

## THE KING'S LOVER

### Chapter 41: Have An Apple

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It was clear to anyone that there were some untruths to what Martha was saying, but Rose didn't exactly have a lot of supporters, and she was new. She was sure Edna had risked herself by supporting her, but Edna didn't seem bothered by this.

Rose was relieved to have at least one person who would speak on her behalf. It would have gone completely differently without Edna. At least, she just had to clean some rooms, maybe wash some curtains and rugs. It was nothing different from what she was already doing.

"'Ow big is the sout' wing?" Rose suddenly blurted. She might as well know what she was getting into.

Whispers came from outside. "Very big. It's the third biggest wing, but it's rarely in use."

"Shoo, all of you," Martha suddenly said, standing to her feet. She was annoyed. She walked to the door and shut it, then she turned to Edna and the second girl. "You two, out, now!"

The other maid rushed out the door, but Edna didn't budge. "I'm here to see Rose," Edna said. "This is her room too."

"I don't care, get out. You're clearly on the whore's side even after she slapped me and split my lip. Mistress Edith was too nice to you. You deserved to be whipped," she shouted at Rose.

"It wouldn't 'ave 'appened if ye didn't take mi carved pieces."

"Here, have an apple," Martha mocked her. "No one can even understand the way you speak."

"I guess I just 'ave to beat ye until yer hearin' is fixed," Rose said, and Martha took a step back.

"I-I'm not scared of you."

"Ye still 'ave mi swallows, Martha, and I want it back. Ye 'ave one week!"

"What are you going to do?" Martha asked as she rolled her eyes. "And as I said, I didn't touch your things."

Martha tried to act as though she didn't care, but the way she folded her arms around herself was pretty obvious. Rose knew she was scared of her now. Unlike Rose, the only way Martha could get back at her was to accuse her, but Rose could just beat her up.

Rose shrugged. "Goodnight, Edna. I 'ave to wake up early tomorrow mornin' to get to work."

"Don't try to fight Martha all by yourself. Tell someone—tell me, and more importantly, tell Mistress Edith."

"Okay, thank ye," Rose replied with a smile and waved Edna goodbye.

After things had settled and the maids had all gone to their rooms, Rose lay on her back, staring at the ceiling. The curtain that covered the window moved in the wind. She was still very dissatisfied, and she hated that she didn't have a way to get Martha to give her the swallows.

The only other option she could think of was dragging Martha's uncle into the picture, but things had already blown out of proportion, and she was worried about that. She would just have to search Martha's things more carefully and keep her important items to herself.

Rose rolled onto her side and fell asleep. She didn't dream of anything. It was a peaceful, short sleep, as though her body wanted to give her the chance to rest before the work of the next day.

Rose woke up early the next morning, before dawn. She stretched, feeling the stiffness in her muscles from the activities of the day before. The room was quiet; Martha was still asleep, her soft snores drifting to Rose.

She got out of bed and dressed quickly, pulling on her plain dress and tying her hair back with a simple scarf. She wore the apron around her. The thought of the south wing loomed in her mind, but she pushed it aside, focusing instead on the tasks at hand. She would deal with Martha and the missing carved piece later. For now, she had work to do, and the faster she could start on it, the better.

As she stepped out into the hallway, she noticed Edna already up and about, carrying a basket of linens and holding a lamp. Edna gave her a small smile and walked up to her. Rose returned her smile. It was comforting to know she had at least one ally in this place.

"I was just about to come wake you up. You have to get started on this early."

Rose nodded as she listened to her. "I'm ready."

"Good. I just need to clean these clothes, and I'll come join you. There's no way you'll be able to make any progress all by yourself—trust me. I also found some maids who said they'd help. Thank the goddess the mistress said you could get help."

"You did?" Rose asked.

Edna nodded and gave her the light. "Here. You know where the pantry is, right? Take out the things you need to wash—like the curtains, the rugs, and the bedsheets. If you can't reach the curtains, the guards can help you. Someone will come pick them up to wash, but make sure you bring them down first."

Rose nodded as she listened attentively to Edna. "Thank ye."

"I'll be there as soon as I'm done with these. It shouldn't take too long, and I'll also bring the girls who said they'd help you. We don't use the south wing. I don't understand why Mistress Edith would tell you to clean it alone."

Rose shrugged. She wasn't worried about this. She just wanted to get the job done. She waved Edna off and headed in the direction of the wing. She was grateful for the light. She could use this to light up the candles in the rooms—hopefully, there were some—at least before dawn arrived. She could wait for dawn, but according to what she'd heard, it wouldn't be enough time to clean everything.

The south wing was as large and daunting as Edna had described. Rose stood at the entrance, taking in the vast expanse of rooms and corridors. Dust covered every surface, and the air smelled stale as if the wing had been forgotten by time itself. She sighed, walked in, and got to work.