

52 Uninviting cousin 10

When the butler from the Nottingham mansion opened the door and saw Mallory standing there, his eyes widened in disbelief. He seemed at a loss for words, unable to comprehend her unexpected presence. Mallory said to Hadeon.

"See? I'm so famous, I leave them speechless. Who needs posters?" 24

Hadeon chuckled in response, enjoying her humour. "Oh, I do love it when you speak my language," he replied with a grin before turning his attention to the flustered butler. "Where's Dollet?" he demanded, prompting the butler to scurry off into the mansion, presumably to summon help. 20

"Master Hades, do you have trouble remembering names or do you just do it on purpose?" Mallory asked with a furrowed brow. 2

Hadeon shrugged indifferently. "I think it's simply because those people are of no use or interest to me," he explained casually, waving his hand dismissively before stepping inside the mansion uninvited. "Wow," he remarked, taking in the surroundings. 5

"I know. Mr. and Mrs. Nottingham have one of the finest mansions in Reavermoure," Mallory added, feeling a sense of unease creeping over her.

"I meant this place is small," Hadeon commented, his displeasure evident on his face. "Your cousin isn't too bright, is she?" 10

Mallory asked, "Because she's living here?" 2

"Because she's not on your side," Hadeon remarked, turning to meet her gaze. 4

"Mallory!" Colette appeared in the hall and so did Mrs. Nottingham, who trailed right behind her. Her cousin's eyes had gone wide and she demanded, "What are you doing here?!" 9

Though it had been only a week since Mallory had last seen her cousin, it felt like years had passed by because of the distance between them now. Hadeon responded with an innocent voice,

"Oh, just taking a leisurely stroll, darling. And while we're at it, do you have a nice vintage drink lying around? Blood." He eyed Mrs. Nottingham. 9

"What?!" Colette and Mrs. Nottingham replied in shock.

"I meant vintage wine. What did you hear?"

Hadeon cocked his head. 5

Colette took a quick sweep at the man standing next to Mallory, not knowing what an attractive man like him, who seemed to belong to nobility, was doing with her cousin. She hadn't seen a man this good looking before and she stared at him. 9

Mallory demanded from Colette, "How could you destroy our house like that, Colette?"

While giving a wary expression towards the man, Colette turned to Mallory with a huff, "It is a house of sin. Don't you know what you did to my parents? We should call the guards for what you did to them, when they gave you space in the house!" 5

"I told you I didn't kill them!" Mallory gritted her teeth. "I had no motive to kill them. It was Kaiser who did it!" 2

"Your lies won't work on me! Mother was right," Colette said with disgust towards Mallory, "You are bad luck. A witch, who will ruin anything that you touch!" 3

"Why can't you believe me?" Mallory whispered, her heart clenching.

As Mallory looked at Colette, hurt etched deeply into her features. She had always regarded Colette as more than just a cousin, she was like a sister. Mallory had gone out of her way to accommodate her, to prioritise her needs above her own. Yet, despite all her efforts, this was the heartbreaking response she received after all these years.

"Guards!" Mrs. Nottingham shouted, and two men came running to the hall they stood in. "Capture them and take her to the town's prison! She needs to be punished for her evil actions!" 10

Hadeon waved his hand at the two men and suggested, "Better. Go inform the town's head. Tell him that Mallory Winchester is back and that they need to send more men. After all, she did kill an entire manor of people." 3

"Go call the town's head!" Mrs. Nottingham said in haste and one of the men left, while the other stayed as if he would fight the criminal. "How dare you show your face here? You are not Colette's family anymore. She doesn't consider you—"

Mallory, who was already angry that her family house had turned into ruins, hardened her heart and stated, "That doesn't mean she had any right

to sign away the house, which was never in her name." 3

"Neither was it in your name, Mallory," Colette huffed. "I always wanted the manor, after all, we were the ones who looked after it. But I don't know why Father insisted on you having it. But then again, in the end, it belongs to no one. You don't deserve the house. Everywhere you go, you take this omen with you and you did the same with us. You are the reason why my parents are dead—" 2

SLAP! 16

Colette's mouth was left hanging wide open, as her cheek began to redden. Mallory felt the sting on her palm, which slowly curled into a fist. Mrs. Nottingham protested, "What do you think you are doing, coming to our house and creating a fuss, you damn witch?! And raising a hand on my daughter-in-law??" 11

Mrs. Nottingham raised her own hand, ready to slap Mallory but the latter caught her wrist. She said, "Mrs. Nottingham, this is between me and Colette. The house she once belonged to. I would advise you not to interfere, because right now, my hand won't stop at one person." 16

"Good Heavens! You have no manners when it comes to speaking to your elders. This is what happens when you don't have parents who raise you well," Mrs. Nottingham abruptly pulled her hand away from Mallory. "You just wait! Last time you were rescued by, who knows what long haired man. Even that man will be caught and beheaded. This time, you will be beheaded for sure. None of the people in Reavermoure like you. They hate you." 6

That was only because people didn't know the truth that Kaiser was a vampire and he was the one who killed them. One day, they would know the truth, Mallory thought to herself. And they—

"Beheaded?" Hadeon questioned with amusement. "How are you going to do that?" he asked with his eyes sparkling with mirth.

"On the scaffold, he will also be—" Mrs. Nottingham began.

"Humans have such bad eyes and memory. It makes me want to throw the brains out of the body as it seems useless," Hadeon murmured, before his short hair grew to his shoulders and the two women's jaws fell open, "You were saying?" a wicked smile appeared on his lips. 8

"W—what just happened??" Colette's eyes looked like they were going to fall out of her sockets.

"Black magic! They are part of the coven!" Mrs. Nottingham jumped to conclusions. 3

Hadeon rolled his eyes and said, "I will show you what black magic means." He looked around the place and noticed a little showpiece doll resting on a shelf. He said, "Now imagine this is the lovely Mrs. Nottingham. And if I twisted the arm, her arm would twist in real life. And if I ripped the head off... oh my, it is making me tingle in excitement." 9

Just when Hadeon touched the arm, Mrs. Nottingham screamed before he actually tugged on it, "NO! What do you want?" 2

"Me?" Hadeon asked, his face and voice turning serious. "I want a lot of things, but for now, Mallory would like to get her manor papers. Also, how about some heartfelt apologies for the words and actions?" 6

"Just the papers should be fine," Mallory replied rigidly, eager to leave the uncomfortable situation behind.

"Don't take my fun away, monkey," Hadeon chided, his tone dripping with sarcasm as he

clicked his tongue disapprovingly. "I know how to handle unruly blood, almost like siblings, because I have done that before."

Mallory shook her head, firm in her stance. "It's meaningless if it's not sincere," she insisted, her gaze unwavering. 6

Hadeon's expression darkened, a glint of annoyance flashing in his golden eyes. "Is that what you're going to do? Give an insincere apology?" he demanded, his voice laced with menace. Both women shook their heads, intimidated by his demeanour.

"Go on, then," Hadeon urged, his patience wearing thin. "Unless you want me to find out what lies at the bottom of your heart—trust me, I will."

Colette attempted, "I—I am sorry, Mal. I should have asked you." Hadeon stared at her and remarked, "Weak. I am sure you can do it better," he snapped his fingers. He then turned to the older woman. "You. Go bring those manor's papers."

Mrs. Nottingham turned around while Colette tried to come up with an apology. The woman walked to another corridor, as if she were going

to get the papers by going away from there, but instead she stepped out of the mansion through the back door. She was going to summon help, she spotted her servant approaching from a distance. 2

"Where are the town's guards?!" she demanded, her eyes flashing with anger.

The servant hesitated before responding,

"Milady, the town's head refuses to aid us. He claims the man inside is none other than the lord of Reavermoure and three other towns." 7

Mrs. Nottingham reentered the room, holding the papers in her hands. Meanwhile, her daughter-in-law, now flushed red and visibly flustered, was apologising for the sixth time. "I shouldn't have said those things to you," she stammered, her words tumbling out in a rush. "I'm truly sorry. I feel awful about it and I promise I won't do it again." 1

Hadeon hummed with a thoughtful expression, "I still think it can be better." 8

Mallory took the papers from Mrs. Nottingham and, without another word, turned back and stepped out of the building. The sky had darkened, and she didn't wait for Hadeon, as she

kept walking with a heavy heart until she arrived at the church.

As Mallory took a seat on one of the benches, she did so in complete silence, trying her best to hold back her tears.

"Unfortunately, I don't have a spare handkerchief," she heard Hadeon's voice come from behind.

"I don't need one. I'm not crying," she shot back defensively. - 3

"You sure? You look like you're about to," Hadeon teased, leaning in with a mischievous grin. "With the way you walked, I thought you were going to walk back to the castle. I was almost impressed." After a few seconds, he asked, "You doing okay?" 28