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After speaking with Hadeon, Mallory found Hattie in the maid's room inside the castle. Like Mallory, Hattie had little to call her own, with only a few spare belongings she had picked up in the last few days to survive. 1

"Lady Mallory, thank God you're here!" Hattie whispered urgently, quickly walking to the door and closing it behind her. "Have you been harmed?" 4

Mallory smiled at Hattie's concern and replied, "As you can see, I am doing fine, Hattie. There is nothing to worry about." 2

"But that man—he's the dead man we dug up that night, isn't he? He's walking and talking, and he just came and threatened me to come with him!" Hattie's eyes were wide with fear, as if she had seen a ghost. Until now, she had been holding herself together, but her composure broke now that they were alone. "I saw him k-kill those town guards with pebbles and thought he had sacrificed you." 8

"Death is too easy an option for him," Mallory murmured, imagining how Hattie and Hadeon's



conversation had gone. She smiled reassuringly. "Hadeon can be like that most of the time, but you are safe. He knows how important you are to me. He wouldn't hurt you," she assured the young woman, placing her hands gently on her arms. 11

"Really?" Hattie asked, her eyes wide with concern. Mallory nodded reassuringly.

"Yes, why else would he bring you here?" Mallory replied light-heartedly. Despite Hadeon's violent tendencies, she believed he wouldn't—

"Because I helped you open his coffin too!" Hattie exclaimed, her eyes wide with fear. "I told you, milady, opening coffins brings curses." 8

Mallory had initially felt the same when she first met Hadeon, but he had saved her life more than once, which counted for something. "I wouldn't call it a curse. If it weren't for him, I could have ended up as someone's stew last night." 5

"Stew?" Hattie repeated, bewildered.

Mallory gently guided Hattie to sit down and began explaining everything that had happened. Hattie listened with a shocked expression, her hand covering her mouth. When Mallory finished, Hattie whispered, "I'm so sorry you



went through all that, milady. I wish I could have been more useful. I even searched for you, but I couldn't find you. I heard this castle was supposed to be abandoned."

"It was, until Hadeon came back from his sleep," Mallory replied, watching Hattie nod in understanding. 4

"I thought his name was Glideon. At least, that's what was plastered on the town walls," Hattie sighed loudly, and Mallory was relieved that Hadeon wasn't around to hear it. "The last time I saw you, your face was covered in bruises. Thankfully, there are none now. I'm just so happy to be here with you." 4

"Me too, Hattie," Mallory said, sharing the young woman's relief and happiness. 2

"But milady... Did you not think about leaving this place? Your posters have been pulled down, and it looks like the towns have forgotten about the matter," Hattie said softly, her eyebrows slightly furrowing. "To go west, where Lady Elspeth lives?" 3

Lady Elspeth was her maternal aunt, a widow. But now that Mallory considered her family tree, with branches nowhere attached, she realised



the lady was not actually related to her. Not to mention, she had never met her even once in her life. 2

"Some other things have come up now, Hattie, and I don't think I can let them rest until I find answers," Mallory responded, thinking about the book of memories and what she had found inside it. She hadn't mentioned any of this to Hattie. Seeing the confused look on Hattie's face, it was clear that much of this was going over the young woman's head. 5

"I see. Then I will serve you here!" Hattie exclaimed, her determination clear as she decided not to press for more information. She noticed that her lady's chain had disappeared and was now fashioned into a choker necklace around Mallory's neck.

Suddenly, their conversation was interrupted when the door opened and Ivy showed up at the door.

"Lord Hadeon has ordered both of you to join him in the orchard garden," Ivy informed them. "Now." 1

The two women stood up from the bed, and stepped out of the room. On their way, Mallory



noticed Ivy staring at her and she had a sullen expression. 16

Once they arrived at the garden, Mallory caught sight of Hadeon standing amid the lush trees. She didn't know why, but she didn't have a good feeling about this. Ivy walked to the side, while Mallory asked the pureblooded vampire, 3

"Did you need something from us?"

"I did," came the nonchalant words from Hadeon. "I wanted to see how good of an apple picker Hattie is. I was thinking that with all the apples we have here, they should be turned into cider. What do you think, Ivy?" 6

"You always have excellent ideas, milord," Ivy responded with a polite bow, the adoration in her voice going unnoticed. 4

"Go prepare the cellar," Hadeon ordered, and Ivy left the place. He then turned to Hattie and asked in a serious voice, "Waiting for the bell to ring? Go on. Lady Mallory would like to take a bite."

Mallory gave Hadeon a questioning look, because whatever he had on his mind, it was definitely not simple. She could only imagine that his mind was similar to a very long thread,



which was intertwined with complexity. 3

Hattie walked to one of the trees, where she saw the apple hanging closer to the ground than the rest of them. At the same time, Mallory said to Hadeon, "Master Hades, I do—"

"Hard to stop calling me master, hm?" Hadeon murmured with a sly smile.

Mallory's lips pursed and she said, "You know I don't eat apples from here. Why are you making her pick it?"

"Not a very good apple picker, is she? Seems to grab whatever's closest instead of the one with the best colour and taste," he remarked with a condescending tsk. When the maid finally plucked an apple, he ordered sharply, "Stay there." 8

Hattie looked bewildered, holding the apple in her hand, as she turned to Mallory for guidance. Hadeon's eyes were cold and unyielding as he instructed, "Place the apple on your head. Upside down, so it grips better. I'd hate for it to slip and end up blowing your head off." 10

"Don't tell me you're going to shoot the apple off her head..." Mallory said, her voice tinged with fear and worry.



Hadeon's expression remained nonchalant as he drew a gun from behind him, the metal gleaming ominously. "I was thinking that, even though I usually hit my targets, I should work on my precision. You know, like hitting the exact spot," he said, his tone chillingly casual as he aimed the gun.

"Why?" Mallory asked, because he and she both knew that he had a precise aim.

"It is for your benefit, wifey. We need to test and put you under pressure to see if there's anything inside you. I told you I would help you, didn't I?" Hadeon asked, looking at Mallory with a serious gleam in his eyes, before he pulled the trigger without looking at where to aim. 25

