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The next morning, Mallory was awakened by the distant chirping of birds. As her eyes opened, she found the world tilted until she felt the soft yet firm surface beneath her head. Raising her head, she realised she had been resting on Hadeon's shoulder all night. 1

"Good morning, sleepyhead," Hadeon greeted her, a playful glint in his eyes. "Did you have a satisfying sleep?" 5

Mallory quickly pulled away, realising that she had curled her hand around the pureblooded vampire's arm as if it were a pillow. "Forgive me! You should have woken me." 6

Hadeon noticed how Mallory had been growing increasingly conscious of him since last night, and he couldn't help but smile slyly. "I did when your head dropped on my shoulder and you started to drool, but you only tightened your hands around me. So clingy," he teased. 12

Mallory's face turned bright red as she quickly turned her back to him, squinting in embarrassment. "I'm sorry about that. I should have been more aware." She paused for a second,



then added, with a hint of awkwardness, "I'll go wash my face."

"Lord Hadeon!" Cawlin, who had been patiently waiting for his turn to speak as his lord had closed his eyes and seemed uninterested in conversation earlier, quickly came to sit in front of him. "Barnby has crossed the borders and has entered Woville. He has secured a carriage. Would you like me to tell him to wait for you?" 4

Hadeon chuckled, watching Mallory walk stiffly away. He murmured, "I do love a bit of clinginess, though this one feels like a pinch. It should do." 6

"Milord?" Cawlin looked confused. 1

"That won't be necessary. Though there are some things I need him to find out, it will save me some time," Hadeon hummed thoughtfully. 4

Meanwhile, far from Hadeon, Mallory found herself next to the river and sat at the edge. She splashed cold water against her face, groaning.

"So many things are happening! I don't know which one to focus on," she muttered.

"Something tells me that mother wasn't chased because of the prophecy. There must be something more and I can only find out about it



once I arrive at the royal castle." 6

Though Mallory was thinking about the royal castle, her thoughts quickly drifted back to Hadeon grabbing her waist and pushing her against the rack in the library. The tingle in her toes from that moment was still fresh in her memory. Never had she thought that a kiss could evoke such a feather-light emotion. 10

"Stupid old pureblooded vampire!" Mallory muttered, scooping water from the river and splashing it against her face. The flowing water prevented her from seeing her reflection, making it difficult for her to fix her appearance. 1

Standing up, Mallory turned to leave when, suddenly and out of nowhere, she was pulled into the water. 14

For the first few seconds under the water, Mallory's thoughts were disoriented, unable to comprehend what had just happened. As she struggled to resurface, her efforts seemed futile; someone had caught her ankle, pulling her deeper. Though the sky above was bright, the water grew increasingly darker the further she was dragged down, giving the sensation of an endless descent. 7





A shadowy figure tried to drag her away from the surface while Mallory flailed her hands and legs. For a moment, she managed to land a kick on the person's face and try to swim back up. Emerging from the water, she gasped for air, but her success was short-lived. The figure came right back at her, yanking her down swiftly, giving her no opportunity to escape. 2

"...!" Mallory exclaimed underwater, this time able to see the silhouette more clearly. It was a woman with long black hair, spreading out in the water like dark tendrils. Her clothes, ragged and torn, blended with the murky depths, giving her an eerie appearance. When the woman opened her mouth wide, it revealed her jagged teeth. 8

Before the woman could drag her to a place from which she couldn't return, Mallory's consciousness began to dim. She closed her eyes, feeling a sudden rush of air. In the blink of an eye, she found herself transported from the river's depths to its edge. 2

"Holy... crap...!" Mallory gasped for air, stumbling away from the water. She glanced at her ankle, noticing the fingerprint on her skin. As she looked back, she saw the water grow still. "What the hell is that?" she muttered, spotting the



woman briefly surfacing to reveal its black, hollow eyes before disappearing beneath the surface. 1

Hastily, Mallory hurried back to where Hadeon was, who was conversing with his crow. The bird flew away as she approached. 4

When Hadeon turned to look at Mallory, he found her utterly drenched, water dripping onto the ground. He noticed her dilated eyes and rapid breathing, and he said, "I'm guessing you aren't here to invite me to take a bath." 5

Still catching her breath, Mallory shook her head. "There was a woman in the river. I don't think she's a woman," she frowned. "More like some strange water creature."

"A siren?" Hadeon asked, glancing in the direction Mallory had come from. 1

"No, not that I have seen one before. She wasn't beautiful like how sirens are described. This one looked like something out of a Halloween story," Mallory answered as her heart steadied. 4

"How about I go greet her? It would be rude not to pay a visit to this woman," Hadeon suggested, his eyes twinkling with a hint of violence. 1



When they arrived at the river, the water was flowing once again. Hadeon handed his coat to Mallory and, within seconds, dove into the water. Five minutes passed without any sign of him, and Mallory's worry began to grow.

"Hadeon?" Mallory called out, receiving no response. "Hadeon!" She shouted louder, but only the sound of the flowing water replied.

Another minute passed, and she gritted her teeth. "Where did he go?" she asked, feeling increasingly anxious. Just then, Hadeon surfaced, but not as she had hoped. He appeared unconscious, his body floating in the water. 12

Mallory's eyes widened in horror at the sight of Hadeon floating away. Not knowing what else to do, she apparated from the riverbank back into the water. It took her a moment to catch hold of the pureblooded vampire before she could apparate them both back to land. 12

"Hadeon?!" she exclaimed, her voice filled with worry as he showed no signs of consciousness. Did the water contain something harmful? Surely he couldn't be dead—he was already undead. 5

She placed her hands on his chest and began to pump it, not to revive his heart but to expel any





harmful water he might have ingested.

"Wake up! Please," Mallory pleaded, her voice tight with fear. But Hadeon didn't respond, his body remaining stiff. Desperation mounting, she used more force, pressing his chest in and out, but he didn't cough up anything. 10

At the same time, a shadow slithered from the river to the land, moving towards Mallory and Hadeon. It was the creature she had seen earlier. Now out of water, it looked darker with its face resembling the dead. 1

"Your soul smells delicious. I am going to devour it," the creature hissed, standing right behind Mallory. 20