

Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne By Caroline

Chapter 56 Gather the boys

A full moon? She knew what that meant for the wolves, but she didn't know why it would matter if she was there to witness it or not. Enzo gave no further hint for what that might mean or what would unfold and Doris was too exhausted to even ask. Doris made sure her window was closed tight and her door was locked before she dressed for bed. Her mind was wild and wouldn't stop replaying the moment the man grabbed her. The smell of alcohol still haunted her senses and she swore it lingered around her as if it was stained on her skin. She pulled the covers over her head and prayed to the moon goddess for a bit of rest. Her luck had only seemed to be getting worse, perhaps it was fate telling her she wasn't meant to survive so many close calls. Before she was marked, she never had one before. Now it was almost a weekly occurrence. Unless... unless it was the mark William had given her that left her with such rotten luck. Doris rubbed at her skin where the mark still showed underneath her clothes. No matter what she did, it wouldn't heal as other scars did. It stuck out harshly against her pale skin

and brought back fresh memories of how she'd gotten it. Only when her own thoughts exhausted her did her body finally allow her to rest.

Something clamped tightly over her mouth in the dead of night. Doris woke to see an unfamiliar man standing over her bed. He squeezed her face and grinned down at her. He smelled like rubbish and looked as if he hadn't bathed in months. "The palace likes their pretty things, don't they?" Doris thrashed under his hold, but he only gripped her tighter. A cold gust of wind chilled the room, her window was left wide open but she swore it had been locked before she went to bed. "Ay, she is a looker. No wonder Stephen couldn't keep his drunk paws off her." Another voice said from across the room. A lanky boy around her age was seated on her dresser. He had her undergarments in his hand and he tossed them up in the air as if they were a ball. When he grinned, he had a few teeth missing in the front. "What's that on her neck?" He hopped off the surface and shoved the cloth in his pocket before came to pull down her nightgown more. Doris kicked the boy in his chest. He let out a rough breath of air and stumbled back a bit

"Ooof, she's a fighter." "You dumb ass. Stephen said not to get too close. Tie her up or something." The man holding her said. "With what? I didn't bring no damn rope!" The boy neared Doris again and dodged her kicks this time. He bent over her to observe her neck again. "Look at this, she has a mate bite." "No, no. Jules said she was bitten when she was kidnapped." "Are you stupid? You can see that bite there," He pointed to the other side of her neck. "This one is the mate one. It never heals." The older man leaned closer to inspect it. He moved her nightgown down further than he needed to and Doris bit the palm of his hand as hard as she could. He screamed and yanked his hand back away from her and Doris was out of the bed in an instant. "You moron!" The boy shouted. He brushed back his greasy hair and went after her. She picked up the candles on the bedside table and threw it at his head. "Ow, you bitch!" "Get away from me!" Doris screamed. She picked up a glass vase and threw it at the older one when he tried to get closer to

her. It smashed against his head and rained down bloody shards of glass against the floor.”

What do you want from me?!”

“Stephen sent us.” The boy spat. “He would’ve come himself if he wasn’t nursing his lost tongue. He wanted us to make sure we took care of you before the morning.” The boy took a step across the broken glass. “So why don’t you come over here nicely and we’ll get this over with.” “You’re absolutely mad if you think you’re coming anywhere near me!” Doris grabbed the fire poker near the fire place and lifted it between them. She swung it at his head when he took another step closer. The boy ducked just in time, unfortunately. “I’ve had enough of this, get over here!” The old man roared. Doris swung the fire poker and caught him right in the side of the head. He went down with a hard thump. While she was distracted, the boy tackled her to the ground and pinned her wrists above her head. “Normally, I like it when a girl is rough, but not tonight.” He hissed through his teeth. Doris kned him between the legs but he only tightened his grip and groaned. “Where’s your mate tonight, huh? Back at that big palace you left behind?”

Doris leaned up to bite his wrist but the boy only laughed. “I would never usually go after another wolf’s mate, but I’m sure he won’t mind if I have a taste.” “I thought you were here to kill me!” Doris

shouted. She hoped someone would hear her eventually and come help her but But maybe she didn’t need anyone to save *her*. Maybe she could save herself. Doris glanced at the older man and saw he laid unconscious in his own blood. If she could get out from under the boy’s hold... “I will do that too, don’t rush me.” The boy grinned as if he was flirting with her. Doris knew wolves weren’t kind lovers, but this boy was deranged if he was turned on from any of

this He leaned down to lick her neck, she shivered from disgust. “It’s been a long time since a pretty girl came through here. All the ones here are either too young or taken.” “You’re disgusting.” Doris spit on his face. He released one of her wrists to wipe it off him. Doris quickly gripped the closest piece of glass she could reach. “Don’t get kinky with me, baby. I don’t hold back my emotions.” He growled before he slapped her harshly across the face. He ran his free hand up her gown and Doris stabbed him in the neck. His blood blinded her when she removed the glass. It felt as if time slowed a bit as he gripped the side of his neck where blood gushed. His eyes looked as if they were bulging from his head, he stared down at her

in disbelief as if he couldn’t believe she actually defended herself against him. Doris pushed him off her and he fell next to his friend like a heavy lump. She scrambled off the floor and gripped her bed post. The boy laid still, staring at the ceiling with no life behind his eyes. The older man still breathed despite his blood loss. She had... She killed someone. 1 Doris threw on her cloak and shoved her feet into boots before she rushed out the door and into the freezing snow. A strong wind blew through her hair and almost pulled her cloak right off her shoulders. There wasn’t another soul outside, she was all alone. Doris glanced back at the cabin and saw her own footsteps stained their blood in the snow. Doris turned and ran towards where Enzo said his cabin was. She banged on the door desperately, as hard as she could. She didn’t trust going to anyone else.

What if they cared for the ones she harmed? What if What if Enzo punished her for what she did? Doris stumbled back from the door and hurried away before he could open it. She stumbled in the snow and fought against the growing winds. Where could she go? For the first time, she wished William was here. She wished he was here to take her back to the palace where she could be in her own

– comfortable misery again and far from here. “Doris!” Enzo shouted over the wind. She glanced back to see him and Elena half dressed and shrugging on jackets. Doris resented herself. He moved like his own storm, he was by her side in seconds. He gripped her arm gently and turned her to face him. When he saw all the blood down the front of her nightgown, his eyes darkened. “What happened? Are you hurt?” He said loud enough for her to hear. Doris shook her head, silent tears fell down her cheeks. “Then where is all this blood from?” Doris said nothing, she simply pointed towards her cabin where her door was still wide open. He glanced at Elena over her head and soon she felt the woman guide her back to Enzo’s cabin.

“Come now, you’re safe.” Elena said gently as she seated Doris by the fire. “There is no safe for me.” Doris said bitterly as a warm drink was pressed into her hands. Enzo came bursting through the door with wild eyes moments later. “Elena, gather the boys. Now.”

Chapter 57 Tonight will be the end of their rebellion

They were gone for a while. Doris watched the sun come up but didn’t see it fully raise before she fell asleep on Enzo’s couch. As a maid, she would have normally been appalled at herself for potentially staining the couch with the amount of blood on her clothes. Now, she felt numb to it all. To any sort of thought that required her to listen to someone or take orders. How would she ever be that way again?

When she opened her eyes, it must have been hours later. The sun was low again and the fire had dimmed to a slow burn. Enzo sat in a chair across from her with his eyes fixed on the dying flames. He looked deep in thought, she wondered if he was here to punish her for Killing one of his own. As if he felt her eyes on him, he looked over at her. “Doris, how are you feeling?” He asked as he sat up from his slouched position. Doris lifted the heavy blanket that was draped around her and pushed it off. She still wore the bloodied clothes that reminded her it wasn’t a dream. She really did take someone’s life, didn’t she? When she said nothing, he stood to pour

, some tea for her. “It was a stupid question, of course you’re not okay.” He placed the cup in her hands and she let the heat unthaw her fingers that still felt like ice. She didn’t think it was possible to ever get used to this sort of cold that chilled her bones. Enzo pulled the chair closer to sit near her. “I want you to take the cabin next to mine. I’ll be able to hear you if you... if you need me.” “Is this going to be a nightly event?” Doris asked numbly. She set down the cup without taking a single sip. Her stomach didn’t feel as if it could handle anything in it. “No, I will make sure of that.” Enzo said with a dark tone. Doris wasn’t sure she believed him this time. It was hard to trust anyone but herself anymore. Now that she had blood on her hands, she knew she would never be the

same "Do you know where Prince William is?" Doris asked as she rubbed some of the blood off her hands. In her mind, she saw his moody face. She imagined he would've killed those men for hurting her. Wouldn't he? Or was she only delusional? "No, we haven't heard of his recent location but I will let you know the moment we do. Are you wishing to go back to the palace with him?" "Yes. I wasn't treated the best there, but I was much safer than I am here." Doris pushed her

... long hair back behind her shoulders. She felt disgusting, every ounce of her was rotten. She *wished* she could peel off her skin and step into a new body. "I know you may have a hard time believing me, but I assure you that no one will lay a finger on you after tonight." Enzo leaned towards her. He went to reach out his hand, but thought better of it. "Tonight. You mean the full moon?" "In the north, we celebrate every full moon. I *originally* had plans to make tonight more fun but after what happened-things changed." Enzo scratched his jaw with his alert eyes on

her. "In what way? Are you going to cancel the party or whatever it is you do?" "No, it's not cancelled. There'll still be a gathering, it just won't be fun. Before the wolves take over our bodies, I have something in mind involving those that wished you harm." Enzo opened his coat and took out something flat wrapped in leather. He placed it in her hands gently as if he was trying not to scare her off. "Will you be my guest of honor?" Doris unwrapped the leather and saw her own reflection shine back at her in a sharp dagger. It had small flowers engraved on the hilt and was small enough to wear on a belt. She looked back up at him with a question in her

gaze. "You should have been given a weapon the first night you came here, especially after what you've been through. I was a fool for not arming you sooner, I hope you can forgive me *for* it." Doris lifted the blade and lightly trailed her *fingers* across the medal. It was beautiful for something so deadly. "This is for me to have?" "Of course, if you'll take it. It's yours to use as you need." Enzo leaned back a little in his chair. "It does have many uses other than stabbing others. For instance, you can cut up food or clear your nails. Be careful, though. I once slit my finger open when the blade was too sharp." "I don't even know how to use a blade." Doris set it down and covered it with the leather again.

"Oh, there's nothing to it. You point and stab. Really, there's not much else to say." Doris rolled her eyes, Enzo only laughed. "No, I mean-I've never really... had a weapon of my own. Not even at the palace, it's against the rules to let servants have a blade." "Ah, but again-you're not at the palace, are you? You're in the dangerous north and you need something like this to keep under your pillow or I worry you'll never find peace to sleep again."

. Something about his words sounded sad. Doris clenched the gift in her hands tightly. Enzo continued, "If you want to throw it away the instant you leave this place, you're more than welcome to. But it would make me feel better if you kept this with you until you were safe at least." "Thank you, Enzo. I mean it." Doris whispered. He only shook his head. "Don't waste those words on me. I had some clothes delivered for you, they're in my bathing chamber. Take as long as you need and come find me when you're done. Doris watched as Enzo stood and left his cabin for her own use. He gestured for her to lock the door once he closed it. She practically ran across the room to do just that -and then double checked

that it was closed and locked tight. She went to each of the windows just to unlock and lock them again. She paced the room so many times before she finally went to wash all of the blood and gore from her skin.

It was hard to remind herself that she needed air, that she needed to live when the water tried to pull her under and offer an eternal release. While she sat and scrubbed at her skin, she silently prayed that every minute in the tub would allow her to scrub away everything she'd been through. Each day she

... came out more and more damaged, she wanted to be brand new again. She wanted to be the maid at the palace that was too afraid to look others in their eyes and hid in the corners so no one would see her. That maid felt further away from her, almost as if she didn't exist anymore. When she finally emerged from his cabin in a new set of winter clothes, she felt more detached than ever. Almost as if she was *walking* beside herself rather than actually being there. Eliza rushed towards Doris with Enzo close behind, she wrapped a thick shawl around her shoulders. "Oh, you poor dear. You shouldn't be out here, why don't we go get you something to eat while I look at your wounds?" "I'm fine," Doris said. Her fingers touched the blade at her side as if reminding herself it was there. Enzo seemed pleased that she decided to wear it, but she didn't really have a choice. Apparently, danger loved to follow her even in the smallest corners of the world. "Well, you'll at least have to let me help you get dressed for tonight." Eliza said with a kind smile. "I'll just wear this, Eliza. Thank you, though." Eliza threw a glance over at Enzo beside her. "You'll be the guest of honor, Doris."

... "She can wear what she wants, Eliza. Her attire is the last thing that matters at a time like this." Enzo said. He put his hand on Doris's lower back and led her away from the *gathering* crowd. They all looked at her with a bit of pity in their eyes, she hated it. She hated being the victim again. She noticed they avoided the path that led to the center of the village-or camp. He purposefully led her down towards the frozen lake again and she was glad for the distraction. "What's so special about tonight anyway?" Doris asked as they seated on the same log they did the day before. Enzo tossed her a bit of a smile that didn't reach his eyes. "Tonight will be the end of their rebellion towards me."

Chapter 58 It won't be a pretty sight when they return.

The wind died down by the time night came. Doris relocated to a cabin next to Enzo's, she didn't dare step back into the one she left bloodied. They left her a thick, red velvet dress on the bed and she assumed it was meant for the full moon tonight. She didn't feel like looking nice, she wanted to blend into the crowd and wait until she could slip away and hide in her room again. A loud knock startled Doris. Lately, everything had been making her flinch more than usual. She quickly shoved the dress in a bottom drawer and unlocked the door. Enzo stood in a dashing red suit that was thick enough to bear the cold. He smiled down at her and didn't look the slightest bit bothered that she hadn't dressed in the gown they provided. It was strange. She liked how she wasn't treated as a servant here, but she felt as if she couldn't step out the door without looking behind her shoulder. She didn't trust anyone here, even the ones that were nice to her. She supposed she didn't trust anyone anywhere she went-except Beth. She could always count on her friend. She couldn't help but

. wish she was here with her now. "Ready?" He asked and offered his arm. Doris closed the door behind them and held onto him tighter than she intended. He didn't seem to notice, or perhaps he was just too kind to say anything. "You look lovely." He said, breaking her anxious thoughts. "Don't tease me." Doris said weakly as they walked towards the middle of town, "I wouldn't dream of it." Enzo said. When they turned the corner, it was as if they entered an entirely new village. Torches lit the area brighter than a foggy day and booths were set up as if it was some sort of market day. Food was passing them on large trays and gallons of beer and wine were being poured to everyone who wanted it. The crowd was so thick, she could barely see the small platform set up in the middle of it all. Everyone seemed so... happy. As if nothing had happened the night before, as if no one had died or attacked her.

"You do this every full moon?" Doris asked in wonder "Most of them, sometimes the storms are too thick to be outside so we either bring the celebration inside or cancel it altogether." Enzo guided her towards the platform. "You've been through enough, so I won't require any attention to be on you tonight."

"Thank you." Doris said as she released a *slow* breath. He gripped her shoulders and *made* her look at him. "I'd like you to stay and watch, but I *understand* if it gets too much for you. You *can* return to your room at any point." Doris *nodded* and he left her by the front of the stage. When he stepped up on the platform a strange silence fell over the laughing *crowd*. Soon, others gathered around her as he waited patiently. He didn't even have to say a word, it was as if they all knew what they had to do and what he wanted

them to do. "Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we approach the full moon with a new agenda." He said once everyone was settled. "I've noticed the shift in the pack for a while now-and I tried to be patient with those who questioned me. After all, it's one of the most humane parts of us to question what we're told." Enzo had his hands clasped behind his back as he spoke to the crowd. He paced the stage, "I tried to allow room for those who disobeyed me to learn from their mistakes. I tried to be a fair ruler to everyone and only punish when it was necessary. But, tonight my hand has been forced. Those who have decided to ignore my orders have gone too far and I no longer have patience for them."

A quiet, *worried* murmur passed through the crowd around Doris. They silenced again when Enzo turned his sharp gaze on them. He lifted his hand and two men had been forced on the stage bound at their wrists and ankles. It was her attackers. The older man from the night before and Stephen. He made a strange moaning sound as if he was trying to speak but couldn't without his tongue. The older man had his head bandaged from where she hit him but he still wore the ruined clothes she last saw him in. Doris knew the boy must have truly died if he wasn't on the stage with them. She... she didn't know how to feel about that. Yes, she had defended herself and it led to his death, but she had still taken someone's life.

The back of her mind reminded her that if she didn't, she wouldn't be standing here right now. He wanted to kill her and do horrible things to her body before he did. Men like that didn't deserve to live. Who knows what other women he had terrorized in his young life. "These men have tried and failed to gather a rebellion against me to overrule my leadership. They've disregarded my direct orders time and time again, but this time it almost costed someone innocent

their life." Doris wanted to shrink into the crowd when several pairs of eyes went right to her. "Tonight, they finally will be dealt with. But before we

do that... is there *anyone* here that wishes to speak on their behalf?" His *words* sounded almost dangerous, as if he *was* daring someone to out themselves to the crowd as being apart of what these men *believe*. *No* one said a word, Doris felt as if the *entire crowd* was holding their breath in *anticipation* to what was to come. "No? Good." Enzo pulled a long, sharp blade *from* his belt. "I know we have a tradition *every full moon* to let the beastly side of us *enjoy* a good hunt, but tonight I thought we *could* have a new target." Enzo shoved both men to their knees and *trailed* the blade across their shoulders. A small stream of blood pooled at their necks when he pressed a bit harder. "Tonight, I decided there will be a prize for whoever wins this hunt." Doris could feel a bit of desperate excitement raise from his words. "Whoever wins will be named as my second until the next full moon."

A few gasps sounded around her. Doris only could guess that would give someone a bit of power they didn't have before. Power made people desperate, it made them feral for a taste and she could feel that energy bloom around her. "What do we have to do to win, Lord Enzo?" A man to her left asked.

"It's simple, really." Enzo *gripped* the top of the men's heads. "I'm going to let these *two idiots* run free into the woods. The winner has to bring me both of their heads or risk sharing the title. And yes, just their heads will do." ¹ And just like that, silence stilled the area. *Nervous* glances were thrown between friends and lovers, Doris felt her own hands start to shake. Enzo released their heads and forced them to stand. "The full moon is almost fully risen," he said as he cut their hands and legs *free*. He shoved them both off the stage. Let's give them a head start, shall we?" The crowd parted to let the men stand. Their eyes were wild as they looked around for some sort of help, but no one dared to offer. Enzo clapped his hands. "You're wasting time, my boys. I wouldn't normally allow traitors such a head start." The men took off in different directions through the trees. Enzo smiled at the crowd in a charming way. "I expect their heads before the first hour is up. Enjoy your hunt." Enzo stepped back into the crowd and grabbed Doris quickly. He led her off to the side and she realized why a second later, Bones started to crack, she gasped as those in the crowd started to shift into their wolves. She'd never seen a wolf shift before, she only ever heard stories but this was so much more

frightening than she would have guessed. Their clothes were torn from their backs as they grew larger in seconds, their backs cracked and Doris had to look away as they *shifted* into the shape of a wolf. Petite women were now huge, deadly looking wolves and the men were even worse. Several howled at the moon when it was highest in the sky. She glanced up at Enzo-but he hadn't changed. "I'm sitting tonight out." Enzo said to the question in her eyes. "I've learned long ago how to control when I shift. I used to have to do it every full moon. Now it's only when !

want." The wolves started to sniff the ground for the scent of the men, all at once Doris watched as two groups broke apart and went in the direction of each one. She hadn't realized she was trembling until Enzo held her tightly against him. "You didn't have to do that for me," Doris whispered. ¹ Enzo shook his head. "You misunderstand, I did it for me." Enzo brushed hair from her eyes and patted her

cheek gently. "You may want to return to your cabin. It won't be a pretty sight when they return."

Chapter 59 It was chaos

Enzo didn't have to ask *twice*, Doris returned to her room and put a chair in front of the door to make sure no one would be able to open it even if they unlocked it. She also *made* sure every window was locked again before she turned out all the lights and laid in her *bed* with her dagger gripped tightly in her hands. Howls sounded far away from her *window*, she didn't think she would be able to *sleep* a bit until the morning came. What on earth did the rogue hunt when Enzo *wasn't* trying to make a point to his pack? Did they use animals-or strangers? She shivered to think about it, but it had to be something worth it. There was no doubt as to why Enzo was the leader of the rogues. Even if he was as kind as he was, he was one of the scariest men she'd ever met. And that was saying a

Tot.

After what felt like hours of almost dozing off -shouting erupted from outside her door and instantly woke every inch of her. She shot up from her bed and stumbled over herself as she tried to hear what was happening. Had someone returned with the heads? Doris trembled at the thought of their heads being

delivered right to Enzo's feet as if they were

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trophies. But-Why did it sound as if they were fighting? "It's the prince!" Someone shouted as they ran *past* her door. Doris immediately moved the chair and threw open the door to step out into the snow. Did he say prince? Her prince? Was William here? What she saw... was chaos. Guards from the palace fought against the wolves that were part of the village. They shifted into their wolves and the fight turned every more vicious within the seconds it took. She hid behind one of the cabins as she watched and gripped her dagger tightly. Her mark started to itch, she could sense William nearby but she hadn't seen him yet There he was. William stood on the platform as his normal self with only a hint of derangement on his features. His hair was wild and his scruff had thickened on his jaw since the last time she saw him. Her heart stupidly flipped at the sight of him so wild. His guards surrounded him like a shield and snapped at anyone that tried to get close to him. He didn't see her yet, but she watched him closely. Her mind felt conflicted. Should she make herself known? Or would he even care? Why was he here in the middle of the night? She would have thought he'd already

be back to the palace with his answers he wanted. *William* lifted his hands and Doris silently *gasp*ed. He held the heads of the men that attacked her. Enzo stood in front of the platform with a look of indifference on his *face* and his hands shoved deep in his pockets. He had his own guards that *surround*ed him, but they only looked at each other as if no one else was around. As if *wolves* weren't dying around them. 2 "When I *heard* about your hunt, I couldn't help but join in on the fun." William said with a drip of poison in his tone. He threw the heads at Enzo's feet with a sickening splat. "I also heard the reason behind the hunt and I want

her returned to me. No more of your rogues will lay a hand on her unless they want the same fate." 1

"Doris isn't a piece of property to be passed around, she can go to you if she wishes. William took a step closer to Enzo, he looked as if his rage was close to spilling over and setting his surroundings on fire. "She is mine, I demand you return her right this instant." Something about his words sent a chill through Doris. She stood firm where she was. She didn't belong to anyone but herself, William didn't own her just because she was a maid. Not anymore. She was through living

her life as if everyone else owned her and her choices. "Even if we return her, you wouldn't call off your dogs. Isn't that right? Enzo asked over the sounds of fighting. They both looked so unfazed about it all, Doris couldn't stand it. William growled when Enzo shrugged and backed away from him as if he was tired of their argument. She looked away when William started to shift into his wolf form and lost track of him the instant he disappeared into the crowd. If he found her, he would drag her back to the palace himself. But-wasn't that what she wanted? She wanted to be back to her old life and far from here. But that also meant she would be treated as she always was the second she stepped foot back in the palace. People shoving her and making her do whatever they wanted. People treating her as if she was nothing and didn't have feelings. Would she have to be Melody's maid again and listen as he made love to her every night and endure her savage beatings during the day? No... no. She couldn't do that anymore.

Here, Enzo made sure she was respected and all of her wishes were met if they were reasonable. It was hard to let that go, but it was also hard to live in fear. Melody was her old reason for fear in the palace-as was

William. Him demanding she be returned to him like an object made her want to rethink her decision and run as far as she could. But deep down, she knew she could never live with herself. Beth counted on her return. 2 She moved between the buildings to get a closer look at what was happening. Part of her wanted to hide somewhere no one could find her, but she wasn't that girl anymore. She wanted to face what was to come and deal with the consequences, even if it meant her eternal misery. If only she could shift like them, she might have just joined in to help. But who would she even be helping? Enzo-or William? It was easy to tell which ones were the guards and who wasn't. The guards had sleek fur, even after being out in the north for so long. The villagers looked a bit more matted and crazed in a way. Enzo wasn't joking when he said they fought dirty, the wolves went straight for each others throat and tried to down then without a hesitation. They fought as if they were backed into a corner and they would fight to the death to get out of it. Doris was terrified to see so much blood shed when the fight had only just begun. There shouldn't be so much death-so much suffering. There were yelps of pain and sounds of horror all around her. William reappeared through the center of the worst of it all. He tore through

two wolves that tried to corner him. He brought them down with almost no effort. She knew none of this would stop, even if she threw herself out there as Enzo claimed. Her eyes drifted towards the edge of the village where three wolves walked slowly towards the fight. They didn't look as if they were part of either side of the fight to Doris. The wolves separated and searched through the crowd, no one seemed to notice them but her. One of the three threw

themselves at a guard for the palace which made Doris realize they must have been for the rogues. But why did they seem so... different? The other two disappeared from her view but she knew they couldn't be far. The sight of them made Doris feel uneasy. Something about it wasn't right and made her stomach turn. The one that found itself in a fight with the guard was badly scratched. She watched as it bolted towards the woods with a trail of blood in its wake. Its friends didn't follow, she caught another one keeping track of the prince's every movement. Doris quickly searched for the other and saw it across the way from William

Her mark itched again, something felt wrong. Doris stepped out into the clearing and William's eyes found her instantly as if the

wind blue her scent right to him. He froze his *fighting when* he saw her and took a single *step towards* Doris as if he couldn't believe it was her. That she was here. "Look out!" She shouted at him, silently begging him not to look at her not to be distracted by her but it was too late. One of the two wolves tackled William to the *ground* and went right for his neck.

Chapter 60 I don't know how much more my body can

Everything hurt at first as the world shined *bright* all around her. She only had one thought and that was to get to William, to save him. He couldn't die, she wouldn't let him die. Everything else was a blur. Her bones felt as if they were tearing out of her skin, she felt every part of her was expanding and closing at once. Time felt as if it dragged on for hours when she knew it must have only been seconds. The most agonizing seconds of her life, she knew she would never forget the feeling. Her wolf was free. "Mate!" Her wolf shouted in her mind. Bright white fur broke out from her skin and she rushed to William the second her feet hit the floor without a hesitation. She dodged other wolves in the crowd before she slammed right into his body and pushed him out of the way from the wolf's claws. The next thing she knew was a sharp, blinding pain into her neck. It fogged her vision instantly, she went down with a hard thud that shook the earth. Blood coated her fur and stained the ground beneath her. Was this her

final ending? Would her body allow her to survive through this? "Doris!" Doris felt as if William was shouting in her mind. She heard another voice too, one she didn't recognize but felt like home in a way. She wanted to curl up against the sound and close her eyes for eternity. It was like electricity had passed through her body and woke her up for the first time in her life. She felt him, she felt as if their wolves were one. Their connection formed and cemented itself in her soul and she didn't think she could last a day without it now that it was free inside her. This was meant to be. "My mate... What have they done to you. Why isn't your wound healing?" He said, was it William's wolf speaking to her? Doris let her eyes drift closed as she listened to the sound of William tearing through every wolf around her in fury. She bet it was gruesome, she bet it was a huge blood bath but she didn't have enough energy to open her eyes to see it. Her life was fading faster than she could register. Imagines of her memories flashed across her eyes as if it was all one big play out on a stage in front of her. What a marvelous thing. Moments from when she was younger, when she first went to the palace, when she first met Beth. She saw herself in hindsight with

William's arms wrapped around her protectively as they tried to bear the cold *nights*. Why had he held on so tight to her? Why *did* he tear through so many villages for

her?

She heard her name leave his lips a hundred *times*, but she couldn't see him. It was as if she was in a dark room far away from any sense of reality. She wanted to bang on the walls and demand to be let out, but no matter where she went, the darkness never ended.

Doris woke back in the cabin and her world was still once more. Did she... did she dream that? Did she dream saving *William* and becoming a wolf herself? It wasn't possible, it must have been a nightmare. She must have passed out after she returned and had a nasty

dream... But pain in dreams didn't usually follow her when she woke. *William* was seated in a chair by her bed with his head propped up on his chin and eyes closed. The sight startled her, she quickly looked down to see herself in even more bandages. By this point, her entire body must have been littered in scars. How hideous she must be. As if he felt her gaze on him, his eyes slowly opened. At the sight of her awake, he sat up instantly. "Doris, you're okay."

"What happened?" *Doris* asked. Her voice *sounded* hoarse and sore, she was starting to get used to the dreadful feeling. It was like she hadn't drunk water in years. He must have *noticed*, he leaned over to retrieve a cold glass of water off the end table next to her and set it in her shaky hands. "You shifted, *Doris*. Did you know you could do that?" He asked curiously, his blue eyes studied her as she drank. Was this a dream? This couldn't be real, none of this was real. "No... no that can't be possible. I don't have any wolf in me, I never have." "We all saw you shift, *Doris*." An unfamiliar voice sounded from the other end of the room. *Doris* flinched when she noticed the lean man. He clearly was from the palace with the way he stood and the way he was dressed. What on earth was he doing in her room? *Doris* glanced at *William* but he didn't seem bothered the man was in here in the slightest. He leaned against the fireplace, watching as the flames flickered. It made his hair almost look orange in the light. "Apologies for our delayed meeting, but my name is *Patrick*." Realization dawned on *Doris*. *Patrick* was *William's* beta and best friend -*Beth* had told her about him ages ago but she'd never seen

him up close before. She thought he was only another guard on their trip since he didn't *speak* a *word* to her the entire time. *William* must have brought him on all his trips. "Oh, hello." "You were a white wolf, do you realize how rare that is?" *Patrick* asked as if she hadn't said anything *Doris* *noded* weakly. Everyone in the entire kingdom knew how rare a white wolf was. Of *course* it was possible for other wolves to be white, but usually they had spots of other colors across their body. To be pure white was almost unheard of. There was no way she was a white wolf, he was mistaken. "I don't know how this happened. This.. it can't be true." *Doris* shook her head. It simply *wasn't* possible.

"Do you remember what happened before you shifted?" *Patrick* pushed away from the fireplace and turned his gaze on her. *Doris* pulled the covers up a bit

higher. "I... I saw these strange wolves come out from the forest behind the fight. I watched them because I thought it was odd that they looked so different from both packs. When I saw them go for William, I—" Doris hesitated. His blue eyes were a calm storm as William watched her. She swallowed and continued. "I had to save the prince, they would have killed

I don't... you." Doris tried not to feel embarrassed under their gazes as she gulped down more cool water to ease her throat. He was the prince, of course she tried to save him. His life was worth ten of hers. "This has to be some sort of mistake. I don't *have a wolf* in me like you do." Doris said *again*. It felt more as if she was trying to *convince* herself at this point. William refilled her water again in silence. "Some people aren't aware they have a wolf until something forces it out of them." Patrick explained. "If their family didn't raise them to know, it's possible they'd never find out until that moment hits. I've heard of many people not changing until they were older than you." "I don't understand, I've been tortured and.. almost taken advantage of—" William's eyes darkened at her words, she hurried on. "But I've never changed before. Not once, not to save myself." "Our wolves protect those we care for more than ourselves at times. It makes us act in ways we don't expect. It's possible yours was waiting for a moment it felt needed for someone else, not for yourself." Patrick said. Doris glanced at William as he ran his fingers through his messy dark hair and she curled her fingers in her lap.

"I want to protect myself." Doris said quietly and traced her fingers across the scars on her *arms*. How many more hid beneath the covers? "I don't want to live in fear anymore. I don't want to wait around for people to save me when I could save myself." "I can teach you." William offered after a moment of silence. She tried to hide her *surprise* at his offer. "I heard you calling for me." Doris whispered. "I could hear you in my head. Why could I hear *you* so clearly?" William cleared his throat and looked away for the first time since she woke up from her own personal hell. "I don't know, perhaps you *were* hallucinating it. You did lose quite a bit of *blood*." 2

"Wait," Doris looked around again. They were still at Enzo's camp. William must have had them stay since she was hurt, Enzo was kind enough to allow it. "How long was I out for?" "Two days." William said and leaned back against the chair. His clear eyes watched her, she could see the hints of exhaustion across his skin. She wondered if he had even slept during that time or if he'd slept at all when she was gone. Enzo had said he was searching for her like a madman—perhaps he

hadn't been lying. "I don't know how much more my body can

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. *take before it finally gives up on me*." Doris said with a frown. For some reason, her body *didn't* feel like her own. It was as if she was numb to it all and she could just barely move her *limbs* enough. "You'll survive, Doris." Patrick said gently. "You were given a bit of William's blood to heal some *of your* wounds while you rested." Doris hesitated before she spoke again. William's face darkened a little as if he knew what she wanted to ask before she could dare. "Have you spoken with Enzo?"

