

Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne By Caroline

Chapter 41 Be safe, my friend.

"He...he said what?" Doris felt as if the world around her had slightly shifted as her focus grew a little fuzzy. The dress she was wearing was much too hot for her to handle this news. "Mr. Carson said you can't leave unless I return?" Beth nodded, her eyes glassy with unshed tears. "He just told me when I came here to say goodbye." Doris squeezed Beth's hands as she talked, but her mind was far from her words. It was William who put this order, it had to be. He must have thought this would guarantee she wouldn't try to escape while they were in the north. It hadn't even crossed her mind that she might be able to escape-she was only worried about staying alive in such a horrible place. She supposed to others-it should have been front and centered in her mind, to grasp at the chance to be free from him and this palace. Running away from Prince William while they were somewhere dangerous was just not an option to her and it never had been. How would she fend for herself in the north without the royal guard and Prince William? She had no survival skills for the freezing snow or self defense against wild packs, so there was no way she could do it without dying in the process. For William to punish Beth because of Doris angered her. Had he truly thought so little of her that he would bring her innocent friend into this to make sure she didn't try anything? The nerve! Every time she thought he had a heart, she was immediately proven wrong. She wished she could

for the prince. Beth did not deserve to suffer for however long it would take her to return. Their trip could take months or more! And what if something happened to Doris while they were in the north? Would they keep her friend long after they found her body? Or let her go by default? Doris let out a small sigh and brought Beth in for a tight hug. "I'm so sorry, Beth. I will return, you have my word. I don't know how long this will take, but I promise to come back so you can have your freedom." "And yours." Beth mumbled against Doris's hair. She pulled away a little to grip her shoulders. "Perhaps it's okay that I have to wait for you, so that we may go free together like we always planned. I would have waited close by for you to return anyway." "Leaving your fate up to my return is not fair—" "No, it's not." Beth frowned. "But we have never gotten a say in anything we do here. I would rather know you've returned safe than be out there alone wondering where you are." "What if it takes me months to return? I won't have any way to communicate to you when I'll be back." Doris picked at her nails as her thoughts started to run from her. "What if something happens to me out there and you'll never be freed?" "Doris! Don't talk like that, nothing will happen to you out there. Mr. Carson told me they're sending some of the strongest guards out there with Prince William, surely they will protect you too." Beth said gently. There was no guarantee that they would care to protect a maid when they were only meant to protect their prince. They both knew that, but it changed nothing. Doris would just have to try to stay alive for more than just herself.

She knew her friend was trying to look on the bright side of things, but the back of her mind kept screaming her own fears back at her. She felt as if her corset was crushing the life out of her, the heat it caused was enough to make her faint if she wasn't careful. "Beth... I'm going to the north... we've both heard the horror stories of what happens there. Remember the servant that was forced to

travel through to deliver a message? They said they found his body ripped apart and never found where his head went!" Beth's brows formed a line of worry, she shook her head. "Don't think about those sort of things, he was traveling alone. You'll be protected by the roya guard, Doris. If that man had Prince William at his side, we know he would have survived. Even though Prince William doesn't have his own pack—he's a very dangerous wolf when he turns. Of all the princes, I'm glad he's the one you're going with because of that." Doris already knew how dangerous and scary Prince William could be. She had the scar to prove it. There was so many thoughts trying to drown her nerves, it was getting harder to breathe. She was to be alone with Prince William for who knows how many weeks or months in the snow. There was no where for her to run or protect herself, especially against the prince if he got drunk and tried to attack her again. She knew his guards would look the other way if he instructed them. Yes, Prince William hadn't tried anything with her since she told him she wasn't interested, but she hadn't been around him when he was as drunk as that night yet. And if she wasn't worried about him, she was worried about the rogue packs that lived out there. The ones that would love to catch Prince William or

one of his party alone to torture for fun. She wandered how true that was, if they were desperate *for* the chance to snatch a royal member and hang him for all their friends to poke at. What would they do to the ones he traveled with? Pick them off one by one first starting with the weakest her? Who knows what other dangers awaited her, but she knew each second made her more terrified to find out. It had always been a dream of hers to leave the grounds of the palace, now that she was she only wished she could remain inside and hide in her old comforts. "Doris?" Beth gripped her shaky hands and brought her racing mind back to earth. How long had she been talking? "It's okay to be scared, anyone in your *shoes* would be more than frightened for this journey." Beth said softly. "Remember who you are. I know you're more brave than you allow others to see, it's time to face the fears that are trying to pull you into the darkness." Doris felt her eyes water, she quickly brushed away a few stray tears. "You've always been a good friend to me, Beth. I don't know what I'm going to do without you." "You're going to survive," Beth said with a smile, her voice cracked. "And come back home to marry one of the princes who are crazy about you." She laughed lightly, though it died off rather quickly. Doris rolled her eyes and laughed. "Perhaps I'll come back and you'll be the one who's married to a *prince!*" Beth pulled out a handkerchief from her apron and dried Doris's tears before she pulled her in for one last hug. "Be safe, my friend. I will see you when you return as whole." "I surely hope as whole." Doris tried her best to

laugh, Beth pulled back silently and smiled. Doris watched as her friend turned away and disappeared into the palace for the last time. A part of her heart would always stay with this place, perhaps because she knew she would never truly escape it no matter how far she would get away from it. She supposed that happened when you were forced to become a maid like she was at such a young age. Even now, as she was about to leave the grounds for the first time in years, it still had a hold on her. It was as if a long rope had tied itself to her ankle and she knew she would eventually have to follow it back to release the grip it had on her friend. Freedom tasted sweet, but it would be rotten if she knew Beth was forced to stay here because of her. Doris lifted her skirts as she turned and made her way down the pathway towards the stables, ready to face the beast that she was forced to call a prince and start their journey.

Her Unwanted Male On The They

Chapter 42 Stay down

The carriage was packed and ready by the time Doris finally arrived to the stables. It was much smaller than the other carriages the prince's usually traveled in, she assumed Prince William wanted to remain as discreet as they possibly could by taking the smaller one. It was typically used by lower ranked members of the royal party, never by a prince. Prince William turned the moment she stepped around the corner as if he sensed she was there. A heat of rage spiked through her veins when their eyes met, she quickly looked away in case he caught her anger. She wanted so badly to give him a piece of her mind about what he did to Beth, but she knew it would only make things worse. She had no right to speak to a prince that way, even though she silently screamed at him in her mind. He deserved it, but she would never allow herself to do

1. it.
1

He was leaned back against the side of the carriage as if he had been waiting there for hours. Dressed head to toe in a sea of black fabrics, it made his eyes look startling against his snowy features. Doris calmed her rage and finally looked up at him once she was able to form a mask strong enough to hide her emotions. "Sorry I took so long, your majesty. I was saying goodbye to a friend." Doris said evenly as she curtsied, careful not to let her voice waver. Prince William furrowed his dark brows, a bit of suspicion crept into his features though she couldn't tell why. "Who were you saying goodbye to?"

down "No, another maid named Beth. She's a good friend of mine." The same maid you tied my fate around. Doris added silently. She watched for recognition to spark in his features, for any sense of acknowledgement for what he'd done. His blue eyes remained distant and stormy, not even a flicker of anything sparked on his features

"You've kept us long enough, let's go." He pushed off the side of the carriage and didn't bother to wait for another servant to open the door for him. He pulled himself up and left the door wide open. Doris glanced around, but no one moved to close it.

ward and started to push it closed for him when his hand shot out and held it open. "What do you think you're doing?" He asked. "Oh, I'm sorry. I was just closing it for you, your majesty." Doris dropped her hand and stepped back. "Do you plan on standing out there all night? You've already costed us a good part of the hour." He leaned out and grabbed her wrist to pull her inside the carriage "Oh!" Doris stumbled a little and quickly pulled herself up into the carriage to seat herself opposite of him. It was so much smaller than she imagined, one bump and she would be on top of him. "I didn't realize I would be riding with you, your majesty." Doris smoothed out her thick skirts and leaned back against the leathered seat, she wondered if he could hear how loud her heart raced Prince William slammed the carriage door shut and turned to look at her. "Where did you think you would be riding? With one of my guards on the back of their horse?" "I don't know, your majesty. I suppose so." Doris glanced out the small windows and gripped the

seats as the carriage pulled away from the palace. She definitely didn't need to accidentally fall onto

Prince William snorted and shook his head, he looked out the window on the other side of the carriage. He looked as if it was ridiculous of her to think she would've traveled any other way but in this carriage with him. Normally servants had their own horses or carriages, it was unheard of to ride with a royal member. Let alone a prince. Since this was the only carriage they were bringing, she assumed that was why she was sharing the carriage with him now. All of his guards rode on black horses that surrounded every angle of the carriage. Doris watched as the palace grew smaller in the distance before she closed the curtain and looked away. She wasn't sure how long it would be until they returned, it was strange to leave it behind for the first time in forever. Thank goodness she brought the book Prince Martin had given her, it might be a long ride before they stopped and she didn't think Prince William would be a good match for a long conversation with a maid. She pulled out the small maroon book and gently ran her fingers over the shimmering cover, it was so much more beautiful than she remembered. She opened the book and smiled at Prince Martin's neat handwriting. When Doris looked up, Prince William had his dark gaze already on her. She silently closed the book. "How long has it been since you've traveled outside of the palace?" He asked. "Oh-about five years, your majesty." Doris glanced down at the book on her lap. "I haven't been outside the palace's grounds since I first arrived as a maid when I was 16." 1 EA_

11_- — 1

— > IT. — -11—

asked, she shifted slightly under his gaze. "I used to love working in the library, your majesty." His gaze narrowed a little. "Why there of all places you could be?" "I suppose I liked to read whenever I wasn't working. Not many people ventured into the library so it was the perfect place to me." "Not many people visited the library," He leaned his chin on his palm as he slouched back against the wall of the carriage. "I know that can't be true." "Well, not many did. Prince Martin came by once a week for a short time and some of the other servants would pop in to grab something to read but most of the time it's just me in there." "You seemed to have made an impression on him nonetheless." He said with an edge to his voice. His eyes flickered to her book and her fingers tightened on it.

"I don't know what you mean, your majesty." Prince William leaned towards her, resting his elbows on his knees. "Perhaps it would be wise for you not to refer to me as a prince on this journey. If anyone had heard you, it might tip them off once we get closer to the north." "What should I call you, then?" Doris asked cautiously, she leaned back further into the leather seat away from him. "William. Nothing else." His eyes grazed the book once more, when his blue gaze returned to her own -she felt as if she could drown in the color. He was so close, she could smell the scent of pine on him. She wondered if he had gone on a walk through the trees after they left his mother's cottage. Her fingers itched to pick out the small leaf that sat in his soft dark hair. He would surely throw her out of his marriage if she tried something like that Derhane he

would make her run next to the carriage if he got angry enough at her. He stared at her with his head tilted as if he was waiting for her to say something. His dark

brows raised impatiently, she swallowed when she realized what he must have been wanting to hear

"William." She said hesitantly. It felt strange to refer to him by his first name. Daniel was easier since he was a friend before a prince to her but Prince William had only ever been a prince to her and he was so much more intimidating than Daniel. Doris cleared her throat and spoke more clearly. "Yes, of course I'll call you by your name, William. If that's what you wish." Doris thought she saw the corner of his mouth move up slightly, but she blinked and it was down again. "It is." He leaned back against the seat and turned his attention out the window to watch as the trees passed them by in a blur of motion. His dark lashes lowered a little as if he were in thought, she let out a slow breath and picked up her book again. She sensed their time for conversation had come to a close and most of her was thankful for it. After a while of reading, Doris quickly understood why the prince loved this poetry book so much. It was filled with hope and wonder for the future and love. She felt herself dozing off after the first chapter and glanced up to see Prince William still staring out the window. Doris closed her eyes and allowed herself to rest.

Doris woke the second the carriage started to shake erratically. How long had she been asleep? She sat up quickly and gripped the black cloak that must have been laid across her as she slept. What was happening? Where were they?

Her eyes immediately sought out Prince William for answers—he was glancing out the window trying to see what was happening when he suddenly turned and threw himself on her. "Stay down!" He shouted. William held onto Doris tightly as the carriage tipped and darkness took over.

Chapter 43 It's been torn apart

Doris slowly opened her eyes when the carriage stopped completely, Prince William had her gripped tightly beneath him, it took her a moment to realize the carriage was on its side and they were laying against the wall of the carriage. He held onto her as if she might break if he let go, she blinked away her surprise. The door was now above their heads, one of the guards ripped it open and Doris squinted up at the light that shined in. Her skin started to burn from pain where Prince William held her. "Your-William, are you alright?" The guard cleared his throat as he corrected himself. Prince William leaned back to look at Doris, his eyes seemed to scan every inch of her before he pushed himself off her and helped her stand. "We're fine. What happened?" Prince William demanded. He gripped the side of the door and pulled himself out. Doris frowned and tried to do the same. A second later, his hands reached down to grab her waist and pull her out of the carriage as if she weighed nothing. "Oh! Thank you," Doris gripped his hands to steady herself as she carefully stepped off the carriage and into the snow. Prince William only let go of her hand once she was safely on the ground. A flash of pain rushed through her side where her bruising was the worst, she bit down on her lip to keep in her groan. His dark gaze immediately turned to assess the scene before them. Their carriage laid sideways in a snowy ditch with one of its wheels laying detached

she rarely came across the royal guard at the palace. Not that they seemed to want to introduce themselves, she supposed. It would still be nice to know what to call them if she needed to "Alright, then let's eat." Prince William turned and

the rest of the guards moved all at once as if they had been waiting for his order. Several guards immediately went to push the carriage up right again while others made an area for Prince William to rest. The rest of the guards stood watch as discreetly as they could manage without looking like the guards they were. To Doris, it was impossible. They clearly had the demeanor of guards rather than casual travelers. "Doris, if you could help me prepare some of the food to hand out, I would be grateful." A younger guard with a gentle face appeared at her side. Doris smiled and nodded her head. "My name is Erik—" "Doris is to rest, not help you." Prince William interrupted. She turned to see him standing behind her with his gaze fixed on the guard. "If you've already forgotten, she just got out of a crashed carriage." "Of course, sir! I mean-William. Of course." Erik bowed quickly to both of them. "I apologize for suggesting otherwise. I wasn't thinking." Prince William only stared at him until he turned and left as quickly as he could. "I could have helped—" Doris started, her words died in her throat when their eyes met. "You should sit for a minute." He said it more like a demand, she couldn't help but frown. Lately the tip of her tongue was desperate to snap back at him for once, but she always stopped herself just before. Doris stilled when he suddenly reached out his hand to brush the snow from her hair. His fingers

lingered for a moment before he finally dropped his hand back to his side as if it never happened. It startled her enough that all of her thoughts vanished as well as anything she might have wanted to say. "I—I'll sit." She breathed and went to rest on a log that had been recently cleared of snow. Her hand ached, but she could hardly feel anything but the numb coldness that started to take over her body. At least nothing else ended up broken. The clearing was quiet, she could hear the crunches in the snow from those that stomped by but not much else. The air made her cheeks red and fingers almost blue. She tucked her hands beneath her arms and watched her breath fog in the air. "How long have we been traveling?" She asked. She could sense him behind her still, she didn't have to turn to know he was there. "Hours, it's now mid day." He said evenly. Doris quickly turned to look up at him. "I was asleep for that long?" Prince William only lowered his chin in confirmation. Doris looked away and rubbed her hands together while trying to keep her teeth from chattering. Her pain had subsided for the time being, perhaps the cold was good for that if anything. She couldn't wait to get back into the warm carriage and out of the blustery wind. A soft weight fell on her shoulders after a moments silence. His black cloak warmed the sides of her cheeks, she almost instantly nestled into the fabric in relief. When she turned to thank him, he was already halfway across the clearing. She closed her eyes and held it tight around her with a small sigh. The warmth was a luxury, she didn't understand how he would ever give it up.

Perhaps he was warm blooded and didn't need the extra warmth, but she doubted it in weather like this. Why would he ever give it to her of all people? Erik came by to hand her a plate of dried fruit and bread. "Thank you, Erik." Doris smiled. "You're welcome, Doris." He said with a cheeky grin. "I hope the carriage crash didn't hurt you too badly." "Oh, no. I thought it would but I don't think I have a scratch on me." "It's probably because of the hold William had on you, he must have taken most of the impact." Erik glanced to where Prince William stood, Doris followed his gaze and saw him watching them while in a conversation with someone else. Erik cleared his throat. "Well, let me know if you need anything else." "Thank you—" Erik waved and hurried away before she could say another word. Prince William had taken most of the impact? That couldn't be so, he didn't look hurt in the slightest. Besides, why would he ever risk himself to save her? Doris studied him across the clearing for any hint of injury, but he stood tall

and-normal. The other men that hovered around him barely came up to his shoulder, they looked at him as if he was their god and they were desperate to please. Prince William's eyes caught her staring, she turned away and shoved more bread in her mouth to distract her thoughts. "William!" A guard came racing through the snow as fast as it would allow him. Doris stood in concern he would pass out when she saw how out of breath he was. Prince William pushed through the guards that surrounded him and neared the one who seemed

close to fainting by the time he reached him, "What is it? Keep your voice down!" He hissed and grabbed his shoulder roughly. "The decoy." The guard whispered, Doris leaned in a little to hear him. "The decoy carriage has already been torn apart by the rogues."

Her Unwanted Mate On The Thr

Chapter 44 Luna Queen is behind all this, isn't she

"What do you mean the decoy was torn apart? We're not even a full day into this journey!" Prince William whisper-shouted. Doris hadn't even realized there was another carriage on the road, she thought it was just theirs. Why didn't she see it this entire time? "I was sent to check their route a few hours ago and when I found them-" The man swallowed, his eyes were larger than life. "There... there was so much blood. They destroyed the entire carriage as if it were nothing." A chill ran through Doris, she clenched the cloak tighter around herself. Prince William's eyes flickered towards her for a breath before he glanced at the rest of the men that waited for his order. "We have to get moving. Our carriage will be next if we're not quick enough." "How will we avoid them?" Doris asked. Prince William turned his sharp gaze on her, she only lifted her chin. "We have to stay on the off roads. The decoy we sent went straight through the main traveling road and must have been caught the instant it crossed the border. Two men will travel ahead to search the area before we travel through, Any hint of another pack and we will do our best to move around those areas." "How many people died in the other carriage?" Doris asked quietly. The guard hesitated and looked to Prince William for approval, "Around a dozen. Most of their bodies

looked as if they were dragged through the trees. I was lucky to get out of there alive." Doris tightened her grip on her cloak and for the first time, she wished she had a weapon on her. She wasn't skilled with knives or even used to holding one but having any sort of blade in her hand might comfort her a little. What would she do if one of them got near her? She had nothing to defend herself out here. Every guard that surrounded her had more than a few weapons to defend themselves. Prince William-well, he had himself. She was sure he had something under his coat but it would be nothing compared to his wolf-or so she'd heard. "Let's not waste more time, clear the area and leave no trace of our stop behind." Prince William said before he gripped her arm and led her to the carriage as if he was certain she wouldn't follow without his lead. Doris glared at him when he wasn't looking and tried her best to cool her features before he helped her back into the carriage. The door slammed after him and shut the warmth in tight with them. Doris settled in her seat across from him and watched as the trees quickly started to pass them by. Prince William leaned across the seat to close the curtain. "We can't risk either of us being seen." "I think you mean just you." Doris corrected. Prince William leaned back against the seat and shrugged. "I'm sure it's been a while since the rogues have seen a pretty girl around here. I wouldn't

risk it." Doris felt the blush light up her cheeks, she quickly pressed her cold hands against her warm skin to cool it before he noticed. "Don't tease me, please." His eyes followed her movements like a predator in the dark. Slowly, she lowered her hands to her lap.

"When did the decoy carriage leave the palace? Around the same time we did?" Doris asked. "We sent them ahead about thirty minutes. It was the original time we were supposed to leave, but I thought it would be better to have it go first." "It's just... it seems rather fast for it to already have been taken down. Did anyone else know that was the time you were leaving?" "My father, brothers and Luna Queen were the only ones to know. I didn't tell them I was taking the servant carriage, though. The decoy was one of the bigger ones so it was meant to appear as if a prince was inside." Doris thought for a moment. "You were right not to tell them." William looked surprised at her words. "Why do you say that?" "It's Luna Queen behind all this, isn't it?" > "What makes you suspect her?" "Pardon me for saying this," Doris shifted in her seat, "but when Melody was poisoned at the party, she didn't look the least bit shocked when she saw her pass out. I didn't want to think anything of it, but it's possible it might be her who poisoned the soup. Jack was so insistent on trying to force me to blame it all on you. It made sense to me after I heard the story from Lady Katherine. "If I may make a bold guess. I would say it was her out of the rest of your family you told. I'm not sure how Melody is doing, but I hope she's alright by now. The portion she took shouldn't have been enough to be lethal." 1 William stared at her for a moment, almost as if he was impressed. He leaned his head back against the seat and closed his eyes as if he were ready to drift off to sleep. Doris crossed her arms and watched

him—was she allowed to kick him? No, but it would feel so good if she could. "Now that I think about it—" His eyes shot open, he leaned towards her again. Doris held her breath for a moment, this carriage was truly much too small for them to be this close. "Luna Queen happened to be nearby when I was gathering the guards to relay the plans. She said she wanted to thank me for going, but she wouldn't leave. When she finally left the room, I was able to instruct them about the decoy but it's possible she was nearby to hear it." Doris picked at her nails in thought. Why would Luna Queen want Prince William caught by the rogues? The most popular gossip that tainted her reputation was that she had a hand in William's birth mother's death. It was said that she was so jealous of King Charles' love for her that she poisoned one of her meals to get rid of her once and for all. It's been dozens of years. Did she hate William enough to set him up and get him killed? But why? She's the Luna Queen and her soon is the crown prince. The Kingdom would be at her service sooner or later. Why would she have even bothered with all this? 1 It didn't make sense to Doris, but there was no other explanation as to

who might have tipped off the rogues to their arrival. Prince William's eyes flickered to her bag on the seat next to her. "So you think Luna Queen over one of my brothers? What about Martin? I'm sure he would've enjoyed the news of my downfall." "Prince Martin would never do such a thing!" Prince William narrowed his eyes and leaned forward until his face was barely an inch from her own. She dreaded to think what one bump would do with him so close to her. "Why are you so quick to defend him when you hardly know him?" 21:42

"He's been nothing but kind to me at the palace, I don't think he would ever stoop so low to harm his own brother." A storm brewed in his gaze the more she

talked. His hands curled into fists at his sides, she quickly pressed her lips together. "Are you always so daft for every man that shows you kindness?" a His harsh words stung, she felt them press deep into her chest like a bite. How is it that he could give her his cloak to keep her warm one minute, and insult her the next? Doris changed the subject, "I still just don't understand. Why would she want you to come to the north? This obviously must be some sort of set up. You must have realized it, didn't you? She wanted to make sure you were seen here by the rogues-why did you offer to come to the north?" "Are you more worried about me or yourself?" William teased. Doris froze, unsure how to respond. Prince William only stared at her. Seconds felt like hours as his gaze dug deep into her skin and threatened to unravel her like paper. "You don't need to worry, I have my own plans." His words made Doris shift uncomfortably-would he betray his family? His own brothers? For what reason would he ever have to do such a thing?

Her Unwanted Mate On The Thr

Chapter 45 They were heard nearby

Prince William stayed silent for hours, Doris didn't bother to try and start another conversation. She was starting to get used to his mood swings and she didn't want to feed into another one that might blow up into something more. He kept glancing out the small window *every* ten minutes to make sure all was in order, but something uneasy settled in Doris. It was too quiet. The air felt thick and normally she would be glad of the silence-but for some reason it only felt off. Doris wondered if William had felt it too. He hadn't tried to sleep once, instead he seemed more alert than ever. She couldn't help but worry that he was running on little to no sleep for almost two days. How much longer could he last before exhaustion took him over? "William-" Doris said hesitantly. He dropped the curtain and turned to face her. His eyes were a little red and his hair was an absolute mess in the way that she found looked handsome on him. She shook those thoughts away and cleared her throat. "Perhaps it might be a good idea—" The carriage came to a sudden halt that slid Doris out of her seat and right into his waiting arms. They both stilled as they strained to listen for any voices or movement, he silently seated her beside him and opened the curtain an inch to peer outside. Doris tried to calm her breath, afraid to make even the smallest sounds in case a rogue was nearby to hear it. A loud thud hit the side of the carriage and shook

the inside. William opened the curtain wider to see a crazed man hanging off the side of the carriage, Doris gasped. Was this a rogue? He bared his teeth at William and let his bloodied fingers stain everything he touched. "I can smell you in there, prince. Come out to play." The guards were quick to pull him off, she flinched when she heard one of them shriek. William forced the door open and closed it quickly behind him so she couldn't follow. Doris quickly scooted over to open the curtain and see what was happening. The man stood in rags outside the carriage with his hands coated in blood up to his elbows. Everything about him blended in with the snow, if she hadn't seen the blood, she might have missed him entirely. He had long, white hair and eyes almost as light as the ground beneath him. When he smiled, she saw his sharp teeth poke out of his gums as if he were about to rip apart everyone around him. William stood in front of the carriage door as if he was guarding it, though she knew it only looked that way from where she was seated. "You know I could smell your royal blood for miles, prince." The man

taunted and licked his teeth. The guards surrounded him as if he was in the center of a circle. "All alone out here, I see. Where's your pack?" William lifted his chin. He refused to let his gaze leave the deranged man for even a second. A trail of blood dripped from the man though he didn't look injured. Doris's eyes followed it to see it led to a guard by the carriage-his head laid several feet away from his body. She covered her mouth and closed the curtain a little more so the man wouldn't see her. His eyes seemed to find her anyway. A smirk fell

across his face when he saw the curtain move." They're near enough, don't you worry." He took a step closer with his eyes still fixed on the carriage. He inhaled deeply, "Who's that in there? Do I smell a girl?" William took a step forward, she couldn't see his face but his voice sounded deadly when he spoke

"Take one more step and I'll rip your eyes from your skull before I shatter your nose for even seeking her out." "I seem to have hit a nerve." The man grinned. "She must be something—"

Doris blinked and Prince William was on him. He grabbed him by the throat just as the man raised his claws to strike him. William's shirt came away at the top, she saw his blood drip in the snow from where he must have been scratched. Doris quickly closed the curtain when she saw William start to rip out the man's throat. His screams died instantly and she didn't think she would ever forget the horrible sound.

Doris sat with her knees to her chest in the corner of the carriage. She wasn't sure how many minutes had passed until William had finally come back inside. The blood was cleaned from his hands and his coat covered any trace of a scar, but she knew there must have been one. He didn't look at her once as the carriage started to move again. Only when they stopped a few hours later did he finally say something. "We're going to stop to rest for the night. There's a creak near the edge of camp if you need to clean up, but don't stray too far." He spoke with his eyes out the window as if he were already far from the carriage. Once he was done, he stepped out without another word and didn't bother to look back to see

if she would follow. The moon was bright in the sky above her, she held the cloak tighter around her as she gazed at the stars and stepped out of the carriage carefully. If her fear wasn't trying to control her thoughts, she would have appreciated how beautiful the night was. Doris sighed and turned back to the clearing. Several tents had already been set up between the trees, there were so many she doubted it was possible for anyone to see their camp when it was this dark. They didn't even dare to light a fire despite how freezing it was. It would be worse to wake up in a blood bath because a rogue pack had found them rather than simply suffer through the cold. Erik was the only guard she knew the name of, he busied himself with setting up a few chairs for other guards to rest. "Excuse me." She spoke quietly as she crunched her boots in the snow to reach him. He turned and offered a tired smile. "Do you know where I am supposed to sleep for the night?" "Oh—" He glanced over his shoulder to the larger tent behind them. Clearly that one was meant for the prince. "William requested you stay with him." Doris felt her cheeks immediately redden, she took a small step back. "Surely he was mistaken." "No, I wasn't." His deep voice interrupted. He stood with the flap of his tent wide opened and half of his shirt already unbuttoned as if he'd been in the middle of changing. His hair was a mess and a bit of dark scruff

appeared on his jaw from not shaving. Her eyes lingered on the red mark across his chest before she quickly looked away, "You'll be staying with me." "I—are you sure? I don't mind staying out here."

Doris glanced at Erik but he was already gone. Prince William blew out a breath of frustration. "I need you to be in here tonight. I might need... tea or something. Just get in here." He snapped, she could tell it was hard for him to keep his voice low. Doris reluctantly followed him inside. There was a makeshift bed on the floor and clothes scattered in the corner with bloodied rags but not much else besides a plate of food. She turned to find him completely shirtless and picking at the mark on his chest. Doris quickly stepped forward to grab his hand. "Don't do that, you'll make it worse." She said with a blush. She hoped he would think it was due to the freezing weather. She picked through the pile of clothes and managed to find something that looked like a rag to clean his wound with water. He stilled as she neared him, his eyes watched her silently but he didn't say a word as she carefully cleaned away the blood and dirt. It was closed for the most part, she assumed that was thanks to the wolf inside him but if he kept picking at it-it would open as new. "There." Doris said softly as she looked over the scratch and tried not to let her gaze lower to take in the rest of him. "It shouldn't bleed again if you leave it." His blue eyes were calm when she looked up at him. There was no storm or anger beneath the sea in his eyes. Just a steady ocean. "Thank you." He said, for a second she swore she imagined it. He moved to put on a thick sweater before he laid in the bed. Doris dropped the rag in the pile and nervously slid her cloak off. "Do you need me to get you anything?" "No." He grumbled with his eyes already closed.

Lay down." Doris looked around for an area for her to lay that wouldn't be too close to him. His hand shot out and *gripped* her wrist to pull her onto the blankets next to him. "Oh-" "Shh." He demanded. Doris laid still with her eyes wide opened. Why did he want her in here if he didn't need anything? Her bones struggled to relax for eternity until she heard the soft sounds of his breath against her ear. Her body wanted to curl up against his warmth and fight the cold chill but she forced herself to make do with the blankets around them. She didn't realize she had fallen asleep until William had roughly shook her awake the next morning. "Get up, quickly. My guards have spotted someone nearby."

Her Unwanted Mate On The Thr