

# Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne

Untitled chapter

## #Chapter 6 Doris, was it you?

Doris sat up quickly, desperate for air. Her gown felt soaked through, every inch of her skin felt tainted and wrong. Her head ached, she had to scrub herself clean again to rid herself of him—

“Doris!” Beth whispered harshly for her attention, it took her a moment to realize she was in the room

with Beth and not being eaten in the forest by a giant wolf.

Doris touched her neck and looked down to

see her hand was clean, there was no blood. Slowly, her heart beat calmed and she was able to breathe.

It felt so real... she was so sure she was about to die at his hands. “Get up, quickly! Prince William is here,

he asked for all of the maids to be checked!”

That woke her, she scrambled out of bed and almost tripped over herself. Doris paled at the thought of

facing him. “Checked? Checked for what?”

“Apparently he left a mark on one of the girl’s neck.” Beth

already looked delighted from the gossip, she

started shoving clothes at Doris before she paused. “What’s wrong? Are you feeling alright?”

“Nothing’s wrong!” Doris turned away to change, the

nightmare still fresh in her mind. “I was just

wondering what he could possibly want with her. She’s just a maid, after all.” Doris touched the mark at

her neck beneath her dress. The makeup she used would surely have rubbed off by now—she needed to

reapply it before she left.

If he found out it was Doris he was looking for, would her

nightmare become reality? She was silently

thankful that he must've been too drunk to remember her face. "I'm not sure, he's probably not through using her yet after they slept together." Beth laughed a little, though it sounded empty. "Remember with Lisa? He wanted her all to himself until he didn't. But—this girl doesn't seem like she wants to be found by him. Every other girl here would gladly announce themselves as his lover, but no one has come forward yet." No, we definitely didn't sleep together. Doris silently corrected her friend. At least he didn't get to take that from her.

"Hurry up!" A man appeared at their door, Doris gasped at the sight of Prince William's valet and almost touched her neck to cover it more than her dress already did.

"You two don't want to keep Prince William waiting, I suggest you stop chattering and get moving."

"Of course, sir! We'll be right out!" Beth shouted to his retreating form. When she turned to face Doris, her brows furrowed. "Doris? What's wrong? You look as if you're about to pass out."

Doris wiped her clammy hands on her skirt and took a deep breath. "I'm fine, give me a moment." Beth squeezed her hand and nodded. She didn't care if it looked suspicious, she just needed a minute alone.

Once Beth left, she quickly opened her drawer and grabbed her cheap container of makeup to cover the mark. Her shaky hands dabbed at the bite, she could still see a sense of bruising that the makeup just couldn't seem to cover. She couldn't let him find her, he would... he would kill her just as he tried in her dreams.

Doris made her way out to the open field where the other maids gathered. She took her spot next to Beth and listened to those around her gossip silently amongst themselves. Each one of them looked even

more confused than her, but just as eager as Beth to find out who it must be. She wondered how many of them wished it was them that the Prince was looking for, Doris wished it was one of them, too.

When Doris looked up to the front of the crowd, she felt her heart still for a moment in her chest.

There stood Prince William, easy to spot when he was taller than everyone around him. Even his guards.

He wore no jacket over his suit, his shirt clung to his well built form and left little to the imagination of what he hid beneath. She could see why everyone found him so attractive, his sea blue eyes and dark tossed hair. He looked as if he just rolled out of bed with a lover, she wouldn't have been surprised if he did. He looked out into the crowd like a born predator, his eyes catching every movement made around him as if he were hunting. The Alpha blood ran purely through his veins and it showed with every breath he made. As handsome as the third prince William Arnold was, she had a taste of how he acted and it was not something she desired to repeat. She wished the rest of the girls here knew how awful he was, then perhaps they would stop fantasizing about him.

"Your majesty, this is the last group of maids in the Golden Palace." Mr. Carson announced, his hands clasped tightly behind his back.

William only nodded, his face free of emotion as he took in the sight of each girl. "Do your job."

"Yes, your majesty." Mr. Carson bowed before he turned to the maids. "Prince William is looking for the maid he left a mark upon just the other night. Please, line yourselves up by Ms. Shirley so she can check each of your necks. Only do as you're instructed, do I make myself clear?"

“Yes, Mr. Carson!” The crowd responded. Each of the girls lined up outside of the booth Ms. Shirley had set up. The old maid had been serving Royal House Arnold for over 40 years, surely she was one of the more trusted maids of the bunch.

As soon as each girl was checked, they were asked to leave. Though, it seemed none of them actually wanted to. They were all curious to see who this mystery maid could be, the one that Prince William was so desperate to find. They hung around a bit away from the booth, watching as each maid was dismissed and the line grew shorter. Doris forced herself not to scratch at the mark on her neck, she didn’t want the makeup to smear off and hoped her sweat didn’t ruin it either.

As time went on, Prince William grew more impatient. He frowned at the thinning line, not one of them came forward to announce herself as the one he’d left his mark upon. And why wouldn’t she come forward? It would be an honor to be his mate, her resistance angered him more than he liked to admit.

He waited for her to come to him yesterday, it was no secret he desired her to. Yet she hadn’t and now it resorted to this foolish attempt at finding her. Because he would find her today.

“She is here, I can feel her.” Waylon, his inner wolf declared in his mind with a deep growl. “Our mate.”

“If she is here, than pick her already you useless wolf.” William shot back silently. “Why must you make it so impossible? Other wolves would have brought her to me by now.”

“I’m trying, I can’t connect with her wolf. It’s as if she doesn’t have one.”

William almost laughed a sinister sound. “The moon goddess must be kidding me. She must have a wolf

if she's my mate." Otherwise how could it be?  
One by one the maids were cleared until only three remained in line. Doris stood with Beth and Melody, nervously picking at her nails as they got closer. Beth was quickly cleared, she offered a quick smile to Doris before she wandered near the other curious maids. At least her friend was kind enough to wait for her. Doris took one step towards the booth, and stopped. She couldn't do it, she couldn't go in. What if Ms. Shirley saw through her horrible attempt to cover it? What if—what if Prince William finished what he intended to do that night with her? Would she end up like Lisa, or worse?

Mr. Carson frowned at Doris. "What do you think you're doing? Get inside now to be checked! We don't have all day." Doris stared at him, her lips parted. "Are you defying the Royal order?"

Doris knelt down instantly, clamping her lips shut. She didn't dare to move or speak and make things worse for herself. The crowd gasped around her.

"What's your name?" Came a demanding voice from above Doris. She looked up slightly to see Prince William walk straight to her.

Still, Doris said nothing. As if every bone in her body refused to let her.

"Doris Goodwin, your majesty." Mr. Carson answered when she wouldn't. He shot a displeased look in her direction as if she were the dirt on the bottom of his shoe.

"Doris..." Prince William said her name as if he were tasting it for the first time. It sent a strange shiver through her to hear her name on his lips. She kept her head down—refusing to look at his handsome face and remember what he did to her.

Slowly, Prince William lowered himself until he was able to spit out the sentence clearly enough in her

ear. "Was it you?"

#Chapter 7 Any woman would do?

His stone cold voice pierced through Doris' heart and froze her to the ground. It wasn't the first time she'd felt like his prey with no where to hide, no where to run. A desperate feeling to be free of him overtook her senses, but all she could do was stay still beneath his gaze.

The crowd around them held their breath as they waited for the scene to unfold before them. Their eyes eagerly flickered between Prince William and Doris, the silence made each of her breaths louder to her own ears.

"Your majesty, I—" Doris hesitated and cringed away from him when she saw his patience run out. His cold features let anger taint its beauty like a flicker of flame ready to start a fire. Prince William gripped her arm, about to haul her up until a soft voice rang out behind him.

"Please, forgive me your majesty." His grip loosened on Doris, everyone in the crowd turned to look at Melody. She knelt close to Doris, her head bowed. "Forgive me for hiding so long."

"Hiding?" Prince William turned away from Doris to focus on Melody. Doris could have deflated from relief when his eyes finally left her, the look he gave her alone was enough to follow her back into her nightmares.

"I believe I'm the girl you've been looking for, your majesty." Melody said sweetly, Doris knew that voice well. It was the same tone she used with those higher up than her to get exactly what she wanted. And it usually worked, not many men liked to refuse Melody. Her regular tone was much more cruel when it was used towards her fellow maids—especially Doris.

“You’re the girl I’ve been searching for?” Prince William furrowed his brows, as if he was confused. Doris was more than confused herself, a bit of doubt trickled in her mind. Did he mark more than one girl that night? Or was Melody—lying? To become his lover? To one day end up like Lisa? Doris curled her fists in her lap, how could she want that life for herself? Melody stood without an answer, she walked straight into the booth and everyone stayed still until she came out again—including the prince. Ms. Shirley followed close behind, her face tired and worn from the day that just wouldn’t seem to end already. “She has the mark, your majesty. You may see for yourself.”

Prince William immediately went in to check, Doris stood on shaky legs and brushed dried leaves from her skirt. It couldn’t be... they both wouldn’t have the mark. Though, part of Doris hoped she did. Then perhaps it just might save Doris from the same fate Lisa suffered—or worse. A moment later, they both walked out.

“Why haven’t you come to me since I marked you? Do you resent me for what I did?” There was a bit of an edge to his voice, she wondered if his temper was already flaring at the idea of Melody hiding from him. Doris took a small step back, her hands clasped in front of her.

“Of course not, I wouldn’t dare.” Melody assured hm. Doris almost scoffed but held her tongue. Prince William attacked Doris, of course she resented him. Had he mistakenly marked Doris and intended his mate mark for Melody? It was possible he was just drunk and confused when he marked her—it would make so much more sense to Doris.

“Then what kept you?” Prince William asked.

“Your majesty,” Melody brushed her golden hair behind her ears nervously. “I’ve adored you for so long—it’s always been an honor to serve you and this Palace. I was afraid... I was afraid you would see me as nothing but a gold digger out for your fortune rather than how I truly feel.” Melody blushed, her voice choked from emotion that seemed forced to Doris. Prince William watched her for a moment, his eyes took in every inch of her. Melody shifted under his gaze, “What’s your name?”

“Melody Harford, your majesty.”

“Melody...” Prince William said in the same tone he said Doris’s name just a few minutes before. A ping of annoyance shot through Doris, she quickly swallowed it down. A second later, Prince William turned and left without another word. It happened so fast, no one had a chance to react properly to his departure.

“What are you waiting for?” Mr. Carson sputtered to the surrounding crowd. “Dress Lady Melody up and escort her to her new quarters!”

A few days passed in a wave of calm, it seemed Prince William had been treating Melody quite well since she came forward as the one he marked. The former maid now wore beautiful gowns and jewels and no longer had to clean up after anyone, now people waited on her. Doris only hoped she enjoyed it while it lasted, Prince William was never satisfied for long.

“There’s no way it was her, she’s definitely taking advantage of Prince William.” Beth said quietly to Doris, she threw a look over her shoulder to make sure no one was nearby.

“What do you mean?” Doris asked.

“Prince William was much too drunk to even remember what the girl looked like. Any woman would do



in that case, any woman could easily claim it was them he was with that night.”

Any woman would do?

The words rang through Doris. Did he attack her because she was the first girl he came across that night?

Of course that was it. He was drunk and confused. “She’s beautiful, I’m sure she could have charmed him without the mark. She never wanted to be a maid anyway, she always wanted more for herself and now she is. Perhaps we should try to be happy for her.” Doris brushed it off.

“Oh Doris, that’s so you. You’re being kind about someone who always looked for every excuse to abuse and embarrass you in front of everyone. Why would you ever forgive her or wish her well?” Beth snapped. Doris knew exactly where her friend was coming from, but it was easier to be happy for Melody than be the one in her shoes. Not that she could confess that to Beth, especially now.

“I—it doesn’t even matter. We don’t need to waste our energy on someone like her anymore, anyway.

One day soon we’ll be free and able to leave all of this mess behind. We won’t have worry about her or any of this. Right?” Doris nudged Beth with a small smile. They had to remind that to each other—at least once a day.

“Of course we will.” Beth linked her arm through Doris’ and they stepped out into the gardens. The sun was high in the sky, only a few clouds peppered above them. It was enough to make her wish she could lay in the grass and daydream the rest of the day away. The Palace truly was a beautiful place, especially from the outside. Doris smiled to herself and stopped to smell a bush of red roses on their path.

“You know, I’ve always thought you were much prettier than Lisa and Melody, especially when you smile.” Beth grinned at her friend.

“Oh, stop.” Doris turned her face to hide the blush that bloomed. Beth was truly a wonderful friend, she wasn’t sure how she would’ve ever survived the palace without her.

Doris arrived at the Library with a lingering smile, she opened the windows wide to allow in the fresh air and warm sunshine. The lovely day was enough to boost a bit of energy back into her, she immediately got to work organizing the new books that had arrived to the library.

A smaller poetry book caught her eye across the room—Moon Rising—the book Prince Martin had been reading just a few days ago was left by the chair he usually favored. She smiled to herself as she picked it up, he really did love this book, didn’t he?

Slowly, she flipped through the pages and was surprised to see more of his own writing in the margins.

Soft, delicate words that she would have never guessed were his coated the pages. Far more suited for a poet, not a politician.

Her fingers traced his words, part of her longed to know what went on inside his mind. She wondered if they were more alike than she had first thought. Did the words speak to him as they did to her? Did he imagine himself in the stories he read?

She caught a shadow of a man in the corner of her eye. She gasped and closed the book quickly, startled to see it was Prince Martin himself.

“Oh! Prince Martin...” Doris bowed.

#Chapter 8 I thought he took you away.

“You surprise easily, don’t you?” Prince Martin smiled as he walked in, a familiar sight she started to

crave that a bit of kindness around here. Doris pushed her brown hair behind her ear and returned his smile, her cheeks already warmed under his gaze. She watched as he went to browse the same shelves quietly as he always did. Doris worked up the nerve to follow him and offer her help this time. She was determined to talk to him a bit more than she had been before. Her silly nerves always got the better of her and kept her silent around him—afraid she'd say something that would embarrass her. He was always so kind, she would be so lucky to have him as a friend—

“Why weren't you here last Thursday?” He casually asked over his shoulder before she could say anything.

The question startled her for a moment until Prince William's face flashed in her mind. Doris quickly shook her head to clear him free of it. She did not need to remember the disaster that happened last Thursday, or picture that man's face. She hadn't had a nightmare since he claimed Melody as his new lady, Doris didn't want to risk triggering new ones. “Oh! Prince William was looking for someone, he had all of the maids called up to be searched. It took quite a long time, almost the whole day to go through all the maids.”

“Hmm,” Prince Martin nodded as if he remembered himself.

“Yes, I heard he was looking for the girl he marked. Did he find her?”

“Yes, she's found.” Doris nervously played with the hem of her apron. Her neck almost burned under her dress, she held her hands still to keep herself from touching it.

“Who was it?”

“The head of maids, Melody Harford.” Doris added, “Lady Melody now.”

“Oh yes, Melody...” Prince Martin murmured, he tossed a smile over his shoulder at Doris. “That’s a relief, I thought he took you away.”

“Oh,” all of her blood rushed to her cheeks. She lifted her gaze to meet his eyes. The sunshine fell warmly on the side of his gentle face, brightening his lovely green eyes. Doris cleared her throat and turned away. She truly admired his kindness to maids and the way he was so different from his brother.

Prince Martin chuckled lightly and turned his attention back to the shelves. Silence fell upon them once more and she pressed her cold hands to her cheeks in an effort to ward away her blush.

After a while, Doris couldn’t help herself when she noticed he hadn’t found a book yet, she ventured back over to him. “May I help you find anything, your highness? Is there a title you’re looking for?”

“I have found it,” His eyes flickered to her hands but she didn’t understand what he’d meant. “I’m not sure if it’s available, though.”

Doris tilted her head in question. “Which book is it? I can find out if anyone has it...Perhaps they might have finished it already.”

“Well, I suppose that depends on if you’ve finished it, then.”

Prince Martin grinned when he turned to face her.

“Oh! Oh my, yes. I’m so sorry your highness. I didn’t realize this was the one you were looking for.” Doris held out the small book for him, almost sad to see it go. She didn’t have a chance to read everything he put between the pages yet.

“It’s quite alright. A book only has value when it’s being enjoyed.” His fingers brushed her own as he accepted the book.

Prince Martin flipped through a few pages before he looked up again. "Doris..."

"Yes, your majesty?" Doris clasped her hands in front of her as she glanced up at him.

He paused for a moment, she watched curiously as he shifted his weight to the other foot before he

spoke. "I—I'm glad you're still here." He finally said.

Red formed on his snowy cheeks, she wondered if it was because of the sun. Doris looked at him in

surprise, her lips parted but no response came. Prince Martin lowered his head slightly and smiled at her

through his lashes—gentle and soft. She couldn't help but smile back at him.

"Martin." A soft voice broke the silence from behind them.

They both quickly turned to see Lady Grace

standing at the doorway, Prince Martin's fiancée. Her hair was pinned up in an elegant bun, the style

displayed her beautiful features perfectly. She was taller than Doris was, more slender with light eyes.

Every move she made was graceful, her long silver gown trailed on the floors behind her as she walked.

Doris had never seen Lady Grace up close before, but now she understood all the whispers about Grace's

beauty. She looked like an angel. It was no wonder he chose her to marry.

"Martin, I was just passing by and I heard your voice in here."

She said with a light smile, her eyes

flickered to Doris. "Who's this?"

"Doris," Prince Martin supplied, his eyes lingered on Doris as he spoke. "She's the maid who's

responsible for the library. She was just helping me find a book."

He lifted the poetry book in his grasp.

"I see." Grace raised her brow at Doris as if she expected something.

Doris forgot herself completely for a moment, she bowed politely. "My lady, I'm always here to help if you ever are in search of a book or anything else."  
"Mhmm." Grace turned her attention back to Prince Martin as if Doris was no longer there. "It's time for dinner, my love. Shall we go back?"  
"Yes, of course." Prince Martin glanced back once more at Doris before he took Lady Grace's hand. She watched as they disappeared at the end of the garden path towards the grand hall for dinner. She sighed to herself, it wasn't right to be envious of them but she couldn't help it. She imagined it was wonderful to have a love like that. One that was grand and beautiful enough that everyone around them celebrated it, even strangers.

Doris smiled to herself at the thought, she was happy for him. He was a wonderful man. Kind, gentle and caring. Grace must have been just as lovely as she looked for him to love her. Doris couldn't imagine him loving anyone cruel, so she must be truly wonderful. Doris's smile froze on her face when she saw a familiar figure walking up the path towards her. The last person she ever wanted to see, especially alone in her Library. Part of her wished she was dreaming again because it couldn't be him, could it?  
Prince William?! What on earth was he doing here?

#Chapter 9 I want Doris to be my Lady's Maid.

"Your majesty." Doris curtsied as he passed her. Prince William never failed when it came to making her nervous. Among so many other things she didn't want to think about.

Prince William only nodded, barely looking at her as if he didn't remember her at all. Perhaps he didn't, why would he? Doris released a small breath of relief as she followed him into the library. She'd never

seen him in here before, she didn't even realize he liked to read. She briefly wondered what kind of books he liked as she adjusted the collar of her dress. He took the first book his hand touched from the bookshelves and flipped through the pages absently as if he didn't really care what it was about. "Did Prince Martin just pass through here?" He asked Doris without looking at her, his voice almost casual. "Yes, your majesty."

"Does he come here often?" He asked, a bit more intensely. "Oh, no. Not very often." Doris hesitated. Something inside her felt uneasy, perhaps it was just due to his wretched presence but she couldn't shake her discomfort. Why was he asking about Prince Martin? Why would he even care if he came by here often? It didn't seem like a big deal to Doris if he did or didn't. Prince William frowned and shot a sharp glance towards Doris when she hesitated. Slowly, he turned to walk towards her, she held her breath as he neared her. Close, he was too close to her—she wanted to step back but didn't dare try it with him. His warm breath caressed her skin but she refused to look up into his blue eyes. Her unease quickly turned to panic, did he remember her after all? Is that why he was here? What did he—

Prince William pressed a book in her shaky hands. "Go on." "I—I'm sorry?" Doris allowed herself to breathe again. Her eyes flickered to his mouth when he frowned. "Don't you have to mark which books are borrowed?" "Oh! Yes. Yes, of course your majesty." Doris bowed her head and turned away to write down the name of the book. Not many people borrowed books, Doris almost forgot it was required to note which ones left the library and with whom. She often forgot to note which ones Prince Martin took with him, only

because he always brought them back the same week. She felt his eyes on her as she wrote as quickly as she could manage. The faster she finished, the faster he would leave and she could go back to blending into the walls.

“Who taught you to read and write? I thought most maids couldn’t.” He asked suddenly, the question startled her.

“I had a home tutor when I was younger, before I came here.” Doris set down her pen and handed the book back to the prince. He took it with a thoughtful expression, she didn’t want to admit how handsome he looked when he wasn’t angry. But he was—extremely handsome. His raven black hair was messy in a charming way, as if he’d just ran his fingers through it before he came into the library.

“Where is it? Your home, I mean.” He asked, pulling her from her traitorous thoughts.

Doris glanced up at him in surprise. To a maid like her, home was a very sensitive subject. Not many people had ever asked her where she came from, and she hadn’t asked them. Home was a daydream to Doris now, too far away to ever reach but one day hoped to see again. As each year passed, it only became a fading memory to the ones she had here. She didn’t expect Prince William to be the first person to ask her about it. Or about anything, for that matter.

“I—don’t really remember.” Doris lowered her gaze.

When she looked back up at him, his face had gone a little red. He shifted uncomfortably and she could tell he knew she was lying. He knew she just didn’t want to talk to him about it. It angered him, and she wasn’t sure why something like that would, but she could see it on his face.



“Your majesty?” A shocked voice came from the entrance, they both turned to see Melody. Her eyes flicked between Doris and Prince William as if she couldn’t believe they were here together. Doris took the opportunity to step away from Prince William.

“Melody,” Prince William’s brows furrowed. “What are you doing here?”

“I came here in search for Doris.” Melody said.

“Her?” Prince William frowned again. “What would you want from her?”

“Well, your majesty,” Melody plastered on an innocent smile as she walked further into the room. “I came here to ask if Doris would be my lady’s maid. I prefer to have someone I know and trust attending to me.”

Doris’s eyes widened at Melody’s words. Why would she ever ask Doris to be her maid when she hated her? Everyone knew how horribly Melody treated Doris, it wasn’t a secret that the girl enjoyed making a fool out of her whenever she got the chance. They’d never gotten along, not once in the years since they met. Doris always tried being kind to Melody, even when she didn’t deserve it but it never seemed to work in her favor.

“Her?” Prince William asked, a bit surprised himself.

Melody walked straight to Doris and took her hands. “We’ve been such good friends for so long, you’re like a sister to me. We always said we would look after each other, didn’t we? Please say yes.”

Doris furrowed her brows and looked at Melody, confusion in her gaze. They never promised to look after each other. “I—” Her eyes flicked to Prince William. Was she allowed to say no? She didn’t want to be Melody’s personal maid, what a nightmare that would be! Doris loved being in the library, never mind

that it would be considered a high promotion if she accepted. On the other hand, if she rejected... she knew how mad that would make Melody. And Melody did her worst when she was mad.

"I'm... I think I would be too clumsy for that role, my lady."

Doris said carefully. "I might just be nothing but an annoyance to you rather than helpful."

"Nonsense! I'll take that as a yes!" Melody grinned and looked over her shoulder at Prince William. "Your majesty, you would approve this, right?"

"It's your decision." Prince William said as if it was the last thing he cared about. He turned and left without another word, his book grasped in his hand. Doris frowned and watched the sunshine go with him.

Melody dropped her hands the second he was out of sight and turned as well. "Then it's decided, you'll work for me." Her voice quickly grew empty of the sweetness it had contained when Prince William was in the room, it sent shivers down Doris's spine.

Doris deflated as she watched Melody leave.

Doris was quickly moved into a space closer to where Melody lived, as well as Prince William. It was possibly the hardest thing she ever had to do since she started working at the Palace. No longer would she get to share a room with her best friend, now she had something a bit more grander but it didn't make her feel even a tiny bit better. She wanted the simplicity of her library job, of seeing her best friend every night and hearing all the gossip she'd heard during the day. Not... this. Not with Melody.

It would be fine, she reminded herself. Soon Beth and Doris would be free and far from here. As far as they could possibly get so she'd never have to hear the fake obnoxious laugh Melody gave every time

Prince William opened his mouth. It was astonishing how no one had ever seen through Melody's mask, but Doris always had.

At night, she entered Melody's chamber to find her seated at her vanity. Doris caught a strange smile on her face in the reflection as she walked in. "My lady?"

"What are you waiting for? Come here and do my hair."

Melody demanded, her voice like ice. Doris grabbed the comb and carefully brushed out her curls.

"You're very beautiful, Doris." Melody said almost as if it was a question and not a statement. Doris glanced in the mirror to see her face was anything but kind.

"You know that though, don't you?"

"Don't make fun of me, my lady." Doris said softly, her hand moving gently through her hair. "You are much prettier than I am."

"Who do you think Prince William would choose between you and I?"

#Chapter 10 Are you mocking me?

#Chapter 10 Are you mocking me?

"I'm nothing compared to you, my lady." Doris said quickly to reassure her. It was a wonder why she would ever compare herself to Doris when she was sitting as his lady and Doris was still a maid. "Besides, he's already chosen you above all girls in the Palace. You're his one and only, my lady."

Doris didn't bother to add the fact that she had no intentions of ever wanting to be in her place. Melody looked at Doris in the mirror for a moment before she laughed quietly. "I never knew you were so good at sweet talking, Doris. Good. Remember who you are and what your place is. If I hear anything strange about you and Prince William... well, you know what I'm capable of. Understand?"

“Yes, my lady.” Doris said gently. Doris was not who Melody had to worry about, it was her prince she should keep a closer eye on. Why would Melody ever bother having her as her Lady’s Maid if she thought Doris was capable of stealing Prince William’s affections? She’d only ever spoken with him a handful of times and each one of their encounters was just him demanding her to get something for him. Except... except of course the night he marked her. Months had passed since Doris had first become Melody’s Lady’s maid. The job paid much better than the one at the library, but in the end it was never worth it. Everyday she spent with Melody was worse than the last. The worst part was that she wasn’t able to vent about all her troubles at the end of the day with her best friend as she used to. Beth would have loved all the gossip about Melody, it would have kept her laughing for days to know all the little things she complained about. Doris felt an ache in her core with how much she missed that, the sense of belonging that Beth gave her. There weren’t many places in the Palace she felt that way, but her best friend never failed to make her smile when she felt the world shift around her. Every extra coin she made, she saved towards their release. The job was slightly more bearable because of it. Only a few months remained until the amnesty was announced and signed and Doris was counting the days. Only a few more months until she was free, so she suffered. It would all be worth it in the end. It would be worth every mood swing Melody aimed at her if it meant she never had to see her again, or the Prince for that matter. To Doris’s surprise, Melody also had a bit of her own suffering. Not that Doris was glad to see it, it only

made Melody's mood worse towards her maid. Prince William had not yet asked Melody to spend the night with him—which meant they hadn't slept together once. Doris could tell it was somewhat of an awkward situation for Melody, she hung all over him yet he still didn't want her to stay with him. Most days, she stayed inside her room because of it. Perhaps it was because of all the gossip that now swirled around her.

In the hallways, Doris passed other ladies while on the way back towards Melody's room. They stopped her the moment they recognized who she was.

"We haven't seen your Lady in a few days, is she feeling alright?"

One of them sneered, the other tried

to muffle her laugh. Had it been that obvious to the Palace?

Doris only truly noticed because she

happened to be her Lady's Maid, but if she were still in the

library she wouldn't have taken notice to it at

all. Unless Beth told her about it, she supposed. Doris never

really paid attention to others bedroom

affairs like the rest of the maids had. It wasn't really any of her

business what the Princes did behind

closed doors, she wished she could say that to these ladies

without offending them.

"Lady Melody has been feeling under the weather lately, but she will be fine. Thank you for asking."

Doris curtsied and tried to pass but they only kept on.

"Not feeling well, hmm? I think it's because she's embarrassed to be seen—"

"Absolutely! Prince William doesn't even want to touch her! I wonder why she even still has the title of a lady anymore." The other added with a sneer.

Doris clasped her hands in front of her and remained silent as they laughed. When they noticed she

wasn't joining in on their gossip, they looked almost annoyed that she wasn't being cruel like them. As much as she disliked Melody and all the things she did to her, it wasn't in her nature. Besides, she hardly knew them.

"What are you ladies doing gossiping here?" A voice sounded from down the hall. Doris glanced up to see a taller woman walking towards them. Her slim form moved with elegance and dignity, it made Doris stand up straighter.

"Lady Jane." Both girls quieted immediately, their heads lowered in respect.

Lady Jane was the daughter of a well-known beta family—one of the biggest merchants in the kingdom.

To strengthen their relationship with Prince William, her father had sent Jane to stay at the Palace for a while. Prince William obviously valued her family, so his respect for Lady Jane grew as well. They'd never been lovers as far as Doris knew, but Lady Jane helped manage the ladies and everything else around Prince William. Especially when those resorted to gossip that involved him.

"Prince William has his own reasons for what he does. It's not up for you two to spread gossip, do not let me hear it again. Understand?"

"Yes, Lady Jane." They replied together and curtsied before they turned to leave. Their cheeks were splotted with red from embarrassment, Doris would have laughed if Lady Jane wasn't still standing there.

"You may leave too." Lady Jane told Doris.

"Thank you, my lady." Doris curtsied quickly before she returned to Melody's room, releasing a slow exhale. She raised her fist to knock, but stilled when she heard voices on the other side of Melody's door.

“Thank you for the tip, my lady. But it’s really too much...”  
“You deserve it, Ms. Shirley. If you can help me regain Prince William’s love and meet our agreement, they’ll be more.” Melody spoke quietly, Doris almost pressed her ear to the door to hear her. Melody was paying people to help her gain his love now? Had she really gotten that desperate? Doris supposed gossip was a venomous thing, it must have been eating at her worse than she’d first thought.

“Well,” Ms. Shirley cleared her throat. “Prince William’s valet, Peter, arranges everything for him. That includes who will be in Prince William’s thoughts tonight. If you pay him well enough, he might be willing to try and sway him in your favor...”

Doris strained to hear more, but the voice grew too low to make out any words. Doris gave up and waited patiently outside the door until Ms. Shirley came out a moment later. A flash of Prince William’s angry face flickered through her mind. What would he say if he heard what his lady was doing? Doris barely knew him but she knew he wouldn’t be happy about any of this.

Doris stepped in once Ms. Shirley was gone and had a small velvet bag of gold placed in her hands immediately. “Go deliver this to Peter, Prince William’s valet. And hurry back.” Melody demanded.

Doris accepted the money and turned towards the door. A small sense of guilt stopped her. “Please don’t lower yourself like this, my lady.”

“Excuse me?” Melody snapped. “What are you talking about?”  
“You’ve been given the title of Lady by Prince William himself. I don’t think it’s wise to bribe his valet. It’s below your standards.” Doris hesitated. “Please be patient, my lady. Prince William has his reasons for what he does. He won’t ignore you forever.”

“Were you eavesdropping on my conversation?” Melody looked offended, and a bit embarrassed—but furious overall. “You’re suggesting me to wait now? And how long do you suppose it’ll take Prince William to wake up and realize I’m right here?” Melody’s voice grew along with her anger. “Are you mocking me now, too?”

Next Chapt

#Chapter 11 Your maid has to come

“No, of course not!” Doris quickly explained. “I was just thinking of what’s best for your own good, my lady.”

Despite her own harsh feelings towards Melody, Doris didn’t want the girl to make a fool out of herself.

She risked losing his affections entirely if she made the wrong choice and bribed his valet. It wasn’t like Prince William would ignore her forever, he wasn’t the type of man to make brash decisions. He named Melody his lady—he had his own plans for what he was doing. Melody just needed to be patient.

“Have you so quickly forgotten you’re nothing more than my maid?” Melody’s voice lowered into something almost threatening. “You do everything I tell you to do without questioning me or my reasons. That is all you exist for. You know how much harder I can make it for you if you don’t.”

Doris’s lips parted, but no words formed. Melody lifted her chin—daring Doris to say something back.

“That’s what I thought. Go and stop wasting my time.” Melody dismissed her with a wave of her hand as if she were nothing more than a fly that wouldn’t leave her alone.

“Yes, my lady.” Doris curtsied before she turned to leave to find Peter.



It didn't take long, she caught Prince William's Valet in the garden speaking with another maid. Their laughs greeted her long before she ever saw either of them, Doris stayed out of sight and waited for the other maid to leave before she would approach him. "Thank you for your help," the maid spoke softly, she slipped a small box out from her apron and handed it to him.

Peter's smile widened at the sight of it, he immediately looked inside before he slipped it into his own pocket. "Don't worry, my dear. I'll remind Prince William soon." Doris watched as the maid's face brightened before she left. Doris slipped the bag of coins into her pocket before his eyes caught her.

"Ah," Peter spread his arms with a smile and walked towards Doris as if he'd been expecting her. "Did your lady send you here?"

He already knew Doris had something for him from Melody. It seemed more than common for him to get bribes from the maids that wanted Prince William's attention. It made Doris sick to her stomach how shameless these girls were. Doris couldn't imagine herself ever even considering tipping someone for a man's attention.

"No," Doris saw the surprise flash across his features. "I was just passing by."

It was a risk, she knew it was. But Doris was certain that Prince William would come around on his own and it would be worth the wait for Melody. Perhaps he had his own reasons for delaying it, but this wasn't the answer.

"Just passing by?" Peter's smile slipped from his face. He snorted and turned away. "We'll see how much longer she'll last."

Three days, Doris swore to herself. She'd wait three days before she brought the gold to Peter and did it Melody's way. She could wait three more days—Doris hoped. The three days passed rather quickly and nothing happened at all between Melody and Prince William, much to Doris's surprise. Melody's mood had only gotten worse towards everyone, but mostly towards her own lady's maid. When she wasn't screaming at Doris, she paced her bedroom worrying about why she hadn't been called yet, and spent her nights lonely by her tall window.

Perhaps it was a mistake, perhaps she should've just given the gold to Peter after all. Doris knew she had to go tomorrow to pass it off and make this right. If she had three days ago, Melody might have already—

Two quick knocks broke her thoughts. Doris opened the door to find Prince William's footman standing on the other side. He gave a slight bow to Melody. "Lady Melody, Prince William has invited you to accompany him tonight."

At his words, Melody shot up from her chair and almost tripped over herself to get to her closet. Doris swallowed the lump in her throat and quietly closed the door after the man stepped out before she leaned back against the wooden surface. Something inside her didn't feel right when she heard his official invitation. This entire time Doris had only hoped it would come for Melody so she would quit being in such a sour mood. But now that she'd gotten it... Doris felt off. It wasn't jealousy, it couldn't be. She just didn't feel happy about it, perhaps she was just worried about how it will all turn out. What if it goes wrong and Melody only grows more vicious?

“What are you doing just standing there? Come help me!” Melody shouted at Doris.

“Yes, my lady.” Doris pushed away from the door and laid out all of Melody’s makeup at her vanity. She enhanced her lovely eyes and brought a soft rose to her lips and cheeks, her shaky hand was extra careful not to ruin anything she did. When she was finished, Doris stepped back to look at her in the mirror next to Melody. She looked... absolutely beautiful. Almost like a princess. Doris looked pale and tired in comparison, she lowered her head so she didn’t stare. Melody didn’t seem to notice Doris’s mood at all, she was giddy as she stood and hurried to the door.

Prince William’s footman started to follow Melody to the prince before he paused. “My lady, your maid is required to accompany you.”

“What?” Doris’s eyes widened at his words. There was no way—

“It’s protocol.”

Doris deflated when she realized he was right. In the Golden Palace, if a lady was spending the night with one of the royal members, it was required for her maid to stay outside the door in case the lady or prince needed anything inside. As awful as that sounded, she wasn’t allowed to argue.

Doris felt her cheeks redden. She’d never thought she would have to stand outside anyone’s room while they made love.

The worst part was it being Prince William’s room.

The thoughts left a horrible taste in her mouth and left her even more confused than the moments before. Prince William was a horrible man who did something unforgivable to her, but a traitorous part of her heart didn’t like the idea of him with Melody.

The word mate still haunted her thoughts, he'd said it so many times it was hard to forget the way he whispered it into her ear as if he was claiming her. She knew what a mate meant to a werewolf, but it was nothing more than a mistake. Clearly he'd meant his mark for Melody or whoever his true mate was when he marked her. There was nothing worse than this fate, she wouldn't wish it on anyone.

Doris was just an omega—she had no wolf inside her. It was impossible for her to be William's mate, she knew that. And she was glad of it. The last thing she wanted was to be tangled up with a hot tempered beast of a man. She wanted to be free, to no longer go to bed with a million worries. She wanted a simple life with a man who only wanted her, and that was not Prince William. Even worse, being the mate of a prince would immediately mark her as the target of every jealous woman in the kingdom. It was just not worth it.

"What on earth are you doing just standing there?" Melody frowned. "Didn't you hear him? Get moving!"

Prince William's footman walked ahead, Melody shot a smirk over her shoulder at Doris.

"Don't worry, you'll have a fun night hearing all the things Prince William and I are going to do."

Next Chapter

#Chapter 12 This doesn't feel right.

Doris followed them out silently, her cheeks still burned against the cold air. Prince William's footman led them towards an area neither of them recognized.

"Where are we going? Melody asked.

"We're going to Prince William's bedroom, my lady." He responded.

Melody looked even more surprised than Doris felt. Everyone in the palace knew that Prince William never brought a woman back to his own bedroom. He usually slept with them in one of the many guest bedrooms in the castle. Tonight it seemed he was ready to show just how much Melody truly meant to him. Doris felt her stomach turn at the thought. Why did she even care? Perhaps this would brighten Melody's mood for once towards Doris.

"Oh! Yes, good... lead the way." Melody's excitement caused her to stumble over her own words like a lovesick fool. Doris refrained from rolling her eyes.

"You must be so disappointed, aren't you?" Melody whispered after a few moments of silence. Doris furrowed her brows in confusion until she continued. "Weren't you the one that asked me not to lower myself? And look where we're headed, to his personal bedroom. Am I too low for him now?"

"Of course not." Doris looked away quickly in case the truth showed in her eyes. How would she act if she knew Doris had never given Peter the tip?

"I wonder what would have happened if I listened to your stupid advice." Melody gripped Doris's chin so she would look at her. "Did you hope I would've been ignored by the prince? Is that what you wanted? What a shame your wish was broken."

Doris's chin hurt when Melody applied more force. "Tonight, you'll hear exactly who he chose to be in his bed." She released her chin and kept walking. If only Doris was allowed to throw the bag of gold at Melody's face to show that her advice was right and Melody was the one that had been wrong. Doris rubbed her skin as they arrived to Prince William's chamber. His door was partly open, Doris couldn't help herself as she leaned forward to peek inside. Every step

closer she took to the man made her body feel strange. She couldn't tell if it meant she wanted to get as far away from him as she possibly could or if there was an invisible string pulling her towards him against her will.

His room was absolutely fit for a prince. It was one of the biggest rooms she had ever seen, her eyes grew wide as she took in the detail. The dark ceilings stretched far above similar to the one in the library, he had a huge fireplace with a warm fire already started. Velvet couches, a dining area, doors that must have led to his closet and bath room. It was all so... grand. Her eyes drank in the detail of his private room. Many maids had always wished to see what his private bedroom looked like and it did not disappoint. She dragged her gaze over to the large feathered bed that was draped in the royal red colors.

And—him.

Doris held her breath at the sight of him, Prince William was propped up against his headboard with a book grasped in his hands. He looked relaxed, calm and so unlike everything he was outside of this room.

He lazily flipped the pages as he read, his white untucked shirt rode up high on his firm stomach and she tried to tear her eyes away from the sight. He looked... so gentle in this moment. Doris watched as he bit his lip in concentration, a bit of messy black hair had fallen into his eyes but he didn't seem bothered by it in the slightest. It was no wonder so many women had given up their freedom for a chance to be with him. Even if it never ended up well for them, she could see why they wanted to try. She hated to admit how attractive he looked...

No, it was horribly wrong to ever think that way about him! He attacked her and left her scarred for

life—he wasn't gentle or lovable, he was just a monster. Doris's eyes watered when she remembered the way it felt when she thought she was going to die at his hands that night. The way his blue eyes glowed under the moonlight and how his growl echoed through the trees, she'd never forget the way he called her his mate. She'd also never forget the heavy scent of alcohol on his breath.

Her traitorous heart flipped in her chest when he looked up from his book, his piercing blue eyes met hers for only a second before he found Melody. Slowly, she released her breath.

"You're here." Prince William closed his book and stood from the bed. His shirt was unbuttoned lazily at the top, he didn't bother to close it as he neared them. Doris swallowed and tried not to follow the lines of his muscles through his shirt. He was... so tall. He towered over all of them and she had to tilt her head back just to look at him.

"Good evening, your majesty." Melody curtsied elegantly and batted her lashes at him. Doris looked away and took a step back from the room.

"She's here," Waylon growled in William's mind. "I can smell her... a sweet vanilla scent."

"She's our mate? You're sure this time?" William asked his wolf silently.

"Yes, it has to be her. No one else in the palace has her scent." William didn't hesitate, he grabbed Melody's wrist and pulled her against him. Melody let out a small groan as she fell into his chest.

Prince William's footman quickly closed the door when her maid stepped out, something shifted inside him when he did.

"Wait! Stop," Waylon almost shouted in his mind as if it was fighting him. "The sweet scent is gone, this

doesn't feel right."

"Now you tell me?" William snapped back and watched as the girl in front of him started to undress. "I'm still going to enjoy my night even though you've failed me again."

Doris stood outside of the room nervously picking at her nails. Prince William's footman quickly left after he closed the door with nothing more than a shrug towards Doris. She didn't want to hear what went on in that room, she wanted to return to her own and pretend none of this had ever happened. Why did Melody feel so insistent to have Doris around for this? She could have easily requested a different maid—but she clearly only wanted Doris to suffer more than she already had been.

Doris paced the area, her thoughts loud. Half of her wanted to hurry and find someone else to watch the door, the other half knew she would be in serious trouble if she left it unattended for even a second.

Perhaps it would be worth whatever trouble she would face if it meant she would be free of the sounds that would grow behind that door. The thought of anyone ever overhearing the noises Doris might one day make with a lover made her sick. Never would she allow someone to stand even remotely close to her door if she were with a man. But Melody wasn't anything like Doris. Melody wanted her to hear everything, and Doris only bet that she would make sure her sounds were louder than normal just to be certain it haunted her thoughts—

Doris watched the light go out beneath the door and quickly looked away. Her skin crawled and stomach ached as she heard the sound of clothes hit the floor before silence overwhelmed the area.



A few moments later, she heard the sound of Melody's moaning.

#Chapter 13 There was never really a point to have a fated mate

Doris covered her ears the second she heard the first moan. Her mind flashed back to that night—she couldn't shake the images of him from her mind. She didn't want to imagine him when he was on top of her or the way his lips felt trailing down her skin. It was beyond wrong to ever think of him that way, he wasn't meant for her and she should be glad of it. But it was so hard to forget when she could hear his same groans through the door. It was as if her mind planted her right back in that moment with him. Her heart raced with fear when the images wouldn't stop.

The sounds only grew louder and deeper as if each one were banging against her heart from the inside.

She pushed harder against her ears to ward out the sounds, her back slid down the wall and she

stationed herself as far from the door as she could possibly get. Please, she begged herself, just fall asleep.

She silently prayed it would all stop. She prayed sleep would overcome her and relieve her of this

nightmare. Everything will be fine tomorrow, she promised herself. She wouldn't remember a single

thing if she just fell asleep now. It would all become one horrible dream that will hopefully fade once the morning comes. right?

The halls grew darker as the night wore on, the castle descended into a silence that only sleep could provide. Doris still held her hands against her ears long after they finished. Dry tears marked her cheeks, she could still hear the sounds echo in her heart. Of all the things Melody had done to her, this felt like one of the cruelest.

Doris opened her strained eyes to see a foggy morning outside the tall windows. For a blissful moment, she'd forgotten everything from the night before. It only came back to her when she heard the sound of Melody's sticky voice behind his door.

"Good morning, your majesty." Her words were laced with sleep and sweetness, Doris wanted to gag.

"Up already? Perhaps I didn't wear you out enough last night." Prince William teased, his voice husky.

Doris cringed at the thought of their night and closed her eyes tightly to clear her mind from it all.

Melody giggled, her pitch high and almost forced. Doris hugged her knees to her chest and shivered, longing to escape to her warm bed.

"While I liked the sounds you made last night, you..."

"I, what?" Melody asked with a light laugh.

"You didn't sound the same as that night." Prince William responded lazily.

Doris felt her heart stop just as Melody's laugh halted. Did that mean he never marked Melody? Was he thinking of how Doris sounded? Doris felt her cheeks flame. Had he been thinking of her when he was...

with Melody? Did he wonder why she didn't sound the same as Doris did the night he attacked her?

Doris shamefully remembered the lustful moans she made when he kissed down her skin. All she wanted was to get away from him that night, but her body reacted to his touch as if it wanted more. She definitely did not want more, she knew that. The shame still lingered with her long after that night.

A few moments later, she heard Melody speak again with a tone soaked in bitterness. "Weren't you satisfied with me?"

Doris held her breath, part of her couldn't help but feel sorry for Melody. She'd spent so long trying to

get Prince William's attention and earn a night with him—only for him to compare her to someone else.

One wrong word and Melody could lose everything with him.

His emotionless cruelty was sure to return

soon but she couldn't rid her mind of the thoughts—

He mentioned that night... Melody didn't sound like the one he marked because he marked Doris.

"It was fine, you did well. I think we're done here." William said as he pulled open the door. His blue eyes found Doris immediately.

"Your majesty—" Doris stood quickly and felt the world tip beneath her numb legs when she neared him, she lost her balance and stumbled into his firm chest. He gripped her arms to steady her, she looked up to see his cold face interrogating her every breath.

"It's her," Waylon spoke up in his mind the moment William touched Doris. "Our mate. I know it is."

"You said the same fucking thing last night." William growled silently, his patience was running thin.

"No, I told you something felt off when she left the room and you didn't listen." Waylon hissed.

"How can you be sure it's her this time? You've steered me wrong before." William spoke with a bite to his words as he watched the small girl in his arms. She stared up at him with wide, terrified brown eyes.

"Can't you feel it? The electricity passing through your veins when she fell into your arms. That's the mate bond."

William froze at his words and realized he was right. He felt the shock in every inch of his body when he held her. He'd never felt that way with anyone before, especially not with Melody last night—

"Your majesty..." Doris said.

"My prince!" Melody's face turned red as she appeared at his side fully dressed. Her wild eyes flickered

between Doris and himself.

Prince William pushed Doris away from him out of instinct, she stumbled but caught herself and curtsied quickly. “My majesty, lady Melody—please forgive me.” “Did she hurt you, your majesty?” Melody neared him, her face melted into an exaggerated concern as she touched his arm. He shook her off and straightened himself.

“I’m fine.” William said, his eyes flicked over Doris. She wouldn’t look at him now that Melody was here.

Her brown hair was unbound around her shoulders and a bit messy as if she’d just woken up. She stood with her hands clasped innocently in front of her, but that wouldn’t fool him. “Is she the one you brought from the library?”

“Yes, your majesty. I apologize if she offended you.”

“She didn’t.” William finally caught Doris’s eye and narrowed his slightly. “But it was a nice try.”

Doris’s lips parted to explain herself—did he think she fell on him on purpose? She took a step forward and stopped when she caught the hatred in his gaze. It felt like a bucket of ice water had doused her, she flinched at the sight. It was much worse than the look Melody gave her every day, that one she was used to. This one had something else behind it, something she couldn’t put her finger on but knew it was there. If he thought she was pathetic enough to fake a fall into his arms for his attention, he was horribly wrong. She wanted a bath just to get the feeling of his touch off her.

But... Why did he hate her so much? Doris supposed there was no point in trying to change his mind about her, he wasn’t going to care what she had to say to defend herself. He’d clearly already made up his mind about her.

Doris lowered her eyes to the floor and clasped her hands in front of herself again.

“Keep an eye on her.” William told Melody before he closed his bedroom door on them both.

His inner wolf growled and made William stumble a bit as it tried to take control of his body. “How could you treat our mate like this?” Waylon’s voice grew, William pushed back against it. “I should kill you and take complete control over your useless body for that—” “There was never really a point to have a fated mate.” William said to his wolf before he closed their link and silenced him.

#Chapter 14 I didn’t realize you were good at scheming  
Doris followed Melody back to her own chamber in silence. Each step closer to the room only made Doris’s nerves flare through the ceiling. Melody’s posture was more stiff than usual, she’d probably already made a list of things to scold Doris about that went beyond what just happened. Doris silently wondered if Melody was secretly excited to have an excuse to unleash all of her wrath upon Doris when they got back to her room.

As they turned down the hall, there was a group of ladies blocking her door. Doris immediately recognized a few of them as the ones who’d been talking behind Melody’s back and spreading those vicious rumors that kept Melody hidden away for so long. Now they surrounded her with acceptance, excitement, and... gifts. News of her night with Prince William must have traveled much faster than Doris expected. It made her wonder if there even was anyone trustworthy in the castle, she could only assume it was Prince William’s footman who tipped off the gossip—unless someone else saw them on their way to his room.

“Lady Melody, there you are!” One of the ladies pushed her way to the front, her voice was dripping with false sweetness. “I should have visited you much sooner but I heard you weren’t feeling well. I thought it was better to let you rest more, I brought you a welcoming gift!”

“Oh, that’s quite alright Lady Daphne.” Melody smiled widely as she unwrapped the gift to see a shining gold bracelet. “How lovely! Thank you my dear.”

“Well well, girls. Since Lady Melody is fully recovered I bet Prince William won’t get enough of her company now!” One of the ladies near the back said, Doris almost rolled her eyes.

Another lady pushed a gift in Melody’s hands with a bright smile. “I had a custom perfume made for you, my lady.”

Doris stepped back and watched Melody grow overwhelmed with the amount of gifts presented to her.

Extravagant necklaces and dresses, delicate roses and purses. Doris couldn’t believe they showered her with such beauty all because she’d spent the night with Prince William. Did all of the ladies get this treatment?

“Thank you ladies for coming!” Melody said over the chattering voices. She looked over the crowd and noticed Lady Jane was one of the few missing from this show of affection. “I’ll have the kitchen prepare some tea, why don’t you all join me?”

“Oh, yes!”

“That would be lovely!”

“Finally, some girl time...”

The crowd excitedly filed into her chamber, Doris waited until they all stepped fully in before she started to enter herself.

“Not you!” Melody shouted the second her foot hit the carpet.  
“Get out and kneel at the door!”

Doris froze in shock, her face grew red from embarrassment. Everyone’s eyes fell on her at once as the room went silent enough to hear the sound of her own heartbeat. Humiliation scorched every inch of her body and she wished it would have burned her alive right there.

“Are you deaf? I said to kneel!” Melody shouted again, her voice like a gunshot through the room.

Doris fell to her knees at the sound, she had no choice but to obey. The cold from the ground chilled her entire body, Doris closed her eyes to keep in the tears that tried to escape. Of course she would choose now to punish Doris, in front of a crowd like always.

The other ladies were frozen in their own shock, they glanced at each other—confused and worried.

“What has she done?” Lady Daphne asked cautiously as if she were talking to a wild animal that might snap at any moment. She wasn’t wrong to treat Melody that way—she was always a small misstep away from screaming at someone.

“She’s nothing but a shameless maid. She fell on Prince William’s chest in hopes he would notice her.”

Melody scoffed and seated herself on one of the couches between the ladies. “She clearly believes the ridiculous rumors that he’d take any maid to bed.”

The loudest silence Doris had ever heard filled the room, not one lady dared to respond. They all knew what Melody was referring to, they knew she’d heard the gossip they all spread about her. She took her opportunity to make a statement by abusing Doris and using her as an example. By the looks on their faces, it had worked. “I’m the lady that Prince William chose himself and titled. Not a silly maid anymore.

If any of you think of continuing to speak of me so little, I'll make sure to repay the favor."

The ladies stared at Melody with their lips parted, after a moment she smiled brightly again as if it never happened. "Now, let's not let this nonsense ruin our day. Let's have some tea."

Melody waved her hand and locked eyes with Doris as someone closed the door in her face, still kneeling on the cold ground.

Her knees grew numb, soon the chattering continued behind the door and it seemed the awkward moment was already forgotten. The sounds grew distant to her ears, she moved to lean back against the wall as her vision blurred. After a horrible sleepless night, she finally felt the exhaustion tug on her senses. Doris closed her eyes for just a moment and soon the world faded away from her.

Cold water splashed on her face, Doris woke with a gasp.

"How dare you sleep when you're being punished!" Melody stood with one hand on her hip and the other clenching an empty glass.

Doris hadn't realized she'd fallen asleep, slowly she straightened herself and dried some of the water from her face. "Sorry, my lady."

Melody snorted and crossed her arms. "You honestly think you should be the one to take my place, don't you?"

"Of course not." Doris paled. "I have no desire to ever take your place."

"Right." Melody gripped her chin to stare into her eyes. "You should take a good look at yourself. Do you think this is the face that could ever win Prince William's heart?" Melody snorted. "What a joke."

"No, my lady. I know what my place is in this castle, I never wanted Prince William's attention. My only



job is to serve your needs, please believe me.” Doris wasn’t lying, she didn’t wish to be in Melody’s shoes. The only thing she wanted was to make her happy enough until the amnesty was signed and she was free—nothing more despite what Melody thought. Melody narrowed her eyes before she loosened her grip. “Good. I hope you don’t forget your own words. Now rise.”

Doris gripped the wall to stand on shaky legs she could barely feel. “Thank you, my lady.” Doris bowed her head and watched the drips of water slide off her face. “Get out of my sight.” Melody said with a disgusted expression, but all Doris felt was relieved at her words.

It wasn’t a far walk to her room from Melody’s, but it might as well have been miles. She slowly walked on her numb legs with her hand clenched to the wall so she wouldn’t fall. The only thoughts that kept her going was her own warm bed and a bath to rid her of the past 24 hours.

An elegant figure appeared at the end of the hall. When Doris noticed it was Lady Jane, she curtsied but the woman walked right past as if she didn’t even notice Doris. “I didn’t realize you were good at scheming.” A voice said from behind her.

#Chapter 15 I have no interest in you

Doris stopped and turned towards the voice. Lady Jane slowly moved to face her, a ghost of a smile on her lips.

“Were you talking to me, my lady?” Doris asked with a polite smile.

“Do you see anyone else around that could play lady Melody so easily?”

Doris’ smile froze on her lips. “Play her?” Was this a joke? As much as Doris hated Melody, she would

never dare play a lady. Especially not one so cruel. No revenge was worth losing her life over.

Lady Jane's smile grew as she walked gracefully towards Doris. "Prince William has gone without an official lady for so long, it's caused quite the jealousy between the girls at the palace. Those that fought with the other girls were never suitable for the title which was almost all of them. But Lady Melody was someone who had been marked by Prince William himself so he ignored her to see if she was fit enough for the role."

Doris only blinked at Lady Jane as if she didn't understand what the lady was implying.

"If you didn't stop Melody's bribery, she would have been worth nothing to the prince. She would have never earned the chance to spend the night with the prince in his own bedroom."

Doris's eyes widened when she realized Lady Jane knew exactly what Doris had done. How on earth did she find out Doris never gave the gold to Prince William's valet? It dawned on her that Lady Jane kept an eye on everything to do with Prince William, including his maids.

Ms. Shirley had gotten her tip, but Peter never received the money. It must have been so obvious.

"I apologize for taking the gold for myself, but I only took it out of greed. Please forgive me." Doris lowered her head, clasped her hands in front of her and spoke carefully. "I still don't understand what you meant, my lady. If you say I'm good at what you referred, how is it that I'm still being punished by Lady Melody?"

"I'm not really sure why you're doing this, but be careful. The Golden Palace is too ruthless of a place for someone soft like you to fit in here, don't get yourself involved in things you can't handle. It might

devour you whole.”

Doris understood her warning. She was indeed helping Melody, because she had to. It was the only way to secure her release when the amnesty was signed. If Melody was happy and kept her title, Doris would eventually be free.

Nothing could devour her, she promised herself. She would do whatever she had to do and be free of this place. Even if it meant being kind to the last person that ever deserved it and swallowing all the abuse she suffered through daily.

Doris released a breath and smiled again. “I still don’t completely understand your words, but I’m thankful for the reminder, my lady.”

“Well, I won’t keep on if you’re not getting it. But if I were you, I would get rid of the gold as soon as possible. It will cause you more trouble than it’s worth.” Lady Jane turned to leave.

Doris hadn’t even considered what to do with the gold, but Lady Jane was right. She had to get rid of it before someone found it on her.

For the next few days, Doris anxiously waited to catch Peter alone. Every time she saw him, he was busy with some other matter that always had him surrounded by others. Each minute that passed only made her more nervous, the longer she kept the gold the more trouble she would be in. Would they throw her in the cell if Melody claimed she was a thief? The last thing she needed was to be marked as untrustworthy by the palace. No, she needed to get out of here. Not make more trouble for herself.

Finally Doris caught him alone when he was walking the opposite way down the same hallway. Doris quickened her step and greeted him with a smile.

“Hello Peter! How’re you doing today?”

“Oh, Doris. I’m doing very well, how’s your lady?” Peter slowed his steps to talk with her though he didn’t sound entirely happy. Clearly he was still burned about not receiving a tip the last time they spoke.

Unfortunately for him, Lady Melody was now Prince William’s favorite. At least to the eyes around the castle.

“She’s doing well. Though there is something...” Doris quickly held out the gold for him to take just to rid herself of it. She didn’t get to finish her sentence when Peter turned away from her and bowed. “Your majesty.”

Majesty? Doris swallowed and slowly turned to face Prince William. His face wore a mask of no emotion, she quickly curtsied. “Your majesty.”

“Peter, go tell lady Melody I will meet her for dinner in her room.” Prince William said with his eyes still on her.

“Yes, your majesty. I’m on it.” Peter bowed before he left down the hall, leaving them alone.

Doris nervously shifted her weight onto the other foot and tried to hide the gold in her hands. His gaze burned through her, she lifted her eyes to his own. “Your majesty, if you don’t need anything else I’ll be going.”

Doris turned, but the man grabbed her wrist and forced her to look back at him. “Who’s is it?” He asked between clenched teeth. Doris lowered her gaze to the gold.

“Is it your lady’s?” He asked.

“Oh! No, no.” Doris said quickly. “It’s mine...” She regretted the words as soon as they were out, she cringed at herself. How could she tell him it was hers! What was she thinking? Now he was going to think she wanted him in that way.

He loosened his grip from surprise and shot her a disgusted look. "Oh."

Doris felt the shame crawl up her throat as he buried any shards left of her dignity into the ground. She looked down at her feet and wished he would leave her alone already. The sound he made when he found out it was hers was what she expected from a man that hated her so.

Prince William reached out his hand to raise her chin. She held her breath as he looked her over.

"Actually, you don't look that bad." He inched closer to her and lowered his head to her neck. She could feel his warm breath on her skin. Her mind screamed at her to run from him before he sank his teeth into her like he did in her nightmare.

He inhaled her scent, every bone in her body was frozen to his touch. "And you smell good." He whispered.

Slowly, he raised his head until his lips hovered over her own. His blue eyes flickered down to her mouth and she wanted to push him as far as she could away from her. He couldn't kiss her, this was not happening! Her body felt hot, too hot. As if he doused her in his own body heat from a simple touch.

What game was he playing? A moment ago he looked as if he were about to throw up at the thought of her wanting him, now he inhaled her as if she were his next meal to taste.

No, I don't want this. Doris shouted in her mind. His hand curled around the back of her neck and she almost melted into him. What was happening to her? Her body was fighting her mind, she didn't want this, she didn't—

She heard the gold coins hit the floor beneath them as it slipped from her hand.

His lips parted, she couldn't take her eyes off his mouth—

“But, I have no interest in you.”

#Chapter 16 You don't know me?

“You stupid lying asshole.” Waylon growled in William's mind.

“Turn around and claim our mate before

I—“

“We aren't meant to have mates. It's our damned fate as a royal member, remember?” William cut off his wolf before the threats poured in.

Of course, Waylon knew exactly why William was pushing away their mate.

William's birth mother was the Alpha king's one and only fated mate and king Charles loved her with every fiber of his being. It almost killed his father when she died just months after she'd given birth to

William. What made it even worse was when the rumors started to spread that Luna Queen Cara herself had been the one to drug her out of pure jealousy.

In the Golden Palace, true love meant nothing. Power was the only thing that mattered which meant the king never did get revenge for his mate. All he was left with was the scars from not being able to protect her. William did not want to become weak like his father because of a mate. He refused. William simply pushed out the images of her brown eyes and forced away the electric feeling he had whenever he was near her.

“I just wonder if we might be lucky with ours, you know.”

Waylon said quietly, William didn't respond.

Doris watched William disappear at the end of the hallway. She kneeled down once she was alone to

slowly gather her coins back into the small bag. Her tears blurred her vision until she started to choke

from them. Would her humiliation ever end in this palace?

He has no interest in me.

That's all I wanted.

Wasn't it?

Doris clenched her chest and felt the pain pulse beneath her hand. Why did his rejection hurt so much?

He was a beast, a horrible man. She didn't want any of his affection—so why was she crying? Doris

furiously wiped her tears away and picked up the last of her coins before she headed to her room.

It must have been because of the mark he'd left on her, it was making her heart feel strange towards him

when her head knew better. This was nothing more than a nightmare that wouldn't release her. His

hatred and disgust of her was enough to push him far from her mind. At least she knew he wouldn't try

to call on her now. She wondered what he would do if he saw his mark on her neck, would he be

horrified at himself that he marked a maid like her?

Doris had barely gotten to lay down for five minutes before another maid showed up at her door. The

girl popped her head in the room without a knock, Doris almost stumbled out of bed. "Lady Melody

asked you to serve her and Prince William for dinner tonight, Doris. You'd better hurry before she gets

mad."

Doris cursed silently and asked herself yet again why Melody decided to choose her of all the maids in

the castle to be her lady's maid? Doris made Melody angry by just existing, surely there were other girls

in the palace she liked enough not to glare at all day. Perhaps she only wanted someone she was allowed

to yell at, that must have been it.

Prince William was the last person in this kingdom she wanted to see, but now it seemed it would be

unavoidable. Doris only wondered what Melody would do this time to embarrass her in front of him and

make her torture worse.

The second Doris arrived to Melody's door, she was already scolding her. "What took you so long? Prince William has been waiting for ages for you to serve us! How dare you make the prince wait for you!"

"I apologize my lady and majesty." Doris curtsied, her eyes anywhere but him.

"Just serve the dinner already." Melody huffed at the table and crossed her arms over her chest like a child. Prince William wasn't looking at either of them.

Doris brought out their dishes and carefully set each one in front of them. The smell made her stomach turn, it'd been a while since she had a moment to eat anything more than a snack between her duties.

Melody never let her snack around her, she always had to slip away before she could eat anything.

After they finished their courses, Doris cleared the table and brought coffee out to serve. She made the mistake of locking eyes with Prince William for just a moment—he stared at her with a look of pure hatred in his gaze once again. It was like a fire in his blue eyes, no one had ever looked at her like that.

The sight startled her, she stumbled a bit and the hot coffee splashed over the rim and scorched her hand.

Doris gasped, quickly setting down the tray to hold her hand to her chest. "I'm so sorry—"

Melody gasped as if she was the one who got burned. "How dare you—"

"Out." Prince William's deep voice cut through the air and silenced both of them. Doris dared a glance at the man that wouldn't even look at her as he ordered her out of the room without a trace of pity.

"What are you waiting for?" Melody said after a beat. "Get out of here!"



Doris bit her lip and turned to leave without another word. She felt nothing but agony in every inch of her body. It was hard to tell if her heart or hand hurt worse, but at the moment she didn't even care anymore. She was just glad to be free of both of them. For a wild moment, she imagined herself running out the front doors of the castle and never looking back. If she wasn't a maid bound here by the alpha king, she would have. One day she would get to throw away her horrible uniform and wear whatever she wanted. She would serve no one but herself and stand up to anyone that tried to step on her and make her feel small and weak.

Doris wasn't weak, even if everyone else thought she was. She knew she wasn't. She'd survived blood, sweat, and tears over the years at the palace, she wasn't about to give up now because of a rotten prince and his cruel lady. Not when she was so close to being free of them both. Doris looked down at her red hand and knew it would leave painful blisters by the morning, she could already feel the areas they would hurt the most.

Fresh air dried some of her tears. Doris wandered into the gardens and found a bench to rest on. Slowly, she inhaled the scent of grass and flowers and tried to calm herself down. He was not worth her tears—neither of them were. Only the pain from her hand was reason enough to cry—nothing more.

“Oh my, did you burn your hand?” A man appeared at her side, Doris almost flinched away from the stranger but he smiled at her. He looked a little younger than herself, perhaps 18 or 19. He had an innocent lopsided grin that was laced with concern as his eyes flickered down to her hand she cradled in

her lap. He was handsome in a boyish way with light eyes and light brown hair, but Doris didn't recognize him.

When Doris didn't reply, he gently went to raise her wrist up to have a better look. "That doesn't look good, let me see—"

"Excuse me," Doris snatched her hand away from him. The last thing she needed was a stranger touching her burn. "Who are you?"

He blinked at Doris as if he was confused by her question. "You don't know me?"

#Chapter 17 Good day, Prince William

Doris studied his features, there was definitely something familiar about him. He was dressed in a dark suit that looked similar to the ones guards wore, but he was quite young still. Something about the way he moved made her think he was a bit of a reckless boy, a little far off from the proper way men moved around the Palace. For some reason, it made her smile a little.

"Are you Prince William's Beta? A new guard for the palace?" Doris asked.

He looked at her with his head tilted slightly, a big smile crawled up his lips. "Yes, that's right. And who are you? I haven't seen you around here."

"I'm lady Melody's maid." Doris stood and brushed off her skirts before she turned to leave.

"Wait," he said and lightly touched her arm. Doris turned to look up at him. "Let me have a look at your burn." He gently took her wrist in his grasp and stepped closer. Doris's lips parted in shock. He was reckless indeed, despite his warm intentions what he was doing would land them both in trouble if anyone saw them. She'd never had a guard reach out and touch her like this before.

“I know you’re new here but you have to know that we must follow the rules in the palace!” Doris whispered and raised her hand for him to see. “You’re not allowed to touch the maids around the palace, so this can’t happen again. They might think you’re flirting with me or something and we’d both get in trouble!”

The young man smiled but didn’t let go of her hand. “Okay, I hear you.”

Doris went to pull her arm free but he kept his grip firm in the area that wouldn’t hurt her. He pulled out a small tube of ointment from his pocket and spread it gently across her burn with his middle finger.

“There you go, now it won’t leave a scar.” He grinned and let go of her hand before he lifted his own.

“See my hand? I was injured by a bomb last week but now it’s all good thanks to that stuff.”

Doris rested her hand on her chest in shock. A bomb? He must have gone through so much to be chosen as Prince William’s guard. Only the best of the best were ever recruited into the palace. Did they put this young man through some sort of dangerous test to see if he was good enough for the palace?

“Thank you so much,” Doris breathed with a small smile.

Already the ointment was cooling the pain from her burn. She relaxed her shoulders at the feeling.

“It was no big deal.” He scratched the back of his head and gave her another charming grin. “May I have your name?”

“Doris.”

“Doris...” He said her name as if he were trying to burn it into his mind. “I love it.”

Doris couldn’t help but flush under his gaze. He had an easy smile that anyone would warm up to. His

light eyes shined brighter than the stars in the dark sky above them. He was sure to be popular among the younger maids in the palace. She was just happy to see another friendly face around, there weren't many of those at the Golden Palace. It was rare to find someone kind enough to offer their help if you weren't royal.

"And yours?" Doris asked.

"Mine?"

"Yes, what's your name?" Doris asked with a laugh.

"Oh, it's Da—David."

"Well, it's lovely to meet you David."

Days had passed almost peacefully since that night. Every time Prince William came to visit Melody, Doris always found an excuse to leave. Melody was too much in a good mood from all of his attention to even notice she was gone. That was all she was thankful for. Doris finally found a small slot of time to visit her best friend again, so she made Beth's favorite dessert.

Doris carefully wrapped the strawberry cake and made her way towards her old room with a heavy heart, she missed sharing a room with someone that cared about her.

Her steps were almost automatic down the halls. As she rounded a corner, someone jumped out at her.

"Doris! We meet again," David reached out to steady her when she almost dropped the cake.

"Oh, David! How are you?" Doris breathed.

"Quite fine, thank you. How's your hand?" He asked.

"All good now thanks to you." Doris lifted her hand to show him, but his eyes were only on the cake box.

David licked his lips and Doris couldn't help but smile. "Do you want some?"

He gave her a crooked smile and scratched the back of his head.

“Here, take it. I have more in the kitchen.”

David didn’t hesitate, he opened the box and took out a piece for himself. Doris watched as he took a large bite and grinned at her through all the icing. “I’m starving. I’ve been at camp all morning and haven’t had the chance to eat anything.”

Doris laughed a little as frosting coated his lips. He ate like a little boy. It would be so wonderful to have a little brother like him, she thought suddenly to herself with a small smile. She never had the privilege of having a younger sibling, but it was something she always longed for. Especially when she’d met people like David.

She took out a handkerchief from her apron and stepped forward to wipe the frosting from his mouth.

“It’s all yours, take it easy!” She laughed.

David blushed under her touch. “It’s the best cake I think I’ve ever had.”

“Really?” Doris grinned.

“Really.”

“Well, next time you want dessert you’ll have to come find me. I have tons of recipes you might like.”

Doris smiled kindly.

“You look so beautiful when you smile.” He said suddenly. Doris lightly hit him with the handkerchief.

“Don’t make fun of me!”

“I’m not!” He said quickly. “Everyone in the kingdom said that Lady Grace was the most beautiful. And of course Lady Melody is gorgeous as well—but I think you are prettier than both of them when you smile.”

Doris shook her head at the reckless boy. It was a wonder how he could ever think to compare a maid like Doris to Lady Grace and Lady Melody. She rolled her eyes at him.

“You’re quite the sweet talker, aren’t you? I’ll make another cake for you tomorrow, is that what you want? Now shush and eat.”

David furrowed his brows at her and shook his head. He opened his mouth to explain himself, but was cut off by loud voices down the hall. “Prince Daniel!” They shouted.

“Have you found the prince yet?”

“No—”

“Go on then! The Alpha King asked to see him.”

Doris glanced towards the voices, confused. “Prince Daniel? Why would they search for him here?”

“Maybe he came to visit Prince William, I should go help them look.” David said quickly.

Doris grabbed his arm before he turned. “Wait! Don’t go with this mess,” She teased as she wiped the rest of the cake off his face.

He grinned down at her and turned to leave, throwing a quick wave over his shoulder before he was out of sight.

He was such a cutie, Doris couldn’t help but smile as she watched him leave. She slowly wiped the frosting from her own fingers and turned to head back towards the kitchen. At least she made more cake, surely Beth wouldn’t mind if she shared it with someone as kind as David—

Her smile froze when she saw someone across the hall watching her. The last person she ever wanted to see. Doris lowered her gaze and curtsied. “Good day, Prince William.”

Next Chapter

#Chapter 18 You stay here

William didn’t say a word or move an inch. Doris raised her gaze to find him staring at her quietly.

Goosebumps lined her skin as the moment stretched, she nervously clenched the cake box in her hand but felt too afraid to move. She hadn't done anything wrong, only helped someone clean up—that was all.

After what felt like hours, he snorted. "You seem to be quite popular with men, aren't you?"

Doris was too stunned to respond for a beat, by the time she found her words again—he was already gone. It wasn't like anything she said would've mattered to him, he didn't care anyway. Doris had the feeling that she would never be good enough in his eyes, so why would he care to begin with?

After dinner, Doris laid out Melody's nightgown and began to prepare her for bed. As she untied her hair bun, Prince William's footman knocked on the door.

"Evening, Lady Melody." He bowed when Doris opened the door wider for him.

"What is it?" Melody asked, running her fingers through her long blonde curls.

"Prince William has requested you accompany him tonight." He clasped his hands behind his back. "In his bedroom."

Melody beamed and rushed forward to tip the man. It'd been days since she'd spent the night with him.

Sometimes he came to have dinner with her, but never stayed.

Doris could tell it was starting to weigh on her emotions again, but now it seemed he wanted her to be in his bed tonight.

"My lady, I don't mean to rush you but Prince William did ask to see you as soon as possible."

"Of course! One moment please," She closed the door and turned to glare at Doris. "What are you just standing there for! Come help me,"

Doris silently sighed and moved to help Melody with her makeup. How would she possibly get out of this one?

She'd mostly avoided Prince William since that horrible dinner incident—the last thing she wanted to do was sit outside their room all night while they had sex again. She still had nightmares about the last time she was forced to listen throughout the night.

Doris's hands became a little shaky. There was no way she'd find another maid to take her place tonight.

It was already much too late and she wasn't even sure if she would be able to find one before—

“You'll come with me tonight.” Melody demanded, silencing her frantic thoughts. Melody stood and gestured for Doris to hurry up.

“Yes, my lady.” Doris bowed her head and followed her out the door.

They arrived to Prince William's chamber much sooner than she expected. She wiped her sweaty hands on her apron and tried to stay out of sight until Melody disappeared behind the door with nothing more than a satisfied smirk on her lips.

Well, here goes another sleepless night.

Doris sat as far away from his door as she could manage, but it wasn't far enough to muffle their noises.

She clasped her hands to her ears when she heard the first moan and pressed as hard as she could. She knew by now it was no use, but at least it wasn't as loud. There was no one else in the hallway, their sounds echoed off the walls and always found their way back to her despite how much she didn't want to hear it.

A few moments later, they silenced. Doris slowly removed her ears but kept them cupped in case it started up again—but it didn't.



“My prince?” Said a sweet voice. A sweet, confused voice.  
“You may go back now.” His voice sounded a little rough, Doris straightened a little as she listened.

“I—Did you not want to continue my prince?” Melody’s voice sounded small, embarrassed. It dawned on Doris that they must not have had sex yet—it would be extremely humiliating for Melody to be sent away now. The other ladies would never let her hear the end of it, and they would easily find out if they saw her walk back to her own room at this time of night.

“I want to be alone tonight.” He said, annoyed. “Just leave.” After a long silence, Doris heard a bit of clothes rustling and small, frustrated grunts. “Ask your maid to help you.” Prince William said, he’d almost sounded bored by the whole encounter.

Melody opened the door a crack, Doris sprang up from where she was seated. “Get in here!” Melody glared at her, but tried her hardest to keep her voice somewhat sweet around the prince. Doris almost rolled her eyes, she could practically feel the rage coming from Melody and of course it was only aimed at Doris. Everything was her fault in Melody’s eyes.

Doris pushed open the door and saw the prince leaning back against his headboard, half naked. He didn’t open his eyes as she entered, she wondered how he could possibly fall asleep so quickly or if he was just pretending so he didn’t have to look at either of them. The sight angered her, she turned her gaze away before he saw it written on her face.

Melody stood close to the bed with her back to Doris. Her bodice’s lacing had knotted a bit as if it was almost torn. Doris carefully unlaced the delicate string before redoing it. The whole time Doris worked, Melody kept turning her head to look back at the prince. It was obvious how much she wished he would

say something to her, anything. She probably hoped he would change his mind before she left. But he didn't.

"I'll be on my way then, my prince." Melody said. her voice a little nervous.

Prince William nodded, but didn't bother to open his eyes. As they headed to the door, they both froze at his voice. "Tea, please."

Doris quickly glanced around the room but she knew there was no other servant around. She glanced

back to see a furious Melody already leaving. "Go on! Get Prince William some tea." She demanded over her shoulder before closing the door behind her.

If it wasn't the prince's room, Doris bet she would have slammed the door so hard it would have splintered. But she didn't, the door clicked closed normally and the sound rang through Doris. They were completely alone now.

She took a deep breath and moved to pour some tea in a cup. Her shaky hands managed to bring it to him without spilling a drop. "Here you are, your majesty." Doris said quietly, her voice just as shaky as her hands.

He watched her for a moment before he took the cup from her. "It's you."

Doris felt her heart speed up as she met his eyes. They were the color of a stormy sea, it was hard to admit how lovely they were when they weren't filled with hate. His hair was a mess, her fingers itched to run her fingers through it just to fix it. Part of her liked how unkept he looked in this moment. It bloomed a bit of heat inside her when she realized how intimate it all was. His muscled chest was on full display, but she was careful not to let her eyes stray from his own.

Doris felt her cheeks heat up, she lowered her head a little at his words. What exactly did he mean by that? She was too afraid to ask. Did he know she was the one he marked? Had he always known? He swallowed his tea in two large gulps and handed her the cup, her blood spiked when their hands brushed.

After she cleaned up the mess, she opened the door to leave for the night but froze when he spoke to her back.

“You stay here.”

#Chapter 19 The night isn't over yet

Doris looked down at her hand on the door handle and kept silent for a moment. She didn't just hear that—

“Me?”

“Close the door. Since your lady has left, you stay here to serve.” William said simply.

Doris slowly turned to face him. Stay with him alone? For the whole night? Why would he want her to do that?

“Your majesty, I should go get Peter. I'm sure he would—“

“Are you defying me?” He frowned and sat up a little more.

“No! Of course not,” Doris said quickly.

“Then shut the door.”

Doris let out a low sigh and turned back to the door. Her nightmare was coming true, wasn't it? How would she ever survive the night alone with him?

“I—I can wait out in the hallways, your majesty.” She offered, a bit of hope dangled inside her that he

would let her leave. After all, he hated her. Didn't he?

“Shouldn't you be glad you're here?” He snorted, she flinched at the sound. “Isn't this what you wanted when you tried to tip Peter?”

Doris burned at his words, but stayed silent. She couldn't tell him the real reason she was bribing Peter. She lowered her eyes to the ground and went to sit at the chair near his end table. She picked at her nails and tried not to focus on how close she was to his bed. Her eyes shot to him when he sighed. "Candle." He reminded her.

"Oh! Yes, your majesty." Doris leaned forward to blow out the candle on the side table.

The room fell into darkness, she carefully seated herself back on the chair and folded her hands on her lap. She could hear him settle into bed, rolling back and forth as his breathing steadied. She'd never been in the same room with a man as he slept—it was odd.

Doris slowly released her own breath and closed her eyes to clear her mind. His room smelled lovely and inviting. Much different from the stench of alcohol on him that night he attacked her. This was more unique to him, almost like a stormy morning and pine. It was intoxicating.

His breath was deep and heavy, she felt her mouth was much too dry. She swallowed nervously just as he said, "Tea."

Tea again? Doris wondered to herself. He'd just had a cup, perhaps he couldn't sleep.

She quickly stood and tried not to trip over herself in the darkness as she poured him another cup.

When she leaned over to hand it to him, he grabbed her wrist. The cup shattered against the floor as she was pulled on top of him. "Oh!" She gasped at his strength, her mind flashed back to that night when he pinned her beneath him.

She could feel his hot skin through her uniform, she scrambled to stand up but he grabbed both her

hands. Their eyes locked, she saw a bit of a storm in his gaze. His eyes lowered to her mouth and suddenly he flipped them over so he was on top of her. He pressed her into his silk sheets, she gripped his bare shoulders and tried to push him off her. "Please let me go!"

"Now you're playing hard to get?" She could hear the smirk in his voice, her eyes blurred with tears. His face fell when she kept shaking her head and struggling. "You really know how to earn a man's heart, don't you?" He said with a bite to his words, but Doris thought she heard something other than anger.

She thought she heard jealously.

Did he want to punish her?

"Unfortunately, it won't work on me." William lowered his voice as his eyes raked her features for any sign she'd felt their mate bond like he did. It didn't seem like she felt it at all, perhaps if she did she wouldn't be playing with his emotions. On one hand, he'd caught her trying to get his attention more than once, on the other, she'd been nice to everyone except him.

He had to shut down his feelings, he had to let Waylon take over before he grew more irritated.

The beast inside him growled happily at his decision. The smell of his mate excited him, he instantly reached to undress her. She pushed at him with all of her stretch and managed to get out from under him. Her dress tore down the front and left her almost bare in her undergarments.

William stared at her in shock when he saw her mark—the real mark he'd left upon her neck. Waylon crackled silently. "I told you it was her."

"You really didn't want to sleep with me?" He asked quietly, glad the darkness hid his face enough. He

flinched at himself when he heard the hurt in his own tone, it wasn't like him to sound sad over a girl.

"I don't, I never wanted to." Doris breathed, trying to calm herself. She would not cry in front of him, she would not collapse. Doris lifted her chin, she would be strong. Yes, many girls would kill to be in her shoes. They would probably call her crazy for not joining him in bed, even for one night. That was the kind of girl he wanted. Someone that gave up their dignity, freedom, even their lives for him and his wealth. They dressed up every day desperately hoping for his attention or even an extra glance from him. They fought with each other over who would be his favorite as if they could win that title if they were cruel enough to each other.

But that was not what Doris wanted. She would take the abuse Melody gave her if it meant the amnesty would be signed. But there was no way she would ever give up her freedom for some man. Even if that man was a handsome prince.

No... never in a million years..

"What are you saying?" Prince William sounded shocked from her response as if he fully believed she wanted him this whole time.

"I'm here to serve you, not sleep with you your majesty." Doris responded quietly.

"And if I insist?" Prince William threatened, though his heart didn't sound in it.

Doris stepped back and glanced around the room. She picked up one of the butter knives resting by the tea pot and pointed it at him.

"What? You're gonna murder me with a dull knife?"

Doris pointed the sharp end towards her neck. "I wouldn't dare, but if you insisted I would end my life right here before you could touch me."

Prince William stared at her silently for a moment before he finally spoke. "Alright, put it down. I won't touch you again."

"Will you keep your word?"

Prince William scoffed, "What? You think I'm so desperate to sleep with a fucking maid?"

Doris lowered the knife and turned towards the door.

"Where are you going?"

Doris glanced back at him with confusion in her gaze.

"As you said yourself, you're here to serve. The night isn't over yet."

She glanced down at herself. Her undergarments were on full display from the rip down the front of her dress. Her hair was unbound from her proper braid—she looked like a mess. He must love the idea that he was humiliating her.

Well, she wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

"Alright, your majesty. I'll be here." She calmly returned herself to the chair by his bed.

The night air chilled her bare flesh, she hugged herself and closed her eyes tightly. Praying to the moon goddess that she would be able to leave soon.

Light poured in from the long windows across from her. Doris blinked the sleep away from her eyes and slowly sat up. She felt warm, Doris looked down to see a coat was draped over her body. She glanced up to see Prince William fully dressed, seated on the edge of the bed with his back to her.

"Leave." Was all he said.

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#Chapter 20 You're nothing like a lady

Doris walked to her room wearing Prince William's coat over her torn dress. It was huge on her, it fell past her knees and gave her a small sense of comfort from the warmth. It even smelled like him, but that

wasn't something she cared to remember. As Doris reached her door, she noticed Ms. Shirley and two other maids were gathered in front of it. They turned when they heard her approach and she could see the smirk crawl up their faces as they observed her. Great, Doris was sure a rumor was already spreading about her night with the prince. No one would believe her when she would tell them she didn't sleep with him. The gossip of a lady's maid sleeping with the prince was just too good for them to believe anything else.

"Good morning, Doris. Lady Melody asked to see you immediately." Ms. Shirley said.

Doris swallowed and went to step past them to get into her room, but they wouldn't move. "May I have a moment to change first? I'll be fast—"

"Lady Melody demanded you be present now. Please don't make this harder than it has to be." Ms.

Shirley threw a look at the other maids and the girls quickly came up to stand on both sides of Doris so she would walk where they wanted her to. Melody would surely lose it if she saw Doris with a torn dress and Prince William's coat. Doris shivered at the thought of what Melody might do to her for this.

When they arrived to Melody's door, the first thing she noticed was the velvet bag on the table. Doris paled when she realized it was the bag of gold she hadn't had a chance to pass on to Peter after she kept it, but she thought she'd hidden it so well—Melody stood from the table angrily when she saw Doris.

She must have searched her room after she left Prince William's chamber last night. No doubt looking for something that would land her in trouble. She found the only thing in her room that she didn't want anyone to find.



“My lady, we’ve brought Doris.” Ms. Shirley announced, Melody walked out with fire in her eyes. Doris stumbled back when the two maids let her go and moved out of Melody’s way.

“You stupid bitch!” She screamed as she barreled into Doris and knocked her to the hard ground. Once she was down, Melody kicked her stomach as hard as she could with her pointed heels.

“My lady, please...” Doris tried to beg but was only offered several more kicks to her stomach, it became too painful to try and speak. Each time she opened her mouth, a bit of blood dripped out.

“How dare you keep the gold for yourself like some nasty thief!” Melody shouted. Would anyone help her? Or would they only watch as she was beaten by Melody?

“What were you going to do with it? Bribe Peter? To make him sweet talk William about you so you can sleep with him?”

“No, no!” Doris coughed out. “I didn’t do anything to harm you, my lady.”

“Oh no? So why did the prince make me leave and you stay last night?”

Doris opened her mouth to explain, but saw Melody’s anger flare when she noticed who’s coat she had on as well as all the marks on her skin he’d left last night from their fight. Doris tried to brace herself, but it didn’t work against each of Melody’s aggressive hits.

Melody bared her teeth and kicked Doris harder than she had before. Doris screamed for mercy, but Melody refused to give it. Soon Doris felt faint as blood blurred her vision, she tried to curl herself up but Melody only kicked harder. Ms. Shirley and the other maids finally pulled Melody away from Doris, clearly shocked by her actions. Where were they earlier when she was screaming for help?

“My lady, please stop. You’re killing her!”

“You’re damn right, I am going to kill her!” Melody screamed, it was the last thing Doris heard before she saw darkness.

She wasn’t sure how many minutes or hours passed when she woke up, but the moment she opened her eyes, every sense of pain slammed into her at once. She groaned from the feeling, too afraid to move and make it worse. Her entire body trembled as she silently sobbed, blood leaked from her lips.

“My lady, she’s not lying. Prince William didn’t sleep with her despite the room being messy.” Ms. Shirley said cautiously.

“Really?”

“Yes, it’s protocol to mark down the names of all the girls the princes spend the night with in the Golden Palace.”

Melody was silent for a moment. “So, she just stole my money?”

“I’m afraid so.”

Doris saw Melody near her with a new look in her eyes. It was worse than all of sneers or glares of hatred. This one looked like the cruelty of a killer, Doris only hoped she was quick about it. When she reached Doris, she stepped on her hand without any sense of hesitation. Doris opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came out. She closed her eyes and leaned her head back in the blood beneath her.

“You stupid bitch, I can’t believe you stole my money!” Melody pressed harder, Doris heard her bone crack beneath her shoe. She screamed in agony, but the moon goddess did not answer her prayers. It occurred to Doris that she was about to die. Not by a wolf, or the monster in her dreams, but by a girl

that used to be a maid just like her. “Fortunately, Prince William loves me despite your attempts at pulling us apart—“

Doris wanted to explain herself, to tell Melody she only did it with good intentions—not to hurt her. But she was too hurt to even get a word out. Would she even listen if she could? Doris had the feeling that Melody had always wanted to get rid of her. She’d never once shown kindness over the year towards Doris, it was always hatred. Even when Doris tried to be the bigger person and offer her friendship, she never wanted it.

Suddenly, her foot was lifted off her hand but the pain was still intense.

“P-prince William!” Melody gasped, Doris looked up to see William lift Melody above the ground by her neck, choking her. She clawed at his hands as if she couldn’t breathe, but he didn’t loosen his grip.

Ms. Shirley and the other maids kneeled to the ground, begging for Melody. “Your Majesty... please have a little mercy.” Doris watched them with her own bite of hatred, they didn’t care as much when it was Doris who was about to die.

William stared into Melody’s wide, frantic eyes and dropped her. “You’re nothing like a lady.” He spat.

Melody gasped for air and straightened. “Your majesty, I—I was only punishing her because she stole a bag of gold from me! I asked her to tip Peter but she kept it for herself. If I didn’t search her room last night, you never know how much she would have tried to steal from the palace...” Melody spoke quickly, Prince William only stared at her.

He tilted his head slightly as a silence followed. His eyes grew dark when he finally spoke.

“Did you just say it was yours?”

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