

## **Beauty and the Immortal: It started with a dig Chapter 8 - Night in the tavern**

### **Chapter 8: Night in the tavern**

Mallory briefly glanced over her shoulder to make sure no one was following her. Because of the rain, the ground in the forest was slippery. She kept on running, praying that her maid was also fleeing too, to escape the consequences they had unwittingly unleashed upon themselves, along with the anger of the villagers.

But as she passed by the trees in the almost dark forest, she realised that it was possible that Hattie was safe. Because she was the one who had opened the coffin, not her maid.

"Grandmother's information was wrong!" Mallory murmured to herself, huffing for air. "That is not an artefact. It is a nightmare!"

She hoped the townsfolk were keeping the ghost of a man occupied, giving her enough time to cross oceans! Curses couldn't cross it, could it? "What am I even thinking?!" Mallory asked herself in disbelief before her stomach growled.

The distant cawing of a crow suddenly interrupted her train of thoughts, making her speed herself out of there. She finally arrived at the edge of the forest, arriving in a town named Ghoulsville. Lanterns flickered outside buildings as she quietly headed to a tavern, seeking food.

Mallory entered the dimly lit tavern, where a single oil lamp burned at the front, leaving the other parts of the room in shadow. The air was filled with the smell of food. Her gaze drifted to the only customer dining in a corner who blocked her view of the day's menu. Glancing towards the curtain, she waited for the tavern keeper to appear.

Unable to stay still, Mallory made her way towards the counter, when her foot hit something and she stumbled. She whispered, "Who leaves a sack of pota—!!"

Mallory's eyes popped wider than a full moon upon spotting a dead man sprawled on the ground, who was probably the tavern keeper by the looks of

the apron he wore. She did not kill this man! She needed an alibi before her 'Wanted' posters would be glued on every wall and bark of the tree!

"Excuse me!" Mallory blurted, attempting to alert the customer. "Someone killed the tavern keeper!"

"Hm?" The customer turned to look at Mallory, and she staggered. He wiped the corners of his bloody red lips and asked unbothered, "Did you say something? I couldn't hear you while having my drink."

"Y—You...!" Mallory stammered, her body frozen as she couldn't process how he was here! She ran long and far, damnit! "You are the one... who killed the tavern keeper!" she whispered, as horror filled her face. How did he know she would come here?

"First digging out my coffin and now following me, tch," Hadeon tutted, his tongue clicking in mock dismay and his eyes twinkling, "You must be one of my followers."

When he turned in his seat and rose to his feet, bells of panic rang at the back of Mallory's head. Trying to rack her mind, she ran to the kitchen and rummaged through the jars.

"You don't have to cook for me. Age of forty-five or forty-seven, not usually one of my preferred choices, but I was thirsty—" Mallory heard his voice before he stepped inside the kitchen. She grabbed a jar before turning to face him. Her heart fluttered like a bird flapping its wings to escape, when he completed his sentence, "—and every drop to the last was delicious."

Did he just say he drank the tavern keeper's blood?? Mallory screamed in her head.

"I apologise for disturbing your grave! I didn't know I would find a coffin of a dead body there," Mallory rushed her apology, hoping he'd accept it.

"Of course! I mean, bodies are the last thing one would find in a graveyard," Hadeon feigned being shocked while his words dripped with sarcasm.

"Waking up soaked to the bone, mud plastered to me because someone decided to excavate my grave amidst a downpour," annoyance flickered in his golden eyes. His voice darkened, "Maybe you'd fancy a taste of that?"

Mallory shook her head and replied, "I am fine. I am not looking for such thrills."

When she saw him take a step forward, her hand slipped into the jar that she had grabbed earlier, emerging with a clutch of salt and her stance defensive.

"Salt?" Hadeon questioned, tilting his head. "As delicious as I look, I assure you, I am better off the flame. Though I do love turning others into meals," and this time when he smiled, Mallory caught sight of his sharp fangs, and she gulped.

When he walked towards her like a predator, Mallory didn't waste a second more by bending down and making a circle around her with the salt.

The salt was going to keep the evil being away from her! She saw him stop before the circle, his eyes shifting from her to the salt on the ground.

She was safe! Mallory released a sigh of relief.

"I was going to thank you for interrupting the execution, but here you are trying to kill me too! You think I have a hobby of digging people's graves? And when did ghosts start drinking people's blood?" Mallory's eyes narrowed slightly. "I am going to send you back to the grave so that you can sleep well. Forev—"

Mallory's words stopped midway through her rant when she saw the person step on the salt she had drawn. He had fooled her into thinking that he couldn't cross it!

"What a terrible attempt at drawing a circle," Hadeon taunted, lifting his gaze to lock with her wide, fearful blue eyes, and he grinned maliciously. He said, "It seems my coffin awaits another guest. You will have sweet dreams."

What now?? Mallory wondered if she should recite lines from the holy book! She said, "T—Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of d—death, I will fear. No—"

"No evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," they concluded in unison, Mallory's voice a mere whisper against his confident tone.

She was living a nightmare right now!

He took one more step to close the distance between them, and Mallory's heart shuddered. She was going to die! Either by him or by heart attack! Now that he stood right before her, she was more than intimidated.

Hadeon's hand shot to her neck, and his fingers curled around it momentarily. Mallory quickly shut her eyes and pleaded, "Please don't slit my throat like the tavern keeper's! Don't kill me!"

She trembled when she felt his icy finger graze against her neck and felt him tug her chain. She opened her eyes in time to catch him holding the cross pendant between his fingers that her grandmother had gifted her. He remarked,

"Indeed, you bear the cross of loyalty, just as my true servant would."

Grandmother... What nonsense is he talking about? Now she had to find a way to put him back in the coffin!