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Mallory's fingers fumbled as she struggled with the buttons at the back of her dress, managing to fasten only one before the rest proved impossible to reach. Her eyes caught sight of a familiar presence in the mirror, and her breath hitched. Hadeon's reflection was watching her. 1

Turning to face him fully, she tried to steady her voice. "What are you doing here?" she managed, clutching the front of her dress to keep it from slipping.

Hadeon's gaze was unwavering as it took in every detail of her form, lingering on the tousled strands of her blonde hair and the way the blue gown highlighted her eyes. His eyes fell on her parted lips that waited for him to speak. 8

"I finished shopping," he said, gesturing to his attire, a crisp white shirt that contrasted strikingly with his dark black hair and features. "Thought I'd see if you needed a hand." 7

That was quick, she thought to herself. Before she could respond, he stepped closer, his presence both commanding and gentle.

"Seems like you could use a little help with those



buttons," he said, his voice low and an intimate murmur and it was enough for Mallory's composure to slip. 11

Unprepared for his kind offer, Mallory stammered, "I—I can do it. You don't have to..." But he was already too close, standing right in front of her. "What are you doing, Hadeon? If you're joking, this isn't funny," she added, her lips pursed in annoyance.

"I assure you, humour is the furthest thing from my mind right now," Hadeon replied, his voice calm but intense. "I can see you're having trouble. If you prefer, I can button it from where I'm standing. You won't even need to turn around," he said, his gaze shifting to the mirror behind her. Her cheeks flushed with heat. 10

"A dress needs to be worn properly before being purchased," he continued. "And since there's no female assistant to help you, unless you're okay with taking the boy's help... Are you?" 6

"I didn't say that. You know I wasn't going to," Mallory replied, meeting his gaze with a stern look.

Most men would tread cautiously around Mallory, given her reputation for not hesitating



to throw a punch. But Hadeon wasn't like anyone else she had ever encountered, and his response was a knowing smile.

Though this pureblooded vampire was ancient, his values were his own, something Mallory was acutely aware of. She was an unmarried woman, yet here he was, having already seen her bare back and stolen a kiss! ³

"Are you afraid that I might kiss you again?" he asked, his words laced with a taunt that didn't escape Mallory. "Or is it something else you're scared of? That you might actually enjoy it... maybe even crave it? I wouldn't blame you—kisses do have a way of becoming addictive." ¹⁴

Her pale skin turned a deep shade of red as his words flustered her. "I'll clock you if you dare," she warned, her voice shaking slightly despite the bravado.

A small chuckle escaped Hadeon's lips, light and airy, at how weak her threat was.

"I won't do it now. But you do need assistance, and I promise to be good," Hadeon's words were like sweetened honey, gently coaxing her. "It's entirely up to you—whether you prefer to turn around or have me fix your buttons from here." ²



Determined to get it over with, Mallory decided to turn around. The thought of him reaching around her, his face so close to hers, felt too intimate to bear. With a deep breath to steady herself, she slowly turned her back to him, exposing the unfinished buttons.

Hadeon's fingers deftly found the first button from downward, and he leaned in slightly, his voice a smooth whisper. "As adorable as you are when you're angry, I must say, this softness suits you beautifully." 2

"What?" Mallory asked, her eyes meeting Hadeon's through their reflection in the mirror. She noticed just how close he was.

"The velvet of the fabric," Hadeon replied, his lips curling with a hint of mischief. With each button fastened, the dress began to fit snugly around Mallory's body, accentuating her figure.

"It is done, princess," he murmured as he finished the last button. "It wasn't so hard, was it?" 7

Mallory noticed that this dress was exquisite compared to any she had previously worn. The intricate detailing on the white lapel stood out beautifully before the velvety blue fabric flowed



elegantly down her form. It was an elegant dress and she liked it very much.

Her eyes then subconsciously drifted to Hadeon. Seeing his lips curl into a knowing smile, he said, "I'll be waiting outside."

The male assistant had just returned with a cup of blood tea when he saw Hadeon emerge from behind the wooden divider, a bright smile lighting up his face. Although initially taken aback, the assistant swiftly concealed his surprise and extended the tea cup. 6

From the far side of the room, Mallory inquired, "Is there a comb that I could use?"

"Y-Yes, milady," the assistant responded. As he handed over the comb, he noticed the stunning woman with slightly flushed cheeks. "About the Hallow tomorrow—"

"I will let you know about it later today," Mallory replied politely, unsure of Hadeon's plans.

"Actually, what I meant to say was that you don't need to worry about it. I've got it covered now," the assistant said, waving his hand dismissively. Despite the earlier man's smile, it had seemed both eerie and threatening. Besides, he had just learned that the vampire was a lord and he didn't



want to get into trouble. 11

"Oh..." Mallory replied, but then smiled, "Well, I am glad for you, Mr. Glass. Thank you for assisting me today." 3

Hadeon stood at the main entrance, occupied with the tailor, as they loaded items into the carriage that Lord Salvador had sent for them. He softly whistled a tune, his mind wandering until the gentle sound of footsteps drew his attention. Turning, he saw Mallory appear in his sight. 1

Before long, Hadeon and Mallory settled into the waiting carriage, setting off towards Delcrov's grand mansion. The estate rose majestically, its expansive structure unmistakably marking it as the residence of a vampire—an ancient one at that.

The carriage came to a stop, and Hadeon and Mallory stepped down from it. They were then greeted by the butler of the mansion, who led them in. The mansion was beautiful inside, and as they took the stairs to the first floor, she noticed several other carriages lined up along the side. She murmured,

"Lord Salvador certainly has a collection of



carriages."

Just then, the mansion's butler interjected, "Those are the carriages of guests who arrived early for the Hallow Ball, milady. Allow me to escort you to your bedroom. It's located on the first floor, and the view—"

"Bedroom?" Mallory echoed, her voice barely above a whisper, as she caught sight of a few guests glancing their way.

"Surely, you don't intend to sleep on the roof, do you?" Hadeon teased her. 3

As the butler stepped ahead to lead the way, Mallory leaned closer to Hadeon and whispered, "You know, I didn't mean it that way."

"Don't worry, I will save you some space in my bed," Hadeon remarked, a sly grin playing on his lips as his eyes twinkled with playful mischief. 17