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Mallory couldn't help but feel that the people from Valeria were nicer compared to those from Reavermoure in the south. It was probably because they were vampires who didn't care about the prejudices that humans held so closely to their chests. 1

"Lady Mallory, when did you marry Lord Hadeon?" A curious voice chimed in, the question darting around like sparks, igniting a circle of eager faces around her. The corners of Mallory's mouth twitched into a small, nervous laugh, a reflex from how often Hadeon playfully called her his wife. She caught the eye of Lady Rose, who calmly sipped her tea, pretending not to hear. 13

"Didn't he just awaken from centuries in his coffin?" Another vampiress mused, eyes dancing with intrigue. "And yet he noticed you so quickly." But just as Mallory was about to reply, a soft but firm voice interrupted, "They're not married." 8

It was Lady Reagan, descending the staircase with deliberate grace, her presence commanding attention. The first woman,



reluctance tinging her words, retorted, "And how would you know that, Lady Reagan? They've been inseparable, sharing chambers, I'd wager." 4

Lady Reagan had taken Mallory's earlier rejection and humiliation of her too personally, and she smiled at the women. She replied, "Simple. She wears no ring, and there was no ceremony. The Lord and I once shared rooms, but nothing more." 8

"You seem to have grown quite a lot in such a short duration, Lady Reagan," Lady Rose hummed with a polite expression as if she meant well, but Lady Reagan's face turned sour, which she tried to mask. 7

"She's nothing of his," Lady Reagan replied, clearing the air of confusion. Mallory didn't like the tone the vampiress used, as if putting her on the same level as herself. She smiled back and asked, "And how do you know that, Lady Reagan? You weren't there when it happened. Not like you were invited." 12

Lady Reagan's mouth fell open, while the other ladies leaned forward to hear more about it. One of the ladies exclaimed, "So it is true?!"

"I told you I heard him address her as his wife



yesterday!" another one said with an all-knowing smile. 5

"She's just making it up!" Lady Reagan scoffed at the lie, but Mallory had never admitted what she was really talking about and had been vague.

"Oh, hush now, Lady Reagan, there's no reason to be a sour fruit here," one of the older women responded with a sympathetic look. "Mr. Everald is in town. We can conspire to have you both matched, as Lord Hadeon is taken." 11

Lady Reagan was more than offended by these foolish women, who couldn't see that this human was leading them on. She rolled her eyes and stormed out of there, ostensibly for fresh air. 3

"Lady Mallory, why don't you tell us how you both met? Was he as taken by you as when you first met him? How about you?" The questions continued to pour in on Mallory.

"Very, very taken, though I took a little time," Mallory smiled, recalling the time she had tried to run away from Hadeon and he had caught her. After answering some of the questions, she finally deflected the subject to another woman's marriage. 7

Finding an opportunity, she slipped out of the



group who were still busy talking. She came to stand at one of the windows, where she could see the town from there. The streets had been decorated, and she caught sight of children already wearing their attire for the entire day. The sight brought a smile to her lips.

"I am saddened that I wasn't invited to the wedding," Lady Rose came to stand beside her with a peaceful expression on her face. 7

"Ah, that..." Mallory's voice drawled for a moment with embarrassment. "That was just for jest."

But Lady Rose only stared at her with a soft smile. She then said, "You shouldn't be worried about me."

"Huh?" Mallory was caught off guard by the vampiress's words.

"I know about the prophecy," Lady Rose stated, which almost made Mallory's heart slip from its place. She said, "I knew my time would come to an end. For a very long time." 9

Mallory's lips felt like they were glued together, as she was at a loss for words. Her eyebrows slightly furrowed and she asked, "Because of your ability?" She saw the woman nod.



"But it was your thoughts that confirmed it yesterday," Lady Rose remarked, and it took Mallory some time before it finally dawned on her what she meant. She could read her thoughts! "I can," she chuckled. 6

Mallory couldn't believe that a vampire could have such a useful ability while also hearing people talking all the time. She then said, "I am not going to do it."

"The prophecy is unyielding, regardless of your desires," Lady Rose whispered, her voice soft and only for Mallory's ears. "No matter how we try to change it, our actions inevitably guide us to our destined path. And it seems he has embraced his destiny, hasn't he? Even the darkest soul can be transformed by love." 9

Mallory's eyes widened slightly at the vampiress's words. She had been avoiding this very topic ever since Hadeon's late-night confession, and it lingered persistently in her thoughts.

"Can you read Hadeon's mind too?" Mallory asked, watching Lady Rose's smile grow.

"Are you curious about his thoughts on you, or just in general?" Lady Rose teased lightly. She

then reassured Mallory, saying, "I can't. The devil crafted him differently, stronger than us all. Darker even." 5

Silence enveloped them as they gazed out from the mansion, watching the simple village folk revel in the Hallow celebration that had already begun.

"I've given it a lot of thought and decided it's time for me to leave soon," Lady Rose said in her usual calm voice, sending a chill down Mallory's spine.

"Do you not enjoy your life here, Lady Rose?" Mallory asked, noticing the sorrow etched on the woman's beautiful face.

"I do, and I can tell that I have lived a far better life than most I know. But when you have lived as long as me, even the most beautiful thing can turn mundane. We have no angelic heart, after all, we were made by the devil. We are cursed to see things that we love perish," the vampiress sighed. 6

"What about Wallace?" Mallory asked, recalling how the butler attended to Lady Rose like a devoted shadow, ever-present and attentive.

"He understands my need to go," Lady Rose



replied, a smile causing the corners of her eyes to crinkle. "You should get ready for the Hallow Ball, Lady Mallory and not worry about your future. Tonight is Hallow, and you deserve to live like everyone else rather than carry the burden." 2

Mallory couldn't help but stare at the woman, soon joined by her butler. Seeing how most of the guests had already left this side of the mansion, she decided it was time for her to get ready too. When she arrived at the entrance of the room, she noticed a maid standing by the door, who offered her a bow and informed her,

"Milady, I have been instructed by Lord Hadeon to help you get ready for the ball."

"Where is he?" Mallory inquired, having not seen him since noon.

"Lord Hadeon? He got ready earlier and left, milady," the maid answered, and Mallory nodded in acknowledgement. 6

Entering the room with the maid following closely behind, Mallory's breath caught for a moment as she spotted a gown spread elegantly across the bed. She walked towards it, her heart racing. It was the silver gown, layered over a luxurious beige silk fabric. It was the gown she

had reached out for but hadn't refused when the tailor's assistant had offered to pack it. 8

When an hour passed, Mallory had slipped into the silver gown as the maid helped her before the mirror. She could hear music beginning to fill the Delcrov Mansion's corridors, and there was a whisper of excitement. 2

"Hold still, milady," the maid instructed, fastening delicate buttons along the back and revealing the smooth curve of Mallory's spine. The full sleeves enveloped her arms, exuding elegance.

Her hair had been skilfully tied back while allowing soft, blonde fringes to cascade delicately against her cheeks. Each twist and turn enhanced her features. A delicate hairpin adorned with glimmering gemstones was secured into the side of her hair.

The maid quietly admired Mallory. The gown flowed perfectly with her movements. "Happy Hallow to you, milady." 3

"Happy Hallow. Thank you for your help," Mallory thanked the maid, who bowed and excused herself out of there. She gave her reflection a final look in the mirror. It was time. 2

