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Mallory wondered who had been reckless enough to kill someone and leave them out in the open. But then her eyes fell back on Hadeon. There was the person! Maybe he had sleep walked and killed the woman. *Innocent Master Hades*, she said to herself. 1

Hadeon caught her scrutinising glance. "Longing looks, darling?" He then said, "If I had danced with the woman's death, you can bet I would have taken credit for it. But this? Amateur, really. Tsk." 13

"Master Hades," Mallory replied, her voice laced with dry sarcasm. "I believe I know someone who fits that description. Could it be that someone took a leaf from your book?"

She couldn't fathom any of the prominent vampire figures risking exposure to humans. If Hadeon claimed innocence, then even Lady Rose would likely be uninvolved, given her efforts to maintain peace among their kind. 3

Hadeon chuckled at Mallory's inquiry, his eyes gleaming mischievously.

"Ah, it looks like my admirers are expanding. But

even I have standards because this one sounds like an amateur's work. I suspect there's more to this than meets the eye." His tone turned thoughtful as he continued, "While I did indeed deal with the tavern keeper, my methods are more refined. After all, why settle for a straightforward approach when you can orchestrate a masterpiece? It's all about finesse." 11

Then was that only a coincidence that the villagers found with the first and second victims? Mallory asked herself.

"Barnby, prepare the carriage for our departure to Ghoulsville," Hadeon commanded his servant, who promptly bowed and exited the hall. Then, turning to Mallory, he declared, "You'll be joining me." 10

"What if the people of Reavermoure track us down there?" Mallory voiced her concern, wary of the risks involved in hunting down the killer while they themselves were wanted. "With George missing, the search might extend to other towns." 4

"Fear not, my dear monkey," Hadeon reassured her with a dismissive wave of his hand. "I've navigated through these situations more times

than I can count, and if push comes to shove, my vast forest will gladly play host to any unwanted guests." His nonchalant tone did little to ease Mallory's mind, and she regarded him with narrowed eyes. 8

"Those are innocent people. How could you take an innocent soul?" But even as the words left her lips, she realised the futility of expecting empathy from someone who had never walked the path of humanity.

"I am too," Hadeon remarked, looking as if he were offended. 8

Mallory's scowl deepened as she retorted, "If you're innocent, then I'm a vampire." 15

Hadeon's response was swift, his demeanour shifting with an air of amusement. "Already enticed by the vampire lifestyle, are we? Say no more. I'm more than willing to bite into the idea." With a graceful step forward, his fangs glinted, causing Mallory to retreat two steps backward, her eyes wide with alarm. 4

"Don't. Even. Think. About. It," Mallory ground out through gritted teeth, her shoulders tense with resolve. She would never be one of the night creatures! 19



"How rude. You're the one planting ideas in my head, yet somehow I'm the villain!" Hadeon retorted, feigning offense, though his eyes sparkled mischievously. "Confused monkey," he muttered under his breath. He then said, "As for the tavern keeper, he had it coming."

Mallory frowned and asked sarcastically, "He didn't feed you?"

As the hooves of the horses echoed and the sound of the carriage wheels creaked at the entrance, Mallory and Hadeon stepped out of the castle. Barnby opened the carriage door for them. Mallory settled into the vehicle's carriage seat opposite Hadeon before they set off towards Ghoulsville. 1

On the way, Mallory couldn't help but squeeze her hands that rested on her lap as she stared outside the carriage's window. She would have questioned Hadeon's actions, but she only came to the conclusion that this pureblooded vampire enjoyed drama like a person's cup of coffee, and that was not good for her faint heart. 1

Glancing at Hadeon, Mallory was met with a sly smile. He was enjoying her misery now. That's right, she thought to herself. Apart from drinking blood during his meals, he ate

appetisers of people's suffering, followed by a dessert of their fear. 8

"Master Hades," Mallory began, her tone more assertive this time, no longer seeking permission to question him after what he did earlier. "How do the villagers know that you are their lord? I mean, you've been in a deep slumber all these years." 5

Hadeon reclined leisurely before responding, "The marvels of deception and the gullibility of mortals. Before my extended nap, I had rumours circulate that I was moving to the east, leaving another to tend to the affairs of my estate. Upon my return, another announcement was made, declaring that Van Doren's heir was going to resume his lordship." 10

"And humans don't suspect when they see you that... you haven't aged?" Mallory asked curiously. Upon reflection, she couldn't recall encountering anyone who remained eternally youthful. 4

"We vampires have quite the knack for disappearing acts," Hadeon remarked with a casual shrug, his lips curling into a wry smile. "We resurface like ghosts in alternating years. And if you want to stretch your time a little



more, you say you are blessed with good genes," and he pulled out a black band from his pocket. 1

Simultaneously, Mallory's gaze fixed on Hadeon as he deftly gathered his long locks, securing them into a sleek ponytail. With his hair now neatly tied back, his piercing eyes commanded attention, which exuded a calm aura that felt unnerving. She later realised he had done it so to avoid being compared to George's hideous art that covered the walls of the town. 12

"Mallory," Hadeon called her by her name to her surprise. "Have you fallen in love with me? You have been staring at me a lot. I wouldn't be surprised, because of how loveable I am." 21

Mallory flinched at the thought and felt the intense need to roll her eyes. She retorted, "I haven't. Rest assured, I will never." 15

"Aw, when you put it that way, it's almost tempting," Hadeon grinned like a Cheshire cat, earning himself a glare in return. "But I must warn that I come with a label: 'Danger: May cause heartache, headaches, and an insatiable desire for midnight snacks.'" 29

Lots of headaches, Mallory thought to herself. 4

As Hadeon's carriage rolled into Ghoulsville, the



villagers flocked around, bowing and gushing over his presence in the town.

"Lord Hadeon, what an honour to have you here!" The villager, who had earlier come to the castle, greeted him warmly.

Hadeon smiled, the corners of his eyes crinkling before he got to the point, "Take me to where the victims are."

"Of course, milord. It is this way, please," the man said, walking forward, and both Hadeon and Mallory followed him further into the village.

Meanwhile, another villager chimed in with wide-eyed admiration, "We're truly blessed to have you here, Lord Hadeon. Most nobles wouldn't bother to lift a finger, let alone solve problems themselves. You're a legend!" 8

Hadeon smiled, basking in the adoration. As they walked, he leaned in to Mallory, a smirk playing on his lips, 2

"Did you catch that, monkey? It seems I've got fans wherever I go." He then feigned tiredness, "The struggles of being adored. It's exhausting. To think I have touched so many lives." Mallory was certain that those 'touched' by Hadeon would've preferred less contact, given his skill of

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providing a one-way ticket to the afterlife. 14

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