the woman's death," Hadeon replied, his head tilting ever so slightly. "This time, I am as innocent as a newborn kitten. Meow." Mallory frowned as she stared at Hadeon's golden eyes. If it wasn't him, then who was it? 20