



84 Becoming of the fruit ¹³

Mallory knew that with Hadeon, there was always a transaction involved. She could have let the deer die, but she couldn't bear to watch a defenceless animal be killed. She wished they would encounter people who deserved his wrath instead. Giving blood might have been a simpler solution, but the thought of his fangs piercing her skin sent a chill down her spine. ¹

Hadeon had left her side, giving her the space she needed. She didn't know where he had gone and continued to walk until she caught sight of red berries hanging from a bush. ³

"I remember these!" Mallory exclaimed, her excitement evident. These berries grew at the edge of Reavermoure, and Hattie had introduced them to her. She had fond memories of eating them together. She stretched her hand to grab a branch, but it was too high. She jumped a couple of times until the branch suddenly lowered itself, leaving her momentarily confused.

When Mallory leaned back, taking a step backward, her back touched Hadeon. He stood there, his hand holding the branch down. The pureblooded vampire was tall, much taller than



her. Not expecting his help, her eyes lingered on him for a second longer before she heard him say, 13

"Good enough?" Mallory's words were caught in her throat, and she could only manage a nod. "Go on then. What are you waiting for?" his words whispered. 9

There was something in the way he stood so close, his words a whisper of breeze, that made Mallory pause and focus entirely on him. She murmured, "I will get it... thank you."

"Always a pleasure," Hadeon replied with a polite smile that made Mallory's walls rise. 5

A little suspicious, she asked him, "Is this about my blood?" 2

Hadeon didn't look away, his expression unchanged. "You wound me, Mallory Winchester. Doubting my good intentions. But if you don't want it, who am I to keep it there?" The corner of his lips subtly curled before he let go of the branch. 7

The branch snapped back to its original position, causing some of the loose fruits to fall to the ground along with the leaves waiting to wither. But that wasn't all the branch had to offer, as a



sprinkle of water drops fell on them.

Mallory quickly closed her eyes at the sudden sprinkle and turned to properly face him. She muttered, "I didn't know you got offended that easily. I thought you were a big, bad... pureblooded vampire made of ice." 11

A flicker of amusement danced in Hadeon's golden eyes. He replied, "Even the coldest ice can be melted. Besides, it's not every day someone questions my intentions so boldly. Usually, when I find someone like that, I toy with them before snapping their heads. Not like they have much to offer in the department of amusement."

"It is good to know that I have been able to amuse you," Mallory replied. 2

"Is that sarcasm I hear?" Hadeon questioned her, noticing her turn her back to him and stand on her toes, hoping to reach the branch.

"Of course not, milord. I wouldn't dare such a folly," Mallory stated with her eyes on the fruit. It wasn't like she had gone out of her way to amuse Hadeon, but because he was, he had bothered to keep her around long enough to offer his help. 2

Hadeon effortlessly picked up the fruit and



broke it open, revealing something similar to garlic cloves. He put it in his mouth, murmuring a hum of approval before clicking his tongue at the sweet and sour taste. "How strange that I have been around for so long and have never eaten this one before," he said, putting the rest in his mouth. "You should try these." 8

Mallory glared at the bark of the tree. She would have, if she had been able to grab it. She wondered if she should really climb the tree, as Hadeon was already on his second fruit without sharing. 12

Knowing it was impossible, Mallory's eyes met Hadeon's, who was still enjoying the second fruit. She asked him politely, "Can you lower the branch for me, please?" 3

Hadeon reached for the branch, plucking a fruit higher than Mallory could reach. Instead of handing it to her, he opened the fruit, pulled out a clove and popped it in his mouth. He then offered the rest to her. She took it and ate the fruit, memories from her past flooding back.

Mallory watched as Hadeon licked his fingers clean, savouring the fruit's nectar that had dripped on his skin. His movements were slow and deliberate, exuding a seductive allure that



sent a shiver down her spine. 11

"We should head back now," he said, his voice smooth and enticing.

"But I'm not done eating..." Mallory protested, her voice trailing off in disappointment. It wasn't fair that she'd only had one.

And then Hadeon did something no one else would.

The pureblooded vampire walked towards the bark of the tree, giving it a casual hug before pulling it out of the ground, roots and all. Mallory's eyes widened in shock. Who even pulled out an entire tree?! 29

Hadeon glanced at her stunned expression, clearly amused by her speechlessness. Resting the tree on his shoulder, he said, "Now we can have as many as we want as we travel to the north." With that, he began to walk away.

Mallory quickly caught up, manoeuvring around the tree that took up so much space. She found herself needing to walk ahead of Hadeon just to see him.

When they reached the carriage, Barnby, who had been waiting with the horses fed and their



thirst quenched, turned at the loud rustle. His eyes widened at the sight of the uprooted tree. 5

"Have this tied above the carriage, Barnby. You can have some if you want," Hadeon remarked cheerfully, dropping the tree on the ground before getting inside the carriage. 2

As Mallory approached the carriage door, she caught Barnby's equally shocked expression at his lord's antics. Apparently, even Hadeon's servants had a similar effect as hers. Leaving the coachman to it, she climbed inside the carriage and took her seat. 5

While the tree was being tied at the top with the branches hanging at the back, Mallory couldn't help but imagine how a carriage had grown a tail now. All thanks to the blessings of Hadeon Van Doren, she mused. 4

Once the tree was firmly in place, the carriage resumed its journey. After a while, Mallory noticed Hadeon with his legs crossed and his eyes closed, leaning against the window as if he were about to fall asleep.

"You should sit beside me," Hadeon suddenly said, his eyes still closed. "The view is much better up close." 13



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Mallory didn't retort to this and Hadeon didn't continue the conversation even though there was a sly smile on his lips, which was enough to make her look away from him. If it were sounds, she would have said that he had been hearing. But his eyes were closed to catch her watching him, she thought in her mind. ¹

Deciding to get some rest herself, Mallory closed her eyes and leaned against the other side of the moving carriage. But just a few minutes into her sleep, the carriage suddenly toppled, jolting her wide awake and disoriented. ¹⁴

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