

51 Discount for an admirer! 13

As Mallory and Hadeon left the vampire's lair and arrived in Reavermoure, she couldn't help but notice the familiar faces and her own wanted posters adorning the walls. She muttered, "I should probably paint the walls in the middle of the night when everyone is asleep."

"Brilliant idea! All we need to do is find some human sacrifice, and we are set to colour Reavermoure," Hadeon suggested with a wicked gleam in his eye.

Mallory's eyes widened, and she replied, "I didn't mean it quite like that, Master Hades..."

As the carriage came to a halt and they stepped out, Hadeon casually asked, "Feel like kicking some rocks, monkey?"

Confused, Mallory followed his gaze and gasped as she saw her once grand manor reduced to a pile of rubble. "My house... How—Who could have done this?" she exclaimed, disbelief evident in her voice.

Hadeon scanned the area, as though searching for clues, before answering, "I'm certain we'll get some answers from whoever's in charge around

here. Do you happen to know where to find them?" 5

Mallory nodded as anger bubbled up in her mind.

They proceeded towards the town centre in the carriage, which halted at the entrance. Mallory wasted no time in stepping out and making her way into the office of the town's head.

"You witch... It's the murderer, Mallory Winchester!" the town's head exclaimed, his eyes widening in horror. "Capture her and behead her!" he ordered his two men. 8

Suddenly they heard a distinctive tongue click at the entrance, and Hadeon finally made his grand entrance. "And who will catch me if you're busy with her?" he asked nonchalantly. "You?" 10

The town's head, still haunted by memories of Hadeon's previous visit, paled at the sight of him and stumbled backward. "I—it's you!" 8

"Ah, you remember me. Must be an admirer," Hadeon smirked, his grin turning positively diabolical. "In that case, I'll be sure to make your demise slightly less agonising. Special discount, you know," he added with a wicked chuckle. "But before we get to that, we have a few pressing

questions. It's terribly inconvenient for you as I am interested, I'm afraid," he tutted, feigning sympathy. 17

The town's head's voice trembled with fear as he threatened, "You may have gotten away last time, but not this time! You'll pay for your mistakes!" 8

Hadeon let out a dark chuckle, taking a menacing step forward. The town's head visibly cowered, his eyes wide with terror. With a serious glint in his eyes, Hadeon questioned, "Is this how you treat your guests? Where are the refreshments and the 'please sit down'?"

The town's head, recalling the gruesome fate of some unfortunate souls at Hadeon's hands, struggled to find his voice. When Hadeon arched an eyebrow expectantly, he hastily attempted to regain some hospitality.

"P-please, have a seat," he stammered, gesturing towards the empty chairs before his desk.

Hadeon disregarded the town's head entirely, circling around the desk with an air of superiority that made the man instinctively retreat. Seating himself in the head's chair, Hadeon remarked casually, "I do adore these chairs. I have one just like it in my reading room,

only it's a lovely shade of red." 4

The town's head exchanged nervous glances with his men, silently urging them to act. "Bring this gentleman some refreshments!" he commanded. 1

Hadeon's grin widened as he turned to Mallory, gleefully pointing to himself. "Did you hear that, monkey? A gentleman," he declared with amusement. 6

As the guards moved to fulfil the town's head's request, Hadeon's expression turned deadly serious. "I sincerely hope you won't disrupt the peace of this gentleman. Because if you dare to ruin my mood," he paused, retrieving a gun from behind him, "Mallory will be forced to use your blood as paint." 7

With tension thick enough to slice, Mallory cut straight to the point. "Did you order the demolition of the Winchester Manor, Mr. Falcon?" 2

"I did," the town's head admitted, his voice trembling with fear. "You're a witch who killed her relatives, and who knows if you killed your parents. We wanted it gone—" 13

Hadeon's sharp fingernails tapped ominously on

the desk, causing the town's head to recoil. Hastily, he amended his words. "No one's going to live there, and it was decided it was best to remove it. Everyone agreed."

"Everyone? Even Kaiser?" Mallory's voice dripped with bitterness as she recalled him clutching the house papers that fateful night.

"Baron Kaiser did push for the demolition, but Lady Colette Nottingham gave the final approval," the town's head stammered, sweating bullets under Hadeon's intense gaze. 9

"And who might this Lady Nottingham be?" Hadeon inquired.

"My cousin," Mallory interjected, her voice heavy with disappointment. 3

"Ah, family betrayal," Hadeon mused, his tone dripping with cynicism. "Blood always turns out to be the sharpest knife, doesn't it, towny?" Hadeon turned his attention to the trembling town's head. "Tell me, are you and Kaiser the best of pals?" 7

The town's head stuttered, "I-I wouldn't say friends... He had the deed to the manor in his name, and only Lady Colette's approval was required. I was just following orders..." 9

"You poor thing, tsk," Hadeon sighed with mock pity. "But fear not, for change is upon us, and I shall reclaim what rightfully belongs to me. The demolished land shall rise again under your diligent care." 7

"But—" the town's head attempted to interject.

"I understand your concerns," Hadeon interrupted with a reassuring smile. "You'll need the blueprint of the manor, won't you? Consider it done."

The town's head couldn't help but feel a chill run down his spine as he stood before the imposing figure of Hadeon, who seemed to tower over him both in stature and in dominance.

"The land doesn't—" the town's head tried again. 3

"Fear not, my friend. Furniture can always be replaced," Hadeon waved off the concern. "And if you ever find yourself in need of motivation, just look to me. Ask Mallory; she can vouch for my excellent motivational skills. Oh, and I'll be expecting those timely tax payments," he added, casually brandishing his gun. "Any questions?" 11

The town's head and his guards appeared utterly baffled, as if struggling to comprehend how a man they had only just heard of was now

dictating terms to them. Then, a glimmer of realisation flickered in the town's head's eyes, and he stammered, "Tax payments?"

"Ah, yes, taxes," Hadeon replied smoothly, as if discussing the weather. "You see, you and your predecessors have been enjoying my generous contributions for far too long. It's only fair that I collect what's due, with a little interest, of course. But fear not. I'm a benevolent lord. I have other, more profitable interests in mind." 3

"But... why should we pay you taxes?" The town's head blurted out, his expression dumbfounded. 3

Hadeon's words dripped with disdain, "Not the brightest tool in the box, are you? How did you even end up as a town's head?" He sighed dramatically. "I am the lord of these lands." 12

The realisation hit the town's head like a ton of bricks. He had heard whispers of their long-lost lord returning, but he hadn't expected this intimidating stranger to be the lord himself! And now, faced with the reality of their new overlord, he couldn't help but feel a shiver of fear run down his spine.

Mallory turned to the town's head and instructed, "Remove my posters from the wall."

She made her own demand in addition to Hadeon's orders. 4

"Why do you want them gone? They give the place character. Otherwise, the walls would be depressingly bare," Hadeon remarked casually. Then, with a smirk, he added, "I'm famous, you know. You need to be as renowned as I am to truly be Hadeon Van Doren's loyal servant." 8

Mallory shot Hadeon a sharp glare before addressing the town's head, her tone firm, "Get rid of them. You can leave his up." 13

"Tch," Hadeon clicked his tongue disapprovingly. "And here I thought we had bonded over our shared tragic past of yours. Honestly, I can't fathom how you ever chose Kaiser, especially when it's clear you've been waiting for so long to find Prince Charming," he taunted, rubbing salt in Mallory's wounds. 3

"Drop it..." Mallory muttered in annoyance.

Hadeon rose from his seat and placed a hand on the town's head, who looked like a mouse compared to the towering pureblooded vampire. "I hope you don't do anything stupid, because humans have a knack for that. And don't say I didn't warn you. Goodness! I'm such a saint, I

should go hunting so I can cleanse my hands with blood," he remarked sarcastically. 4

The town's head's head bobbed up and down like a bobblehead toy, his eyes wide as he watched Hadeon exit the room with Mallory Winchester. 2

"What do we do now, Mr. Falcon?" asked one of the men approaching him, while the town's head finally sank into the chair as his knees buckled.

"Mallory Winchester has the lord's backing..." 9

Outside the building, Mallory walked to the carriage and was climbing inside, when she heard the pureblooded vampire say,

"You know, monkey, I was thinking of getting you a cat for your spinsterhood. But then I realised, you have me, your beloved master!" 32