

Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne by Caroline Chapter 125

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Chapter 125 A blood promise to ease the mind.

A few gasps littered through the crowd, Doris was only glad she didn't join in. All heads turned to look at William and most of them looked at him as if he was the dirt on the bottom of their shoe. They looked ready to unleash their built up anger and Doris was at least glad to see she didn't recognize any of them.

"I'm sorry. What was that, prince?" Mr. Hugh spat. Doris could almost feel William's anger heat up beneath her hands. He let out a deep breath to center himself.

"You. You took a bribe from the Luna Queen to kill me." William announced. "I know it was you. I met one of the assassins that was sent to kill me. Is it only fine to work with us if the money is right?"

Silence. Mr. Hugh narrowed his eyes at William. "I have no idea what you're talking about, boy. I would watch my tongue if I was you, you're not in friendly company."

"No, of course you don't know what I'm talking about. I wouldn't expect a liar to admit when he's wrong just because he was caught. It must be in your blood." William said almost casually. Doris swallowed the nervous lump in her throat.

"Is this true, Mr. Hugh? Did you accept a payment from the kingdom in exchange for Prince William's life?" Sir Antony asked. She watched Mr. Hugh shift on his feet almost nervously.

"We needed money to fix up Life Pharmacy and pay our taxes. I saw it as a wise move, it would have taken care of having that enemy in our lands even if it meant working with another." Mr. Hugh admitted. He didn't look the slightest bit sorry. "At least I didn't let them stay with me—"

"You can not speak hypocrisy, Mr. Hugh. You said that Enzo has betrayed us all by allowing them shelter, but you know as much as the rest of us that what he did was right. We built this place on freedom, not rules. What you did—that was the wrong part." Sir Antony said.

"I have a reason for coming into the north." William announced. Doris felt her heart slow in her chest. "I have not come to start a war or tear the rogues apart. I may have harmed more than a few of them on my visit here, but understand we all must defend ourselves when the time has come for it. I know many of my guards are dead for the same reasons."

Mr. Hugh looked at William as if he was in disbelief at his words. "A plan? We're not interested in your schemes—"

"Hear him out. We allow people to speak their minds here." Sir Antony said, louder than the rest. He gave Mr. Hugh a look that made the grown man clamp his lips shut as if he never had anything to say

"I came here with a proposition that would be beneficial to the rogues, not hurt them further like some of you may think." William said calmly. "For years, I've been trying to find a way that would unite the rogues back with the kingdom-".

A loud murmuring broke out instantly at his words. When Sir Antony raised his hands, they silenced again. A large part of Doris wished that they had sought out his help to begin with, but she also didn't think things would turn as badly as they did.

If she had thought that, she would have left the second Enzo had first saved her so she would have saved him all of this trouble. Doris was quickly realizing that she must have been more trouble than she was worth when she was with William.

"We don't want to be united with the kingdom!" Some nearby man shouted, He was silenced instantly with a look from their founder. It almost reminded her of a teacher trying to quiet a group of kids that just wouldn't calm down. His calm demeanor was louder than any words he could have said.

"As I was saying," William continued as if the man hadn't spoken. "I want to unite the rogues back with the kingdom. Under my leadership at the palace, I would make it my mission to make sure the rogues are treated fairly and no longer looked down upon. I want it to be safe for you all to be able to travel through the kingdom once again."

"Why would we want to go to the kingdom again?" Mr. Hugh spat. His face twisted in disgust at the very idea.

"What do you mean your leadership? You're not next in line for the throne!" Someone else shouted. William stayed silent until they all quieted down again. Doris had to admit, she was impressed.

"I believe I'm a better fit for the crown once the king passes. My brother has no passion for leadership and wouldn't know the first thing when it came to ruling an entire kingdom. He wouldn't think twice about you all. But I would. I want our lands to be united again."

"Is this some kind of manipulation to get your hands on our land again?" Someone asked near the front.

"No. I would never try to take your home from you, I would respect your wishes. All that I ask is that we can open the trade routes once again through the north like we did before the rogues had come here."

"You want our goods, that's it-isn't it!"

"I want to bring business back to your land and offer you freedom throughout the entire kingdom. I can see you all are suffering for money and the taxes the

palace charges don't help—I want to put an end to all of that.” William said. Doris couldn't believe how calm he sounded. He almost sounded like a leader. “You want to get rid of our taxes?” Another voice asked. The crowd was starting to become more curious and less rough.

“I want to lower them immensely. I want to bring business back through here and I want to make sure the rogues are treated as humans and not tortured for being poor. Just think, if you all have more flow of people and business through trade, how easy it would be to build more homes and businesses up here.’

Silence followed. Doris nervously looked upon the unsure faces around her. They still looked at him as if he was no one that they could trust and she couldn't blame them. It was hard for her to trust him on most days.

“What would we have to do?” Another rogue asked. Mr. Hugh shifted on his feet again as if he was annoyed by all of this.

“All I ask is for your support in my claim of the crown. If I have all of you willing to back me, I would be unstoppable to the palace.”

“You really think our support is all you need to gain the crown?” Sir Antony asked curiously. He didn't sound cruel, he only ever sounded kind and she admired that about him above all else.

“I think the palace has wanted to find a way to take control of this land for far too long with no results to come of it. I don't want to take control of your land, I want to unite us.” William said.

Soft murmuring sounded in the crowd and Doris wasn't sure if the reaction was positive or not yet. “He speaks of peace.” Sir Antony observed. “I have to say that I might agree with his reasoning.”

Mr. Hugh turned to him in disbelief. A bit of betrayal lingered on his features. “What do you mean, my lord? How can you trust this man that has caused so much trouble between our people?”

“Because. I see a lot of his mother in him and that's not something I've seen in anyone else since she left.”

The crowd all turned their eyes to William with a bit of sympathy. Doris had a feeling that they forgot William's mother was once a rogue like them.

“I may not have known my mother well. But I know that I don't get my determination from my father. I wouldn't go back on my word, I would be willing to make a blood promise to prove it.”

Several people gasped in the crowd and this time Doris did too. A blood promise was serious business. If he broke it, it could lead to his death or the death of someone he cares for. To offer a blood promise on something so uncertain, proved he was determined to see it through to the end and that he would do anything to make it happen. 1

Sir Antony smiled at William as if he was proud of him. "Then it's settled. We make the blood promise at dawn, and I say you have the rogue's backing."

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Chapter 126 What's love if not anger

"Are you sure about this?" Doris asked the moment they were alone. It was strange to be in the village without the people she used to see everyday. But, it was better having them far from here in case things went wrong. 1 She only hoped they weren't mistreated for being on Enzo's side-if they still were, that is.

William and Doris were allowed to go to their old cabin and clean up, but William was expected back out there soon. She wanted to wrap herself around him and stop him from ever setting foot out of the door again. 1

William turned to her with a tense jaw. "Of course I'm sure about this. I've never been more sure."

"A blood promise is dangerous, what if they trick you—"

"I'm not one to be tricked, Doris. They wouldn't dare." William moved into the bathroom and shut the door on any of her remaining questions. She glared at the wood and felt the urge to kick something.

Doris nervously picked at her nails and she realized how long they had gotten since they first came here. She fought the urge to bite them down when her anxiety tried to crawl up her throat again.

She knew he could handle himself more than she could, but her stomach was in knots when she realized how worried she was about him. If they worded it strangely or added something he didn't expect, it could lead to his death.

Doris gathered her new clothes and waited for him to leave the bathroom before she went to clean up herself. When she came out, he was seated on the bed staring at the roaring fire as if he was lost in thought. The warm light caressed his handsome face like a kiss, a shadow was already growing across his chin.

"I don't want you to be there when I make the promise." William said suddenly. A small part of her heart pierced at his words.

"Why not? I won't try to stop it—"

"I would rather you didn't be there." He interrupted. "I don't want you to see the process of it. I would rather you stay safe inside here and sleep during it all."

"I can handle a little blood, William. You don't have to be alone during this."

William stood, his eyes barely looked at her. "I won't be alone. Patrick will be at my side." He brushed past her to the door. Even though the blood promise wasn't until dawn, Enzo and the rest required his presence to talk more about the deal. He didn't want her there for that, either.

"William—"

He closed the door without a response. She clenched her hands into fists and had half a mind to follow him out the door and scream at him. After all they had been through, he always pushed her back. She deserved to be a part of the decisions, didn't she? He was always there when she was the center of the matter. 1

Doris angrily pulled on her coat and gloves before she ventured out into the snow. It felt good to have clothes that weren't dirty or ripped. She still felt the cold through her thick clothes, but not as harshly as the night before. Perhaps her body was finally starting to get used to the dreadful cold.

Doris ignored the stares from the rogues as she walked out behind the cabins and towards the frozen lake. There was no where else to go, no one to talk to

"He sure does like to fight, huh?" Cordelia said inside her. Doris almost jumped at the sound. It was easy to forget she had a wolf inside her when she spent her entire life without one.

"I knew it wasn't a good idea to get close to him." Doris grumbled. "He drives me insane most of the time, I almost chased him down just to scream at him."

"Isn't that what love is?" Cordelia teased. It only made Doris more angry. She sat herself down on a fallen log by the lake and wrapped her arms around herself.

"That's not what I expected love to be. All the books I ever read were much more—"

"Boring?" Cordelia filled in. Doris rolled her eyes at her wolf.

"No, normal. The men were sweet and treated their women with respect. They didn't try to irritate them every chance they had. They... they loved them and it was obvious."

"Hm, sounds boring to me. In case you forgot, you're not a normal girl, you have a wolf and it's normal to be attracted to his difficult side." Cordelia said almost gently. Doris expected her to make fun for feeling the way she was. "He is certainly attracted to yours. He likes it when you argue with him, I can tell."

"It shouldn't be this hard to love someone, no matter what I am inside." Doris whispered. "It should as easy as breathing or falling asleep. Lately it only feels as if I'm about to suffocate."

"Are you okay? A familiar voice said from behind her. Doris turned to see Joseph standing a few feet away with his hands shoved deep in his pockets and dark circles under his eyes. He was one of the last people she ever wanted to see during a time like this. Or ever.

Part of her was glad he wasn't dead, but another part of her wanted him far away from her. Doris stood quickly and brushed off the snow from her pants.

"What are you doing out here?" Doris asked. Her eyes flickered to the camp behind him.

"I saw you leave your cabin and you looked upset. I thought I would check on you." He took a small step towards her. Doris narrowed her eyes at his kind smile. What did he want from her?

"I'm quite alright, thank you. I don't need your assistance, you can go back to the camp. I wouldn't want Mr. Hugh seeing you out here with me."

"Look, Doris—I'm sorry for what I did—"

"You mean when you shoved me in a hole and locked me in a dark cell? I'm sure you're very sorry, but I don't have time for this." Doris started to walk back to the camp but he stepped in her path.

"I had to do those things, Doris. You know as a servant that we have to listen to the commands no matter how much we don't want to." Joseph held out his hands as if in surrender. "I haven't stopped imagining your screams, they've haunted me. I don't know what I can do to make it right with you, but I want to more than anything."

"I'm glad they've haunted you, Joseph. You deserve it." Doris moved again, but he gripped her arm this time.

"I heard you talking to your wolf. I heard what you said about William—"

Doris yanked her arm free of his grip. "That's none of your business. Hasn't anyone ever told you that it's impolite to eavesdrop on a lady?" "You want to be with someone who is easy to love and doesn't drive you crazy, I know you do—" He continued as if she hadn't spoken. A lick of rage flamed inside her.

"Oh, and you're about to tell me that that person is you?" Doris laughed and stepped back. "I don't think any of your recent actions would make you easy to love. As harsh as William is, he hasn't thrown me in a hole." 1

"No, just the royal cells for you to be abused." Joseph said with a sneer. Doris closed her eyes for a second and took a deep breath. He wasn't worth this much energy.

"He is the reason I got out of that cell. You were ready to let me rot."

"I was going to let you out! I couldn't stand you being in there for another second—" Joseph took a breath and ran his fingers through his hair. "Come with me, Doris."

"What?"

"Come with me. We can leave right now and get far from here before anyone could notice." He reached his hand out to her.

"Joseph, you don't even know me."

"I know you feel trapped like I do. I know that you want something better for yourself and you want an easier life, I can give you that."

Doris glanced down at his hand as if it was a bug. She shook her head and took another step back. "You don't know anything about what I want. How could you when I'm not even sure?"

"Doris," he said impatiently. "I made a mistake at Life Pharmacy. I let my emotions rule over my actions but I would never treat you that way again. Come with me and we can be free of all of this."

"I don't think she's going anywhere with you." A deep voice said. 3

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Chapter 127 You're mine, Doris.

William grabbed Joseph by his arm and forced him to face him. He moved so fast, Doris barely had time to register what was going on and realized it was too late when she did.

"Calm down!" Joseph held up his hands, but William didn't calm in the slightest. He looked close to a beast even without having to shift. She saw the murderous glint in his eyes and the growl on his lips—he was close to losing it. 1

"William

"

"What were you asking her a minute ago?" William asked through his teeth. They all knew he had overheard exactly what Joseph had asked her. He was just daring him to repeat it. Doris silently wished he wouldn't.

"I... I just noticed she was unhappy here—"

William hit Joseph so hard in the face, it was a miracle he didn't snap his neck from the impact. Blood poured from his nose almost instantly and dripped down his chin. "If I see you come near her again, I will rip your throat out." William said with his hold tightening on Joseph. 1

"You don't own her." Joseph gripped William's shirt and shoved him back, staining him with his blood. It was obviously the wrong thing to say, Doris tried to intervene but William was faster. 1

William grabbed Joseph by the front of his shirt and yanked him back towards him. He punched him in the face over and over until she could barely see the color of Joseph's skin. Doris tried to pull him off Joseph, but it was as if she was doing nothing. He didn't move an inch.

"Stop! You're killing him!" Doris yelled. Her voice was so small compared to their sounds.

William's face was sprayed with Joseph's blood, it was horrifying. Doris begged her inner wolf to give her some sort of strength, and she obliged almost instantly.

Doris shoved William back with the help of her wolf. He dropped Joseph and staggered a little, looking at her in complete disbelief. Joseph was—thankfully—still alive, but he looked close to passing out. Doris kneeled next to him and hesitated. Where could she touch that wouldn't hurt him? It looked as if he was bleeding from everywhere, the snow around him was painted a dark red.

"Are you okay?" Doris said gently. She glanced up to see William with a wild look in his eyes. He clenched his bloody fists and glared down at Joseph as if he was ready to unleash even more of his rage if he said another word. Doris prayed that he kept his mouth shut if he knew what was good for him. William was not one to be taunted, not even a little.

"I—" Joseph coughed up a round of blood, she rubbed his back a little when she didn't know what else to do. Were his insides bleeding out too?" "I'm sorry, Doris."

Joseph laid his head back into the snow and closed his eyes. For a terrifying moment, Doris swore he had just died. When she saw his chest rise and flow steadily, she let out a breath of relief.

"Did you want to go with him?" William asked tensely. Doris took a handkerchief out from her pocket and started cleaning the blood off of Joseph's face. She was going to need a lot more than a small cloth to clean him.

"Of course I didn't, William! I can't believe you would even ask me something like that!" Doris said helplessly. She stood and pointed at Joseph. "Look what you did to him! They're not going to start trusting you if you act like a complete animal to their people!"

"I don't care what they think of me! They would laugh if I died right this second, I have no concern over them." He growled and neared her. She was proud of herself for not cowering away, especially when she saw the look in his eye.

"You should start to care if you want them on your side." Doris said calmly. She reached up to wipe some of the blood off his face. "You can't go around killing them when you're angry."

"He wanted to take you away from me. Why didn't you tell me about him?"

"I completely forgot that he existed when I saw you, William." Doris whispered. Beneath his angered gaze, she saw a bit of vulnerability that she wasn't used to seeing on him. Doris caressed his cheek gently. "It would be impossible for him to steal me away from you."

William turned his head and kissed her palm, but his brows were still furrowed in anger. She wanted to smooth her thumb across his brows to make it disappear forever. Doris glanced back down at Joseph and sighed.

"We need to help him, the last thing you need is for him to die because of you right before the blood promise." Doris bent down to try and finish cleaning him, but it only seemed to make it worse.

William bit his wrist and pushed it up to Joseph's mouth almost as if he couldn't stand it. He offered him two drops, but no more. It didn't matter, it seemed to be more than enough. She could already see his wounds close just seconds after he moved away from his body.

"Will he be okay?" Doris asked.

"He'll be fine in a few hours. He might have a bad dream or two, but he'll be fine." William said bitterly. He turned and left towards the trees. Doris could only guess that William would be the star of Joseph's next hundred nightmares after this.

"Where are you going? We can't leave him out here to freeze!"

"I'm getting Patrick. Stay here."

Doris narrowed her eyes at his back and went to kneel over Joseph again. She tried not to replay the scene of William's jealousy exploding right in front of her. She didn't think she had ever seen him so jealous-expect perhaps the night he had gotten drunk because his brother became engaged to his ex lover.

Doris itched at the mark on her neck and pushed the thoughts out of her mind. It didn't matter if he still harbored feelings for Lady Grace. After they returned to the palace, she would be freed and they would part ways. 1

Their love affair was passionate and hungry, but she knew better than to expect more from him. Even if he got so dangerously violent at the very idea of her leaving him.

Why did it—why did she feel a strange flutter inside her stomach? She was not supposed to be turned on by something like that.

“It’s your wolfish part of you.” Cordelia spoke up in her mind, making Doris flinch. “We like it when our men get possessive and angry at the idea of another man wanting us. William can’t help going feral for you, he thinks he owns you.”

Doris snorted. “No one owns me. It doesn’t matter if he’s our mate, he doesn’t own us.”

“You still liked it when he got violent, Doris. Don’t pretend you don’t.”

Doris ignored her wolf and tried not to glance at Joseph’s injured form.

“What the hell happened?”

Doris turned to see Patrick and William standing over Joseph. He shot a glare at William as if he didn’t even need an answer. Doris sighed as she stood and neared them.

“We had a bit of a disagreement.” William said through his teeth and matched Patrick’s glare. “I need you to take him somewhere so he can heal. Try not to get noticed by the others.”

Patrick snorted and rolled his eyes to the sky. “I had hoped for one evening without bloodshed. I suppose with you, that’s impossible.” “I didn’t bring you out here to hear you complain. Get him out of here before someone notices.” William growled.

Patrick threw a look at Doris and she only shrugged. He sighed, “Well, at least he’s not dead.”

He leaned over and hauled Joseph up over his shoulder with a grunt. Joseph wasn’t overweight, but he was still a tall man. “Try not to get into any other disagreements before your blood promise, William. I don’t want to have to find a secret room to fill with bodies.”

“You’re hilarious.” William grumbled and watched him leave. Doris started to kick around the bloody snow, but it was no use.

“Someone is going to see this eventually.” Doris said. William glanced down and kicked at the snow as well.

"With all of the war between the rogues, I doubt they'll give it a second glance." He shoved his hands in his pockets and glanced down at Doris. Her eyes flicked to his mouth and she had to hold herself back from kissing him.

William gripped her chin and forced her to look up at him. He pressed a little harder than usual. "You are mine, Doris. You understand that, don't you?"

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Chapter 128 Blood promises

Doris felt as if her body didn't belong to her anymore. She leaned into his touch when she should have shoved him away from her. She didn't belong to anyone, she never would. So why couldn't she say that to him? Her heart betrayed her, but she didn't have the mind to be mad about it.

"Answer me." He demanded. Doris nodded her head slowly and he seemed satisfied enough with her answer. His eyes trailed over her lips for a long moment, she swore he was about to kiss her right there in the falling snow. But he released her chin and started walking back to the camp.

"Wait." Doris hurried after him and gripped his sleeve. He looked down at her with raised brows. "You think you can claim me like an object and not even kiss me?" 2

She didn't give him a chance to respond. She gripped his shirt and forced him down to her, kissing him as hard as she could. He was tense under her hold, as if he was surprised at her for ever daring such a thing. It soon faded away.

William's hands gripped her hips and pressed her against him. He quickly took control of the kiss that she thought she had the upper hand on for once. She was foolish to think that when it came to William. 1

He turned them over and slammed her back against a nearby rock. Doris groaned when his tongue slid between her lips. Her back pressed into the cold stone, he moved her up a little and wrapped her legs around his waist so he could have better access at kissing her.

She felt ridiculous for ever rolling her eyes at characters in books that melted from just one kiss, but she now knew what that felt like. Her insides were ready to turn to mush as his hands slid up her back. She tangled her fingers in his hair and arched her chest against him.

Doris couldn't feel the cold. He heated her up like lighting a fire inside her. It would never be enough for her. A single kiss left her desperate for more. Her mind wanted him to lay her down and kiss every inch of her skin until she turned red.

She took his bottom lip between her teeth and bit down. William groaned and thrust his hips up into her, she almost moaned loud enough to send the birds flying from trees.

"If I'm yours, then you're mine." Doris whispered against his mouth. He gripped the back of her head and kissed her roughly. She didn't think it was possible to get addicted to the taste of someone's lips, but she would never recover now that she knew what he tasted like. 4

"Am I interrupting something?"

Doris broke apart from William instantly at the sound of Enzo's voice. He looked utterly amused to have caught them out in the cold. If she wasn't already burned from their kiss, her blush would have scorched the ground.

"Yes. You are." William said through his teeth. He gently put Doris down and she found it was quite hard to detach herself from him.

"I'm sure you'll find some time for that later, but you have to come with me to prepare for the blood promise." The amusement left his face altogether, Doris was surprised to see how serious he looked.

William glanced down at Doris before he nodded and followed Enzo back to the camp without a goodbye. Doris quickly looked around for any sort of rock to throw at his head, but sadly none were nearby. 1

Doris wandered back to the camp on her own and could almost feel the tension in the air as the hours dragged closer to the deal. She'd never witnessed something as serious as a blood promise, but it clearly was enough to set each of them off into their own nervous state.

Doris went to the kitchens and gathered herself some food before she hurried back to her own room. Even in their distracted minds, they still stared at her as if she was an enemy. She didn't want to find out what they thought once they realized what happened to Joseph because of her.

She expected William to have come back at some point before dawn, but he hadn't once showed. The hours ticked on and Doris had dozed off several times before she couldn't take it any longer. She had to see him before he did this, why didn't he want to see her?

Doris threw on a thick coat and opened her door a little. She peeked her head out, but no one was in the main courtyard. Not that she blamed them, it was an ungodly hour and she hated the smell of morning air.

Slowly, she slipped out the door and closed it behind her. She tried to listen for any sounds of life, but all she heard was wind that started to pick up. Every direction she turned was complete darkness. She wandered around the camp grounds and leaned by each door to see if William was in any of them, but all she heard was more silence

—and the occasional snore.

It wasn't until she reached the edge of town when she saw the glowing light down the path. A large fire surrounded by dozens of cloaked figures, Doris moved closer to the trees and tried to get as close as she could without being seen. It was ridiculous that she wasn't invited to come. It bubbled a new rage inside her every time she thought about it. Why couldn't he just tell her why he didn't want her there?

Her inner wolf laughed a little as if she found Doris's rapid mood shifts amusing. She wanted to scream suddenly from the anger she felt.

Once she was close enough to hear what people were saying, she crouched down to keep out of sight. Hopefully William didn't scent her with all of these other people around. He hadn't once turned his head in her direction, she let out the breath in her throat when her eyes found him instantly

"It's almost time." Mr. Hugh said. He looked more than irritated to be there, but at least he wasn't trying to stop it. Enzo stood tall and proud, he looked like a leader. Had they accepted him back as their own?

"I suppose we can start now." Enzo lifted a torch and put it near the fire to light. He held out his hand and William stepped up with a knife and sliced it neatly across his palm. Doris cringed at the scene, but Enzo seemed unaffected.

William cut his own palm and clasped it against Enzo's open wound. Silence surrounded them as well as a weird energy even Doris could feel. It made her skin prickled and left her stomach in knots. Was it supposed to feel this way? It felt almost, wrong.

"Prince William, do you swear to stay true to your word about the rogues? Do you promise to keep their lives in your best interest and not take advantage of this deal?"

"I do. I promise." William said. He sounded a bit pained as if Enzo was sucking the life out of him. But-no, that couldn't be so.

"Do you promise to always make sure the rogues are treated kindly once you are king?"

"I do." William said. She thought he looked as if he was about to pass out. Doris slowly stood and gripped the tree.

"Then we promise to back you and your journey to the crown. The rogues will support your leadership as long as you keep to your word." Enzo said and lifted their joined hands. Their blood dripped in the fire and turned it dark red. Enzo threw the red flame into the bigger fire and they all stepped back as it erupted into something wild and dangerous. Sparks flew in all directions as if it was furious at them.

Doris forced her eyes away from the horrible fire to find William clenching his chest, but he wasn't the only one. Every single rogue and royal guard was doing the same. One by one, they went down to the ground as if they were having a heart attack. Doris popped out from the trees and ran as fast as she could to get to William.

When he saw her, his eyes were terrified. "No! Get back!" He screamed.

She ignored his pleas and fell to his side. "William, what's happening?"

"You have to leave before it marks you too—" He groaned and clenched his eyes shut. Doris put her hands over his own but he only tried to force her away. 2

"Get out of here!" He said again.

"William! What is happening to you?" She didn't know what to do to help him, he

looked as if he was fighting something internally—and then it hit her. , The blinding pain ripped through her body and sent her on the ground next to him He reached out his hand to her, but it was too late.

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Chapter 129 The sweet burn of peace

The middle of her chest started to burn like never before. Doris clenched the area with her hands but of course it did nothing to relieve the pain. William moved closer and gripped her chin to force her to look at him.

"Where does it hurt the most?" He asked in a strained tone. Doris wordlessly pointed to her chest. He reached his hand up her shirt and brushed his fingers over the area it burned. It ignited a loud groan from her. "It's going to pass, it's almost finished."

Doris looked up at him with wide eyes. What was almost finished? What was even happening to her-or any of them?

One by one, the people around them started to sit up and rub different areas of their body. Did they feel their skin try to melt off like she did?

It felt like her heart was about to combust out of her chest. William was saying something but she couldn't hear a thing. All she could hear was the sound of her ears trying to explode. She was about to die, she was certain of it.

Was she screaming? It was impossible to tell.

Minutes passed and suddenly the pain stopped all at once—as if it was never there. Doris opened her eyes to see William still bent over her, but Enzo was there as well. The sound came back to her but it was almost as if she was underwater for a second as William repeated her name over and over.

“What—what just happened?” Doris gasped. It was hard to even get the words out, they didn’t even sound like her voice.

“You were marked by the blood promise.” William said calmly. His blue eyes quickly turned from worried to furious. “What the fuck were you doing out here? I told you I didn’t want you here! You were supposed to stay in the cabin!” 1

Doris sat up slowly, her heart about to burst from her chest. “What do you mean I’ve been marked by the blood promise?” Doris wanted to rip her hair out and scream as loud as she could, but her voice wouldn’t let her. “You even didn’t tell me why I shouldn’t come! All you did was tell me you didn’t want me there! How was I supposed to know it would mark me?”

How could he possibly turn this around and try to blame it on her? He only made her feel unwanted, not as if he was doing it for his own good. Doris felt her rage quickly return as it crawled up her throat. He was so close, she could punch him right now if she had any strength.

“The blood promise marks everyone near enough to the flames to follow through.” William angrily unbuttoned his shirt and showed her the mark beneath. His skin had a blood drop seared right down the middle. It was still red as if the burning hadn’t. Doris forced herself not to reach out and touch it, it was no bigger than her thumb.

“That’s what I have too?” Doris touched the area over her clothes. She was close to strangling him. “Why didn’t you just tell me why you didn’t want to be here?”

William rolled his eyes to the sky and took a deep breath. “I expected you to just listen, not go against me. You never went against my wishes at the palace.”

“I’m not a maid here, I’m a person with feelings—someone who feels the burn of your words every time you carelessly throw them at me.” Doris moved to stand. She ignored his offered hand and brushed the snow from her pants. “What does this mark mean?” 1

“It means you are tied to the promise just as much as William is. You have to abide to the rules and make sure you don’t mistreat any of the rogues.” Enzo filled in. He nervously looked between both of them as if he didn’t know what to do.

“What if he breaks the bond?” Doris glanced at his guards. “What happens to us?”

“Unfortunately, it would all lead to the same punishment.” Enzo said softly. Doris filled in the missing words—it would lead to their death if William decided to go against the promise. But what about the rest of them?

"I don't plan on ever breaking my end of the deal." William said through his teeth. Doris tiredly ran her fingers through her long hair.

This was the opposite of what she needed right now. This pushed her back even further from the freedom she craved. In yet another way besides her mate mark, she was tied to William. It would never end.

"Great. I'm going to bed." Doris mumbled and turned to get back on the path towards her cabin. She didn't hear anyone follow her, and she was only partly disappointed by it. She wanted the solitude to let her thoughts override her mind—but she also wanted to be followed back so she didn't have to deal with it alone.

Doris closed the door behind her and immediately went into the bathroom to look at her mark. Right in the center of her chest, a blood drop was carved into her. She traced the shape with her finger and hoped it was just another cut that would fade away after time—but it already looked healed.

Doris crawled into bed and let the exhaustion take her over before her thoughts started up again.

Late afternoon, Doris woke to find a large arm draped over her body. Slowly, she turned to see William asleep beside her without a shirt on. Normally, it would distract her to see his bare chest, but she felt nothing when her eyes fell upon his matching mark.

Doris started to move out from under him, but he tightened his hold. His eyes were wide open when she turned back to him.

"Where are you going?" He asked.

"It's late in the day. I want to go out for a walk and get some air." Doris went to move again but he wouldn't budge. His arm dragged her closer to him and she debated whether she wanted to bite him or not. He might take it wrong and get turned on.

"This mark won't affect you like you think it will. You wouldn't be cruel to the rogues, you wouldn't mistreat them or betray them. You can live through life and forget it's even there."

"I suppose it's a good thing that I have so many terrible scars now. It'll blend right in." Doris said bitterly.

"Your scars are beautiful. They all have stories." William said almost gently. It surprised her. He hadn't ever said something like that to her, it almost sounded alien and she eyed him suspiciously.

William released her and fell back against the bed. His eyes went up the the ceiling and stayed there. Perhaps he already regretted what he said. She didn't blame him in the slightest.

"Do you think they trust you now?" Doris asked.

"I do. They don't look as if they want me to die every time I enter a room."

"That must be a first for you." Doris said as she slipped out of bed. She glanced back just in time to see a ghost of a smirk on his lips. It was gone before she could capture it forever in her mind.

"I know you don't owe me anything, but I would appreciate if you were honest with me." Doris quickly turned away from him and searched through her drawers. She heard the bed creak behind her.

"I see it as trust. I wish you had just trusted me."

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Doris clenched her hand around a pair of socks and took a deep breath. After a second, he continued.

"I will tell you next time."

Doris turned to look at him, but he was already in the bathroom.

After they were both dressed, Doris followed William out of the cabin and into a crowd. Immediately she recognized a lot of the villagers blended in with the guards. Many of them looked tired, but others seemed happy.

"They were brought back after you went to bed." William answered the question in her mind. "They're all aware of the deal, many other guards are going to other

villages to let them know as

Doris bit her lip. None of them glared at them as they passed, several even smiled. Did this mean peace had already started? Less than two days ago Doris swore she was close to death.

"William." Enzo broke through the crowd and headed straight for them. His face was serious, in his hand he clenched a golden letter. "The palace has sent this for you."

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Chapter 130 Home is calling.

William clenched the letter in his hand and immediately turned back to their cabin. Doris followed him with Patrick and Enzo on her heel. They closed the door and William ripped open the letter to read it quickly. Her heart pounded roughly in her chest, who had sent William a letter all the way out here?

- There had never been a silence so loud to her own ears. When he finished, he looked up at all of them with a distant expression. She hated when he looked like that. She feared she could never reach him. "Something happened at the palace. There's some sort of plague that has broken out while we've been gone." William said, clearly in shock. That was truly the last thing she had expected to hear.

"Is everyone okay? Has any of your family been affected?" Or Beth! Doris felt the dread sink in her stomach. She silently prayed to the moon goddess that her friend was okay. How could this have happened? They'd been gone for some time, but not that long.

"It doesn't say much about if anyone had gotten sick." William stared at the paper again as if hoped it would have more. "It just requests that I come back before it gets worse."

"That's all?" Patrick asked. He stepped forward to peer at the letter.

"That, and my idiot brother Martin had decided to get married the second we were gone." William tossed the letter to the side. Patrick immediately went to grab it and read it over for himself.

Doris watched William carefully. Did he feel jealous that his brother had just married his ex lover? He shifted a little and refused to meet her eyes and she didn't know why that hurt more than anything else. It was all the confirmation she needed. Clearly, a part of him had not gotten over her just yet. 1 "I can have you all packed and on the road within the hour." Enzo offered. He looked at each of them. "I can come with you if you need me to convince your father of our blood promise."

"I think it would be best if you did come with us. You can bring your own guards with you if you need." William crossed his arms over his chest and stared into the fire. Tears started to burn the back of her throat, she swallowed them down before anyone could catch a hint of them.

"Very well. I will have it all prepared." He nodded his head and threw a small wink at Doris before he left the cabin. At least he would be there with them, that mended her pain a little.

"If we take the main roads, we'll get there much quicker than it took to get here." Patrick said. He still had the golden letter in his grasp but Doris didn't want to see it. A new ache in her chest had already formed from worry and a touch of jealousy. Why did it still bother him?

"Enzo will know the quickest route back to the palace. I need you to make sure all our our men are gathered and that we have enough horses to get back. We won't

need a carriage, I want to get there as quickly as possible." William said without looking up.

Patrick bowed his head and left as well. Closing her in with William. Already she could feel his title start to form again, she already could imagine a crown on his head and the stiff shoulders he always wore at the palace. The dark look in his eyes.

What would they become once they were back? Would they sneak around until she was released? Would he try to prevent her from getting any sort of freedom?

Would he be ashamed for people to know she was his lover?

And—what about Melody?

"What about Melody?" Doris blurted out the second the question had hit her mind. William slowly turned his distracted gaze to her.

For a moment, it looked as if he didn't know who she was referring to. "She'll be moved out of the ladies ward the second we get there." He said absentmindedly.

Clearly Melody was the very last thing on his mind at the moment-or ever.

"Just like that?"

"What did you want me to say? I'll throw a sad parade in her honor and have her carried out the door?" He moved through the room like a force, starting to gather their things.

"She was your lady—"

"She lied to me and made a fake mark. I don't like liars and she's lucky I don't ban her from the kingdom."

Doris thought back to the day she was poisoned, when William barely cared and everyone told her how little he seemed concerned. How long had he known she was lying? Did he know the second they made love, or after?

Her wolf felt at home every time he touched her—did his own scream at him that he had the wrong woman? Or did he just not care?

A sour taste burned her mouth. She went to help him pack and for the first time, she really started to consider what would happen. Her heart didn't want to break before they even left, but she couldn't help but wonder what was about to happen.

She saw it all in her mind. They'd get back to the palace, he would treat her like a maid again, invite her to his room when no one was around, and ignore her during the days. It filled her with misery. She also dreaded the idea that he would try to offer her to be his lady. Once their bags were full, they went out to find the

rest of the guards. People raced around the camp frantically-Enzo must have set a fire under them to help the prince. Doris went right to the stables and handed her bag to the nearest guard. He tied it to their horse and a second later, Enzo was entering the stables.

"I had enough food packed to last us all a few days. I expect us to get there sooner, but if a storm hits us we might be stuck out there." Enzo pulled himself up on his horse, a few of his guards filed in to join him.

William didn't even look at her before he lifted her on his horse and pulled himself up in front of her. Did he think the same thing she was? Was he dreading the thought of popping their small bubble of bliss? 2

Out here, they were different. He wasn't a prince, she wasn't a maid. There was no palace to force them into their roles and make them realize they were wrong for each other. She day dreamed about the idea that he was just a normal man that she could love.

But she knew it could never be so.

Enzo led them out onto the main road and kicked his horse off into a steady gallop. William was close behind and the guards followed. Doris closed her eyes and rested her head against his back as she tried to imagine a bit longer that they weren't about to be torn apart.

Even if it took weeks or months for her to be finally freed, it was inevitable. Unless he tried to stop it, but how could she ever love someone that did that to her?

After a while, their horses slowed to a lighter walk to gain a bit of their breath back. The sun was quickly fading in the sky and she dreaded the night air. It was even more unbearably cold than during the day. Her hair felt frozen on her head even though it hadn't been wet, she could barely feel her toes and she desperately wanted to feel a warm bed and hot meal.

Their group stopped for the night when many of them couldn't stand another minute. William ate next to Doris and held her when they slept, but he didn't say much else to her. Perhaps he was dreading it, too. They weren't ready to go back to how it was.

As soon as the sun broke the darkness, they were fed and on the road again. They rode hard and fast and then gave their horses breaks whenever they needed it. Her legs started to burn and ache from the pounding of the horse. She was barely able to walk every time William helped her off the horse for a break.

Another day passed of travel and thick fires. William grumbled his responses even though he stuck to her side the whole way through. Enzo hadn't been very talkative himself, but she thought that was due to the mood of the rest of them. They all had their terrible silences.

Enzo came up to them as they tore through their meals. "We should be there within a few hours."

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Chapter 131 So much sickness

Just a few hours left before Doris became a maid again, wasn't it? It all became a giant blur as they mounted their horses again and took off into the growing winds. An unsettling feeling shifted in her stomach, more than it had before. Perhaps it was due to the fact that they were closer than before, another half day or so and they'd be there. 4

The ride was silent and not as urgent, as if all of the energy had dissolved long ago and they were left with the anticipation. They rode the horses in a normal gallop through the snow rather than push them as they had been before. The fog had grown so much, she almost couldn't see some of the guards that had ridden ahead.

A shape blocked their path up ahead, they all slowed to a stop right before it. Doris squinted her eyes and saw that it looked like a man bundled up-but that couldn't be so. He would have been frozen to death and she did not need to see another dead body. One of the rogues slid off their horse and went to see what it was.

As soon as he touched the shape, it moved. The man rolled to his side and sat up quickly as if he was startled. He looked... deathly. His skin was tinted an awful grey and sickly color and he could barely open his eyes all the way. Doris tightened her grip on William. What happened to this man? Was he stuck out here in the cold?

"Help... help me." The man coughed. He tried to stand, but he collapsed on his knees again. Enzo slid off his horse instantly to go help. She felt another uneasy feeling sink in her stomach.

"What happened?" Enzo asked. Doris had to strain just to hear him say anything over the sounds of wind. It was starting to make her eyes water.

"I... the whole village, we're sick. Something came over us all and we have all fallen ill" He coughed. "I went to get help from the lords nearby, but got lost and couldn't make it another step."

William tensed under Doris' grasp. "The whole village?" He called. The man looked over at William and his eyes widened a little. He nodded eagerly as if he recognized him, perhaps he did.

"Y-yes. We've all gotten sick." He stammered, his entire body started to tremble.

Doris knew exactly what William was thinking. The plague had already gotten here from the palace—how was that so?

“Please, we need help.” He coughed again and tried to get closer to William. His guard gripped his shoulder and pulled him back a bit.

“We don’t have time to pass—”

“Please!” He begged. The rogues and guards shared a few uneasy glances.

Enzo cleared his throat and motioned for one of his men to come closer. They surrounded William’s horse and lowered their voices. “We need to see if we can at least help this man and villagers.”

“We don’t have time—” William started. “How will the rogues trust you if they heard you didn’t even try to help?” Enzo said quietly. He gave him a look that made Doris nervous. The last thing they needed was for William to get angry.

“I don’t think this is a wise—” William inhaled and exhaled slowly. “Alright. We will pass through and see if we can help. But we can not linger, we have to get back on the road soon.”

“We can at least give them a half day of our time.” Enzo clapped William on the knee and turned back to the man who looked as if he was going to pass out any second.

“We will take you back to the village and see if there’s anything we can do to help you.” Enzo said. He gestured to two of his guards to help the man on the horse as he crawled up on his own. The man repeated his grateful praises the whole ride to his village.

They went off the road and opposite of where they were meant to be heading. It didn’t take long for Doris to see a bit of a small village up ahead in another camp style that reminded her of Enzo’s. This one was about half the size of his own. 1

The fog was still heavy and thick, she couldn’t tell if there were any people outside or if they were all inside. They came to a stop at the stables, William slid off and helped Doris before he followed Enzo. His shoulders were tense with his inner rage wanting to come out, but surprisingly he managed to contain himself. Perhaps he was already back into his role as prince and wanted to make it stick.

“Just- just up here.” The man coughed. He staggered a little before he led them to one of the larger cabins. Inside, it was worse than she expected. There were rows and rows of cots that had sick people in them. Half of them looked like ghosts and the other half already looked dead.

“This isn’t all of them, two more cabins are full of the sick like this.” The man explained. He collapsed on one of the empty beds and had another coughing fit. Doris cringed at the noise. It was wet and nasty, she took a small step back.

"What can we do to help?" Doris asked. William shot her a look that she ignored.

"We need... medicine or something. Anything! Please, help us." Someone else groaned in the corner of the room. Doris looked over each person and saw them clenching their stomachs while others just looked as if they wanted to die. Doris frowned and went to find an apron.

William gripped her arm to stop her. "What are you doing?"

"We're here to help, aren't we? I'm going to try and help them." Doris shook his arm off and tied an apron around her waist. She went to heat up some water and gather towels.

"We should try to see what medicine we brought." Enzo said to his men. They hurried out the door and slammed it closed behind her. William stared at the door as if he wanted to open it again just to let air in this sick place.

"Come help me, please." Doris said to the remaining guards. "Get some warm towels and clean up some of the patients. I'm going to go make some tea."

She headed to the small kitchen to brew some water while the men got to work. They looked a bit confused at being asked to help out, she almost rolled her eyes at them. What did they expect? To sit and watch?

William followed her into the kitchen and leaned against the counter as he watched her. "We shouldn't be near them, Doris." 2

"If we don't help them, they're just going to die. I don't know how to take care of them but I can at least help." She glanced back at him. "You can try to help too." 2

William narrowed his eyes and pushed off the counter. He lined up a few cups for her to pour tea into before he carried them out of the kitchen without another word. Doris sighed and carried the rest. 1

It wasn't nearly enough to serve all of them, they didn't even have enough cups. Doris watched them helplessly. Guards wiped the warm clothes against their foreheads and looked just as clueless as she did.

Her training at the palace never mentioned what to do when a plague fell upon the kingdom. How many people would die from this? It looked like most of them were already close to it.

"Perhaps I can try to make a soup or something," Doris whispered to William. He stood in the far corner with his arms crossed over his chest.

"Soup is not going to cure them, Doris. Just look at them." William muttered.

"I don't know what else we can do!" Doris said. She glanced out the window to see Enzo talking with his guards and gesturing to a bag in his hand. They must not have brought as much medicine as they expected.

A man from behind her started coughing so loud, she swore he was about to cough up all of his insides. The sound made her sad and sick at the same time, she wanted to help him but she just didn't know how.

He rolled to his side and fell off the bed. Doris quickly hurried over to him and helped him up. When he saw who was helping him, he clenched onto her tighter and

started coughing directly in her face.

William yanked her back away from him and she almost fell right into his chest. A guard hurried over and handed her a towel, but something inside her told her it was too late.

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Chapter 132 Another bloody mistake.

The sickness started slowly in the day, and then it hit her all at once. She was in the middle of washing dishes when a dizziness overcame her and she collapsed on the cold ground. The guard that had been helping her nearby picked her up and carried her to where William was speaking quietly with a ghostly Enzo.

They'd set their party up in a temporary cabin that hadn't yet been touched by the sickness. Or, they set themselves up while the villagers suffered in the other ones. William dropped the papers he was holding and took her in his arms the second he saw her. Already she felt sweaty and nauseated as if she was about to throw up all over him. How had it gotten a hold of her so fast?

"You got sick! I fucking knew this was going to happen!" William growled and carried her up to one of the empty rooms. Each of his stomps were like echos in her throbbing mind. He placed her in the center of the bed and started to pull off her boots and thick sweater. 1

"You know," Enzo appeared at the door, he gripped the frame to hold himself up. He looked pale and as if he was about to pass out any second. "I haven't been feeling too well myself." 1

Just as he said it, he collapsed on the floor face first with a loud thump. William grumbled furiously and snapped at the nearby guards to take him to another room.

"I'm sure it's just a cold." Doris coughed and closed her eyes. "It'll be over soon, it's freezing outside."

"It's been freezing since the moment we entered the north and you've only just gotten sick." William snarled. He wrapped her up in the blankets and left the room a second later. Dread crawled up her throat, as well as a bit of fear.

They were planning on leaving by nightfall to get to the palace by morning. Now that Enzo and herself were sick-they could be here for days until they were both fit to travel again.

It was hard to lift her head when she tried to sit up, it felt as if a lead weight pulled her back down to the bed. The second her head hit the pillow, she was out.

Doris woke in a pool of her own sweat. The blankets were kicked down to her feet and she'd never seen sheets in such a twisted state.

"Stop moving, you'll only get sick again." William said from beside her. She turned to see him seated in a chair with a bucket and towels next to him.

"Again?" Doris whispered. Her voice was hoarse and scratchy as if she hadn't used it in years.

"You've woken up to throw up about four times." William leaned forward to wipe the sweat from her brow. "And then you would pass out the second you were done."

"I don't remember any of that." Doris leaned her heavy head back on the pillows. A wave of chills passed through her body, he got up and brought the blankets back around her shoulders. "Was any medicine found?"

William snorted and leaned back in the chair. "From where the outside snow? No, none of the medicine that we brought has worked on anyone."

"Is Enzo doing okay?" She didn't have the energy to roll her eyes at his ridiculous tone. He shifted beside her.

"He's worse than you. I've never seen anyone look that sick before." William said without a hint of sarcasm left in his voice. Doris could see the crease of worry form between his brows and she wanted to smooth it away. 1

"It'll pass. Don't worry." Doris whispered. When she reached for his hand, he yanked it away

"Why is it that you can't help but go against my commands? I told you not to get close to anyone and you let an old fucker cough in your face!" He stood and kicked the metal bucket across the room. Doris flinched when it hit the wall. At least it wasn't full of her vomit.

Slowly, Doris tried to pull herself up but didn't get far. "I didn't invite him to cough on me, William." Doris said in a strained voice. Her throat was starting to bum and she only wished she could swallow a pound of snow to sooth it. "I was just trying to be a good person. It's not wrong to want to help people." 1

"It is if it gets you killed." William growled. He turned to face her and gripped the edge of the bed frame. "At the palace, you never went against my wishes. You did everything I asked and you never—"

"What? I never complained? I was a slave, William. I'm not allowed to complain or tell people how I feel." Doris coughed into her arm. "Or tell people how I feel. I'm supposed to blend into the walls and allow everyone higher up than me to abuse me. I'm sorry that you miss that version of myself, but I've finally learned how to respect myself."

Silence fell over the room. He didn't break eye contact with her for a second. She felt sweat drip down the center of her back as she stared at him.

"I'm sure once we get back to the castle things will—" Doris coughed again. "Things will be back to how they were. You can demand me to do whatever you want and I'll cower away from you and hide when I hear your footsteps."

"Doris, that's not what I meant—"

"It's not? Then what did you mean, William? You don't want me to make my own decisions and you get mad when I want to make up my own mind."

"Look where some of those decisions led you, Doris! On your death bed!"

"I don't regret trying to help people who are suffering. I tried to help and I know it wasn't enough but at least I tried." Doris laid back against the bed and closed her eyes. "I was almost beaten to death by your lady at the palace and all you did was tell her to hurt me in private next time—that she wasn't acting like a lady."

Doris heard an intake of breath, she continued before he said anything. "I almost was killed for being wrongly accused of a poisoning. I almost died several times just on this journey. If this was why I go, I would say it's a lot better than the other reasons." She whispered. 2

He said nothing, but she knew he was still there. She could hear his breathing turn from heavy to lighter as if he was letting his emotions simmer out of him. Doris pulled the blankets more around herself and sunk deeper inside the bed.

"I would have never let her kill you." William said before he finally left the room. His words echoed around her but fell to the floor uselessly. For a man that was built on actions rather than words, he missed the mark on that one. 1

The next time she woke up again, he was standing over her bed with a steaming cup. For a moment, she'd completely forgotten where she was and what had happened to her. She was halfway out of a fever dream.

"Drink this." He ordered. Doris tried to sit up but kept falling back. He finally gripped her and helped her sit up all the way.

"What is it?" Doris took it with shaky hands. She felt as if her insides were starting to shut down on her. When she looked down at the tea, it looked more red than usual.

"It's whatever tea they had on hand and my blood." William sat next to her on the edge of the bed. Doris shook her head and tried to had it back.

"The last time I took that, I had the most awful dreams—"

"And you'll have them again." He pushed the cup back towards her. Doris sighed. "My blood might get this sickness out of your system before it gets worse. Now, drink." "What if it doesn't?" Doris asked quietly. She felt a fit of coughs try to crawl their way up her throat.

William looked at her for a moment. As if he was trying to assess every inch of her. "If it doesn't, I'll go out into the storm and I won't stop until I've found something to cure you." He said gently. He brushed her hair behind her ear. 1

Storm? She didn't realize they'd been in a storm. She glanced out the window by her bed to see nothing but white. William turned her chin back to him and lifted the cup to her lips.

Doris kept her eyes on his blue ones as she tilted the tea back and drank every drop. When he took the cup back, sleep had already taken her under.

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Chapter 133 Fever dreams of horror

It was red everywhere. The dark room she had once feared was no where in sight, she was surrounded by the bloodiest red. It looked as if it oozed down in big fat drops, the sight made her shiver.

Doris stood and looked around the area. Part of her was well aware that she was dreaming-she had to be. But the other half wasn't so convinced. It felt real. She felt as if she was there, seeing every inch of this massacre. Was it blood? No, it couldn't be. There were no bodies, no sense of life around her

except

Her hands were covered in it, as were her bare legs. She wore a torn dress as if she had just come from a bloody wedding. A diamond ring even sat on her ring finger. When she tried to take it off, she heard a sharp laugh behind her. "Doris...."

A voice called from the shadows. Doris hesitated before she stepped towards the sound. "William? Is that you?"

"Oh, I know you wish it was..." The voice hissed. Doris stopped her steps and tried to move back, but there was now a wall behind her. "Your groom is waiting at the altar for you, what are you doing here?" The voice asked. She swore it sounded like William, but also—it didn't sound like him at all.

"I don't know what you're talking about—"

"Sure you do. It's all you ever wanted, isn't it? William gave up his throne for you." The voice sounded as if it was now behind her. She quickly turned to see fresh blood seeping down the walls. "It's for the better, he would have killed everyone if he had become king."

"That's not true, he's a good man." Doris backed away from the bleeding wall and fell right into a pool of blood. She gasped as she tried to swim out of it, but the edges stretched on.

"He already killed two of his brothers, I'm not sure I would consider than a good man." The voice laughed.

Doris tried to get out of the blood, but it only pulled her further in as if it was an ocean.

"Where do you think all the blood came from?" The voice said against her ear. Doris screamed and was pulled down to the bottom of the bloody pool.

Suddenly, she was sucked through the bottom and dropped into a strange room. It dreams of horror appeared to be some sort of funeral from all of the black. Doris slowly calmed herself before she stood up to see what was happening. She passed rows and rows of people dressed in more black but had no faces, it sent a chill down her spine.

"They were so lovely, I assure you they'll be missed..." The voice said. Doris turned in every direction to try and catch him, but there was nothing but more and more empty faces.

"Who will be missed?" Doris asked. She looked around for a sign of who they all came to mourn.

"Can't you see?" The voice whispered by her ear and shoved her towards the front. There were four caskets, and each held a face she knew well.

Doris screamed when she saw the dead faces of Beth, Martin, Daniel and Enzo. They had their eyes closed and hands crossed over their chests as if they were in a peaceful sleep. Doris collapsed next to Beth's coffin and tried to wake her. "Oh, she's gone. She tried to stop you from marrying the prince so he ripped out her heart." The voice said. It almost sounded as if he was happy. "In fact, I think they all tried to do that. They all tried to talk sense in you for wanting to marry the prince. Or, former prince."

"He didn't do this! He would never kill Beth!"

The voice made a noise of disapproval. "Love is blind, but you are perhaps one of the worst cases I've ever seen."

"Why do you sound like him?" Doris screamed. She put her head between her knees and tried to force herself to wake up. The sound of loud steps made her body tremble. When she looked up, William was walking towards her in a crisp suit.

His hands were shoved deep in his pockets and he looked down at her with some sort of pity on his face.

"Come on, wife." He held his hand out to her, it had blood all over it. "It's time to go."

"Don't touch me!" Doris screamed and scrambled to her feet. He tilted his head as he watched her. "Why would you do this to them?"

"You're my mate. I own you and they only tried to break us apart." William said. He spoke so nonchalantly and she realized it didn't sound like him at all. It was as if something deeper was speaking inside him and he was saying the words along with it. "Come now. Let's go before it gets too dark."

"I'm not going anywhere with you!" Doris screamed. A flash of anger covered his face as he started stomping towards her. Doris moved back and suddenly, William stopped dead in his tracks. 1

His blue eyes were red now. They widened and he gripped his heart. Doris watched dreams of horror as something looked as if it was ripping out of him. It tore William in half and all Doris could do was scream and watch her worst nightmare come to life.

She collapsed to her knees and crawled over to him. The creature that came out looked like a wolf, but also didn't.

"You-you belong to me!" It screamed.

Doris woke up with William pinning her to the bed.

"Doris!" He shouted over her screams. She thrashed under his hold and he refused to let her go. "Calm down! It's just a dream!"

Slowly, her moves halted. William had her wrists pinned against her bed and he looked utterly exhausted as if he just went through a fight with her. The images of her dream were slowly fading away, but she still saw a hint of dead faces in the back of her mind.

Her breathing calmed after a few minutes. He loosened his grip on her and cautiously let her go. "Are you... okay?" He asked when she finally calmed down.

Doris nodded and went to sit up. He moved off her and pushed her hair back behind her ears to take a better look at her. His hands were warm as they gripped her face, she wanted to melt into them and hope the dream melted too.

"Why does it feel so real?" Doris whispered. Her voice was so small, even to her own ears. William frowned and pulled back a little.

"It's the side effect of taking the blood. I don't know why everyone reacts this way, but they do. I only gave you a few drops" He dropped his hands. "You don't look pale anymore." "How long was I out?" Doris asked as she took in his new clothes.

"A day. Enzo is still out but he occasionally screams." William brushed his hands across his front. They come away clean, no hint of blood on him.

"Are the dreams supposed to...mean something?" Doris asked hesitantly. She sat up a little and he placed another pillow behind her.

"No. They're usually meant to play on your inner fears. Usually things that don't see the light of day often and make them a hundred times worse." He handed her a tall glass of cold water. Doris swallowed in large gulps. It felt so good going down her throat. 1

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"What were your dreams?" He asked and seated himself on the bed again. He watched her closely and she wondered how awful she must look to him.

Doris hesitated. "I don't remember much of it just-a lot of blood. I almost drowned in a pool of blood. I think it was supposed to be the blood of people I care about."

William nodded slowly when she offered no other explanation. "How are you feeling

now?"

"I feel... fine. I don't feel like I'm going to throw up on you, if that's what you're wondering."

The side of William's mouth twitched a little. She would do anything to see him smile. Had he ever truly smiled at her? She couldn't remember. If she had money, she would pay everything she had just to hear his laugh every day.

Doris reached out and touched his lips gently. He froze at her touch and she only smiled at him.

William's eyes flickered to her mouth. He drank in the sight of her smile and suddenly she had a strange feeling of home. Could a person be considered home?

"I'll get you something to eat. You must be starving." William let his lips pull up a little further and she held her breath. How could she capture it forever? If only she knew how to paint, then she would do just that.

He stood from her bed and walked out the door, leaving her with her leftover horror.

Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne by Caroline Chapter 134

[/ Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne by Caroline](#)
Chapter 134 Another traitorous thing

Another night of rest followed by food was all Doris needed to feel okay again. Or, close enough to okay. She was required to take it easy for at least another day and she couldn't complain about that. After the the days of riding and then immediately falling sick, her body needed her to take it easy before it collapsed entirely.

Desperately, she wanted to forget the dream that kept trying to come back to corrupt her mind whenever she closed her eyes. Blood coated the walls around her all over again as if she was still in the room. What did her dream mean? Was it some sort of warning, or just another ridiculous scene that came from her deepest fears as William said?

It wouldn't make sense for it to be a warning, William would never give up the crown for her and she wouldn't want him to. She didn't see herself as a bride any time soon and Beth would have thrown a parade if she knew that Doris was marrying a prince

-so what did it all mean?

Perhaps there was something deeper and darker inside her that had its own concerns.

Doris got up from her disastrous bed and changed out of her sweaty clothes. She wasn't sure where William had gone, but she was relieved to have a moment alone especially gayer the dream of him.

Cleaned up and somewhat fresh, she crept down the hall and peeked in on the room next to her own. Enzo laid in a deep sleep with a bit of sweat gleaming on his forehead. She heard him screaming in the middle of the night, she wondered if he had already passed through his wretched dreams or if he was still in the middle of one. William had said he was much sicker than she was, perhaps he would be out another day because of it. Silently, she closed the door again.

The stairs creaked under her feet as she carefully made her way down the stairs. The house was quiet with sleep and sickness, she wondered if anyone else had fallen ill while she was out. Were his guards okay?

William sat at the kitchen table with his head bent over a book of some sort. His eyes snapped up to her the second she stepped further into the room. They were completely alone, surprisingly. It wasn't even night out yet. "You shouldn't be up." He said and closed what he was reading. Doris moved to sit across from him.

"I didn't want to lay there anymore, it was making me stir crazy." She sighed and leaned her head on her palm. Her hair was a wild mess, but there were no signs of brushes anywhere nearby. Even William had his hand tossed waves on full display. She had to curl her fingers closed just to prevent herself from running them through his soft hair. Oh yes, she was definitely feeling much better if she was just thinking of his appearance rather than wanting to die.

"I just got some disturbing news." William said lowly. He glanced over his shoulder to confirm they were alone.

Doris straightened in her chair and leaned closer to him. "Oh no, what happened? Did someone die in the village?" "No. Not yet, many of them are close to it, though." William cleared his throat. "I had one of my guards go ahead to the kingdom to see how people are holding up there and what we should expect. He came back much faster than I expected him to with the news."

"Oh no... what happened?" Doris reached across the table to grip his hand, he let her. A small bloom of panic formed in her chest, she silently prayed that all the villagers at the castle were fine—as well as the princes. "The sickness isn't there. No one is sick there from this and they had no idea what he was talking about when he asked around about it." "What?" Doris furrowed her brows. "That makes no sense, why would your palace send you a letter—"

It dawned on her right then, and something about his face made her realize that he already knew too.

"Luna Queen." They said at the same time.

"Was this some sort of big set up? Why did she want you to race home for this?"

"I was just thinking how strange it was that we found that man out in the middle of the main road. Right in our direct path back to the kingdom." William leaned back in his chair.

"She must have set all of this up—but why?" Doris frowned. "She wanted us to be stopped by that man and lured here where all these sick people are." Doris wasn't sure if they were going to be ambushed or not. The villagers truly looked as if they were about to die. She didn't think they would willingly let someone make them this ill, she felt just how real their sickness was. There was no way they were faking just to trick him.

But—why would she infect an entire village of people?

"Do you think she wanted you to come here so you could get sick and die? This village clearly has no medicine and the supplies is running dangerously low."

Doris said. She glanced at the kitchen. There wasn't that much food left in there, where did they get more if everyone was as sick as they were?

"I think it's possible she did. We already know she wanted me dead here, it's why she planned the whole poison thing. She wanted me to die up here." William said.

"Perhaps when she realized she hadn't heard back if you were dead or not, she took measures a little further and tried to get everyone sick."

"She doesn't realize my blood fights against it. It cured you and Enzo, she doesn't realize I have that sort of power. If she did, she might have killed me in my sleep at the palace or just poisoned me right there." 4

"What should we do?" Doris asked quietly. She felt so angry inside, her rage was waking up as her body regained energy. But she still didn't want to wake the rest of the house. "We have to stop her before she goes even further. This was... this was far enough. She got an entire village sick."

"I might be able to save them. I don't know if I should, though. They took part in her scheme." William grumbled. Doris squeezed his hand and brought her own hand back to her lap.

"I don't think they agreed to be infected like this. I don't know about the man that lured you here, perhaps he was told you were the one that could help him so he quickly wanted you to come with him." Doris spoke gently. His mouth was still in a permanent frown and she didn't know how to fix it. "They shouldn't all die because of her ruthless games."

William sighed and rubbed his face. He looked so tired, she wanted to lay with him forever.

"Alright." He stood. "I can put it in the tea and not tell them about it."

Doris hopped up and followed him to the kitchen. They spent hours delivering hot tea to each of the sick villagers. William had to sit near the end when he gave up more blood than she expected him to.

Doris bundled up and delivered the last batch of tea. Already she saw many had drained their cups and fell into a deep sleep they wouldn't wake up from for quite some time.

When she returned back to the cabin, it was still dead quiet. It had to be nearing nightfall, she didn't think she had ever heard an entire village fall so quiet as if no one else was there.

William watched as she removed her coat and boots. When she walked close to him, he grabbed her waist and seated her on his lap. She gave out a small yelp that he silenced with a kiss that could have left her dizzy for days.

“Do you know how hard it’s been watching you in that bed?” He whispered against her lips. Doris wrapped her arms around his shoulders.

“Thank you for saving me. Again.” Doris whispered. He smiled against her lips, she had to pull away just to witness it. It was half the size of a regular one, but it was true art on him. She never wanted to forget it.

He didn’t even notice her watching him, his eyes were directly on her mouth and she felt her core ache when she noticed the hint of heat in his gaze.

Doris leaned forward to whisper in his ear, “Take me somewhere they won’t hear us.”