

Midnight Blooms

By Isabel Flores

Rose glanced around at her surroundings as she stood at the boundary of the woods and a cliffside residence. The Manor stood magnificently tall, stone fixtures decorated its visage, and Rose couldn't help but admire the delicate flower engravings on the stone columns.

She stood silently for a moment, before making her way to the entrance. Before she had a chance to pound the door knocker, a metal piece fashioned in the shape of an apple, the door had creaked open, a groaning sound accompanying the movement.

With hesitation Rose stepped forward passed the boundary and into the Manor.

"Hello? Sir Rutiger? I am Dr. Kelda, I received your letter for assistance." Her words were met with a suffocating silence, and just as she was about to speak up once again a bang sounded behind her. She gasped in surprise before turning to face the noise.

A man with a sickly pallor stood silently, his face drooping with age, and his hair graying. "My apologies for not immediately greeting you Dr. Kelda, I am the head butler Gregory. It is unfortunate however, the Young Master has crept back to his room for the rest of the evening. He has important research to attend to. I will prepare a bed for you to reside in for the night. In the meantime please feel free to peruse the gardens and enjoy some home blends." Without letting Rose get even a word in, the butler led her away from the foyer of the house and into twisting halls before being led into a shaded area blooming with flowers.

"One of the maids should be by shortly to tour you around." The butler left just as quickly as he appeared, leaving Rose slightly disoriented. To occupy herself in the meanwhile she turned her attention to the flowers.

"How beautiful," The blooms near her were full and bright, the petals glistened with water, having seemingly been watered just recently. However, although the beauty of the flowers were extraordinary, the smell of the place wasn't great. Smelling of a sweet rotting, as if the flowers were covering up-

"Yes it is beautiful Dr. Kelda." A maid appeared before Rose, a plain woman with neat blonde hair held in a respectable bun. "Let me tour you around the garden, your tea is in the central pavilion."

"Of course! May I ask your name?"

"My name is Bea, Dr. Kelda." The maid led Rose around showcasing to her orchids, lilies, lavender, daffodils, and even foxglove variants. The pleasant flowery smell still couldn't hide the rancid odor that seemed to originate from the flower beds.

"I had no idea that some of these flowers could even bloom during this season."

“It is thanks to the special fertilizer our master has acquired, He has searched very hard to come up with the formula. Unfortunately the smell is a bit much... We’ll be heading to the pavilion now.”

Just as the maid had stated, Rose soon reached the pavilion, it was made primarily of a smooth marble, the etchings along the columns similar to those near the front of the manor, however this time there were carved snakes detailing one of the columns. She was ushered into one of the seats that had been placed near the center of the marble clearing. The maid set a tea cup in front of her, the aroma sweet as warmth emanated from the delicate cup.

“This is an apple blossom tea, collected and brewed by myself. Enjoy our hospitality Dr. Kelda.” After her words the maid swiftly bowed before returning to standing nearby.

“Thank you,” Rose only slightly hesitated before taking a sip of the tea, pleasantly surprised by the sweet aftertaste. “This is delicious.” Unfortunately, before she could drink more she felt a bout of drowsiness overtake her. “It seems the travel has taken a bit out of me for the day. May you escort me to my quarters for the night?”

“It would be my honor Lady Kelda.” Out of nowhere, the Head butler had appeared once again.

Rose smiled slightly as she got up to go with him, however as she took a step she stumbled. “Oh! It seems I really am...” before she finished her sentence she listed forward before greeting darkness.

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She awoke to the smell of smoke and metal. Her hand tied behind her back.

Rose screamed hoarsely, her throat tightening in fear and words getting caught. “Please! Let me out! Out!”

The servants of the manor stood by silently not acknowledging her at all. She was trapped in a giant birdcage. She shook the bars that held her to no avail. “You can’t do this!” She could feel the way her throat strained with every word. “Why?! Why...”

Steps echoed from where the doors of the room had finally opened, revealing the master of the Manor. “Fresh roses are always the best fertilizer for the other flowers.” He stepped further still before he met Rose face to face, only separated by the bars of the cage, “Beautiful roses are even better, bury her under the rose bush will?” His red eyes glinted in the candlelight of the room as he made the last request to his staff.

All Rose could do was sob silently, she had been tricked into this treacherous lair. And now she would die.

“Do not fret, little flower. Suffering always gives fruit to beauty. Your death will give birth to a life of it.” Sir Rutiger’s words made Rose glare back up at him before she flinched back in shock. Sir Rutiger was smiling down at her, his mouth open wide revealing sharp fangs.

And in perhaps what could be seen as a mercy of fate, Rose fainted. Taking the last of her consciousness away from what was to come.