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When Mallory and Hadeon arrived at the Van Doren castle, Mallory was out of the carriage faster than a squirrel. She didn't even wait for Barnby to open the door, even though he was quick on his feet and stood ready by the door like a well-trained butler. 1

"Lady Mallory?" Barnby muttered, his eyebrows raised at the sight of her dash towards the castle entrance.

"Let her be," Hadeon replied, a hint of amusement playing at the corner of his mouth as he casually descended from the carriage. "She'll circle back soon enough," he stated in confidence, because they were going to head out soon.

Mallory breezed through the corridors, throwing cautious glances over her shoulder. Just as she turned back around, she nearly jumped out of her skin as George suddenly appeared in front of her.

"Where have you been all night?! Hadeon wasn't in the castle either!" George's voice was thick with concern, and his brows knitted in a serious



interrogation mode. "Did you roll in the mud?" 14

"Yes," Mallory responded, keeping the juicy details to herself. 6

"In the rain?" George's face scrunched up. He leaned in closer, and said, "I need to talk to you about something important. I need your help."

"What help do you need, Georgie? You can request your lord," Hadeon remarked from behind as he made his way towards them with languid footsteps that softly echoed on the carpeted floor. 5

"L—Lord Hadeon," George said, looking startled by Hadeon's presence, and he quickly offered him a bow. How times changed, Mallory thought to herself. The human then said, "I was thinking, now that it has been two weeks since I started to work, how about I do something more useful to you and in the castle? Like, help Barnby when he's not here, uh?" His smile faltered. 6

Mallory noticed how Hadeon coolly stared back at George with the same smile, his expression barely changing like a ghost.

"Indeed, you are right. Barnby could use your help." Hadeon nodded with a thoughtful expression. "You will be taking up the tasks he



has today. Barnby," he called his butler-come coachman. "Lead Georgie to your duties today." 5

"Yes, Lord Hadeon!" George replied with gusto, quickly stepping aside to make room for the butler, when he suddenly heard Hadeon's voice call out, "Wifey." 20

For a split second, George nearly convinced himself that Hadeon had just referred to him as "wifey." His eyes widened in bafflement, and his ears began to turn pink—but then he noticed Hadeon's gaze was fixed on Mallory, not him. George's jaw dropped open in utter astonishment. 18

"Come along now," Barnby said in his typically stoic manner as he continued walking, leaving George no choice but to trail behind him. Unable to contain his curiosity, George leaned in and asked, "What did he just call her?" 2

"Wifey," Barnby responded flatly, and George looked as if the ground beneath him had shifted. 8

"When did this happen?!" George exclaimed, his hand flying to cover his mouth in shock. Mallory Winchester had been far craftier than he'd imagined! By marrying the pureblooded vampire, she had drastically improved her standing! 12



Barnby didn't pause as he led George to the stable where the horses were kept. Just as they reached their destination, he instructed, "Clean the stable floor." As if on cue, a horse conveniently chose that moment to relieve itself, adding to the mess on the floor right in front of them. 10

Inside the castle, Mallory stared hard at Hadeon and before she could say anything, the pureblooded vampire said, "Freshen up and have something to eat. We will be leaving afterward."

Mallory's mind immediately darted to her destination—the old house where her grandmother had once lived. She shared her concern, "Grandmother's house is far from here."

"Then you should make haste so that we don't get caught up in another rain," Hadeon's eyes danced with amusement, and he saw her quickly run in the direction of her room.

After scrubbing away the stubborn forest mud and hastily consuming what was available in the kitchen, Mallory made her way back to the carriage. She found Hadeon already seated inside. It was only then that she realised that the attire he was wearing this morning in bed was different compared to the one he had changed



into last night.

As if he had left the inn and had returned. 4

Soon, the carriage left for her grandmother's village, which was a two hour ride. Upon arriving at the edge of the village, Barnby pulled the carriage to a halt.

"Aren't we going further?" Mallory asked, curiosity lacing her voice.

"Considering your grandmother had been living here for years, I have reasons to believe that there are more witches living here. We don't want to alarm the witches," Hadeon offered her a crooked smile. He then said, "Witches are often not pleasant to have conversations with, and if they knew I am a vampire, it would be harder to get answers. We shall see how it goes."

"But my grandmother was a nice person," Mallory advocated, meeting Hadeon's eyes. "She was nice to me."

The ends of Hadeon's lips stretched into a broad grin, his eyes twinkling as he remarked, "So it doesn't matter that she could have eaten children's organs, because she was nice to you?" 12

Mallory's lips set themselves in a thin line, and



she heard him add, "I was joking," and he stepped out of the carriage, beginning to walk towards the village.

She hadn't thought so deeply about her grandmother, especially not her eating habits, because she hadn't seen her grandmother eat anything strange in the years she had initially stayed with her. She had always held the memories of her grandmother close to her heart. 5

"Go on, milady," Barnby said, as if not wanting her to be lost in the village she was familiar with. "I will be waiting here for your return with Lord Hadeon." 2

With a nod, Mallory caught up to Hadeon and walked next to him, forgetting her demotion. Meanwhile, Hadeon, ever observant, quietly noted the equal stride she maintained. He could sense her heart racing and saw the flicker of anxiety across her face, even as she tried to mask it with her composed presence.

"No one looks like a witch here," Mallory said in a low voice, as they caught a couple of people on the streets.

"Well, you can't blame them for wanting to put



their best foot forward. That's deception," Hadeon commented casually, his gaze scanning the surroundings. "Which is the house?"

"It's two streets away from here, on the left. Red bricks and a blue door," Mallory directed, her voice a mixture of nostalgia and reluctance. Soon enough, they stood before the house.

"If your grandmother was still with us, she and I would have gotten along famously," Hadeon mused, examining the lush garden that bloomed in front of the house. "She seems to have been quite the gardener, huh?"

"Grandmother didn't bury bodies, Master Hades," Mallory retorted with a frown. 7

"That's what you think. We should uproot all these plants and see what's really hidden beneath," Hadeon suggested with a mischievous glint in his eye.

"Yeah, right..." Mallory muttered.

"Fetch the gardening tools," Hadeon suddenly instructed. Mallory, lost in the flood of childhood memories evoked by the old house, snapped her gaze at him, startled. 3

"You seriously want to dig up the garden?" she



asked incredulously.

"Mhm. More often than not, things are hidden in plain sight rather than buried deep," Hadeon replied, his voice taking on a tone of mock-serious wisdom. "Just like how you hid the money in the ground." 2

Returning from the back of the house, Mallory handed the gardening trowel to him and kept the fork for her use. She saw him raise one of his eyebrows, and she murmured, "As you love to garden so much, I thought you might enjoy this time." 6

Hadeon's lips twisted in amusement, and he murmured, "Cheeky little thing, aren't you, monkey?" 2

As Mallory began to dig up the plants around the house, she didn't find anything in the first five minutes, and neither did Hadeon. When she glanced at the pureblooded vampire, the sight was definitely strange, as his appearance and what he was doing, didn't just go along.

Twenty minutes passed, and nothing was found.

To take a break, Mallory unlocked the main door to which she had the key. Her fingers brushed against the surface of the wall, where her



grandmother had marked her height, and it brought a smile. But then she remembered Hadeon's words... that she was a stolen child and the smile lowered on her lips. 2

Her eyes then fell on a painting that her grandmother had made, which now hung on the wall. It was a painting of a forest with fireflies in it. 2

"Mallory? Is that you?" A woman's voice came from outside the house before peeping in.

"Sable," Mallory waved at the woman, whom she was familiar with. The woman was as old as her. "It is good to see you!"

"You too! I heard about your family, pardon me for not attending the funeral," Sable said, who had warm brown eyes. "What brings you here?"

"I was missing Grandmother and thought of visiting," Mallory lied. Since her grandmother had passed away, she hadn't returned here, as her aunt had, for some reason, frowned upon her keeping any contact here, as she always felt their status didn't go along with where her grandmother came from.

Besides, her grandmother was buried in Reavermoure. There was a rustle behind the



house that caught Sable's attention, and soon Hadeon appeared in view, and the moment he gave a bright smile, Sable's eyes widened at the sight of the good-looking man. 5

Mallory introduced them, "This is Sable, Mr. and Mrs. Pousch's daughter. They live next door. And this is Hades, my friend." She caught Hadeon's subtle eyebrow raise, a silent query about her casual manipulation of their labels. 9

Sable, seemingly oblivious to the undercurrents, was fixated on Hadeon with an intrigued gaze. Breaking into a warm smile, she suggested, "Why don't you both come over and have a cup of tea?" She then turned to Mallory, her eyes brightening. "I remember you liking the herbal tea. It's been so long since we last caught up with each other. Our vacations together were always too short." 8

"Of course," Mallory responded with a genuine smile, watching Sable nod enthusiastically before she headed to her house.

As they stepped out of the house, Hadeon leaned in, his voice low, "Looks like your first friend is a witch and not a very good one." 15

Mallory's lips tightened slightly. "Sable saved me



from drowning once in the river," she defended. 4

"Tsk, so you were trouble even when you were young, Mallory Winchester," Hadeon teased, his tone rich with mock disapproval. His gaze became speculative. "Was it before you both became friends? Something in the story doesn't quite add up."

"Let's just say you are right—"

"Which I am," Hadeon cut in, his confidence unshaken.

"But you barely know her enough to judge," Mallory countered quietly, her voice a mere whisper, pointing out his haste in assessing Sable. 2

Hadeon's response came with a dark chuckle, "I can tell because I've spent many years honing my expertise in discerning the true nature of various creatures," he explained. "Also," he turned to look at her, "Calling your yesterday's husband a friend, are you trying to test my loyalty or your friend's?" 11

Mallory sent him a glare, when she heard Sable call her, "Mal?"

"Coming," Mallory replied, and said to Hadeon,



"Don't."

"Don't leave your side? Don't stop?" Hadeon's grin widened as if his diabolical self were activating by being in the village. 1

As they settled into the living room, surrounded by vases filled with fresh flowers, Sable soon emerged, carrying refreshments. She handed a teacup to Hadeon first, and then approached Mallory with a glass of juice. 7

However, before Mallory could grasp it, Hadeon intercepted the glass and took a sip. After savouring the taste, he clicked his tongue and said, "The juice looked so good, I couldn't resist not taking a sip." 27