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Mallory wiped the blood from her fingers after drinking from the hare, the iron tang still lingering on her lips. It was peculiar how, the moment the warm liquid touched her, it seemed to wash away the guilt and hesitation that had clung to her like shadows. She murmured, 1

"They taste different."

"And which one do you prefer? There's still human blood to consider," Hadeon replied, his gaze fixed intently on her as she licked each finger clean, savouring the remnants. If it were possible, the darkness in his already intense eyes deepened as he took in the sight, and he added, "What a pretty sight it seems to be." 10

It took Mallory a moment to comprehend his implication, her hand instinctively dropping to her side as a blush crept across her cheeks. 2

"What is it in the East that cannot be achieved here?" she asked, her voice tinged with curiosity as she searched for her missing handkerchief. As if sensing her need, he produced his own from his pocket and offered it to her. "Thank you," she said gratefully. 3



"It will be easier to find a soul for you there than here," Hadeon replied casually. "There's a much greater variety, from the ancient to the new—souls that drift in the abyss without ever passing through." His tone was dismissive, as if discussing the weather rather than something as significant as a soul. "You need a soul with forgotten memories." 8

Mallory chuckled lightly, a hint of mischief in her eyes. "It sounds like we're going dress shopping when you say it like that." Her smile was bright, revealing her fangs, which she had yet to control like Hadeon and the others.

"I consider myself a rather patient shopper," he said, determination edging his voice. "We will find you the perfect soul, one that resonates with you, one that you can truly call your own." He intended for them not to leave Bonelake until he found what he wanted. His gaze shifted to her as she meticulously finished cleaning her fingers, every movement graceful. "If you like rain, you might like it." 16

"I don't mind it," Mallory replied mindlessly and then said, "I will return this later."

"Aw, keeping our first shared memento," Hadeon turned dramatic as he placed his hand on his



chest. "There's also another reason for going east. Kaiser. He's already on his way from Woville, which should give us enough time to work with the new soul and have you ready by then." 10

Kaiser... How long had she been waiting to settle the scores? And now that she was a vampire, she was at an advantage. Something dawned on her and she asked, "Ready for what?" 1

Hadeon grinned at her question, "You will know about it soon. Also, we seem to have skipped over what happened during the ball. About us," he said, the weight of his words hanging in the air between them like an unspoken promise. 8

Mallory raised her gaze to meet his intense eyes focused on her. She asked him, "And what is that...?"

Hadeon locked eyes with her for a fleeting moment, and in that shared silence, tension crackled in the air like a live wire, pulsating with unspoken possibilities. "Perhaps I could express it better with action," he said, his tone low and inviting. With a swift, deliberate motion, he cupped her face in his hand, pulling her closer. 14

As he leaned in, her lips parted instinctively, a



soft gasp escaping as his lips brushed against hers. The contact sent a jolt of electricity coursing through her, igniting a fire that flared to life in her core. It was a kiss that caught Mallory completely off guard, her eyes widening in surprise at the boldness of the moment. 11

Then, as their lips connected again, heat surged through her, flushing her cheeks as if every ounce of blood rushed down her, growing her desire. Though they had shared a kiss less than a week ago, this one felt different. 6

Instead of stepping back, she leaned into him, surrendering to the warmth. Hadeon's other hand glided possessively around her waist, drawing her gently yet firmly towards him. 10

This kiss was soft but insistent, a delicate balance of sweetness and raw heat that sent shivers down her spine. Hadeon's fingers tangled softly in her hair, cradling the back of her head, manoeuvring her in place as he deepened the kiss. There was a silent possessiveness in his touch. 3

As their mouths moved together, Mallory's initial surprise melted into an overwhelming flood of emotion—a blend of passion and vulnerability. She hadn't known a kiss could feel like this—a

fusion of softness and intensity. She found herself responding instinctively and everything else faded into the background. 7

When Hadeon finally pulled back, just enough to gaze into her eyes, his expression was a mix of satisfaction and something deeper, something raw. "You taste absolutely delicious." 6

Mallory's cheeks burnt red, a heady mix of embarrassment and exhilaration flooding through her. Flustered, she stammered, "It's just the vampire blood... all the blood rush." 3

"You know," Hadeon began, his voice smooth like silk, weaving through the air between them, "I have spent centuries wandering this world, unbothered and detached. But you..." He paused, a soft smile breaking through, "You waltzed into my life and suddenly, the weight of solitude feels unbearable. To be honest, I never really wanted to care about anything or anyone. It felt pointless. But here you..." 12

Mallory's heart fluttered in response, and she held her breath. 3

He studied her, his dark eyes gleaming with a mixture of mischief and sincerity. "You stir something within me that hasn't existed before—

an instinct to protect, to cherish what I never thought I could desire. So, consider this: I will always be by your side, ready to confront anyone who threatens you. It's not out of boredom, but because you are my dearest." 35

"W—Was that a confession...?" Mallory murmured in a stunned expression. 5

Hadeon tilted his head with a questioning look, and he remarked, "No, it is a death sentence I am giving you with me." 17

She felt as though she had been swept off her feet by Hadeon's words—each syllable heavy with unspoken promises. These weren't mere confessions. They were an invitation to share a life together. Never had she imagined hearing such heartfelt sentiments from him, and the realisation sent a thrill coursing through her. 4

"I... I don't know what to say," she stammered, the weight of his proposal leaving her momentarily speechless. 3

Hadeon's hand reached out, encircling hers gently with a warmth that sent a shiver up her arm. "You don't have to," he murmured, his dark eyes locked onto hers, a crooked smile playing at his lips. "But if words escape you, how about a



kiss of acceptance?" He tapped his finger lightly against his cheek. 10

Mallory stared right back at him, grappling with the whirlwind of her own feelings. Excitement bubbled within her, a delicate flutter that danced in her chest, mingling with a tide of nervousness at the possibilities their future could hold. But then again, it wasn't like the present didn't have hurdles. 2

The last time she had opened her heart, it had led to betrayal and heartbreak, leaving scars that whispered caution. But this time felt different. Because this was Hadeon. 2

Stepping closer, Mallory leaned in to kiss his cheek. But just as she aimed for the soft skin beside his jaw, Hadeon, the trickster, turned his head, and their lips brushed together. Her eyes slightly widened and he smiled at her with the corners of his eyes crinkling. He remarked, 12

"Things like these should be sealed with a kiss. Do you not agree?" 8

CAW! CAW! A crow swooped into the forest, its dark wings slicing through the air before it settled atop a gnarled branch, the call echoing ominously around them. "I guess it's time to



return," Hadeon stated. 3

As they returned to Delcrov's mansion, they stepped inside and moved through the grand corridors. Mallory followed closely behind Hadeon, their footsteps echoing softly against the polished marble floor. Pushing the doors open, her gaze was immediately drawn to Lady Rose, who stood before an enormous window that stretched from the floor to the ceiling.

The lady turned towards her, her gaze sharp yet inviting. "Lady Mallory," she acknowledged gracefully before adding, "The colour red suits you well." 6

Mallory offered a deep bow to the vampiress. "Thank you, Lady Rose. If it weren't for your blood, I wouldn't be standing here." 2

A tender smile graced Lady Rose's lips, brightening her features with warmth. "More than me, the credit must go to Wallace. He insisted it was better to wrap it in bandages than to have it licked clean." Her expression shifted, curiosity flickering in her eyes. "How does it feel to be a vampire?" 2

"I'm still adjusting to it. Everything feels too loud," Mallory replied, glancing over at the lady's

butler. His expression barely changed, and instead it looked grimmer than usual. It was when she looked further in the room that her eyes fell on the coffin that had been prepared. 5

"Hadeon is an excellent teacher. Though he has different ways of teaching, I am sure you are in good hands," Lady Rose said, before silence filled the room. There was unspeakable tension in the atmosphere that Mallory sensed. "You must already know what I am going to request from you."

To end her life. Mallory gave a nod to her. 7

"How kind of you, Rose, to have Mallory practice on you," Hadeon remarked sarcastically.

"I have prepared the things you might require," Wallace informed, directing her to a table of different kinds of knives, daggers, and stakes. 3

Mallory had attacked humans with her fist, but she had never gone for the kill. And the moment now felt more than daunting. As if sensing her internal distress, Hadeon came to stand next to her and picked up the dagger that had little wood pieces embedded into the metal.

"Steady your hand and push it right into the heart area. It will be quick and easy," Hadeon

instructed Mallory once she took the dagger from him. 2

Stepping up to stand before the vampiress, Mallory gripped the dagger tightly. She met the vampiress's gaze, and in response, the woman gave her a subtle nod.

Drawing on Hadeon's words, Mallory plunged the dagger into the woman's chest. Time seemed to slow as she watched the crimson liquid begin to trickle down, contrasting starkly against the pale skin. Remarkably, the vampiress maintained her composure, her expression one of serene acceptance. Mallory had expected her to collapse lifelessly, yet the woman stood strong and barely affected.

Feeling a surge of urgency, Mallory pulled the dagger free, allowing more blood to seep out, the metallic scent filling her senses. Lady Rose's chest began to heal where the wound had been formed. 2

Hadeon, standing just a few steps away, observed intently, his brows knitting together in thought. "The prophecy must not hold true any longer because she's a vampire and not a human anymore," he remarked, his voice steady yet tinged with intrigue.



"If that's the case, shouldn't the ghouls stop coming after me as well?" Mallory asked. 2

Hadeon regarded her thoughtfully, and he replied, "True. But the heavens tend to play by the rules more than those from hell. You see, the creatures of the abyss don't concern themselves with such niceties."

Wallace was quick to appear next to Lady Rose, helping her clean up the blood that had spilt on her. She said, "Perhaps that would mean that Mallory needs to be a human if she is able to kill people. And the prophecy never deviates. It is only a matter of when."

Mallory turned to him, confusion knitting her brow. "But I am a vampire," she stated.

Hadeon sighed, the sound rich with unspoken thoughts. "True, but that also means there's a possibility of you transforming back into a human to fulfil the prophecy." He paused for a moment, his gaze piercing as it settled on her. "No vampire has ever reverted to human form, which raises the question of why you might." 11

It made Mallory wonder if it could be because she didn't have a soul? But that still didn't make sense!