

Read Novel Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne Chapter 236

Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne Chapter 236

Too much on his shoulders

William POV

“You haven’t been acting like yourself, William.” Waylon, his wolf. said inside him.

“You know why. Don’t pretend I want to be like this.” William sneered.

“Don’t you think you’ve been a little hard on your mate recently?” Waylon said. William sat on the edge of the bed while Doris slept soundly behind him.

“What do you mean?” William raked his fingers through his hair that just wouldn’t say calm. “I just took her out to dinner—“

“T can feel her uncertainty around you when you push her away—“

“You are the one that told me a father needs alone time with his infant son to bond.” William growled. “You told me that these months are the most important in his life to bond with his parents. I’ve carved out every minute I can for him to be alone with me.”

William didn’t need to remind his wolf what happened with his own father. After his mother died, he pushed William away at such a young age and never once tried to bond with him again. And all the years since, William felt that pain set deep inside him like a wound that just wouldn’t heal. William was not about to let that happen with his own son. His son would know he was loved.

It was a strange thing being a father. All the feelings he had before he met Doris were gone, and permanently destroyed when Alec came. He didn’t care for women that batted their lashes at him anymore. The only thing on his mind was his son and lady.

“«... admit I was wrong about the maid situation.” William grumbled. He glanced back at Doris to see her beautiful face sound asleep. William leaned across the bed to brush her hair from her face lightly. He knew he had to get up soon and deal with the kingdom business—but he wanted a few moments more to savor this moment.

“You let your pride keep you from truly making it up to her.”

“T apologized—“

“Sometimes apologies aren’t enough, William. You know that.” Waylon said calmly.

“She knows I love her. Look at everything I did to get her here with me. I tore through villages and brought down everything in my path to keep her safe. And now she is going to be my queen soon.” William stood from the bed and went to look at a sound asleep Alec.

“Just because you feel that you’ve proved your love in the past, doesn’t mean our mate doesn’t like being reminded. If you keep pushing her to the side and expecting her to be your punching bag, you’re going to wake up alone.”

William curled his hands into fists at his sides. Doris would never leave him. She loved him—she understood that he had a lot on his shoulders. He didn’t mean to push her aside and blame her for things, he didn’t even realize he was doing it half the time.

It felt good to put his anger on someone instead of bottling it up but he didn’t realize until it was too late that it wasn’t the right thing to do. He was still working on that part of himself since he became a father.

William fixed Alec’s blanket before he unlocked their balcony and stepped out for some fresh air. The sun hadn’t fully peaked over the mountains yet, but the sky was lightening faster than he liked.

“I feel as if I worked my entire life to get where I’m at. And now that I have all that I wanted... I don’t know how to feel anymore.” William admitted. It was rare for him to become vulnerable with anyone, but his wolf knew every part of him. “I thought I would have my brothers by my side when I was younger. I used to imagine that Martin would see that I was better fit for this and he would be there to give advice or just... be there when I was uncertain.”

“You feel alone as king.” Waylon said. William rolled his eyes to the sky. “Don’t make me sound weak.” He growled. He wasn’t weak—he was far from it and he didn’t have to lift a finger to prove that. “I’m trying to make the right steps where my father made his wrong ones. Some days are harder than others.”

William sighed. He was once known as reckless to this kingdom. He was a prince that had nothing on his shoulders to weigh him down and got everything he wanted without having to work for it—at least in the outsiders eye.

He swore he wouldn’t be that prince anymore when the crown was placed on his head. He swore he wouldn’t be reckless and put his kingdom at risk now that it was all his responsibility. He used to act on his emotions instead of thinking things through—kings didn’t let their anger drive them. He couldn’t punch a villager for disagreeing with him or ban a servant because they looked at him the wrong way. Everyone calculated his every move when they used to ignore him.

They wanted to see if he could grow to be the king they needed. And they didn’t need a reckless prince even when that part still thrived inside him.

His possessive, reckless side still existed for his family even when he tried to shove it down. They ignited it in him like nothing else ever could. He knew that he wouldn't hesitate to burn down a building to get to them or tear out a hundred throats. It hummed to remind him that they would always be his weakness.

"Perhaps it is time to let her join you by your side in your meetings." Waylon said.

"I don't like the way they look at her as if she knows nothing. It makes me want to strangle the life out of them. I almost lost it when they tried to call her a liar and I realized what they were doing. I took out my anger on her when I should have banned them then." William gripped the railing until his knuckles turned white. "I need her to stay away from the rulers of Eldon. I don't trust them and I know she will see right through them and speak her mind. I need them to think that we don't suspect a thing."

"How much longer will you allow them to stay?"

"Not much longer." William said and glanced back towards his room. "I still have a lot to do before they go. I know what they want from me and this kingdom, but I want something from them that they won't expect to lose."

Waylon chuckled inside him. "Are you going to let Doris in on your plans?"

"I will when the time is right. I can't risk anyone overhearing us and lately I've felt as if every room I'm in is being listened in on. It puts me on edge." William sighed and shrugged on his coat. "I'm not worried about her keeping my secrets, I'm worried that someone will try to force them out of her if they think she knows something."

"You're lucky to have a mate like her. Don't wreck this for us, William. Be careful how you play this game." Waylon warned.

William glanced back at Doris as she shifted in her sleep. "I would go through hell to keep her at my side and rip apart this planet to find her if she ever left. Don't doubt my love for her."

"It is not me that doubts it. I can sense her sadness when you leave."

"Once these rulers are dealt with, she will be my main focus again. Until then, I know she understands that I have something to deal with. If I do this right, I could become the king of two kingdoms and her my queen. But only if I do it right. One wrong move could lose me this kingdom and make an enemy of one that has more allies than I do. She knows I love her." William stepped out the door and had four guards already on his heel. "She might not understand why I act this way now, but she will learn it was worth it in the end."

Waylon hummed. "I think she only cares that you are by her side, not what kingdoms are yours." William silenced his wolf just as he stepped into his first meeting for the day.

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A day in the life of a king

William's POV

The room stood when William entered. Any sense of conversation was forgotten and gone as if it was never there. They watched his every breath as if it would be the answer to every question they had.

The rulers of Eldon stood and gave their respectful bows. Their son, Daemon, watched William with a light in his eyes as if he knew something that William didn't. If he wasn't their son, he would have thrown him out the moment he met him. :

"This won't take long, your majesty. We know you have a lot on your plate." The queen said as they all sat. William had three more meetings today after this and then he had to meet villagers that had quarrels in their neighborhoods. If he was lucky, he would get to spend time with his lady and baby before they were asleep.

"Going off of what we discussed yesterday, we gave it a bit more thought and decided that a shared trade route is necessary for our kingdoms." The king said. He slid William a piece of golden paper.

William took his time as he read through every bit. That always made them nervous.

"No." William slid back the paper. "That indicates that you will raise our prices to keep yours the same. My villages aren't going to suffer because you want easy access."

"It could bring more goods into your villages— "

"My villages can get the goods you mentioned just fine." William said in his tone of voice he had mastered since becoming a king. It left little room to argue with him.

The rulers shared a glance and the queen cleared her throat and threw on a new smile.

"We will have to talk on that some more— "

"What else?" William asked as he clasped his hands on the table.

"Your villages aren't paying high enough dues to the borders." The queen said. Her smile became tight. "We saw last night that they owe more than a few years worth."

William stared at her for a long moment. She shifted in her seat under his gaze.

“Do you think I don’t know about the dues in my kingdom? The villages have stopped owing that for over half a decade. The former king had those removed when they became too much and the palace has paid it instead.”

The queen swallowed. “We must have missed that, your highness. We’re trying to make sure that there are no bumps in the road to our unity.” William tilted his head a little. “I’m sure a little debt wouldn’t get in the way of our kingdoms becoming allies?”

“Oh, no. Of course not!” The rulers laughed. Their son only watched William with an indifferent expression. When they locked eyes, he smiled.

“Ts there anything else?” William asked,

“Can we join you for dinner later?” The king asked. “We know you’re busy— “

“TL be having dinner with my lady.” William stood and the rest of the room stood with him. “Perhaps another time, then.”

Once William left the rulers, that edge of nerve still stuck inside him. He could feel their eyes on him even after he was gone from the room. His eyes looked over each guard he passed and tried to see if any of them would weaken under his stare. Could he trust any of them when there were snakes staying at his palace?

He went into a private room and sat across one of his most trusted members of the royal court. He has known him since he was a child and the man always stayed in the background of things to observe the world.

Mason had lines of age on his face. William tried not to think of his father when he looked at him.

“Did you find anything?” William asked once the room was cleared. Mason dipped his chin just slightly.

“Tn their room, they have a letter that was meant to go out today. I caught it before a mailer could pick it up.”

“Did you get a chance to read it?” William whispered.

“T did. They’ve sent word back to their kingdom’s court that they believe they have information on you that no one else knows. They want to alert your kingdom that you killed your brothers in the war for the crown and they hope that it will start the divide.”

William curled his hands into fists. His court had covered up what happened to his brothers well enough. Many knew what happened to Martin, but not many knew about all the events that led up to it. They didn’t know how his brother felt about Doris.

They knew that Luna Queen and Jack were killed, but who had done it was never revealed. William didn't regret either, but he knew how that would look to his kingdom.

The scandal was big and might put a dent in his reputation, but he could handle that. He's lost their trust and gained it back before. If those rulers thought he would fall to his knee for them, they were horribly mistaken. He'd rather cut off both legs before he did that.

"Why are you keeping them here, William?" Mason asked. He leaned back in his chair and studied William closely.

"They don't realize that I have sent my own men to spy in their kingdom. They stole the uniforms of their guards and I sent them to take their place. I need the rulers here until they get back."

"What do you hope to find in their kingdom?" "Proof of their lies. They've been conning their people for a decade. I read the reports of their villages being shut down and money spilling out. They're letting their own people die in the streets and they want to do that to my kingdom too. They want to make my people distrust me and turn their backs. If they can gain their trust, money will follow."

"I thought the kingdom of Eldon was well off?" Mason said. "Why would they do this to their people?"

"I've been told that their kingdom has made bad deals with bad traders and alpha wolves to protect their palace. Those wolves will gut them if they come back empty handed." William sighed and raked his fingers through his hair. He felt as if he was going mad with how hard he had been working to figure them out without them realizing what he was doing.

"They spent more than what they had to have the best and now they are trying to gain it all back and by doing that, they think they can take my crown from me and make this land their own. If they did that, they would have more money than they would know what to do with."

"Well, they certainly picked at the wrong kingdom. Didn't they?" Mason smirked. William stood and straightened his crown. "They'll regret underestimating me."

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A midnight stroll

Doris woke in the middle of the night to find William sound asleep beside her. It was a nice and safe sight, she hated waking up to find him already gone or awake. He was always such an early riser.

Sweat drenched her skin, her dreams rattled her wide awake to the point that she could barely catch her breath. It all happened in quick flashes that she could barely grasp onto.

There was... fire. A lot of fire and fighting but none of it was clear to Doris. What was on fire?

Was she trapped in it—or did she start it? It didn't make sense to her, she wanted to dissect everything about it but it was already fading fast from her mind.

All she knew was that it would be hard to fall back asleep with the whisper of death on her skin.

The clocks told her that it wasn't far past midnight. She slowly got out of bed and put on a silk robe to cool her skin.

"Must you walk around instead of just closing your eyes again?" Cordelia groaned inside her. "Alec isn't even awake yet."

"I can't sleep. I don't feel even an ounce bit tired." Doris said quietly. She glanced out the window to see the kingdom was sound asleep like she should have been. She checked in on Alec to see him bundled in all his blankets. He was already growing out of his onesies and it made her sad to see him grow up so fast even though he was still super tiny. She wanted him to stay this small forever.

Suddenly her adrenaline felt higher than the ceiling. It would be so nice to run through the forest and feel the cold air on her fur. The room felt stuffy and tight even though it was one of the biggest rooms in the entire kingdom—she couldn't explain it.

She felt Cordelia sigh. "You want fresh air? Would that help you sleep if I let you run?" "Yes, a million times yes." Doris whispered. She tried not to think about the note that fell out of her shifter book when she picked it up to read last night.

Daemon encouraged her to take a little more power than Cordelia gave... but Doris wasn't sure if it was the wisest thing to do even if it felt good.

She felt like a different person entirely when her wolf gave her power. She no longer felt small and helpless to the world—she felt as if no one could stop her even if they tried.

Daemon wanted to see her push herself to be the best she could, but an uneasy ache hummed inside her whenever she thought of him. She knew that she couldn't trust him... not at all.

Cordelia didn't say a word, only pushed Doris towards the balcony and made her open the door. Silently, she closed it behind her.

"What are you doing?" Doris asked. It was much colder than she expected it to be.

“We’re going on a run.” Cordelia said simply. “That’s what you wanted, isn’t it?”

“Well, yes! But we’re stories high, Cordelia. I can go down the stairs—”

“And risk his guards following you or waking William to let him know that you left in the middle of the night? He would tear through this forest to find you.”

“How can I possibly make this jump? We would die!” Doris said.

Cordelia laughed. “Perhaps in your human form, but not in your wolf form. Drops like these are nothing. You’ll see.”

Without another word, Cordelia ripped through Doris like never before. The pain was over in an instant and before she knew it, she was already on all fours ready to take the leap.

Cordelia didn’t have to push her. Doris leapt from the balcony and landed on one of the lower roofs below before she leapt off that one too. The guards didn’t even notice or hear her when she landed in the grass below. Cordelia shot off through the trees before any of them could turn and see her.

Doris knew that she gave her some power without her having to ask. She felt it through her bones and noticed how she glowed a bit in the darkness.

Would she have been able to land that jump without her power? Doris guessed not. She felt like lightening flickering through the darkness as she moved. It was so odd being able to see everything clearly when normally she would have been blind to the darkness.

“Tonight, I want you to try something but it might be risky.” Cordelia said.

“What is it? I’ll do it,” Doris said without a hesitation.

“The reason why it might be a little risky is because of how much noise it will make.” Cordelia said and had her stop in a wide clearing. “It’s also dangerous, which is why I brought you all the way out here where no one else would be around.”

Doris sat in the middle of the clearing and looked around. She could hear everything from miles away but most of all she heard peace. She closed her eyes and took in the feeling that was rare to catch.

“What am I to do?” Doris finally asked her wolf.

“This one will be loud, so you might have to run back to the palace and try to get to your room before anyone catches you. I want you to practice a move that could win battles.”

“Are you referring to the white wolf’s power push?” Doris asked. It was one of the many moves that she had read about in the book Daemon had given her. It was also one of the many moves that she had yet to try.

“Yes, I want you to try it here where it can’t hurt anyone, though it might drain you since you’re not at full power yet.”

“Is it true that this move can bring down full armies?” Doris asked.

“That depends on how strong you are. Normally it is used to give you the upper hand. It can take out a good number of people closest to you and perhaps even far away.”

Doris stood and planted her paws on the ground. “Teach it to me.” Cordelia was silent for a long moment. Doris could feel the power flow through her and it felt like a sort of rope she could pull on. Doris grabbed on and held tight. She knew she could pull more if she wanted... and a big part of her did.

“Careful, now.” Cordelia said. Cordelia pushed Doris forward and rose her up high on her back legs. Just before she slammed them into the ground, Doris yanked on that rope in her favorite and a surge of power rocked through her body. “Wait — « It was too late.

When Doris’s paws hit the ground, it shot out a wave that rippled the ground and sent trees toppling over. Doris was in awe, it felt as if she was watching it all in slow motion. Her power was strong enough to send a tidal wave along the ground and knock down anything in its path— And then she heard the screaming.

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Midnight madness

Doris hurried through the forest towards the noise. She could feel her power draining from her until she no longer glowed. She almost had to stop when she felt as if she was about to collapse —what had she done? This was all her fault, she must have hurt someone close by. But how? She didn’t hear anyone close enough!

Doris eventually found a fallen guard with a man hovered above him. She halted when she saw who it was.

Daemon turned to her with wide eyes. “Was this... you?” He asked and gestured around them.

Doris finally turned to face the damage she had made. It was like a hole from where she stood before. Trees and bushes were blown through and one of the sticks had plunged into the man’s chest.

Panic erupted inside her. She couldn’t shift into herself when she had nothing to cover herself with. Daemon seemed to notice and took off his cloak to rest by her paws before stepping back. He turned the other way and Doris shifted instantly and wrapped his cloak around her.

“Is he dead?” She gasped and joined Daemon at his body. Daemon quickly moved her away from the man.

“You have to get out of here. Someone is going to find him and see what you did— “

"We can't just leave him here!" Doris wrapped her arms around herself. It didn't look like he was moving. Did she... did she do this? Did she kill this man because she took too much power? Her entire body started to tremble. Daemon wrapped his arms around her and she barely noticed him there. All she could do is stare at what she had done.

"We can hide the body, no one will ever find him." Daemon said against her ear. It sent shivers down her spine.

Doris pushed him away from her and looked him up and down. He looked a bit dirty as if he had fallen. His shirt was halfway buttoned and she could see the top of his chest.

"What are you doing out here so late?"

She already knew the answer. He was following her again. Daemon scratched the back of his head and took a step back. "I woke when I heard a loud thump on my roof. I looked out my window to see you glowing and heading into the forest and I.. I couldn't resist."

"You have found me out here almost every time I have shifted." Doris said quietly. She took a step away from him. "You always take the same path." Daemon turned and pointed towards the palace. "I see you clearly from my window every time you leave. I don't know how you haven't been followed out here by others."

Doris didn't have time to question him more— she had to go for help. When she started to run to the palace, Daemon grabbed her arm to stop her. "Where are you going?" He asked. Doris shoved him away from her. "I'm going to get help! This man needs help, I can't just leave him out here!" "This man is gone, Doris. We have to hide him or you're going to be in trouble." "It was an accident — " "If word gets out that you're a white wolf, you will bring more trouble than you can handle." Daemon grabbed her shoulders so she would look at him. "You need to help me hide this body. Do you understand?"

"What—no! You can't be serious! People will be looking for him—" "He's not important. This palace will forget about him in a day and think he's wandered off or ran away."

Doris furrowed her brows. "How could you say that? People will care that he's gone. He might have a family out there."

"Doris— " He stopped short and tilted his head. Doris watched him for a moment, but she didn't hear anything. Cordelia must have taken back all the power after what happened. Doris didn't mean to hurt anyone... she swore that there was no one around... "Someone is coming—and they're coming fast." He whispered. He let go of Doris and turned to the palace. "I have to go before he catches me here with you."

"Who?" Doris asked as she turned to look at the path behind them. She saw nothing. When she turned back to Daemon, he was already gone. It hit her when he was close enough— William. He broke through the trees and his wild eyes found her instantly.

"Doris—what the hell are you doing out here?"

He glanced down at the body behind her, and then his nostrils flared as his eyes caught on the large cloak around her. He stepped towards her and looked all around the area as if he was looking for someone. When he turned back to her, he looked deadly.

“Why are you out in the forest wearing nothing but another man’s cloak?” William asked as he stepped closer to observe her. It seemed that he didn’t care the body behind her as much as he cared about who she might have been with. “I—no, it’s not like that.” Doris shook her head and gripped onto his shirt. “I shifted into my wolf to take a run and—something terrible happened. I think I... I think I might have killed someone.” William took her trembling form in his arms, though she noticed he kept sniffing her as if he was trying to identify the male that owned the cloak.

“Tell me everything that happened.” He said. Doris could have melted against him. “I woke up with a nightmare and Cordelia suggested we take a run. Lately she has been showing me my white wolf power and we come out here to practice it sometimes but—I think I might have taken too much. I pulled on the power and it brought down trees. I heard a man scream and came here to find him already down—”

“Did you get the cloak near him?” He asked, “Yes, I put it on and shifted and—I think he’s dead.” Doris whispered in horror. She didn’t mention Daemon because she knew his jealousy would blind the real problem. She knew he would search the woods for him instead of helping her with this man.

William pulled away and caressed her cheek. “Let me check him.”

He pulled off his shirt and placed it in her hands.

She knew he couldn’t stand the scent of another man on her and she knew it wouldn’t be the last she heard of it.

Doris nodded slowly and he pulled away from her to kneel at the man on the floor. Doris could barely look when he started to check his pulse. She quickly discarded Daemon’s cloak and put on William’s shirt that came to her knees.

“He’s alive, but barely. His heart is starting to slow down.” William said quietly. He bit his wrist and gave the man a drop of his blood before he pulled out the wood from his chest. “Get back to our room. I will handle this.”

The guard remained unconscious as William picked him up in his arms and carried him back to the palace.

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It's alright now

Doris showered and waited in their room with Alec who was still asleep through it all. She paced the room and wanted to pull out her hair—how could this have happened? How could she have been so foolish? What if there were more people by and she didn't do a good enough job to listen?

How come she didn't hear them? Moments before Cordelia allowed her the power, she sat and listened to the quiet forest. She heard the animals asleep and the peace of the land—not one guard that close could be heard. No footsteps... nothing. Her wolf was still silent inside her. Perhaps she was ashamed of Doris for what she did. Or did she drain her wolf? Doris was too nervous to even reach out to her incase it came with a lecture she knew she deserved.

A big part of her just wanted confirmation that her wolf was okay and still there for her even if she didn't deserve it.

About an hour or so later, William finally came back to their room. He had on a new shirt and his hair was a mess— even more so than usual. A ping of guilt set in deep when she saw how tired he was. He said nothing as he walked to their bed and sat on the corner. His blue eyes watched the fire that flickered in the fireplace across the room. Doris nervously picked at her nails as she watched him and dreaded what might come out of his mouth if it was only bad news.

"He's fine. He's alive and will wake up in a day or two once my blood leaves his system. None of the staff are sure of his wound since it closed before he got there."

Doris closed her eyes and let out a deep breath. She knew what his wound was—it was a big thick stick that came off of the trees she knocked down.

"I swear it was an accident—"

"I know that, Doris." William interrupted. He turned his blue gaze onto her and it made her stop short. "Do you think I didn't know it was an accident? You wouldn't hurt an insect even if it was biting you. You would never hurt someone that was innocent."

Doris put her head in her hands. "I didn't realize how strong the kind of power I have is—I thought it would be okay to take a little more, but it wasn't."

William gestured for her to come closer. When she did, he pulled her into his lap.

"Power is a dangerous thing to play with. It can get addicting and hard to not take more than you're allowed." "I feel so horrible—"

"I know that. He will know that when he wakes." William brushed her hair away from her face. "That's some power you have, Doris. Why haven't you told me about it?"

Doris could hear his change in tone. She knew him better than anyone and knew he liked to mask all of his emotions as if he didn't have any. But if she listened close enough, she could always hear it. "I wanted to show it to you when I mastered it. I wanted you to see me and be proud of me and I tried to hurry along the process by taking more." "I'm always proud of you Doris. It's hard not to be." William whispered. "Our wolves can be frustrating, but they usually know best when they tell us not to do something." The exhaustion started to leak into his tone.

"It's just... it's like the power calls to me and I can't help but want to answer. Every time she gives me a little bit, I have this urge to take more. I had never done that before but when she opened it up, I pulled and more came out."

William's eyes suddenly grew dark as if he remembered something. His face reminded her of the time they went to the north and his jealousy was his only driver.

"Who was the man with you in the forest?" William asked. His arms stiffened around her. "Not the guard. The one who's cloak you wore. They have different scents."

"It was the messenger that came with the Eldon rulers. When I ran to the scream, he was there already standing over him." Doris said. She wrapped her arms around his neck. "He saw me and gave me his cloak so I could shift."

William's brows furrowed in confusion. "Their messenger?"

"Yes. The tall boy that's in their meetings sometimes."

"That's not their messenger. That's their son." William said. His voice grew a little darker. "Has he been talking to you?"

Doris was completely shocked at William's words. Daemon swore he was a messenger and nothing more. He was their son? Had he been watching her for them?

"Doris." William said and gripped her chin to make her look at him. "Has he been talking to you?"

"Well— Yes. He talks to me about white wolves because he saw me as one."

William sat up a little more. He looked more awake than ever. "What has he been saying to you, Doris? Has he been asking you about the kingdom?"

"No, no. Not at all. He said he doesn't even know about his own kingdom but clearly he was lying. He just tells me facts about white wolves." Doris said. How had she not seen through his lies? "He was there and he just—left right before you came."

“Did he touch you, Doris?” William asked carefully. Doris knew that he would rip through his door and kill Daemon if he touched her. She could see the promise already in his eyes.

“No. He didn’t touch me, he just gave me the cloak because I didn’t have one with me.” Doris swore. A bit of his anger left, but a lot of it was still there. “I would have just switched into my wolf and gutted him if he touched me.”

Doris took William’s face in her hands. “How did you know where I] was?”

“I woke up and found you gone. I looked all over and saw that the balcony was unlocked. I heard the trees fall from our room and I knew you were there. I just knew. I left here and went straight for you.”

“Thank you for always coming for me, William.” She whispered. She leaned forward and placed a light kiss against his lips. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Doris. Next time you want a midnight stroll, wake me.”

William laid back against the bed and brought her with him. It was only an hour before he had to get up and go again. He closed his eyes and held her against him with a strength that made her feel safe.

Doris laid her head on his chest and listened to the familiar sound of his heart as he fell asleep. Her eyes were still wide open and she was on borrowed time until Alec woke up and demanded breakfast.

But it was the only place she wanted to be.