



## 97 The admirer's pursuit 4

"This is made of silk, milady. The fabric was imported from the north. It is the only piece of its kind in our store," the male assistant informed Mallory, holding up a navy blue gown with a white collar and lapel. He took a quick look at her hands, which were absent of any sign of a ring. 1

Mallory, exhausted from her dip in the water, barely noticed the assistant's fond expression as he looked at her. 2

"It is a lovely colour," Mallory replied.

The man nodded enthusiastically. "Of course, and with your skin tone, you would radiate like a star." 5

Mallory remained indifferent to his flattery, aware that tailors often used such tactics to sell their most expensive clothes. Even though she wasn't the one paying for it, she didn't want to misuse the generosity. She picked up the dress to place it before her while standing before the mirror. 1

"Are you a new resident here, milady? I don't think I have seen you around before," the



assistant said in a polite voice.

"I'm just a passing traveller," Mallory replied.

"How unfortunate. If you were to stay here, I would have liked to ask you to accompany me to the Hallow ball. I haven't been able to find one to take with me, as everyone has been asked. It is quite popular in this part of the land. I am Douglas Glass, milady. This is my father's shop," the assistant introduced himself and it was then that Mallory took notice of the person. 9

Douglas Glass was taller than Mallory, with curly black hair and freckles on the bridge of his nose. He had a boyish charm when he smiled, and his actions were polite, indirectly conveying his interest in her. 1

Now away from Reavermoure and without any ghosts haunting her, Mallory found herself flattered by the male attention. She replied, "Thank you for the invite, but I am travelling to Woville today or tomorrow."

"I see," Douglas replied, then added, "The Hallow is a wonderful event and worth staying for. It's tomorrow. You'll see people decorating the streets and it will be quite busy tomorrow with everyone outside celebrating it. You must not have heard about it." 4





"Oh, I have," Mallory responded, though she doubted she had heard about it in detail. She knew it was one of the festivities in the west and east lands, probably because vampires resided heavily around here, unlike where she came from. When she lived with her relatives, she had come across it and had found it fascinating that people made such a big deal about ghosts and what not. "Maybe I will let you know about it." 2

Meanwhile, in the adjacent room, Hadeon's cuff button tore from the fabric and fell to the ground when he was going to button it.

"Let me get that fixed right away, milord!" The tailor fretted, worried and confused about how the button had come off when it was stitched to perfection. 11

"Mm," Hadeon responded with an uninterested tone. He stood before the mirror, wearing a fresh pair of black trousers and a black shirt. His messy hair from the water had been fixed with his simple ability of just running his fingers through his hair.

The tailor quickly got a needle and began stitching the button back onto the cuff. Noticing Hadeon staring at a rack of men's clothes, he informed him, "Those are for tomorrow's Hallow.



I would have shown them to you, but you might have no use for them immediately."

"Who knows, I might need one," Hadeon replied, his tone serious yet laced with a sly undertone. His keen ears picked up the conversation between Mallory and the young man, who seemed captivated by her presence. They were chatting about the upcoming festivities as if they were old friends. 6

"How about I show you a dress you can wear to the ball? If not, you can keep it for another occasion. Just give me a moment," Douglas said to Mallory, before disappearing into another room. They could hear the sounds of shuffling.

He soon returned with a silver gown with beige underlayers. "It feels like this gown was made for you. It will complement your hair and beautiful eyes perfectly," he said, holding it up. "It's your size. I'll have it packed for you." 2

"You don't have to do that, really, Mr. Glass," Mallory protested with a wave of her hand. "Let me go and try the blue gown," she said, quickly disappearing behind the solid wooden divider that partitioned the room to provide a changing area.



Mallory noticed a mirror hanging on one side of the wall and walked over to it. She draped the dress over a nearby chair and pressed her cheeks, feeling the coolness of her skin. Slipping out of her still-wet, dirt-covered dress, she wiped herself with the towel provided before changing into the blue gown.

She unpinned her blonde hair to let it dry, wiping it with the towel. She then slid into the blue gown, carefully sliding her arms into the long sleeves. It was a decent looking dress, one that she could present herself in when she visited the royal castle.

"Does it fit well, milady? Do let me know if you need any assistance," Mallory heard Douglas call out to her, who patiently waited outside.

"Yes, everything is fine," Mallory replied, even though she had yet to button up the dress. Her hand reached for her back, but she couldn't button it.

Douglas heard silence from the other side and, concerned by the lack of sound, was about to ask if everything was alright when his view was suddenly obstructed by a wall of broad shoulders. 7





"May I help you?" the assistant asked.

"Why yes," Hadeon replied, turning to look at the person with his red eyes gleaming. "I need a glass of blood. I am feeling rather thirsty now. If you know what I mean," he added with a smile that was far from friendly. 25