401 HUNT FOR ANSWERS

Queen Rose, Hildegard and Logan rode on down the forest path. 1

Lucky enough for Queen Rose, she had her good on, her hair was in a very simple braid and she had taken off the jewelry she had worn back in her bedroom.

She looked like a simple woman.

She now wore a brown fur coat that was not as sophisticated as her initial one had been.

All this was an effort to disguise herself.

And it worked because she looked very simple and young.

Nothing like a Queen, just a simple woman riding about.

Once they reached Bernice's small hamlet she came to a stop.

"Why does she live so far away from the pack?" Rose asked confused. "How does she handle being so far away from her family?"

They had rode for over three hours now.

"She doesn't." Hildegard said. "She goes and

comes from here to the castle everyday."

"What?! Everyday?" Rose asked in utter disbelief as she took off her gloves. "Why would she need to do that? We have servants quarters that can allow her stay in the castle. And she could also move her family to stay within the pack?"

Hildegard shook her head. "It's almost impossible to get a room in the castle. Laws were made that restricted servants from coming to stay in. I tried to do my best but nothing was done."

Rose felt utterly weak.

How did Bernice even handle all of that? And she knew for certain that as an Omega as she was, she didn't have a horse to ride home.

So she probably used travel carts that dragged people to and fro.

Every day and night?

What about the days when she closed from work late?

Rose felt so horrible.

No wonder Bernice had been drawn to poison Rose.

Logan led them to a barn where they paid to have their horses kept.

"Why can't we just continue the journey?" Rose asked as they handed off the horses.

"It could draw suspicions. Most of the people here are poor." Hildegard nodded at them. "We don't want to attract the wrong attention so we blend in."

And then they followed the crowd of people moving around.

Rose had her hoodie well secured over her head.

Men and women called out for people to buy their merchandise as they passed by the markets.

Little pups chased each other in the dirt while their mothers in worn out dresses reprimanded them.

The place was filled with poverty and Rose was so overwhelmed with guilt and shame.

"Who is in charge of this place?" Rose asked.

Hildegard shrugged. "I don't know for sure. There was a Beta that ran this place. I don't know if he still does."

They walked for minutes until they finally reached a small and run down cottage.

There were no animals out front or livestock like some of the houses they had passed.

The garden itself seemed to be dying.

The windows were broken and clothes were forced into them to prevent an open space.

The building itself was falling apart and it creaked as if it was going to collapse any minute.

"This is her house?" Rose asked wondering how anyone could live in such a condition.

"It would seem." Hildegard said.

Logan was the one leading them and he hardly ever spoke so Rose shrugged and went along.

Logan put his hands up at Rose telling her to wait and then he very calmly went to the front door.

He knocked.

When no one answered, he was about to break in but the door opened and a little girl about the age of five stood .

She had freckles all over her face and black hair in two pigtails.

She looked like a much younger version of Bernice.

The girl saw Logan and must have been scared because she began to shake so much it visibly showed.

Logan turned to look at Rose and Hildegard.

Rose didn't blame the little girl for being afraid.

"Hey." Rose said stepping up front and Logan stepped aside. "How are you? We're friends of your mummy. We aren't here to hurt you okay?"

The girl seemed much calmer now.

"What's your name?" Rose asked.

Before the girl responded a male's voice said. "Adeline is that your mother at the do-

A man with a two year old boy clinging to his arm appeared by the door .

Rose saw the resemblance and immediately knew it was the little girl's father.

The man quickly pulled Adeline to the side so that he blocked her from seeing them.

"Who are you and what do you want?" He demanded.

"I'm not here for any trouble." Rose said raising up her hand very gently. "I just wanted to ask if this is Bernice's home?"

The man's face crossed.

"Yes it is. What do you want?" He asked suspiciously.

"Nothing much. I only wanted to ask some questions about her." Rose said.

Sensing trouble, the man stepped back about to close the door when Rose set her foot in preventing him from keeping her off.

It hurt her feet in the process.

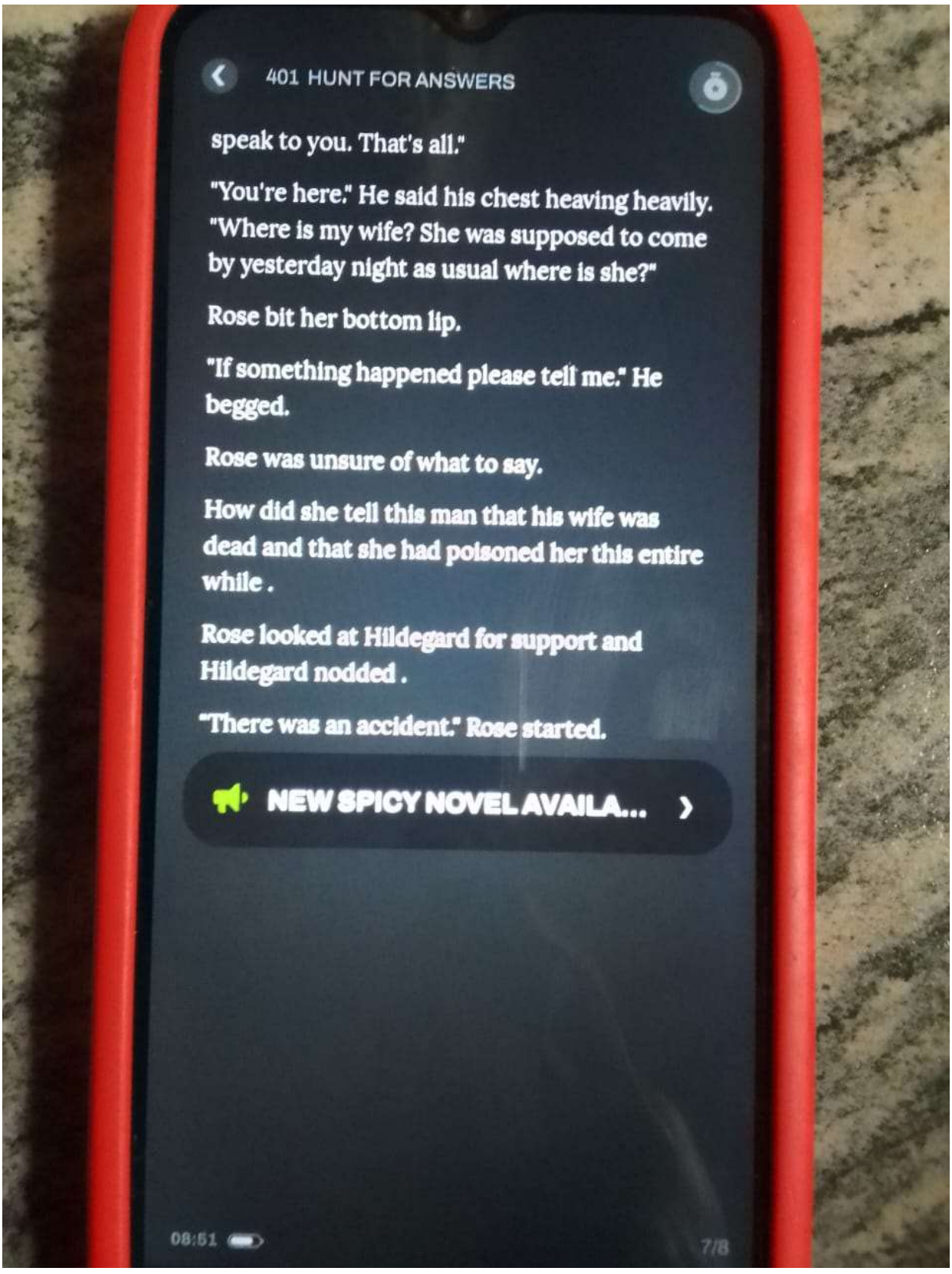
"Your majesty." Hildegard said in panic.

It was then the man's eyes widened in fear and he handed the little boy to a much older sibling who had emerged from behind him, probably around the age of seventeen.

"God and stay in the bedroom all of you! And don't come out unless I say so." He snapped and the children did immediately as he told them.

Rose put her hand up against the door and very gently pushed it back.

"You know who I am now." Rose said. "I'm not here to hurt you. Just like I said. I just want to


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speak to you. That's all."
"You're here." He said his chest heaving heavily. "Where is my wife? She was supposed to come by yesterday night as usual where is she?"
Rose bit her bottom lip.
"If something happened please tell me." He begged.
Rose was unsure of what to say.
How did she tell this man that his wife was dead and that she had poisoned her this entire while .
Rose looked at Hildegard for support and Hildegard nodded .
"There was an accident." Rose started.
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