



## 112 Broken luck 8

As the final notes of the music faded into the background, Mallory was left breathless from her shared closeness with Hadeon. With fluid grace, he slowly let his hand slide from her waist, leaving a lingering warmth in its wake. 1

"Milady," he bent down with a gentleman's finesse, taking her hand and pressing a soft, lingering kiss to its back, his lips brushing her skin with a tantalising gentleness that made her heart swell in her chest. 10

As Hadeon raised his head to look at her with his eyes meeting hers and his hand lowering hers as if returning it to her, he said, "Did I tell you how lovely you look tonight? Like a star that burns brightly even though it is surrounded by darkness. It is an admirable quality." 23

If Mallory's heart hadn't skipped a beat before, it certainly did now, the sound echoing loudly enough that Hadeon must have heard it. No one had ever uttered anything like that to her. 2

Quietly, they withdrew from the dance floor, allowing space for other couples to enjoy its magic.



"Sometimes it feels good to be alive, doesn't it?" Lady Rose sighed contentedly, her smile reflecting the warmth of the evening. 6

"It is," Wallace replied, his expression as serious as ever. "Is your hand better now?" he asked, glancing at Lady Rose's fingers.

"You make me feel very human, Wallace," Lady Rose stated, raising her bandaged fingers. She had earlier put a little too much pressure on the fragile glass outside the ballroom, resulting in a blood spill on the drinks. 12

He asked her, "Do you hate it?"

The vampiress smiled and she hummed, "Not at all. Love can make even the strongest person feel like a delicate piece of glass. It feels rather beautiful to be handled and broken." 7

Meanwhile, Mallory found herself surrounded by a cluster of women, each expressing admiration for her gown and the elegance she exuded that evening. Compliments flowed freely, both for her attire and the mesmerising dance she had shared with Hadeon. The men, however, maintained a respectful distance, well aware that she had arrived at the event with Hadeon Van Doren—a fact that seemed to subtly mark her as



untouchable within their social circle. 7

Though Hadeon was mingling with the other guests, Mallory found her own gaze involuntarily seeking him out across the room. Whenever their eyes met, she felt a jolt of warmth, prompting her to shyly look away, a blush inevitably creeping onto her cheeks. 2

Mallory gently excused herself, needing a moment to collect her swirling thoughts. She stepped out of the ballroom into the cooler air, seeking the refreshment of water from a passing servant. Though the chill of winter approached, she felt flushed, eager to soothe her warm cheeks and calm her racing heart. 8

She wondered if perhaps it would be better to visit the powder room. When she was making her way there, she noticed a shadow following her. Slipping her hand into the gown's pocket, she pulled out the salt from it. She was prepared for the ghoul.

Mallory swiftly turned, finding the corridor empty. Her heart leaped as she spun back around, a startled gasp escaping her lips, her hand instinctively raised. "You!" she exclaimed. 2

Standing before her was the death reaper she



had encountered the previous day. Confusion washed over her. Weren't reapers supposed to appear only amidst sacrificial rituals or at the moment of death? A flicker of doubt crossed her mind—she was still alive, wasn't she? She glanced around anxiously, reassuring herself that her body wasn't lifeless on the ground. 1

She lowered her hand and asked in confusion, "Are you here to take someone's soul?"

"I am here to take a few humans's souls who are going to die from depletion of blood. I thought I should pay you a visit," the death reaper said in a grim voice. 4

"That's very kind of you," Mallory replied with a smile that faltered on her lips. "You should take some time off to enjoy Hollow."

"Not interested. I am here to talk to you and there's no need to call Hades," he said to her and she waited to hear him out. He then said, "If you want to live, you should stay away from Hadeon. Because the ghouls are after you because of him and they won't stop until he is gone." 14

Mallory felt her stomach sink at this and shook her head, "Explain it to me."

"The Devil created him with the intention of



destruction, that is what his name means. And though the devil hasn't appeared for several centuries, he made sure that souls would be collected by him and you stand between those goals," the death reaper explained to her. "Unless there's some blessing, it isn't a relationship that is going to work. Now it is a ghotul and who knows what's ahead?" 11

Was he saying that if Hadeon and she got into a relationship... it would be doomed from the beginning?

"It is boggling that he even fell in love. The first creation was supposed to be a creation without any love..." remarked the death reaper in wonderment. "It makes even a person like me question what went wrong." He then picked up his pocket watch and without sparing another word, he disappeared from her sight. 5

Mallory wondered if her life was doomed to be hard, and if she carried ill luck with her. There was no future... Her hands subconsciously clenched at the thought. The fluttering feeling had been replaced by an unspoken anxiousness in her chest.

Determined not to linger like a shadow, Mallory started her descent down the stairs. Suddenly, a



forceful shove from behind, unexpected and unseen, sent her off balance. Her foot missed the next step, and she tumbled helplessly down the long staircase. With a sickening thud, her head struck the second-to-last step, leaving her crumpled on the ground below. 7

Blood began to trickle from the side of her head, pooling rapidly around her as her eyes remained still and lifeless. 24

