

Chapter 223 Another ruler to come

The next morning, William was already gone with their baby before she could say anything. She spent most of the night nursing Alec and rocking him back to sleep. She didn't get any herself until the sun came back up and by then her body and mind felt like mush.

Doris rubbed her chest. She felt the intense ache of missing her baby even though she was with him all night. She wanted to storm into his meeting and take him back for herself. The weakness she felt the day before was all gone. She felt just as she always did as if it never happened.

Perhaps it didn't. Perhaps it was all a dream—a mystery man and a girl trying to be the white wolf she was meant to be. It didn't feel real, yet at the same time, it did.

Doris got up to find a letter on her nightstand from William. He wanted her to join him by his side for some gathering in the main ballroom. She had half a mind to ignore the invitation all together—but she wanted to see her baby.

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The dress hugged her curves more than it used to—but she didn't mind. She finished off her makeup look before she hurried out the door to the great hall.

Every person she passed turned to stare at her and it made her skin prickle again. It was like she could hear all of their thoughts at once. It was on their faces—they probably thought she as a misfit mother. Why else would she be away from her baby and make the king do all the work?

Doris held her chin high as a guard escorted her to where William was. She could hear the crowd beyond the doors that waited for him and only wondered if it as the palace or villagers that were out there.

William turned the moment she entered the room as if he sensed her. His eyes raked her body in a way that normally would have made her blush and forget how to speak. Instead, she went right to her baby and picked him up. ②

"Hello handsome." She whispered as she rocked him. She didn't have to turn to know that William was behind them.

"I was starting to think you weren't going to come." He said by her ear. He was smart to keep his hands to

himself. Otherwise, he would have caught an elbow to the ribs. ②

"I thought about it, but I would go wherever my baby was." She said simply.

"I may have been a bit too harsh with my reaction—" ①

Doris snapped her gaze up at him and wished she could burn a hole through his head.

"Okay, I know I was harsh with my reaction." William corrected. He looked down at her with a bit of softness she had seen from him when she was pregnant. "I don't know why I put the blame on you—perhaps because there was no one else around. I should have been more concerned with what happened to both of you."

Doris raised her brows. "Are you saying you will trust me again to watch my baby?"

William usually matched the bite in her tone with his own, but this time he let her win. "I'm saying I should have never said otherwise. I'm sorry for how I acted. I increased security around the palace and now all maids and servants have to be checked before they leave or enter." ③

It was rare for William to apologize. He was the type to hold his tongue until he was blue in the face rather than risk his pride. She knew she was owed an apology, she just didn't expect him to actually give her one.

William hesitated for a blink before he ran his finger down her face in a soft caress. Doris said nothing as he

leaned forward to kiss her forehead. "I'm glad you're here with me." He whispered. ①

He gripped her hand and pulled her towards the platform. The room was filled with palace workers and villagers. She hadn't even had a chance to ask what this gathering was about—he distracted her with his unexpected kindness. ①

Doris held their baby close against her chest as William took the center of the stage. His crown glistened bright in the room though his suit was dark as night. He always looked the best in dark suits. It made him look as if he was king of the underworld and it was useless to question him.

"Thank you for gathering in such short notice. I wanted it to be known that we have a guest coming from another palace. The rulers of Eldon are on their way here for a visit."

A few murmuring broke out in the crowd, but they silence again when William looked down at them.

"I know our relationship with Eldon has been rocky before my leadership, so I called you all here today to remind you that we treat our guests with respect." His voice boomed around the room and held its own weight without William having to lift a finger.

"I'm not sure how long their visit will be just yet, but no matter. Under my leadership, all outsiders will be welcomed unless they prove they are hostile and don't

deserve our respect.”

Doris rocked a sleepy Alec gently against her chest as she gazed out into the crowd. Almost all the eyes were on William. They watched him intensely with a bit of confusion or concern on some faces. Doris wasn't aware of the exact history this kingdom had with Eldon, but clearly a lot of others did.

Her eyes snagged on a familiar green in the crowd. Daemon watched her with a tilted head as if he was surprised to see her where she was—but also not at all. The side of his mouth lifted slightly when their eyes locked. He tilted his head in greeting, but all she did was quickly look away.

“...They will arrive by nightfall. Go on how you were.” William bowed to the crowd and dismissed them all at once. He gripped her hand and escorted her off the stage. She dared a glance back at Daemon, but he was already gone. Still, she felt his gaze on her from somewhere in the crowd.

“Have you met the rulers of Eldon?” Doris asked as he led them back to their room.

“No, I never met them when I was the prince. I know my father has met them, but he never really mentioned them as if they didn't exist.” William said. He glanced down at her and then at Alec.

Doris opened her mouth to mention Daemon, but quickly thought better of it. He didn't like when she mentioned

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that she had talked to other men. She didn't need to plant a seed in his mind when it was nothing. +

