

Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne by Caroline Chapter 170

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Chapter 170 A wild man gone

Later that night, Doris kept herself wide awake in case William came back. But he never did. Beth came and distracted her enough until she left for bed and now all Doris had was her thoughts that wouldn't stop replaying the day. The look of murderous rage on William's face before he silenced the Luna Queen once and for all.

He walked away from the scene as if it hadn't really happened. Perhaps he thought if he didn't look back, it wouldn't be true. She couldn't honestly tell a single emotion from him after he did what he did.

He was right for what he did, everyone knew it. If he was wrong, half of the camp would have left the moment they found out but they only celebrated it as a win that it was. They were one step closer to the crown-and perhaps that's what William realized too.

Doris wasn't sure how much time had passed since she last saw him. It felt like days but it must have only been hours. She expected to see him pacing in front of the small area they had in the tent, but he never came to ward away her bad thoughts.

Just when she gathered herself up to go looking for him, someone tapped on the tent opening.

"Doris? The doctor is here." Patrick called through the flap. Doris quickly straightened herself. "Come in!"

Patrick opened the flap for the older doctor. She smiled at Doris warmly and her eyes went right to her stomach as if she expected to see evidence of the baby already under her thick sweater. "Hi Doris, I'm Vale. How are you feeling?"

"Hi Vale. I'm well enough today. I have a bit of nausea but that is all." Doris moved to sit on the bed with the doctor. She glanced at Patrick before he went to leave. "Have you seen William? I thought he would've liked to be here for this." "William" Patrick hesitated. "He left earlier to the palace, I haven't heard from him."

"What?" Doris stood. "We should go look for him! Did anyone else go with him when he left? He might be captured and tortured by *Martin's* side!"

"Yes, he had a good number of guards with him, Doris. He asked me to stay here and watch over the camp." Patrick held out his hand. "He's fine, Doris. He needed to take care of something important. I feel sorry for the man that thinks they could capture or torture William."

"Should I wait for him to come back before I do this?" Doris glanced at the doctor. "I thought he wanted to be in the room to make sure."

"You can tell him the results when he gets back. He knew this was happening tonight, go on with it." Patrick nodded before he left.

Doris hesitated before she sat again. "I'm sorry, I completely forgot you were coming. I've had so much on my mind today."

"That's quite alright. You have a lot of stress around you. I would recommend trying to find ways to let it go if it's being built up inside you." Vale said kindly and pressed her cold hand against Doris's warm forehead.

"I'll keep that in mind for the future." Doris sighed. "I'm new to all of this-sort of thing. How do we determine if I'm with child?"

"Well, since we don't have a lot of the things I would need from the palace, it might be harder to know exactly. I did bring this with me, though." Vale leaned forward to pull a little tube with a blue liquid out of her pocket.

"What... is that?"

"It's a special liquid we have at the palace to know if a lady is pregnant early on. You put a few drops of urine inside and see if it turns purple. If it remains blue, you're not pregnant."

Doris took the tube and stared at it as if it was completely alien. Why hadn't she ever heard of something like this before? Perhaps she should have asked for a few shifts in the medical ward. "Oh, okay." She stood.

"I'll wait here. Let me know if you need any help." Vale said with a bright smile.

Doris nervously laughed and carried the tube with her as she headed out of the tent and behind the trees. She came back when it was finished and set the tube on a towel in front of them. "How long does it take?"

"Minutes, shouldn't be that long." Vale crossed her arms over her chest. "What are some of the other symptoms you've had?"

"Oh, well I've thrown up almost daily and I feel dizzy-like the world is falling out from under my feet. Sometimes my chest hurts too but it's not nearly as bad as the headaches."

"Hmm." Vale hummed. "You might be under more stress than you can handle. Those symptoms are normal, but if they get unbearable you might need to take a moment for yourself."

"Lately it seems as if that's easier said than done." Doris sighed. "I can't believe the timing of all of this."

"Life is unpredictable." Vale agreed. She glanced at the tube. "At least you have many people behind you, no matter how unfortunate the timing is."

Doris opened her lips to speak, but said nothing. She was lucky she had people to wait on her and take care of her needs. She only had Beth before William and now he made people follow her as if she was the important one when she knew she was nothing.

"Ah! There it is, purple." Vale clapped her hands and pointed. "How lovely. Now, this isn't fully accurate but it's rarely wrong. You can show William when he returns."

Doris felt frozen to the ground when she noticed how purple the liquid had turned. There was no confusing it for a different shade of blue or anything of the nature-it was purple.

Vale gripped her arm gently and helped her towards the bed. "Let's lay down, my dear. I'm sure he'll be back soon but there's no need to wait all night for him."

Doris felt her hands shake a little as she crawled in bed. Vale brought the covers over her and set some water by her bed. "I'll check on you often to make sure you're alright. Make sure to call for me if you have any pain or need anything."

"Thank you." Doris whispered. The woman was already gone before she could turn to say it

again.

Doris stared at the purple tube. She watched it as if it would shift back to blue at any moment and none of this was real. It was all a part of her dreams and she just hadn't woken up from it

yet.

The next morning, William had still not returned. Doris got up to change when she saw the purple tube right where she left it. It wasn't a dream, it wasn't fake. It was right there screaming at her louder than anything else possibly could.

Doris hurried out of the tent and searched everywhere for a sign of William, but nothing.

"He's not back yet." Patrick announced when she caught him by the front trees. He lazily picked at his nails with a pocket knife. "I got word that he will be back in a day or so."

"A day or so? Where did he go?"

"To the palace, like I told you. He probably went to deliver Luna Queen himself incase anyone else tried to take the credit." Patrick snorted but there was no humor in his voice. "He will be back, don't worry."

Doris turned and went back to her tent before her inner wolf came out. "Why didn't he tell me he was leaving?" Doris whispered to herself.

"Perhaps he did want to take Luna Queen himself." Cordelia spoke up from inside her. Even through her growing anger, Doris could feel her wolf was just as annoyed as she was.

"He said he didn't want me out of his sight and he left just hours later without telling me." Doris ran her fingers through her hair. If she left like that, he would tear through hell looking for her. All she could do was wait for him to return.

"If we went looking for him, it would be worse. He would be furious." Cordelia warned. Doris fell back on her bed and stared at the ceiling.

"I don't have the energy to go after him." Doris muttered. "I just wish he let me know how he was feeling so I wasn't here waiting all night for him to tell me."

"Men rarely show how they feel, it's as if it goes against their nature." Cordelia said gently. Doris closed her eyes when a thought she couldn't hold in entered her mind. It was almost too painful to admit.

"Maybe he left forever this time."

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Chapter 171 Another step closer

"We still haven't seen him." Beth said as soon as she walked through the tent with a tray of food balanced on her hip. Doris fell right back against the sheets and closed her eyes. Perhaps if she tried hard enough, she would realize it was all a dream.

"It's been two days. He hasn't sent word that he's fine." Doris said. She could feel Beth sit next to her on the bed and rub her arm with her icy fingers. "What if something happened to him and no one knows it? What if the entire group he went with was killed?"

Doris opened her eyes to see Beth worrying at her lip. She quickly stopped when she saw Doris watching her. "It's going to be fine. I heard the rogues were with him." Beth said with a little uncertainty in her tone. She hadn't yet warmed up to the fact that they were working with the rogues.

Not that Doris blamed her. Their whole lives they were taught to fear them and one day they show up at the palace and she's supposed to trust them? Doris wouldn't have either if she hadn't been through the north and saw they were so much better than the kingdom painted them out to be. Beth still refused to be in the same room with one and quickly left before it could happen.

Despite her high praise of Enzo and the rest of the rogues, Doris knew that Beth was still scared of them. Before she left for the north they heard stories of the rogues eating servants for fun, now she was forced to sleep near them as if it was all no big deal.

"Enzo and William are unstoppable together." Doris whispered. *More* to herself than anything. In the north, there was no one that could best either of them alone. Together, she knew they were a force. She only wished one of them would send word that they were fine. I

Beth made a face at her. "Enzo? *Are* you referring to Lord Enzo? The ruler of the rogues?"

"Yes, who else would be talking about?" Doris sat up a little. She felt like a mess and probably looked like one too. Her nausea came and went throughout the day and night. She missed when a simple drop of blood could cure all of her sickness.

"It's just so informal that you refer to him as that." Beth laughed. "I remember the days you would sweat when you heard a prince was nearby. Now you're calling all these princes and lords by their first names."

Doris grinned. "If you called Enzo a Lord, he would laugh at you. He doesn't like his friends referring to him as that. It's more for people he doesn't like or don't know him." 1

"Oh, well, look at you miss fancy friend of a lord." Beth stood and went to retrieve her tray. "It's time for you to eat. I don't want you almost fainting again because you're more worried about him than your body."

Doris rolled her eyes with affection as she took the tray and ate every single piece of food on it. The flavors of fruit, bread, cheese and meat mixed together as one with how fast she finished. If it was anyone but Beth in the room, she would have been blushing with embarrassment.

Beth laughed at her anyway, "Did you want more? I can go get another plate—"

"No! No, thank you. I was just hungry today." Doris stood and wrapped herself in a thick cloak. "Do you think we should go looking for him? I know it wouldn't be wise but-truly! He should have sent word by now. *We're* not that far from the kingdom-" 1

"Doris." Beth groaned. "You know that he wants you to stay here. If you go out there you'll get in even more trouble. I'm sure there's a ton of Martin's army scattered all around the area and you have a giant target on your head. Everyone knows you're the mate of the prince."

"I know, I know. I just-It doesn't feel right. I feel like he's in pain somewhere. I don't know if they captured him or not. What if that feeling is our bond trying to warn me about him?"

"I'm sure we would have heard if he was captured! Our army would be called off if he was captured, we'd all be in jail I'm sure."

"I know-"

A loud scream came from outside the tent. Doris and Beth glanced at each other for a second before they ran out to the sound.

In the clearing of the camp, a crowd was already formed. Doris quickly pushed her way through until she was near the front. She had to clamp her hand down over her mouth just to keep in her own screams when she saw them.

William stood over the broken body of his brother, Jack. The prince that had tortured her for information she didn't have, the prince that almost killed her and tried to frame his brother for something he knew he didn't commit.

William looked up and locked eyes with Doris. For a moment, she didn't recognize the eyes that stared back at her. They weren't her blue ocean or even the storm that blew threw a village-they were cold and dark.

Prince Jack looked as if his neck had been snapped and his bones broken. His face was covered with blood and it dripped down his clothes like rain. William left him there at his feet. Discarded and dead.

"My brother wanted me dead. Perhaps more than the Luna Queen did." William said. His voice carried in a way that he didn't have to raise it even slightly, they all heard it. "I made sure her body was delivered and unsurprisingly was met with his rage."

William turned his brother over with his foot and Doris had to look away before she threw up everything she had just eaten. "As you can see, he was unsuccessful."

Nobody around him moved. It didn't even sound like they were breathing with how silent it was. He looked through the crowd with his dark eyes and straight posture. She carefully took

a small step back when his eyes were off her.

"We're glad to see you're alright, Prince William." Patrick, the ever loyal beta, finally said. The tension was thicker than ever, but William only wanted to bathe in what he had done.

"This makes me one step closer to the throne. Prince Jack would have challenged me for it if our army had won and set us back even further." William paced the small area. Slowly, Doris moved back even more. Was he trying to convince the crowd that this was a wise move, or himself?

"What's next for us?" Someone asked. "Should we move in on Martin?"

"Soon. He'll discover that his mother and brother have fallen and he'll know that it's time to stop this war and give me what I deserve." William said through his teeth. He searched the crowd and found her instantly as she moved towards the back. It froze her to the spot.

"My brother deserves to be with the dirt in the ground. Consider this his redemption for all the wrong he has put into the kingdom." William spat.

kingdom than Kingdom

The crowd said nothing. Prince Jack wasn't a well loved prince. He started more fires in the

ut Doris knew that they were more frightened in front of them.

"Enzo won't be back for a few days with some of the rogues, they're getting a layout of what we're up against. For now, as you were."

The crowd took several moments before it finally dispersed. As if they all woke from the same fog she was in and had forgotten how to move.

William's eyes didn't move from her. He pinned her to the spot and didn't release her until he was in front of her. "Don't get a welcome back?" He said. She couldn't tell if he was joking or not.

"Why didn't you tell me you were leaving?" Doris whispered. William gripped her arm and led her to their tent. Beth was no where in sight, she was smart enough to be long gone before William came in.

"What were the results?" William asked, ignoring her previous question as if she never said it. He sounded so cold and distant. She wasn't sure if he was still in his battle mask or if he was pulling away from her more by the day. She could barely grasp on to what she had with him before, now it felt like trying to hold water.

Doris crossed the room and grabbed the purple tube. She said nothing as she pressed it into his hands.

William studied the tube as if to make sure it was real. Silently, he set it down and turned to Doris. "I should have been here for it."

"Yes. You should have."

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Chapter 172 Something to fight for

William stared down at the purple tube in his hands. Doris wondered if the same thoughts were crossing his mind that had already crossed hers. Was it real? Was this happening to them? Were they even ready to be parents? Doris knew she wasn't. There wasn't an ounce of her that believed in herself to be a good mother when she didn't know the first thing about children. Did he feel the same?

Did he want to change everything about himself just so he could be better like she did?

Slowly, she noticed his shoulders slacked a little and his body came undone as if he was trying to relax all of his muscles. When he looked up at her again, his eyes were the ones she saw in her dreams. A beautiful blue sea that was now her favorite color.

"I left because I knew he would come here if he saw his mother dead. He would come straight for me-and you. I didn't want to risk it." William sat on the edge of the bed. He gripped Doris by her hips and pulled her closer to him. "I didn't want to risk you or the baby. It was driving me insane, so I had to go take care of it before something happened that I couldn't stop."

"All you had to do was tell me." Doris said gently. She ran her fingers through his hair that was caked with mud and-whatever else. She didn't even want to consider how much blood was seeped into his clothes. "I was beginning to think something had happened to you. I almost went after you—"

William's grip tightened on her. "No. Even if they have me in a cell being tortured, you are never to come after me like that. I can handle my scars, I can't handle yours."

Doris's eyes watered almost instantly from his words. She bit down on her lip and tried to curse them silently to stay inside. She cupped his face in her hands and kissed him slow enough to make the world disappear around them.

Doris melted against William when he kissed her back. It was strange to hold someone that was now considered the other half of her soul and be able to fall into them. She felt as if all of her worries could disappear the moment his put his hands on her and kissed her until everything felt better again.

His fingers trailed along the hem of her sweater as if he was tempting himself with what was underneath. Silently, her body begged him to go forward. To show her how much he wanted this life with her even when she wasn't sure of it herself. His kisses and caresses could make her go blind to all that was wrong if he stayed with her long enough. 1

His hands slid up her back slowly, but she felt as if his kisses were distracted. When she pulled away, he looked down at her body as if he wanted a piece of her-but his mind wouldn't clear enough to take it.

"William... Tell me what's on your mind." Doris hummed. He looked up at her again. "You told me that you would always let me know before you leave—"

"I wasn't thinking when I left. I just acted." William stood. He looked as if he wanted to jump out of his skin from his adrenaline. "I only had to get to Jack and take care of him. That's all. I didn't think about anything else, only keeping you safe and securing the crown."

"William." Doris said gently. She watched as he started to pace the small area like a wild animal. "Are you okay? I know this couldn't have been an easy decision."

"I'm fine. I did what had to be done and he would have done the same if he had the chance. He said so himself before I killed him." William grumbled. He raked his fingers through his hair then stared at them as if they were covered in blood. "Now there's only Martin standing in my way-

"Are you going to kill him too?" Doris asked cautiously. "I think you should rest for a moment and consider what has already happened in this war,"

"Dozens dead already on Martin's side." William informed her. Doris put her hand on her stomach without thought. Dozens dead? Those were men and women she had passed dozens of times at the palace, she was sure. Just a few days ago, they were all on the same side.

How many had died on his side? How many rogues were out there fighting for a better life? Doris clamped her lips shut before the words could come out. He looked at her curiously as if they already had.

"I meant to think about what happened with your family. I think you need to slow down for a minute and consider-

"What is there to think about? I killed the woman that killed my mother and her useless son that always hated me." William snarled. He turned away from her as if he refused to look her in the eye. "I don't regret it. I don't care if that makes me a monster in your eyes."

"That would never make you a monster, William. I'm just worried about you. They weren't great people, I'm not ever saying they were but I just want to make sure you're okay." Doris reached out her hands to William but he moved out of her grasp. She tried to hide her hurt but William always saw right through her. 1

"I have to settle this before you have our child, Doris. What don't you understand? I have to be set in my role long before our daughter or son is born." William said. "I need this war over soon. I have to take the throne as my own before more enemies are formed."

"William, even if the war ended tomorrow your father is still alive." Doris tried to speak as gently as she could. Suddenly an idea formed and she felt foolish that she hadn't thought of it before. "I know you worry for him too. Have you thought about giving him some of your blood like you did to me? I'm not sure if it will heal him completely, but it might help."

"If only it was that easy." William said bitterly. "It wouldn't work for him like it did for you, we share blood."

“What do you mean? Does he have the same special blood you do?”

“No. My blood wouldn’t heal him, it would only injure him further. I tried once when I was younger to heal one of his wounds.” William sighed. “When I was a kid, I realized my blood healed injured animals so I wanted to try it on a person. One day, I saw my father had a cut on his wrist so I snuck in his room when he was sleeping. When I dripped my blood in his mouth, it made the cut open wider.”

Doris’s eyes widened. “Oh my, It did the opposite?”

“Yes. I thought my blood hurt people after that, but then I learned it only had that reaction for those that share my blood. Later on, I learned that wolves who can heal can’t use that sort of gift on their blood family.” 1

Doris wrapped her arms around William and rested her head against his chest. “I’m sorry.”

She didn’t know why she expected him to hesitate before showing affection to her, but he didn’t. He wrapped his arms around her small frame and held her tightly against him. “I will make sure this is all resolved before it’s too late.”

Doris closed her eyes and let him hold her for as long as he needed to. His chin rested on top of her head and she could hear the rapid heartbeat inside his chest. She wished he could stay with her for a while before he let his thoughts take over again.

“I don’t want to kill Martin.” He said quietly. “I know that is what it will come down to.” 2

Doris almost pulled away to look up at him, but he held firm. “It doesn’t have to. You don’t have to kill all of your brothers to get the throne.”

“They would kill me if I don’t. Except Daniel, I would never let anyone hurt Daniel.” William pulled away from her. “I have to do this.”

“I don’t think Martin would want to kill you, William. No matter what you’ve done or what you want. He doesn’t have the taste for war and vengeance like Luna Queen did.”

“He might now that she’s gone.” William said. He turned to the door and all Doris could do was helplessly watch him leave.

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Chapter 173 What’s she doing here

"Doris, get up!" Beth hissed in her ear. Doris flinched out of her sleep as if she had been slapped.

"What?" She mumbled and fell back against the pillow when she saw it was only Beth. "What happened?"

"Melody is here!" Beth said as she pulled on Doris's arm. That made her feel wide awake, more so than any freezing bucket of water ever could. 2

"What? Melody is here?" Doris scrambled out of bed. It was only then that she noticed that William must have already left for the morning. She knew he came in during the night. She felt his arms around her to fill her with a warmth that only her mate could offer.

"Yes! She showed up early this morning apparently offering her help to William's side." Beth rolled her eyes. They both knew that Melody only ever helped herself. If she was here, she wanted William back. 1

Doris hurriedly got dressed. "She must be trying to get back on his good side. He banned her from the palace when he took away her ladyship." It was possibly the most embarrassing thing that could ever happen to a former lady. Some ladies got to still live in the palace while others were sent elsewhere for work. To be banned was shameful.

"I heard she was dragged out crying and cursing your name!" Beth laughed. She went to peer through the tent flap to see if Melody was nearby. "One of the maids told me she scratched up a few of the guards and they had to smack her just to silence her. The whole time you guys were in the north she talked about William wanting to marry her."

"If she hadn't abused me as much as she did, I might even feel sorry for her." Doris said.

"The only thing you should feel sorry for is anyone that has to deal with her." Beth muttered. Doris came to join her and poked her head out of the flap. People passed normally and went on their way, did they know that someone wicked now walked among them? Did they even care?

"I don't think you should show yourself to her, Doris. Who knows what she has planned in that rotten mind of hers. She might have come all the way here just to hurt you and get you back for what happened." I

"She knows that would be foolish. Everyone here is aware that I'm the prince's lady now. They wouldn't turn their eye if she tried to hurt me this time." Doris closed the flap. "Besides, she doesn't scare me anymore. I can handle myself."

"She may not scare you, but she terrifies me. I heard some of the older guards mention how you might be with child. If they knew that, then I guarantee that Melody has already learned that as well. We both know she won't take that news well. She thought she was going to be in your shoes." "I can't stay in here all day. She knows I'm here if she knows William is here."

"You're right. It would be more dangerous to have you as a sitting duck." Beth bit her lip in

"I thought you were scared of her!" Doris followed Beth as she left the tent.

"I am! But-I don't want to be anymore. I want to learn how to be less fearful like you did." Beth said quietly. She glanced at the passing rogues as if she was afraid they were eavesdropping on her.

Doris gripped Beth's hand. "You're braver than you think of yourself. Don't sell yourself short when you're the bravest woman I know."

Beth bumped Doris's shoulder with a small smile. Across the camp, *Melody's* back was unmistakable. Her long blonde hair was braided with determination and not one hair looked out of place even here. Doris fought the urge to fix her own hair that never seemed to want to stay still.

Melody turned when she heard their steps approach her. She took one look at Doris and plastered on her usual fake smile that hid every intention in her mind. "Doris. I wondered when you were finally going to get up."

"Yes, her prince tends to keep her up at night." Beth said quickly, almost without thought.

"Beth!" Doris hissed. Her face flamed red instantly.

"Sorry, my lady." Beth bowed her head. *Melody* narrowed her eyes at them.

"*Melody.*" Doris cleared her throat. "I didn't expect to see you here. Or ever again."

"Well, I may have been tossed out from the palace but when I heard about the war-I had to let William know that he still had my support."

"I'm sure he appreciated that. Will you be on your way?" Doris clasped her hands in front of her coolly. "As you can see, everyone here is very busy".

"I was told that his side could use every helping hand they could get." *Melody* smiled with her teeth. "I thought I would stick around for a while and try to help in any way I could."

"Prince William said you could stay?" Doris asked.

"He didn't say I had to leave." *Melody* lifted her chin in challenge. Her voice dropped slightly. "He only said to be a good girl and he knows very well that I always listen to his commands."

Doris swallowed the rage that formed in the pit of her stomach. "As long as you don't cause trouble."

"Don't worry about me." Melody glanced around at those around her. Doris watched her carefully. "I only want to help the cause. I think William deserves to be on the throne, despite what happened between us. He should be the king."

"Right

"Oh! There's William now." Melody's face brightened when her eyes found William. Doris wanted to shove her to the ground.

"Doris." William's eyes were only on her as if Melody didn't even exist. He gripped her hand and led her away from the girls. "I see you've already run into Melody."

"Why would you let her in the camp?" Doris whispered. "She clearly hasn't gotten over what happened. She basically tried to murder me with her eyes the whole conversation."

"She said she would be useful to us." William muttered. "I told her to stay away from you."

"What could Melody possibly be useful for? She wants to end up back on your good side and she will clearly do whatever that takes."

"She said she has overheard hundreds of Martin's private conversations. She might be able to get back into the palace and act as if she wants to work for the palace again to get even more information. Everyone knows I publicly threw her out, they won't think she's with me." .

Doris crossed her arms over her chest. She couldn't imagine William being fine with Doris allowing an ex lover in the camp-even though she clearly didn't have anyone before William.

All she could do was nod her head and keep quiet when all she wanted to do was force Melody far from the camp. Nothing good could come of Melody trying to help.

"If she says anything to you, tell me. She'll be gone by morning." William kissed her temple before he walked off towards the main tent. Doris watched him disappear inside.

Later that day, Beth joined Doris on another walk after their lunch. The cold air felt blissful against her warm skin. They took a small path behind the camp that was much less crowded.

"I heard it's good to take a few walks a day. Soon you won't want to walk anywhere because your feet will swell! Isn't that the craziest thing you ever heard?" Beth laughed. Doris frowned at the thought of her feet swelling.

"That sounds awfully painful. I suppose I wouldn't want to walk either."

“Well, it might not be that bad once you get used to it.”

A wooden cart suddenly came barreling towards the girls. Doris acted without thought, she shoved Beth out of the way and tried to jump as well but was too late. The cart slammed into her leg and sent her to the ground.

“Doris! Oh my, are you okay?” Beth quickly got up to help Doris. She shoved the cart away from her.

“Oh no. I don’t know how that thing got away from me.” A voice dripped in false innocence called.

Doris didn’t have to look up to know it was *Melody*. Beth helped Doris stand carefully. “It’s fine, it doesn’t hurt.” She whispered to Beth. “It was just a small hit.”

“Oh, so brave Doris! I remember you used to cry at the smallest slaps. How much you’ve grown.”

Doris glared at *Melody* as she wiped off the dirt from her pants. “It seems you haven’t yet made yourself useful here, *Melody*.”

“The day is still young, dear Doris.”

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Chapter 174 And there she goes

“Stay away from her, *Melody*.” Beth said. Her hands shook a little as she spoke. “You’ll be kicked out of here too if you don’t watch it. Prince William advised you to stay away from Doris.”

Doris gripped Beth’s hand and casually stepped in front of her. She knew her friend was scared. She was so proud of her friend for speaking up instead of staying quiet. The fact that she did it for Doris melted her heart even more. The last thing she wanted was for *Melody* to hurt her in any way.

“It’s nice to see you’re enjoying the role you stole from me.” *Melody* said with a false smile. She ignored Beth completely as if she didn’t even exist. It infuriated Doris but also made her glad that she didn’t use her opportunity to bully her. “I knew that was what you wanted all along! All those days I caught you staring at him and falling into him like a pathetic cow!”

“I stole from you? You are the one that pretended to be something you’re not. You knew that when you put that fake mark on your neck!” Doris took a small breath. “There is no use in

fighting me, *Melody*. You don't belong here and everyone knows it."

"It was my role!" *Melody* shouted, then immediately lowered her volume. "It was mine. I was his lady. I was the one he was destined to be with. You could never measure up to me or what we were!"

"You are not his mate, *Melody*. You know you're not. I am. I may have run from the role before, but not anymore. I am Prince William's mate." *Doris* said calmly. No matter how gentle she spoke, it only seemed to make *Melody* more angry. *Doris* took a small step back. "There is no point in you being here if you're only here to terrorize me."

"I'm not here for you, *Doris*. I'm here for William." *Melody* took a small step forward. "I know he cared for me when we were together. It's not easy to just forget how you feel for someone!"

"I don't know what you think will happen, but he is not with you anymore." *Doris* said. "He's not going to leave me for you just because you want to help him. A mating bond means more than everything you had with him, which was nothing."

"You think he won't leave you eventually too?" *Melody* laughed. "He'll need someone pretty to lay with when you're big and sweaty. Just wait. I bet he's already returning to bed long after you've been asleep. I can't imagine he would remain happy with someone like you." 2

Doris felt her cheeks heat. Just as *Melody* wanted, the insecurity planted itself in *Doris*'s mind like an infection. She tried to shake it away, but it clung on tight. "You might as well leave, *Melody*. Whatever you're planning, it won't work."

Melody took a small step towards *Doris* almost threateningly so. "It's a shame that cart didn't hit you in your stomach. I would have loved to see you bleed out until that child inside you is no more."

It happened so fast, *Doris* didn't even have a chance to say a word. William appeared behind *Melody* as if he came from thin air and snapped her neck before she sensed him. Her eyes were wide, lifeless as she fell to the floor. *Beth* screamed and ran back to the tent as if she was running for her life. 3

If *Doris* didn't know better, she would have done the same. *Doris* trembled as she watched him move her body out of his way as if she was trash. Her head was turned completely around, it sent shivers down *Doris*'s skin and joined the lump of bodies that already crowded her mind.

"I told her not to talk to you. I told her to stay away from you." William said as he neared her. *Doris* forced herself not to back away from the man she cared for. "When she comes for my child, she doesn't get another chance. I should have cut her open and let her bleed out in the middle of the camp like the animal she is."

"1—" *Doris* tried to grasp for words but she felt breathless. As much death as she had seen, it never got easier. "I..."

William gripped her shoulders lightly. "I would never let anyone hurt you, do you understand? Never."

"Y-yes..." Doris whispered. Her eyes kept trying to look at the body behind him but he refused to let her. He gripped her chin and made her look him in the eye while he spoke but all she heard was the sound of Melody's neck snapping over and over again. "I—"

"It's okay." William held her so carefully with the hands that were so violent and covered in blood. He took her in his arms and carried her back to their tent. She couldn't stop herself from watching Melody's lifeless body. It almost looked like she was watching her right back with eyes that didn't close.

He laid her down in their bed and brought the covers over her. She hadn't realized she was shivering until he did so. "Rest. I'll find where Beth ran off to and send her in to help."

Doris nodded slowly. He left without another word and Melody's body flashed before her eyes over and over again. And over and over and over. Piled on top of all the people she saw die right in front of her. Ones from the north and those from the palace. In the end, they were all the same. They all ended up in the same lifeless pile.

Beth came in her tent like a scared animal that didn't want to be there. Doris sat up and held out her arms for her friend. She'd almost forgotten—it was Beth's first time seeing someone die. How could she erase it from her friend's mind when she couldn't do that for herself?

"It's okay." Doris said gently. Beth hesitated before she crossed the room to Doris. "I'm so sorry you saw that." "I heard he did the same to Prince Jack too. I didn't realize Prince William was like this." Beth said quietly. She kept glancing at the door.

"He knew Melody wanted me to lose the baby, he wouldn't have hurt her if she didn't threaten ." Doris rubbed her back slowly. "Don't be scared, Beth. He would never hurt you."

"Me? I'm not worried about me! I'm worried about you, Doris. What if you say the wrong thing and end up like them?"

"He would never kill his mate! After what happened to his father, I don't think he can even stomach the idea of the same fate." Doris said. Deep down, she wasn't sure who she was trying to convince more. Doris had seen William kill countless times and each time was more shocking than the last.

Now he was killing people he knew well. People he once cared for, but now were nothing but part of the earth that they walked on. She knew they were horrible people, it still made her stomach feel uneasy. Clearly she wasn't alone.

"Maybe he was right, you should be off with Prince Daniel until all of this is over." Beth said quietly. "It would be safer for you and you would be around the best care."

"I couldn't sleep at night if William was here while I was off somewhere far and safe. My wolf needs to be near him for her to feel calm. We both need each other."

"I know." Beth sighed. "I'm just worried about you. I don't know what to do." Doris gripped her hands. "You are doing everything you need to be. Don't worry about me." "I just,"

The flap of the tent opened and William stood tall. Beth was already moving away from her before she could think to grip on tighter. "Are you well?"

"I am. I'm fine, thank you." Doris watched as Beth slipped out of the tent. "I think I'm just a little shocked, is all."

"I shouldn't have allowed her in the camp." William closed the tent flap as if it was a door he could slam. "I hope your maid doesn't make me an enemy to the rest of them."

"She would never do that, William." Doris stood. The world felt a little blurry, she gripped onto the table but William was already there to help her up.

"I thought you'd like to join me in the main tent. I know I've kept you in the dark about all of this, but I don't want to do that any more."

Doris wasn't sure if she was entranced by his eyes, or his words. All she could do was mindlessly nod while he led her out into the snow and towards all the things he's been planning for his army.

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Chapter 175 All in the plans

"Doris! Lovely to see you again." Enzo stood when she entered the tent. He looked deprived of sleep but the smile on his face was real. She always felt a soft spot of warmth when she saw him. It was nice to have a friend that deserved a part of her heart. She always missed him when he was gone.

"Enzo! I thought you weren't returning for a few days." Doris gave him her hand and he landed a big kiss on the back of it. She laughed when William grumbled from behind her. She swore he had a soft spot for Enzo. Anyone else would be shoved out the door for looking at her.

"I was concerned that you would miss me so I came straight back." He grinned. "I finished my task faster than I thought. What I thought would take five days took less than one, *Martin* didn't bring out the big guns as we expected."

"Well, it's lovely to have you back. This place is boring without your flare."

"As expected. Though, it seems that won't be for long. I also just heard you might have a new addition soon." His eyes flickered to her stomach. She almost wanted to cover it before more people started to stare. Wasn't it supposed to be a secret?

"Oh? And who would tell you such a thing?" Doris smiled. Enzo pulled out her chair and she sat around the large table that had piles of papers and open scrolls.

"Your annoying mate told me it. He also threatened me to stop flirting with you but I refused." Enzo winked as he plopped down in the seat next to her. "He can't stop me and I wouldn't even consider it."

"You won't want to flirt in a few months." Doris said and laid her hand on her flat stomach. She tried to imagine what it would be like to have a round stomach with a baby inside and swollen feet. The image it brought made her start to sweat.

"Nonsense, I'll most likely flirt even more! If he lets me live, that is." Enzo eyed William who was glaring right back at him. Doris hid her smile behind her hand. "There's nothing more beautiful than a pregnant woman. You'll be glowing more than usual soon enough."

"If you're finished, we can begin." William unrolled a layout of the palace in front of them. Enzo leaned back as if he had already heard it a million times and was annoyed that William interrupted their fun.

"*Martin's* forces aren't as strong as he claimed. Many of the guards followed to my side and it has left him overwhelmed in some areas." William gestured to the front of the palace. "I didn't think it would be possible so soon, but Enzo has informed us that they have already shown signs of weakness."

"Many parts of the palace aren't being protected for possible ambushes. Only the main entrances are being watched but even then there's not as many as you would expect." Enzo said as he picked at his nails. "I don't think *Martin* considered the possibility of us back to the palace this soon."

"If we push in now before more forces arrive, we might be able to over throw *Martin*." William made a line right to the main entrance of the palace. "I say we head straight for him and take down anyone in our way. If we can bring the guards we have here and some from the field, we can get through."

Enzo nodded slowly. "Yes. I believe we could. *Martin* doesn't seem to know how to handle this, I doubt he's sent for extra forces or else they would have been here already and pushed us back. We move closer each hour."

"What happens when you get into the palace?" One of the rogues asked from down the table. The rest of them stayed silent to observe. "What do we do then?"

"Once we get into the palace and overwhelm them, Martin will know he has lost. He'll have no choice but to stand down and give the crown to me."

Doris studied the map silently as they discussed which paths to take to the palace without getting caught. The last thing they needed was for the palace to be tipped off about their planning. She tried to picture the man she once believed was so kind-pacing in his room this very moment. Did he have a feeling that something bad was coming for him? Or did he think it would all go away like it always did?

"I think it will work." Doris said suddenly. William snapped his eyes to her with an intensity that almost made her forget what she was saying. "Martin has no one. He has no one to tell him what to do or how to move forward, he might be more willing to give up the crown when he realizes that he has no where else to turn."

"He hasn't shown his face once since this fight started. He's most likely in his room waiting for it to end." Enzo said.

"When William asked for the crown before, he had his mother and brother to stand behind him. Now that they're gone, William has a better chance at him feeling defeated." Doris leaned back. "Although, it might backfire. He might be only more driven on revenge and less likely to hand it over without a fight. You took the only people he cared for away from him, he might not be so willing to let you have what you want."

"She's right." William said. "Martin might be even more dangerous now than he was before. We don't know what he's been planning."

"Which is why we need to act now. If we ambush him before he's finished planning, we can stop this war quicker. He won't expect us to close in on him this quickly." Enzo said. It was strange to see him flip from flirty to serious so quickly.

"If you are able to get in the palace and corner him, he might fight you but I think he will know it's over. I don't see the need to kill another prince." Doris said. "Not unless he gives you no other option."

William stared at her for a moment and then nodded. She wished he would realize that she only said that for him, not for her. She didn't want William to regret killing another brother

once the dust was settled.

"I'm glad to see you've finally come around." William said. He sat himself across from her and Enzo.

"I don't like talk of war, but I—" Doris hesitated and glanced at the other men around her. Most of them were looking down at scrolls or had their eyes half

closed as if they were sleeping. "I just want to make sure you come out of this war alive. That's all."

William watched her for a long moment, she shifted in her seat. "Will I be joining you for this ambush?" She finally asked.

"No. Absolutely not." William curled his hand into a fist. She was worried he'd take his shifting anger out on the table. "You will stay here. I'm going to leave you here with some of the guards to make sure you're untouched while we're gone."

"How long do you think it will all take?" Doris asked. She didn't want to admit that she was glad to stay here rather than go with them.

"It depends on how strong his line is by the palace. It could take anywhere from two days to a full week. I plan on pushing in as quickly as possible -" Enzo said.

"We should be back in no more than two days." William interrupted. "We will not wait more than that to get into the palace to get to Martin. Any longer will give him enough time to create a bigger defense."

All the speak of war made Doris's head spin. She shifted in her seat again. "When are you leaving? Tonight?"

"We'll leave before the sun rises." William said almost gently. It made her look up at him and for the first time in what felt like ages, she saw a soft blue sea as he looked at her. "I'm having my men prepare the horses now. I want to leave in a few hours."

"You should rest before then." Doris whispered. A tight knot formed in her chest and made it almost hard to breathe. What if it was her last night with him? As much as he liked to act like he was invincible, he wasn't.

All it took was one bite, one bullet, one stab wound and he would be gone from her forever. A mistake that lasted a second could take his life, and the weight of that was finally crushing her.

William stood and held out his hand for her. "Come."

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Chapter 176 A night to remember

William led Doris back to their tent silently. His large hand swallowed hers as he pulled her forward and closed the tent flap after her to trap her in with him. She stood still and watched his back as he took off his cloak and shirt.

She had the sudden urge to press into him forever and never live a day without his touch. If only he would stay,

When he turned to look at her, his eyes held questions that his mouth refused to ask. Silently, his eyes roamed over her body. Every inch of her shivered as if he had touched her and traced the outline of her curves with his long fingers. Doris unbuttoned her cloak and tossed it to the side where his own landed.

A spike of hunger flared in his eyes as her fingers pulled at the hem of her sweater. Normally, she might have laughed at the thought that he found her desirable wearing an old oversized sweater. But his gaze only made her feel... unstoppable. It made her feel as if she was the only woman in the world that he would look at like that.

Even if it wasn't true.

William crossed the room and pulled her sweater off her before she could get the chance to tease him. He pulled her body against his and she gasped at the feeling of his warm skin. It made her feel as if she was about to start sweating in freezing weather.

"I don't want to hear a word unless you're begging for more." He said roughly against her ear. She could have melted against him right there and let him clean her up off the floor, but he held her firm.

William lifted her off the ground and wrapped her legs around him. He carried her over to the bed and fell on the soft surface with her as one. A tent was different than a cave, there were no stone walls to keep in their sounds but that was the last thing Doris wanted to think about. Even if it meant getting strange glances all day tomorrow.

He kissed down her skin, over every scar that ruined her. He kissed over her mark that claimed her as his. She used to curse the sight of it, now she wanted to display it for the world to see. She wanted to wear it proudly and let everyone know they belonged to each other and it was foolish to ever think otherwise.

It felt like an old version of herself that used to see his blue eyes in her nightmares when they were now only in her best dreams. They calmed her fears and let her know his feelings even when he wouldn't talk to her. His eyes were a dream in their own..

William wasted no time in removing their clothes until there was nothing to separate their skin. His body heated her immediately without having to even touch her.

His hands hungrily searched for her in the dark and made her breathless with a simple caress. Her hips moved up towards him, his warm breath brushed her skin as he chuckled at each of her own. Their sounds echoed together off the walls and came right back to her.

He reached his hand down to rub her clit as he moved harder.

“William!” Doris screamed and arched her back as she gripped the sheets. Her stomach started to tighten, she wanted to crawl up his body and kiss him until he was breathless, but her body was weak when it was in his hands. He could do anything he wanted to her and all

she could do was take it gratefully.

He moved inside her until they both came undone. William groaned her name as he released moments before she felt her own climax shake her body. The room spun around her and left her intoxicated from the feeling of him.

Doris gripped his shoulders and brought him down to her. She kissed him slowly and prayed the moment could stretch on forever so he wouldn't leave her. She kissed down his face, along his sharp jaw, right to the mark she left on his neck that officially claimed him as her own before she kissed right back up to his lips.

William took her in his arms and pulled her against him as they kissed. He pulled up the covers and they slipped beneath the twisted sheets as the cold quickly swept back in on their heated skin.

His tongue trailed along her own and she didn't think there was anything more luxurious than being kissed by him. No gold or kingdom could measure the feeling of his affection when he kissed her like that.

She finally understood why so many ladies risked everything they had just to have a taste of him. She couldn't imagine a life without it now. All Doris could do was hope he felt she was just as addicting as he was to her.

When they finally pulled away, she rested her head on his chest and listened to his calming breath. “Come back to me, William.” Doris whispered. “... love you.” .

William stilled beneath her. Part of her immediately wanted to suck the words back inside herself and pretend that it never happened. After an agonizing moment, he relaxed. “Not even death could part me from you.” He said quietly.

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Chapter 177 Easy they go

The moment he stirred, Doris was wide awake. She didn't want to miss his goodbye, she didn't want to risk a moment that might haunt her forever. All night she had woken at the smallest movements in fear he would try to leave without kissing her one last time. She wouldn't allow that.

Doris got up silently when William did. He dressed himself in the dark and kept his back to her as she did the same. It was too early for any sense of goodbye, the

sun hadn't even started to poke out of the sky yet and it felt like only minutes had passed since they shared a heated moment.

When he finally turned to look at her, Doris had to hold in every emotion she had before they came spilling out of her. William crossed the room to meet her halfway. She couldn't help herself, she reached up to run her fingers through his dark messy hair. A dark sinking feeling pushed down on her chest. "Perhaps I should go with you—"

"No. It'll be much safer for you here. I don't want you anywhere near the palace when this happens." William said firmly but gently. He gripped her hands and drew her closer to him.

This will be over soon. I'll be back faster than the last time I left."

"What if something happens to you? I wouldn't be able to sit by and let you get hurt or captured—"

"I can handle it, Doris. Even if they throw me in the cells. I will handle it. Martin is nothing against me and my wolf and he knows it. When we were younger, he never challenged me like Jack did. He knew I was stronger."

"I don't know, something inside me feels wrong. It feels like something bad is about to happen." Doris wrapped her arms around her stomach. "I don't know why. it just feels like a

sinking feeling in my chest down to my stomach."

"You're worried about what is to come of this war. That feeling is dread of the inevitable, it doesn't mean it will come true." William brushed her hair behind her ear. "You're safer here."

"I'd be safer with you." Doris frowned. "Our wolves should stay together, we're stronger this way."

The corner of William's mouth lifted slightly as he leaned down to kiss her. "You're safer here. Far from the palace with a dozen guards to watch you until I get back."

Doris leaned up to kiss him one more time. She lingered as long as she could before he pulled away from her. He held her face for a long moment and she traced every line of his face with her eyes until it was cemented in her mind. Who was she kidding? She would never forget a single detail about him even if she lived for a hundred years without seeing him again.

Without another word, he released her and left through the tent flap. Doris had to remind herself how to move again before she hurried after him.

Their horses were already packed with any supplies they could possibly need. His guards pulled themselves up on the horses the moment they saw William come towards them. Over a dozen stood off to the side and she could only guess that they were the ones to stay and watch over her while he was gone.

"I want her tent watched at all hours of the day or night. She is to be escorted to and from anywhere around the camp that she may want to go." William said as he neared the guards with Doris on his heel. "Is that understood?"

"Yes sir!" The men bowed. Doris felt her cheeks flame. She wanted to tell them not to worry about her but William would probably glare at her until she took it back.

William glanced back at her once more and offered a ghost of a smile before he pulled himself up on his horse. "You'll hardly notice I'm gone."

"That seems unlikely, who else will stomp around the camp like a dark cloud?" Enzo asked as he pulled up his horse next to them.

William rolled his eyes to the sky. "She should be thanking me for taking you for from her." William muttered. •

"Don't fool yourself, William. She dreams of a day we can be alone without your gloom to follow us." Enzo winked at Doris before he kicked off through the trees. William stared at her a breath longer before he did as well. .

Not once did either of them say goodbye. She didn't know why it bothered her as much as it

did.

A few hours later, the sun had finally rose. Doris didn't sleep a minute, she was already awake when Beth entered with her breakfast balanced on a white tray.

"I don't think I've seen so many guards on alert! Here I thought that they would be sleeping the moment William left." Beth shook her head and set the tray down on the table. "I didn't even realize what time they *were* leaving. I thought they might have still been here this morning but over half of the camp is gone."

"I'm not sure whether I should feel glad that I stayed or not. I just feel as if something terrible is going to happen." Doris said as she picked at her food. Beth sat across from her and gripped her hand.

"It's okay to be worried about him." Beth said gently. "Just don't stress yourself more than usual. The doctor said that wasn't good for you or the baby."

"I know." Doris sighed and tried to shake the feeling of doom in her chest. "I just-I don't know. It's hard knowing that he's going to do something so dangerous. Even if he is prepared and has a full army behind him."

"Unfortunately, war is full of taking risks that are far from safe. I know that you know he will be just fine. Remind yourself that." Beth squeezed her hand.

"Have you warmed up to the rogues yet?" Doris asked in effort to change the subject.

Beth scrunched her nose at Doris. "Warmed up to them? You mean befriend them? Oh no. You won't catch me befriending a rogue out here. I saw one of them pick up a rodent and eat it behind the tents!"

"What?" Doris almost choked on her food. "There is no way you saw that!" "I did! He looked back at me and grinned before I ran away. I don't care if William is friends with them now, I don't have to be."

Doris tried to push the image out of her mind of one of the rogues eating a live rodent before it burned into her brain. "Are you sure it wasn't a nightmare? I lived with them for weeks and not once did I see something like that!"

Beth's face made Doris laugh. "I swear it, Doris! I wouldn't trust them if I were you." She crossed her arms over her chest. "Okay, Beth. You definitely don't have to be their friend if you don't want to. I'm just glad you're mine." Doris stood and peered out of the tent flap. Three guards hovered near the entrance.

"I wonder if William threatened them. I bet they're worried he'll come popping out of the bushes any second." Beth said as she came up behind her. "Will you stay in here tonight with me?" Doris closed the flap. "I don't know if I'll be able to sleep with this feeling in my chest."

"Of course, Doris. You know I would do anything for you." Beth smiled a little. "Let's go for a walk."

Doris bundled up before they ventured out of the tent together arm in arm. Two guards broke off from the tent entrance and immediately followed them.

"What will you do if he does become king?" Beth asked quietly. "... don't know. Support him, of course."

"No, I mean-will you take the title of Queen?"

Doris felt warmth coat her cheeks. "What? Me? No, I don't think he would have me be his queen. I'm not prepared to take a role like that, he's trained his whole life to be king."

"You're his mate and soon to be mother of his child, I think he would want you as his queen." Beth nudged her. Doris felt sick just thinking about it.

"I don't know. I suppose I will have to have that conversation with him when the time comes." Doris cleared her throat. "What about you? When William is set as king, I'll have him make you

Beth stopped short at her words. "What?"

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Chapter 178 Easy they come

"I'm going to have William sign the amnesty for you." Doris gripped Beth's hand. "You can be free and go anywhere in the world you want. You don't have to spend your days looking after me or anyone else at the palace-you can be free."

"..." Beth's hands shook. "That's very kind, Doris,"

"It's not kindness I'm giving you, it's the right thing to do. You should have been freed months ago but you had to stay because of me. You deserve to be a free woman." Doris swallowed. "I'm sorry that I couldn't free you sooner. I wanted to the moment I got back but then everything just kept happening."

Beth pulled Doris in for a hug and squeezed the breath out of her. (This novel will be daily updaed at) "I don't know what to say"

"Don't say anything!" Doris smiled. "Or say everything, say whatever is in your heart. Just promise me that you won't go far and forget me. Promise me that you will live for both of us and not be sorry for any of it."

"Forget you? You're mad if you think I could ever forget you!" Beth wiped away her falling tears. "I don't know what to be without you, Doris. We were always going to leave together and travel as far as we could. All of our plans were with each other, I never once saw myself without my best friend by my side."

"I know." Doris pulled Beth towards a large tree stump and sat upon it with her. The guards hovered nearby, but not too close. She was glad for that at least. "There is nothing I want more than to see the world. All of my dreams were leaving the palace and seeing what else life had to offer me. I wanted to know what it's like in other kingdoms and places-but..."

"But now you have responsibilities bigger than yourself." Beth said sadly. "I don't know why I feel so sad when you have so much good happening for you."

"Be happy, my love. Don't you dare be sad about change." Doris whispered even though she felt that sadness as well. Beth was always in her future, but she couldn't hold her here just to be her friend. It was selfish to even consider. "Where do you want to go, Beth?" Doris asked with a small smile. "Where would your heart take you first?"

".... I don't know. I honestly imagined myself getting in a carriage and riding off far from here. Maybe somewhere sunny with an ocean or somewhere with mountains and beautiful snow."

"I thought you hated the cold!" Doris laughed and looked around at the small piles of snow around them. It wasn't nearly as much as the north where snow covered every inch for as far as she could see. "I couldn't imagine you seeking out snow of all things!"

"I think it's beautiful! I would love to see a place covered in endless snow, but I wouldn't want to live in it. I don't know where I would go first!"

"Well, I want to give you all the money I saved in the castle before you go." Doris glanced up at the gloomy clouds. "I want you to have as much as you need. I want you to be able to go anywhere you want and not have to settle until you find the place that feels like home."

"Oh no, Doris. You know I can't take that." Beth insisted. "I don't even want to leave you. Who would be your maid?"

"Beth, you've been my maid for such a short time. I'm sure I will find someone to help me with the baby." Doris laughed. "You're going to take my offer and then some!"

"Oh my goodness. The baby!" Beth stood and started to pace the small clearing. "Nope, there is no way I can leave my best friend when she is going to be a mother. You're going to need all the support you can get. I know we both have no experience but we can figure it out together!"

"Beth, if you think I would make you stay because of me, you have lost your mind. (This novel will be daily updated at) I want you to go and live your life. I want you to find happiness and make up for all the years you had to care for another person. I will be fine. There is a palace worth of maids ready to help me when I need it. I have William, I will have your love in spirit. I will be fine."

Beth's smile quickly faded from her face. "What if I'm not ready to be on my own yet?"

"Then you can stay at the palace as my guest for as long as you want. You can stay until you're old and gray." Doris gripped her hand. "You don't have to leave. I'm not kicking you out. I'm releasing you from your role officially when he becomes king. You don't have to clean up after anyone or wear a uniform every day. I'll have dresses brought to you and you can be a queen in your own right."

Beth laughed and wiped her eyes again. "I don't think I deserve a friend like you. Tell me what I did to deserve you."

"You were a friend to me when I needed you. Nothing else matters." Doris stood and led Beth back to the tent. "Now, let's eat again. I don't know why I feel like I could eat three meals right now."

Beth laughed. "That's only the beginning, Doris. I heard you're going to be craving the most ridiculous things soon!"

Throughout the day, guards followed her every movement. They lingered closely and reminded her that they weren't far and even though nothing had sparked any of their concern, they didn't fall back in the slightest.

Perhaps Beth was right, maybe they did fear the chance that William would return early and see them not on guard for her. She wanted to tell them that it was okay, to go relax and let her breathe – but she promised William that she would stay safe and the last thing she wanted to do was go against his wish. Especially when her worry for him pulsed in her chest more painfully as the hours went on.

Doris finally returned to her tent in the evening when she was tired of having her steps tracked. Not that she was ungrateful, she only wished to have a moment without eyes on her. It felt strange to go from the one that blended into the walls-to someone that was now cared

Sometimes it still felt like a dream to her. This life was so far from anything she had ever wanted for herself. Now that she had it... she didn't hate it like she once thought she would. She didn't hate the prince that held her each night or the protectiveness he showered her in.

"What do you think you'll have?" Beth asked as she pulled out Doris's nightclothes. Doris quickly went over and snatched them from her.

"I asked you here as a friend." Doris smiled. "Stop taking care of me!"

"I don't think I could ever let that part of me go." Beth laughed. "So answer my question!" "What?"

"What do you think you'll have? A boy or a girl?" Beth bumped her hip against her own. "I heard one of the other maids once say that sometimes you can tell in the hips. If it's wider, it might be a boy."

"That can't always be true." Doris fell back against her bed. "I don't know. I would be happy either way,"

"Do you think William wants a boy?"

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"I don't think he would have a preference either." Doris yawned.

"Usually alphas want sons to take over their spot one day." Beth laid on the bed next to her like they used to do when they would gossip late at night in the palace.

"I think that's ridiculous. A girl could take his spot one day, it doesn't have to be a boy."

"Ah ha! Or she could take your spot!" Beth laughed. "I would be glad to hand it over to any child I have.(This novel will be daily updaed at)" Doris closed her eyes. "As long as they don't come out too grumpy."

"I think you're going to make a great mother." Beth said softly. Doris smiled. "I know it's scary, but I believe in you."

Doris reached out to hold her friends hand. "I believe in you too." Doris whispered before she drifted off into sleep.

A loud bang ripped Doris from her dreams. The lure of sleep quickly faded when she saw the fear on Beth's face.

"What was that?" Beth whispered.

"Stay here." Doris got up slowly and wrapped a cloak around herself before she peered out of the tent flap.

All three guards that watched her tent were spread out on the ground with their throats ripped out.