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Hadeon continued his bedtime story in a serious voice, "So what happens is that the vampire attends a ball after this huge makeover, that is, he turns into a human from a vampire. And then, while dancing, he meets this princess, who is a human." 1

"He and the princess fall in love? And he loses his shoe?" Mallory asked with a roll of her eyes. She then turned to lay on her side while facing Hadeon. 5

"Shh. Are you the storyteller or am I?" Hadeon chided Mallory gently, fixing her with a playful glare. "So, the vampire and the princess enjoy their time at the ball, and all seems well until the next morning—when the princess is found dead, and a pair of fangs are left behind at the scene of the crime." 20

"Wow," Mallory murmured, her tone dry as she noted the typical dark twist only a story from Hadeon could take. 1

Hadeon couldn't suppress a soft puff of pride. "I knew it would stun you." 1

"So, what happens after that?" Mallory leaned in,



Intrigued despite herself.

"That's the end of the story," Hadeon declared with finality, causing Mallory's eyes to narrow in disbelief. 17

"That's a terrible ending!" she exclaimed. It was the sort of story that would leave one wide awake with nerves, not lulled to sleep! Changing tactics, she ventured, "Say, Master Hades, have you ever met the devil?"

"I have," Hadeon responded flatly, as if discussing the weather.

"Is he as bad as people make him out to be? How does he look?" Mallory asked, curious to hear about the devil.

Hadeon's lips twitched with a mischievous smirk as he elaborated on his earlier comment.

"Considering he was once an angel, he certainly had his charms. But centuries in Hell have taken their toll, and now he wears his scars unless he opts for deception among humans," he explained, his voice laced with a hint of dark amusement.

"He's much worse than the tales suggest," he chuckled softly, seeming to find a grim humour in the devil's notorious reputation. 6

"You find that funny?" Mallory asked, her



eyebrows knitting together in a frown.

Hadeon's voice took on a reflective quality as he shared his origins with Mallory, who strained to make out his silhouette in the dim light. He said, "He is a diabolical creature, the king of Hell, commanding legions of demons. Since arriving in the living world, none of us have laid eyes on him." 5

"If you're curious about my memories of him, the Devil took particular pleasure in crafting me. As one of his earliest creations, he chose only his finest ingredients for me. From abilities to strength. Temptation, malice, deceit, despair, vanity, rage, good looks." 9

Mallory couldn't help but be worried after what Hadeon just said to her. Because they weren't positive attributes, but what could be expected from the Devil? 2

Mallory murmured, "Does that mean that you don't feel other emotions?" Was he telling the truth that day when he said he didn't feel sadness? 5

"You look upset. Looking for something, monkey?" Hadeon asked in a teasing tone. 8

"Not really," Mallory replied in a whisper, and she



pulled the blanket closer to her.

"The emotions that aren't present in me— some of them were added to Rose and Shane," Hadeon replied, staring into Mallory's sterling blue eyes that he could clearly see. He continued, "Rose has the beauty, kindness and compassion of a killer instinct. Lots of sorrow in her case. In the beginning, the Devil wanted to make varieties, but then he decided he wanted an army of pureblooded vampires who would bring him souls to hell. The more souls, the better for the underworld to run."

"When he finished making all those vampires, did he run out of the potion attributes?" Mallory asked, feeling her eyes beginning to grow heavy.

"Not really, but he probably didn't want to finish all of it on the useless pureblooded vampires. They got the empty arrogance, I am sure you can say that by just looking at them," Hadeon's lips curled at his words. "Feeling sleepy now?"

"A little," Mallory replied softly as a yawn escaped her lips. 1

"Good. Else, I would have to resort to other means to get you to sleep," Hadeon hummed before he started to hum something under his



breath.

"What is that song?" Mallory asked him, while feeling her body begin to sink into the bed. She had heard him hum it before too. 2

Hadeon intensely watched the woman on the bed and replied, "It is called the song of the dead in hell. Do you liked it?" 3

"Mm," Mallory replied, as she had begun to drift to sleep.

Hadeon lifted his hand, hovering it near her face, before playfully pressing his finger against her nose. With a hint of amusement in his voice, he remarked, 6

"You fell asleep right in the middle of our conversation. It's curious how you find the anthem of the dead comforting, when ordinarily, it might instill fear. Should I wake you?" His finger lingered for a moment, then drifted away from her nose, pausing just above her slightly parted pink lips. "Perhaps not." 12

The night went smoothly, and the innkeeper and his patrons were unaware of the night that had transpired while they were fast asleep. The clouds had cleared from the sky after yesterday evening's rain, letting sunlight pass through the



windows.

When Mallory's mind came to consciousness, her eyes remained closed. It was the best sleep she could remember having in ages. She stretched lazily, her ankles and toes unfurling with contentment. Her dreams had been pleasant, filled with images of herself and Hattie wandering a carnival fair, indulging in deliciously tempting food. The memory of it lingered sweetly in her mind.

However, a peculiar realisation began to dawn on her. The 'pillow' beneath her head and the 'bed' she was lying on felt unusually hard, far from the soft comfort she recalled before drifting off. Puzzled, she pressed her head against the supposed cotton pillow, but it offered no give. Curious, she moved her hands, exploring the surface beneath her. It was smooth yet unmistakably firm, not at all like her bed. 13

"I hope you are prepared to take responsibility after molesting me, Mallory Winchester." 23

Mallory's eyes snapped wide open at Hadeon's words. As the fog of sleep cleared, she slowly raised her head and was mortified to realise she had been sleeping on his chest, her hand perilously close to the edge of his trousers.



Blushing furiously, she hastily withdrew her hand. In her flustered state, she scrambled to put some distance between them, but her movements were too hasty. With a lack of grace that matched her embarrassment, she rolled too far and tumbled right off the other side of the bed. 11

She apologised, "I am sorry, I—"

"There's absolutely no need to feign innocence, you octopus," he exclaimed, his voice dripping with melodramatic despair. "My poor, harassed self endured such a hard night at your hands! To sleep upon me is one thing, but to whisper your desires—'Mm, this is so tasty', 'I want to lick it'—how scandalously tantalising. You wicked, wicked woman!" His eyebrows arched dramatically. 41

Mallory's cheeks flushed a deep shade of crimson as she stammered out her explanation, her voice tinged with embarrassment. "I—I can explain that!" she exclaimed. "I was eating something in my dream, Master Hades." 10

"Speak to the wall." Hadeon clicked his tongue before getting up and out of bed. "Get dressed. Barnby must already be out in front of the inn, waiting for us." Saying those words, he stepped



into the corridor and closed the door behind him.

Mallory buried her head in the heap of blankets and screamed her embarrassment into it, while Hadeon couldn't help but chuckle after hearing it. She banged her head and groaned inwardly, mortified. 4

"Did I really cling to him the entire night? He's never going to let me live this down!" 7

She took her time to change her clothes back to what she was wearing last night and pick up the shoes that were covered in dirt now. Finally, she stepped out of the room and reached downstairs, where Hadeon was having a lively chat with the innkeeper's wife.

There was also Barnby, who stood just outside the inn's door, which was wide open.

"Indeed, last night was a downpour, and I heard from the early travellers that some of the roads are blocked," the innkeeper's wife said, before remarking, "but I hope you both had a good rest." 3

"Oh, we did!" Hadeon nodded, and he then leaned towards the older woman in the room and whispered, not so quietly, "My wife could



barely keep her hands off me. Such a needy thing she is. It is quite adorable," he chuckled, and the woman laughed along with him. 18

Seeing Mallory walk towards them, Hadeon remarked with a bright smile, "There is my beautiful wife." 1

Barnby, on the other hand, who heard the 'wife' word associated with Hadeon, couldn't help but quietly turn his gaze at his lord.

Mallory couldn't even glare at Hadeon properly with how she had woken up this morning. She offered a rather tight smile at the woman and bowed, "Thank you for your hospitality last night."

"Do come visit us again," the innkeeper's wife stated, watching them step out of the building.

Mallory was the first one to climb into the carriage and Hadeon was the next one, before the coachman closed the carriage door.

While not far away from them, a shadow stood behind a tree and heard the conversation that had taken place inside the inn and the vampire murmured, "Hadeon Van Doren married a human?" 33

