

K Lover 167

Chapter 167: Downright Terrifying

Rose was startled by a knock during breakfast. She had been engrossed with the chessboard, trying to replay the moves from last night. She was so focused that the sudden knock made her jerk in fright.

She quickly rushed to her feet and walked to the door, pulling it open. It was indeed her breakfast, but this time, instead of Edna and Lily like the last time Edna had appeared, she was with a different maid. Someone Rose thought looked familiar, though she didn't recall the maid bringing her meals before.

"Edna," she called in a whisper, and the maid winked at her, a hint of a smile on her lips.

Rose quickly stepped out of the way to let them both in, and as soon as the other maid dropped the tray, she looked ready to leave. Rose still stood by the door with it wide open and closed it as the maid exited, leaving her alone with Edna.

"Long time no see," Edna said with a grin as she dropped the tray and took a seat. "May I?" she asked, but didn't wait for Rose's reply before digging into the breakfast.

Rose nodded and walked toward the table. She dropped onto the seat without saying a word, and Edna peeked at her, her mouth full of bread.

"Are you okay?" she asked with concern, her mouth partially open as she debated whether she should be eating, seeing how truly bothered Rose looked.

Rose slowly nodded her head. "I am. Can you stay 'ere for long?" She asked softly, worried that Edna might get in trouble again.

Edna grinned at Rose, her lips lifting to reveal white teeth. "Preparations for the ball have begun. It's the first ball in a very long time, so everyone's busy—even Mistress Edith. So she won't notice if I'm gone longer than usual."

"A ball?" Rose asked in surprise. She hadn't heard about it.

"Yes," Edna supported. "I am a little excited even though I would be in attendance," she giggled.

"That's good," Rose replied, smiling back. "Don't you 'ave to 'elp with the preparations?" Rose asked, worry on her face.

"No," Edna shook her head with a small smile. "The Queen doesn't want me to be a part of it. Well, at least that's what the rumors say."

"Isn't that bad?" Rose asked in horror.

"What? Of course not! I couldn't be happier. The Queen is in charge. Having to deal with her and her ladies-in-waiting could send a young woman like myself to an early grave."

Rose kept her expression neutral as she listened. She didn't like how far Edna had fallen in the ranks because of her. She used to be the Queen's personal maid; now, they wouldn't even let her help prepare for an important event.

Despite this, Edna wore a smile as though she truly didn't mind being excluded from the ball preparations. But Rose knew it couldn't be easy. She understood how cruel the castle could be to someone they didn't like, especially when the Queen was involved.

"Oh, look at me," Edna said, pulling Rose out of her thoughts. Her voice was a little muffled with food. "At this rate, I'll finish your breakfast before you even get a chance to eat."

"No, eat," Rose said, shaking her head. "They give me enough food to feed a 'orse. I fear I might be the size of a mountain in a few days. So, please eat as much as you can."

"Though your offer is tempting," Edna smiled, "there's no way I'd let you skip breakfast. Here, eat some. I'm quite full."

Rose accepted the piece she offered and slowly chewed it. Edna watched her closely, then suddenly asked, "How have you been?"

"I should be asking you that," Rose replied, as she chewed slowly.

"Trust me, I'm better than you think. It must be awful to be stuck here."

Rose shrugged. "It isn't so bad."

"Did you ask the Crown Prince to let you out? If he did, I could show you all the places to go. The castle is huge, and the grounds even more so."

Rose shook her head. "I don't mind."

Edna closed her eyes as though trying to keep her temper in check. "At this point, I might have to ask the Crown Prince for you," she threatened, her gaze stern as she opened her eyes again.

"You wouldn't dare," Rose said.

"Of course not. I'm terrified of him. Everyone knows how crazy and mean he is. That's why I'm glad he's nice to you."

Rose coughed, slightly choking on her food, surprised by Edna's remark. Edna tapped her back hard, and Rose had to raise a hand to stop her or risk a broken rib instead of choking.

"Sorry," Edna said, pulling her hand away. "There was once an incident, my little sister—well, not so little anymore. She choked on a bone, and I had to hit her that hard to get it out. I acted without thinking."

"You 'ave a little sister?" Rose's eyes widened; the conversation about whether or not the crown prince was nice to her or not was completely forgotten.

"Of course I do. And two little brothers, an older brother, and two older sisters. There are too many of us. I keep telling my mother, but she disagrees, saying she would have birthed a nation if she could. Can you imagine?" Edna asked with a laugh and a hint of horror in her tone.

"That's so nice. I'm an only child, but I wish I had a bigger family."

"Eh," Edna stuck her tongue out. "It's not as great as you think. Too many fights. I can't stand my siblings. They're always doing something. And now they have kids of their own, it's chaos when I go home. That's why I'm glad..." Edna paused, realizing she was about to say something she shouldn't.

"You're glad that...?" Rose prompted.

"That I'm here," she said with a suspiciously bright smile. "Away from the chaos."

Rose laughed. "I wish I had chaos. Mot'er was so sick after having me, she couldn't conceive again. My birth took a huge toll on her."

"Oh my, I'm so sorry," Edna said.

Rose shrugged. "Mot'er's illness is something I've known my whole life. It's not something to apologize for. Fat'er was told to take another wife to have a son, but he refused." Rose paused, realizing she was saying too much.

"I'm sure you're worried about them," Edna said, squeezing Rose's hand lightly. Rose looked down at where their hands met.

"Yes," she admitted. "I'd like to know how they're doing, but—" she brightened up suddenly, "I'm sure Mother has all the care she needs. Father won't leave her side, and Emma is—"

"Emma?" Edna asked, raising a brow.

"Yes," she smiled. "She's like my younger sister. We've been friends since we could walk. I'm sure she's taking care of Mot'er for me."

"That's good," Edna said, nodding.

Rose nodded too. It wasn't something she liked to think about, but it was comforting to believe her mother was cared for. She just wished she had some kind of confirmation.

"I should go," Edna said suddenly. "You're done eating, and I don't think I can stall much longer."

"Yes," Rose said, pulling her hand away. "Thank you for staying with me."

"What? Don't thank me," Edna said as she packed the dishes. "It's my pleasure. I'd stay here all day if they let me. I'll try to come see you when I can," she said, lifting the dishes in her arms.

"No, don't. I don't want you to get into trouble."

Edna stepped away from the table. "There's no way I won't come to see you. I fear you might fade away from loneliness if I stay away too long."

"I'm not lonely," Rose replied. "I just want to go 'ome."

Edna nodded. She didn't want to argue. She didn't know what it was like to be in Rose's shoes—and honestly, she didn't want to. If she couldn't marry her fiancé and had to stay here as the Crown Prince's plaything, Edna thought that would be terrifying.

"Good," Edna mumbled instead as she walked toward the door. Rose quickly walked beside her and wished she could give her a hug, but her hands were full.

"Be good, Edna," Rose said as they stopped in front of the door.

"You should come out sometime. The sun would be good for you," she whispered.

"I will," Rose said simply to avoid another argument.

Edna beamed at her words, and Rose couldn't help but smile back. She waved the maid goodbye and shut the door behind her. Rose rested her back on the closed door and sank to the ground.

She was still there, her head buried between her knees, when she heard a loud banging. It was enough to shake her where she sat. Rose was both startled and horrified. No one ever bothered her right after breakfast—especially not someone who would knock like that.