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Mallory's knees gave out as she watched the vampire burn into a crisp toast and then drop into a pile of ashes. Her heart raced, and the villagers were as shocked as her, until one of them blurted out, 1

"Hail, Lord Hadeon! He's our saviour! We're free!" The villagers emerged from their hiding spots. 7

If only they knew, Mallory thought to herself, that Hadeon was far more chilling than the vampires they had just faced. The dust this pureblooded vampire was blowing into the innocent village people's eyes made her shake her head. 7

"Lord Hadeon, your might is unmatched! You've vanquished the night creatures. How can we ever repay you?" One villager asked, eyes shimmering with admiration. 10

"You pose an intriguing question," Hadeon mused, as though carefully considering his response. "How about this: when the time comes, you'll stand ready to lay down your lives for me, just as I've done for you today?" 20



Mallory's eyes widened as she caught the undertone of Hadeon's words. Before she could say something, the village elder chuckled and declared,

"Anything you say, milord! Our lives are yours!" 19

Unaware they were dancing with the devil in the moonlight, the villagers seemed eager to sign their souls away to Lord Hadeon. He had sneakily fooled her. She wasn't going to let these innocent folks jump off the cliff! Unable to bear witness to them becoming sacrificial lambs, she cleared her throat, and said, 1

"With Lord Hadeon on our side, trouble will cower in fear. Surely there are other ways to show gratitude." 3

As her gaze met Hadeon's, she saw his golden eyes subtly narrowing, like a cat eyeing a particularly plump mouse, and she gulped. 6

Suddenly, a woman scoffed and commented, "Who does she think she is? Instead of hiding, she nearly put Lord Hadeon in harm's way," casting a disapproving glance at Mallory. 1

"She's the Lord's woman," someone whispered from the back, and Mallory scowled. 13

"Oh, Lord Hadeon's woman," more murmurs echoed around.

"What?! I'm not his lady," Mallory retorted sharply to the villager, who had evidently heard Hadeon's outrageous comment earlier in the castle. "I'm just his part-time servant." 7

"Can't tell you how deeply wounded I am by your words now," Hadeon exclaimed dramatically, feigning a pained expression. "After all we've been through in such a short time!" 18

Mallory's scowl deepened. "We have only spent two nights—" 32

"Hush now, my dear. No need to air our dirty laundry," Hadeon interjected with a sly grin, relishing every moment of Mallory's discomfort. The air around him shifted to an eerie one, and as his gaze moved to the woman who had made the comment, he fixed her with his sharp gaze. "She did a better job than you did of hiding inside your house like a rat. When one is a rat, they're often the first ones to bite the dust." 12

The heavy atmosphere around them left some of them nodding in agreement and thinking, 'She is definitely the lord's woman.' He then remarked, 5

"After assessing the village, I couldn't help but

notice its lack of adornment," Hadeon began smoothly, his words carrying an air of concern. "It occurred to me that perhaps a fountain, or better, a statue of someone you all believe in, would greatly enhance the ambiance of the village square. Placed prominently at its centre, a symbol of unity and prosperity," he suggested, his tone calculated. 21

"A statue? Who should it be?" One of the villagers proposed. 5

"Perhaps Lord Hadeon's?" 5

Hadeon's expression feigned surprise. "Me?" he exclaimed, as if taken aback by the idea. "But if you insist, what can I say?" 21

"We should have our saviour's statue!" The villagers agreed in unison, unwittingly playing right into Hadeon's manipulative hands.

Mallory, utterly dumbfounded, found herself at a loss for words—a rarity in Hadeon's presence. Where did one's self-admiration draw the line? 5

"My lord, what were those things? They didn't seem like regular vampires," one of the nearby villagers questioned out of worry. "I cannot believe we were living with vampires all this time."

"Some people in your village were probably forcibly turned into vampires by someone. They weren't vampires until recently, at least by the looks of it," Hadeon explained to them in a nonchalant tone. "But humans often don't have the composition to be compatible with the venom that is released, and it turns into poison. Decaying them from within before they lose their senses to reality and turn into nothing but corpses. Ghoulsville is now clean from it." 4

"Who could have turned them?!" a woman questioned in panic, scared to have more of them.

"Whatever it is, it won't be long before it exposes itself again. In the meantime, I would request that you all be cautious," Hadeon warned them, and they nodded.

When the villagers moved to clean up the bodies of the vampires and sweep the ashes out of there, Mallory said, "That was kind of you. To tell them to be careful."

"It wouldn't do to frighten my food supply," Hadeon retorted with a deadpan expression before a mischievous smirk crept onto his face. 5

"Sometimes I don't know if you are serious or

joking," she muttered. 3

"On a much serious note, I am in the mood to stay low and don't need unnecessary spotlight from people I have no interest in. Utterly rubbish ones," Hadeon remarked, checking his nails to make sure they weren't broken from the earlier fight. 3

"Why the statue then? You could have set up your statue in the castle," Mallory suggested. 4

"Come on, now, monkey. That would be way too egotistical," Hadeon chuckled. "Plus, Ghoulsville is mine, along with the other three towns around here. They all need a little beautifying up, you know?" 7

A small crease formed on Mallory's forehead.

"Three other towns?"

Hadeon smirked, as if leaving her in suspense, before he replied, "Wraithwood. Hemlock. And lastly, Reavermoure." 8

Reavermoure too? Mallory asked herself. But then again, Hadeon had been living in this world for many years and he was a lord. It would be apparent for him to own the towns and villages. Just by the way he looked, one could tell that this man was someone one had to be careful about.

"Anyways. Come with me," Hadeon ordered.

Mallory observed him walking towards the dense forest, and she said, "Master Hades, our carriage is parked in the other direction."

"We'll attend to it later," Hadeon replied, his stride uninterrupted. Upon reaching the forest's edge, both their steps halted. Turning to Mallory, he said, "It is time to be useful, monkey," gesturing toward the forest's interior with a calm expression.

"I hope you don't mean that you want me to hang on the branches of the tree," Mallory murmured, eyeing Hadeon warily. 12

"I have a much better plan," Hadeon smiled, his golden eyes brightening with excitement that Mallory was cautious about. "You shall take a long, nice stroll. So that we can catch this foolish vampire that created a mess." 8

Staring at Hadeon, Mallory blinked. "You're... turning me into bait?" 7

"Bravo! This is why you are an intelligent monkey. It's only logical, given that you're the human among us," Hadeon declared, making a sweeping hand motion that seemed more like shooing away an annoying insect. 19

