

44 Picky Master ¹⁰

Thanks to Hadeon's intervention, a selection of shoes awaited Mallory, with the shop workers poised to assist at a moment's notice. She thought she could grab a pair and scam, but Hadeon had other ideas. As she reached for a shoe, the shopkeeper practically shoved it into her hands, sweating bullets under the pureblooded vampire's piercing gaze. ¹

"Absolute garbage," Hadeon remarked, casually sipping his third cup of blood tea. "Looks like something a horse would wear." ¹⁰

Mallory shot Hadeon a silent glare before muttering, "Master Hades, these are perfectly fine." ¹

Hadeon let out an exasperated sigh and clicked his tongue, before saying, "It is moments like these, monkey, where you need my expertise. Your fashion sense could use some serious upgrading. Don't worry though, because your master is here." ¹¹

Had it been the first five pair of shoes Mallory had reached out for, she would have agreed. But she had practically worn more than thirty pairs

of shoes, and Hadeon had waved his hand with a dismissive look at each one of them as if they were not good enough. 9

"Such a delightful shop name, yet the collection is utterly disappointing," Hadeon commented dryly, producing his lighter and flicking it open. "Honestly, they deserve to be burned." 2

Mallory's eyes widened in alarm, along with those of the people inside the shop. She quickly suggested, "Maybe Master Hades would like to choose a pair for me?" 6

Hadeon's gaze turned towards her, a malevolent grin stretching across his features as he theatrically snapped his lighter shut, "Look at you, unable to find a decent shoe and asking for my assistance." 9

Placing his cup aside, he rose from his seat and strode purposefully towards the room where shoes were stacked. Though Mallory couldn't see him, she could hear the sound of boxes being tossed out one after another. After a tense two minutes, they heard him remark, 4

"Well, aren't you a sight to behold?" Mallory wondered if he had found the right shoe. But then she heard, "Mirrors never lie. It's a sin to

look so handsome." 37

"..." 1

The shopkeeper, wishing to apologise to Mallory, bowed his head, fearing that acknowledging his rudeness towards the lady would result in dire consequences. Finally, they heard the pureblooded vampire's voice again, dripping with disdain, "Were you saving these for your wife?" 1

Hadeon stepped out of the room, waving a pair of light peach shoes with delicate heels and ankle straps. As he approached Mallory, she couldn't help but notice the golden heels and delicate vine motifs adorning the shoes. 19

"I—I don't have a wife," the shopkeeper stuttered nervously. "B—But—"

"Your butt is not going to fit in the shoes. What an odd choice of style you have, you weirdo," Hadeon said in a nonchalant tone. When he stepped near Mallory, the shopkeeper looked distressed, prompting him to hastily retreat before the pureblooded vampire's looming presence. 12

"These shoes, sire, they've been reserved for Lady Violet for the upcoming ball next month,"

the shopkeeper explained, mustering all his courage. 17

"Has she seen them?" Hadeon inquired sharply.

The shopkeeper shook his head, "No, but I mentioned to her that I had them and she w—"

"Then the problem is solved! She can't complain about something she hasn't seen," Hadeon looked around before picking up the shoe that he had called fit for a horse and throwing it at the shopkeeper. "Give her these. I'll cover the cost. Now, where were we?" 8

"Master Hades..." Mallory began, eyeing Hadeon as he settled onto his heels.

"What now? You want to rock those horse shoes too?" Hadeon asked, arching an eyebrow. 1

"If those shoes are spoken for, we probably shouldn't mess with them," Mallory suggested, wondering if Hadeon enjoyed pushing people's buttons for fun. 6

"They're fair game, because I snagged them first," Hadeon declared with a tone of indifference.

"And honestly, if this Yellow character really wanted them, she'd have shown up herself. Ever heard of the phrase, 'You snooze, you lose'? Now

why don't you bring your feet forward?" 11

"What if I say I don't want to wear them?"

Mallory asked, wanting to see if Hadeon would let it go.

Hadeon's eyes subtly narrowed, a sardonic smile tugging at the corner of his lips. "Alright then. I suppose you're fine with going barefoot? If that's your preference." 6

Mallory's eyes narrowed in return, disbelief etched on her face. "You're suggesting you won't replace the shoes you tore?" she challenged. Surely, he couldn't be serious. 1

"Let me remind you, I was merely trying to assist you. Next time, I'll be sure to leave the wound untouched," Hadeon rolled his eyes before saying, "Wear them, monkey. Don't test my patience."

Mallory's mouth opened, ready to retort with 'Or what?' but her voice failed her, trapped in her throat. 4

"Go on, monkey. Say what you want to say," Hadeon urged, his grin widening to reveal his sharp fangs. Despite her resistance, Mallory gritted her teeth and raised her feet gingerly. "Good girl," he praised, his tone both mocking

and approving. 9

As Hadeon slipped the shoes onto Mallory's feet, she couldn't help but marvel at how elegant they looked. It was perhaps the first pair of shoes she found genuinely beautiful. 3

"Tell me you don't like them," Hadeon challenged with a sly grin, and Mallory pursed her lips in response. Then, turning his attention to the shopkeeper, Hadeon continued, "We'll take these. And also..." 1

"Yes, sire?" The shopkeeper leaned forward anxiously, wringing his hands.

"I trust these are the only pair available, and there are no others like them?" Hadeon inquired, inspecting his nails with casual disinterest. "I would be rather displeased if someone else had a matching pair." 9

"T-They're the only ones. The last ones!" The shopkeeper stammered, already contemplating closing shop and fleeing town to avoid further encounters with the imposing vampire. 3

Hadeon dropped a bag of gold coins on the counter, the weight of the coins ringing out in the silence of the shop. Without uttering a word, he strode out of the shoe shop, Mallory trailing

behind him. However, before they could take more than a few steps, the shopkeeper came rushing after them, his voice calling out urgently.

"Excuse me, miss!" he called, his footsteps echoing on the pavement.

Mallory turned, her gaze meeting the approaching man. As he caught up to her, he extended another bag, offering it to her with a nervous smile. "These are for you. Consider it a complimentary gift, milady..."

His words trailed off, but Mallory understood the unspoken gratitude behind the gesture. With a nod of acknowledgment, she accepted the bag, knowing it was his way of expressing thanks for not tattling on him. She offered a polite bow before watching him depart, his hurried footsteps fading into the distance. 3

"A little too nice, aren't you?" Hadeon's voice cut through the air, causing Mallory to turn and meet his piercing golden gaze.

"What do you mean?"

"I know something happened before I arrived at the shop. The shopkeeper's heartbeat quickened every time you were about to speak." With that, he began to stroll down the street. "Now that

your shoes are done, we need to find you some decent clothes." 9

"I thought we were here to shop for you," Mallory murmured.

"Well, we are. But now that we are in Marrowmere, I thought, why not make full use of it, hm? Consider it to be your little treat. A gift," Hadeon stated while tilting his head. 5

"Your generosity worries me, Master Hades," Mallory muttered, as she walked one step behind him and heard him let out a wicked chuckle. 2

"I told you I would treat you yesterday, didn't I? You did very well instead of behaving like those rats," Hadeon looked ahead of them. But he was interested in a particular shop, and his eyes scanned, wondering where to find it. A collar. 23

Mallory noticed how the longer they were in this town, the more people turned to notice Hadeon. The man wore an air of elegance even though he was filled with evil thoughts, ready to sadistically laugh at others' plight.

"This ought to be good," Hadeon hummed in glee, his eyes twinkling like stars.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, George came running from the opposite direction, and he ran like his life depended on it. Mallory wondered what was going on, as the man was drenched in sweat and huffed for air by the time he came before them.

"L—Lord Hadeon! I have... have bought the cigar, and this is the change!" George stammered, raising the cigars towards Hadeon with trembling hands. Then, without warning, he collapsed to the ground, pressing his forehead against the cobblestones. "I am your servant, let me serve you!" 18

Huh? What did she just hear? Mallory was surprised by this sudden change in behaviour, which made her question what had transpired in those minutes when George had disappeared from their side.

Hadeon's lips curled into a sinister smile and he remarked, "Oh, Georgie, I knew you would one day understand and only needed a little self reflection." 17

