

Her Unwanted Mate On The Throne by Caroline Chapter 76

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Chapter 76 I think we're lost.

"I said I'm going to be the next king." William repeated with a bit of imitation in his voice at her lack of understanding. She understood what he said, she just couldn't believe it. "I... don't know what you're saying. Prince Martin is the crown prince. He's the next in line to be king." Doris felt a bit of unease settle in her stomach when she saw the look on his face. As if what she said was only temporary and it was about time she learned that. William rolled his eyes and stood from the bed. His shirt was ripped wide open and she forced herself not to stare at the muscles on his chest—this was definitely not the time for that. "Prince Martin doesn't know anything about how to properly rule a kingdom. He's been groomed to be a carbon copy of my father and nothing else." "You plan to take his place? How?" Doris asked, completely bewildered. This was why he came to the north? "I think he will have no choice but to hand the crown over." William said simply and moved to get a new shirt. "I plan on uniting the kingdom with the rogues. Even Prince Martin isn't foolish enough to stand in my way. And if he is, I can't say I will feel sorry for whatever happens to him." Doris swallowed. "What do you mean by that? He's your brother." William slipped off his ruined shirt and casually pulled on the new one. He looked over at her with a sort of lopsided smirk that screamed sinister intentions. "It's politics, Doris. My brother and I have never seen each other as family. It's always been a competition for the crown even when I was in the darkness and he didn't suspect me." "Are you saying you would... harm your own brother for the crown?" "Don't sound so shocked. You've worked at the palace long enough to know how it goes. Luna Queen tried to have you blamed for a poisoning just to pin it all on me. It's all a game." William buttoned up his shirt and ran his fingers through his messy hair as he turned to her. "We'll make history. Doris." "We? I think you're mistaken." Doris took a small step back. William furrowed his brows as he if didn't understand her words. Did he expect her to jump on him with joy? "I don't want to help over throw Prince Martin." His eyes darkened, it felt as the room dimmed with his mood as he took a step closer to her. She mirrored his steps with one back. "You're in love with him, aren't you?" "What? Of course not! I don't want him to die or be forcefully overthrown." Doris clenched her hands into fists. "Forgive me, but I'm not interested in politics. Especially when it hurts others." "His plan to rule will match my father and whatever Luna Queen wants. I wouldn't let that happen." "He's still your brother," Don't you want a better life for yourself?" William shouted. Doris flinched at his voice. "Yes, and I've been working towards that every day since I came to the palace. A better life is freedom." William opened his mouth to respond, and froze. She could see the realization behind his eyes as he took in her words and considered all the things she meant by them. It was the simple truth. She didn't want to be held down by *him* and his politics. She wanted her freedom and she didn't care if her inner wolf insisted he was her mate-she wanted her freedom. No man could tempt her enough to make her change her mind. No matter how handsome, no matter how much control he had over an entire kingdom. "Right." William snarled and grabbed his jacket from the dresser, knocking over a glass pitcher in the process. He stared at her as if he didn't care that he brought glass shattering to the floor beneath them. His boots cracked over each shard as he stepped closer. "I don't need a pathetic maid to be at my

side anyway.” 1 She watched him leave with tears burning the back of her eyes. They threatened to escape and name her as weak as she felt in that moment-but she did her best to hold them in while he slammed the door closed. Did he expect her to fall at his feet as all the women he’s had before had? Did he expect her to be another... pet for him to play with until he decided he was bored and sought out a new one? She was no one’s property. She was a person. He may think he owned her, but she had spent every day for the past five years trying to work against that. He would not unravel it for her now. She refused to stand at his side as something for him to toy with. He hadn’t mentioned Melody once this entire trip, as if she didn’t matter to him in the slightest. She would not be next on his list of conquests.cz Doris felt a strange pain in her heart. She rubbed her chest and winced at the strange feeling. It felt as if he wounded her with her words, as if her heart was close to breaking just at the thought of their fight. She’d never felt anything for another man before, she wouldn’t start now. Not with... him. Doris grabbed her jacket and treaded out into the snow to find a bit of fresh air and peace. “Why would you ever deny our mate like that?” Cordelia whispered inside her, a bit of rage wrapped around her words. Doris glanced around and saw several people near enough to hear her. She went off a back path and set out for some privacy before she dared to respond “If you knew me at all, you’d know that freedom matters more to me than a so called mate.” Doris whispered. She shoved her hands deep in her pockets to warm them and watched as her feet dipped in the thick snow. A bit of wind blew her hair back away from her face, but she was too distracted to notice. Her mind was wild with the look of his face and the sound of his words trying to drag her down. “You should at least hear out his plan before you make judgements.” Cordelia hissed. Doris rolled her eyes at how shallow her wolf was being. She needed a bit more self respect. Doris only recently allowed herself a bit of her own on this journey. “He just admitted he would do whatever it takes to overthrow his own brother from the throne. I want nothing to do with that, or any future kingdom business. It won’t matter to us soon.” Doris swayed a little when the wind picked up. She held her ground and squinted her eyes. It was getting a bit more foggy than she expected. “Are you crazy? You only get one mate. You could travel the whole world and you would never be able to replace him, ever. You’ll only find men that are less than him.” Cordelia sounded angry in her mind, but Doris couldn’t bring herself to care. Life wasn’t about living for someone else, it was about living for herself. “I would much rather live for myself than a man. He would never be faithful to us, Cordelia. Even if I stayed for him. Once he lost interest in me, I would be swept aside like all of his past lovers were. Some of them even scrub toilets for the public just to survive.” Doris glanced around when she lost sight of the path she was on. Where was she? “You heard the story of his father. You know how wild he was for her and how he wanted no one else. William wouldn’t dare stray from us.” Cordelia insisted. Doris snorted. “You must not have been listening. He doesn’t want anything to do with a mate and he never has. He protects me and takes care of me, but at the end of the day I am just a silly maid to him. That is not what I want for my life. When we return to the palace, the king will hopefully have already signed the amnesty and we will be long gone before William even sets his plan in motion.” “You’re absolutely mad! You would dare leave your mate during a dangerous time in his life?”

“We don’t owe him anything! He stood there while his real lady almost killed me and only told her to do it in private next time. Don’t fool yourself just because you’re attached to his wolf!” Doris shouted. She quickly looked around to make sure she was alone. She quickly realized she was not only alone, but lost. She couldn’t see a foot in front of herself and the wind drowned out any noise she

made. Her eyes started to water and sting with how harsh it grew. Doris wrapped her arms around herself. "L... I think we're lost."

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Chapter 77 The worst of the storm is still coming.

Within minutes, the winds turned from nasty to almost deadly. Doris could barely stand up straight for more than a minute. It would shove her forward or back depending on where she turned and nothing she did set her straight. Her hands felt numb with how much she braced herself for impact on the ground. She couldn't tell what direction she had even come from the camp while she was arguing with her inner wolf. How far did she stray? Would they be able to hear her cries for help? Or would they ever find her body when this was over with? Of course not-she couldn't even hear herself breath. Her screams sounded like whispers against the winds. Her wolf was entirely silent as if she abandoned her completely out in the cold, or perhaps she just couldn't hear her over the roaring noise. Perhaps it was scared off because of her own fear. Doris stumbled across the snow and fell face first into a large pile. She tried to pull herself out of it, but the winds forced her down harder. It crossed her mind that she might die out here. She tried to push those thoughts away and focus on standing, on getting herself up and to safety but she couldn't. It was too strong, it was too easy to give up and let it control her. Doris closed her eyes and tried to change into her wolf. She tried to push the wolf out of her but it wouldn't come. How did she make it come out? Why wasn't it answering her calls? Now she was panicking. She felt it in her chest and it rolled through her body like a shock. Doris forced herself out of the snow that tried to trap her and fell right back on her ass when she stood again. The fog blinded her it was like there was nothing in front of her for miles and she felt as if she was an entirely different world she entered. She was so cold, it was agony. No sense of her felt warm or as if she would ever feel warmth again. This was it for her, it had to be. "Help!" Doris screamed, but it was lost in the air lie she said nothing. Her fear crept on her and tried to suffocate any chance of survival. She walked against the wind and towards it, until she realized she was going in circles. She kept passing the same tall rocks and her footsteps were covered before she noticed she was heading the same way over and over again. She must have passed it a dozen times before she gave up and stopped for a minute to think. Doris finally decided to rest against the rocks when her legs started to burn. She wrapped her arms around herself and closed her eyes tightly, praying the winds would end and the storm would blow through soon enough. How long had she been out here? Would hours turn to days? She wouldn't last a single night in this weather. Her jacket wasn't warm enough to save her, not even close. Her teeth chattered so hard, she was afraid they would crack and break into a million pieces. Her bones felt as if they were ice inside her and she felt as if she completely lost feeling of her toes and fingers. If she was a wolf, she might have been able to survive this with all of her fur. But her attempts fell flat, her wolf wouldn't answer to her and she wondered if it was because of their argumentWould she punish her enough until she died? Or did Doris just not understand how to shift on command? of course she didn't know how to do that, not even close. She only shifted once and she wasn't even sure how that happened. It was ripped out of her without a second thought to save

someone else rather than herself. Perhaps deep down, she truly just didn't want to save herself. Doris slid down the rock and fell into the snow. Her hands and arms felt frozen, she could barely lift them as more time passed. How long had she laying here? Would anyone notice she was even gone? Of course not, she hadn't told anyone she was going out for a walk. She bet everyone knew a storm was coming and she was the only one stupid enough to wander out into the worst of it. She bet they all thought she was in her cabin nice and warm like they all were. Snow began to cover her legs and the rest of her body. She held her arms tighter around herself and trembled. In minutes, her legs had been almost completely covered. She tried to stand and pull herself out of it, but her legs wouldn't bend. They were frozen, as were her arms. She laid back in the snow almost willingly when the wind pushed her harder than it ever had before. It covered her in a layer of snow as if she was just part of the ground and she never existed. Why did she even come out here? She forgot what she had been mad about. She forgot what made her mad enough to ever venture out to her death and not think about the horrible weather. Freezing to death had never truly crossed her mind before. Even all the nights she shivered and wished for a hundred blankets. All the times she fell into the snow and cursed at herself for not paying attention, she never thought she would be caught out in a storm. How ridiculous of her to die this way after all she had been through. Doris closed her eyes and felt the darkness start to take over. It was better than being raped or beaten to death, she supposed. At least she could take a shred of her dignity with her and hopefully it would pass on with her in the next life. By the time they found her body, she would be nothing but ice. So cold, she would shatter like glass if they tried to move her. "Doris!"

The sound of his deep voice tugged at the edge of her mind. She saw his beautiful face behind her closed eyes. He wasn't mad at her like he usually was, he looked almost peaceful. She then remembered why she left her room, because of their fight. She wondered what would have happened if she just agreed to help. Would she be laying here now? Most definitely yes, she would have been upset with herself for agreeing to be something she wasn't. "Doris!" The voice called again. It sounded louder in her head, as if he was right next to her. She wondered if he noticed she was gone or if he would care this time. So many times he had come to her aid when all she did was push back against him. She didn't deserve to be helped by anyone, least of all him. Doris opened her eyes and saw a dark shape in the fog. A large body had his arm out in front of him, shielding his eyes from the rough snow that tried to take him down. He moved like a force, she was sure she was imagining it. That tended to happen when you were near death-hallucinating things she wished were true. She heard her name like a bell through the noise. How could she hear him so clearly when she couldn't even hear herself? William lowered his arm when he saw her. His face was red and his eyes were squinted as if he could barely hold them open to look at her. "Doris!" He shouted again. William fell to his knees beside her and pushed all of the snow off her body before he took her in his arms. He lifted her as if she weighed nothing and she couldn't even bend her arms enough to hold onto him. Her legs dangled over his arms, he held her firm against his chest as he looked around. 1 "We have to find cover, the worst of the storm is still coming." He said loudly against her ear. Doris shivered against his warm breath. He barely seemed to be bothered by the snow at all. Doris closed her eyes again when the snow stung her eyes and tried to blind her vision. He held her firm as he stumbled across the rough patches of snow. She listened to his heavy breath and tried to focus on that when her insides felt as if they were giving up on her, "I think there might be somewhere nearby." He said loudly, as if he was just trying to keep her awake. Doris didn't open her

eyes, she wasn't sure how much time had passed until the sounds dimmed all at once as if the air was being blocked out. Doris opened her eyes and saw nothing, just blackness. She tried to part her lips to speak, but nothing came out.

William laid her down. "I'll get a fire starting—" Doris couldn't hear a word he said after that as darkness took her over completely.

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Chapter 78 If we don't hurry, we'll catch another storm.

Warmth caressed her face. Doris slowly opened her eyes and saw fire brighten up her blurry vision. It took a moment for her eyes to focus, but she saw William adding logs to the growing fire. His shadows flickered across the walls around them like art. Doris blinked a few times and realized they were inside... some sort of cave? Doris tried to sit up, his coat fell off her shoulders and she went to grip it but her numb fingers couldn't get a proper hold on it. William lifted his head to look at her. His sleeves were pushed up to his elbows and he looked as if he was actually sweating from the fire. She had never felt such envy for someone being warm. How was it possible? "Stay still. You're not warm enough yet." William said as if it was a command. It only made Doris want to disobey him and sit up anyway. He let out a frustrated breath and dropped the rest of the logs and went to her. "Do you know how long it took to find you? You're frozen." Doris definitely felt like a thawing turkey. Her teeth chattered when she parted her lips to talk. "W-where are we?" "Some cave in the middle of nowhere." William said as he sat next to her. Doris shivered and tried to pull his coat higher on her shoulders. He pulled her closer to him and offered a bit of his own warmth but she could barely feel his body against her. "How did you get so far out here?" "I don't know, I-I just kept walking and realized I was lost." Doris whimpered. Every slight move actually hurt. It felt like burns on the inside of her body and she realized she had never truly felt cold until now. Even with the fire blazing in front of her, she was frozen. William wrapped his arms around her small frame and Doris laid her body back against him. He felt stiff, as if he didn't truly want to be the one to warm her but forced himself to so she wouldn't die. It was a nice enough thought, at least. Even if a part of him would always despise her. "How did you find me?" Doris asked with a slight tremor to her voice. William shifted a little beneath her. "I followed your scent. It took hours before it was strong enough." "Hours?" Doris whispered. She had been out there for hours and he never gave up looking for her? A part of Doris softened and she tried not let herself feel that way. It was a doomed feeling that would lead to nothing, she had to remind herself that every time he showed her a side of him he kept hidden most of the time. She knew he had a bit of kindness beneath all the rough exterior, but she didn't want to get so attached to it when she knew it wasn't safe. She heard the howls of wind grow harsh and try to enter through the pockets of air around the rocks he placed in front of the entrance. She was surprised it didn't knock them right out of place with how loud it sounded. She weakly held her froze hands out towards the fire and let them defrost slowly along with the rest of her body. "Why did you come for me?" Doris asked suddenly. Why did he even bother? She had been in so much trouble since they

first came here, she didn't understand why he even wanted her alive at this point. It would have been easier to let her go and move on. She slowed him down and made him do horrible things to defend her—was she worth that? “Why wouldn't 1.” William grumbled. It sounded more like a statement rather than a question. “I saw you leave before the storm hit.” Doris curled and uncurled her fingers just trying to get feeling back in them. “I didn't think you would care to, is all.” It seemed like the wrong thing to say almost instantly after she said it. His body turned hard as a rock against her back. He shoved her off him and stood. She watched as he wiped his pants as if he wanted any trace of her off of him. His warmth was immediately missed, he looked down at her with a bit of distaste and she forced herself to live without it. “It's so hard to believe that I would?” He spat. Doris pressed her lips together. “It's—” Doris hesitated and he narrowed his eyes at her when he heard it. “I'm just not sure if you even like me most of the time.” “You can believe what you want. Nothing I do will change that.” William went to sit on the other end of the cave. She could feel his anger as if she could slice through the air and grab it to crush against her fingers. It was as alive as he was. “That's not true. Actions speak louder than words, which is why I'm confused.” Doris admitted and pressed her face into his coat. It smelled strongly like him and part of her wanted to bottle the scent and take it with her wherever she went. He didn't say anything to her words. Perhaps he was confused himself. Perhaps he fought a similar battle she did where they both wanted to dance around the truth until their feet bled raw. She was glad to stay stubborn. It was safer that way. “I couldn't change out there into my wolf when I wanted to.” Doris said after a few minutes of silence. He didn't look at her, he only kept his blue eyes on the flames. “It doesn't come at will.” He said. “It's not easy to command it when it's still new to you.” Doris frowned and leaned back against the wall of the cave. She closed her eyes and brought her arms around her legs to hold them to her chest. “At this rate, I'll never learn.” “I told you I would teach you.” William said. He sounded almost as if he was bored. “It won't be easy. I don't like when people complain.” Doris opened her eyes and watched him across the fire. He wouldn't look at her again and she didn't blame him. She wasn't much to look at to begin with, she must have looked like an ungrateful ghost. “Thank you for coming for me, William. I would have died without you.” William's eyes flickered to her. She held her breath for a moment as they raked across her entire being. He didn't acknowledge her words, he simply lowered his head a little. “Well?” He said. “What?” “Do you want me to train you or not?” “Oh, yes. I would like that very much.” Doris swallowed and glanced down at the flames. How long would it take before she would be able to change at will? Did she even want to do something like that? Perhaps it was a good thing she couldn't change. Then she might be able to ignore it until she died. They sat in silence for hours until she dozed off. She didn't want to touch the topic of politics so soon after their last fight. What if he left her in the middle of the storm to fend for herself once he remembered she didn't want to join him? When she opened her eyes, the fire was out and the rocks were moved out from the front of the entrance. William was no where to be found. Doris quickly got up and had to brace herself against the wall for a moment when the room spun around her. She felt as if she was about to collapse for a moment. How long had it been since she last had something to eat? When the world was right once more, she carefully made her way out the small entrance and found William staring up at the clear skies. He didn't turn towards her when he spoke. “It's safe to get back now.” Doris bit her lip and looked around at the fresh day. The sky was clear and she could see every tree for miles. The ground looked thick with fresh snow, she knew it must have been inches thicker than it was the night before. “Do you know how to find the trail back?” Doris asked with a bit of doubt. Not in him, but in herself. She couldn't tell where she was at all. They could have been miles and miles from the camp and she

wouldn't know what direction to walk in. He gave her a side glance. She handed him his thick jacket and he pulled it on." You'll learn how to navigate better eventually." He said. Doris followed him through this thick snow and felt exhausted after only twenty feet. "Thank you, again." Doris said to his back. His shoulders tensed a little, but again he said nothing. "Thank you for all of it. For all that you have done." ; She didn't care if he didn't want to hear it. She had to say it.

"It's fine." He interrupted. "If we don't hurry, we'll catch another storm."

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Chapter 79 She was naked on top of William

The next day, Doris met William out in a clearing a bit away from the camp. He stayed at a different cabin and she hadn't seen him since he brought her back to the camp the day before. No one had ventured out to even notice she had been gone, not one person was concerned about her. Only him. She hated how that made her feel inside, as if her heart could stop for him and she despised her own weakness. It was right that he slept in his own cabin. There were more than enough and it wasn't right for them to share a bed in the first place. She brought clothes that were too big for her and an extra set just in case it ripped off during the process. The last thing she needed was to be wandering around naked because her wolf tore her clothes. He stood with his hands deep in his pockets and his eyes anywhere but her. She tried not to notice how lovely he looked in the color red. It made his eyes look even more blue than normal-if that was possible. She set down her things and went to stand in front of him. "Does it always hurt when you change into your wolf?" "Yes. You just get used to it." William said. They were far enough from the camp that no one would see or hear them as she attempted to change on demand. At least no one would see her failures. His words though made her want to turn back to her cabin and hide under the covers. But she couldn't. She wasn't like that anymore, she couldn't live her life in fear. She had to control her own future and her life was meant to be lived, not feared. If she now had a wolf inside her, she would learn to embrace it... or try to. "Okay." Doris took a breath. "What should I do first?" William looked down at her with raised brows. "It's not about forcing it. It's about calling it to your will." Doris furrowed her brow in confusion. "I tried to call it in the snow but it wouldn't come" "Did you try to call to it? Or did you try to force it to come?" William asked as he crossed his arms over his chest. "Your wolf doesn't like to be controlled when it's new." Doris stood there and looked around as if the answer would fall from the sky. "How do you suppose I call for it? Just... say her name?" William rolled his eyes to the sky and let out a breath of frustration. "No. You call her from within and let it take control of you. You have to be willing to let her do that." "Oh." Doris chewed on her lip. She supposed a part of her had been trying not to let the wolf take complete control of her body. She pushed back even in her darkest times, she didn't want to lose that sort of control to something she didn't really trust yet. It was hard to even think of doing that now. Doris took another deep breath and closed her eyes. She could feel her wolf hum inside her as if it was waiting for her to call upon it. The stubborn wolf must have

always been listening beneath the surface. It made her resent it a bit more when she realized she knew Doris had been suffering and didn't once offer to help her. Perhaps it wanted her to come to the decision on her own-but a little guidance would have been wonderful when she felt so clueless. "Keep your eyes closed and speak inwardly to your wolf." William said by her ear. She could feel him as he moved around her, almost as if her own body tracked him like he was a part of her. She shivered at the sound of his voice and felt her cheeks heat almost instantly. Doris cleared her throat and went for it. "Cordelia?" She asked in her mind. "Yes?" Cordelia responded, it sounded as if she was smirking. Doris tried to keep the conversation in her mind even when her lips parted to answer out loud. "I... give you permission to take control." "Oh, do you? That's nice." Cordelia responded. Doris sighed and opened her eyes. "She's being stubborn." "Our wolves can be bolder versions of ourselves." William said. He was still behind her. "Call to her, command her to take control and shift." Doris closed her eyes and tried again. "Cordelia. I command you to take over." Doris said with a bit more confidence than she felt. She could have sworn the wolf laughed at her and her hands curled into fists at her sides. "You're not doing it right. Listen to our mate a little closer." Cordelia said. 23 Doris blew out a frustrated breath and opened her eyes to find him standing in front of her again. "It's not working. She won't come." "She must be testing you. She wants you to be stronger." William said. He studied her face as if he could see her wolf if he looked hard enough. "It's not always about asking, she can feel what you want and it's her choice to answer." Doris closed her eyes one more time and tried to focus on what he meant. Don't force her, let her come. But don't ask either? Doris tried to find a bit of balance in herself and she knew her wolf lingered nearby patiently. Why couldn't she have a wolf that actually liked to do what it was told? She felt a sense of calm wash over her as she released a breath. She imagined her wolf stepping into control and allowing her body to become her own instead of staying in the background of everything. Doris allowed her to have the freedom, the power she knew she craved. There was no one to save, not even herself. She just wanted her to come out and see the daylight for once in her life. "Alright..." Cordelia hissed. "If you insist, I'll come out to play." Doris felt the shift mimic the feeling from before, but she didn't ever think she would get used to it. Not in a hundred years. Her bones cracked, every single one of them. They shifted and formed new shapes that made her feel intense agony as she dropped to all fours. Her clothes stretched and ripped from her back despite her attempt at finding something big enough to last this sort of thing. She supposed nothing she had would last this, would it? White fur exploded across her skin, she felt her legs shift and her fingers fomm into paws. Her screams turned to howls almost instantly, it was as if she no longer owned her own body the second Cordelia stepped in. She whimpered when she realized it worked. His advice worked and she should have been happy but she only felt more afraid. She didn't want this body, she didn't want this life. Doris turned to look at William and realized he had shifted too. His wolf was black as night with bright blue eyes she would never forget. Her wolf was excited to see him, Cordelia hurried to press her nose against his in a sort of greeting and didn't listen when Doris tried to tell her to step back away from the prince. It wasn't proper for her to act that way with him, no matter how much her wolf wanted to. Doris forced her wolf away and she heard Cordelia growl inwardly. Doris wanted to shout, but she couldn't. All that came out were more howls or whimpers. Was she able to speak inside her head as a wolf? Doris didn't understand how any of this worked, not in the slightest. Everything just made her even more confused than the last. William watched her curiously and walked around her wolf. She sat still and let him observe her until he wandered into the trees and came out a few minutes later as his human version. He had his clothes on still, thank the moon goddess for that. "You need

to learn how to pull it in and change back. You never want your wolf to have too much control." Cordelia bared her teeth at William as if she was threatening him. Doris forced Cordelia to go towards the woods so they could change back but she wouldn't budge. A dark sort of feeling lingered in her mind, she knew it wasn't her own thoughts that made her feel that way. It was strange not being able to control herself, to have a wolf with a mind of her own that just demanded to be heard even when it wasn't

right. Her wolf jumped on William. He caught her in mid air and fell back into the snow. Once she was on top of him, Cordelia released her hold and allowed Doris to shift back into her human form. Doris didn't realize she was naked on top of him until it was too late.

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Chapter 80 There's always a bit of danger in a promise, isn't there

Her entire body heated with shame and embarrassment. His bare hands gripped her naked waist and he seemed to realize it too late as well. William lifted his eyes to the sky and removed his hands. Doris scrambled off him and he pointed to his discarded cloak on a rock nearby without so much as a word. She threw it on herself and grabbed her extra clothes before she ran off into the woods to change behind the largest tree she could find. Had he seen her? His hands were on her naked skin! Doris quickly pulled on her clothes and boots before she glanced out to the clearing where he stood facing the other way as if to offer her a bit more privacy. He had to have seen something, right? She prayed he didn't. She'd never been naked in front of another man before, she didn't want to start with him! But what if he had? She would die from her utter embarrassment. After a few minutes of calming herself, Doris came out from behind the trees. He glanced back at her with a look of his usual indifference and a bit of her body calmed at his expression. He looked as if nothing happened. Though, she wasn't sure if he was just acting this way for her benefit or if he truly hadn't seen a thing. "Walk with me?" He asked. Doris wanted nothing more than to return to her cabin and hide from shame, but she swallowed that feeling and nodded. William held out his arm and Doris blinked before she took it. She made the mistake of gripping where his muscle was instead of his elbow and now her mind couldn't stop picturing it beneath his thick jacket. What was wrong with her? They walked in silence around the main camp and down towards the frozen lake. Doris had seen a few younger kids skating around on the solid surface earlier but she wasn't sure how one would even begin to attempt something like that. Wouldn't the ice crack?

There was no sign of anyone else at the moment, she was glad to be alone for once. He stopped just at the edge of the frozen lake and stared at the crystal surface. Doris watched him for a moment, she studied the way his eyes looked so thoughtful when he had something on his mind. She wished she could unravel what raced through his mind for once instead of worrying about her own. When William caught her staring, he actually smiled at her. It was so small and brief, she almost missed it. Just a tug on his lips that left her heart racing more than it ever

had before. He turned towards her and she noticed his eyes couldn't help but flicker between her lips and eyes as if he wasn't sure which ones were more interesting to gaze at. "I don't think I did very well in your class." Doris said suddenly but she could tell he wasn't listening when his eyes didn't lift from her mouth. "Honestly, I'm not sure why my wolf is so impossible to get along with. She truly has a mind of her own." His hand was almost comically bigger than her own. He gripped one of her hands, isn't there suddenly and swallowed it in his. Her mind raced a million thoughts a second and couldn't seem to decide which one to focus on but she knew she didn't have anything else to say when he looked at her like that. He lifted his free hand up to her face and pushed away her long hair from her eyes. He brushed it behind her ears and she actually shivered from the touch. It was the sort of thing that only happened in books. The love interest brushing her hair back behind her ear before he William tilted her chin up and leaned down to press his lips against her own. She felt as if every bone in her body had froze up at the soft touch. She didn't expect it, not at all-1 William pushed away from her so aggressively, she stumbled back and had to catch herself from falling on her ass. The look on his face was no where near soft or lovely, it was furious. He looked almost-wounded. * "William—" He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and spat at her feet as if she was the most disgusting thing he had ever tasted. Doris felt the tears prick the back of her eyes instantly as he turned away from her without another word and stomped back towards the camp. What—what had just happened? Did he... did he just take her first real kiss and then spit it back at her as if she was poison? Bile rose in the back of her throat, she swallowed it down before she threw up everything inside of her. Thick, warm tears escaped without her permission. It occurred to her that he might have only kissed her because he did see her naked and expected something from her. That was it, wasn't it? When he felt her tense up, he knew he wasn't getting what he wanted. He didn't even give her a chance to let the shock fade, he only wanted one thing from her. She fell to her knees in the snow and watched as light white flakes floated down from the sky. They glistened in the light and it would have normally been so beautiful, but it made her sick with dread. Why did he kiss her? Why didn't he give her a chance to kiss him back? Why would she even consider it?

"Doris?" A light voice called from behind her. Doris turned to see Enzo a few feet away. The sun in the sky had drifted further down in the sky and left her with barely any light left to shine on her misery. Her tears had long dried, but her eyes might stay red for days. She was so angry, she wanted to punch William and then never see him again. He was nothing but a nasty beast of a man that didn't deserve any part of her. She couldn't wait to be free and never see him again. "What are you still doing out here? William has been haunting the camp with his aggression for hours. I thought he might have killed you and left your body out here." Enzo joked, though it sounded as if part of him meant it. Doris would have laughed if she had any sense of noise left inside her. All she had left was anger and emptiness. "Unfortunately, I live." Doris said. Enzo sat next to her in the snow and rested his elbows on his knees. "Ah, I'm positive you meant fortunately but that's okay, we all make mistakes." Enzo bumped his shoulder against her own and looked her splotchy red face over. "What happened?" "I just don't understand how he can act nice one minute and like an absolute mad man the next. I'm tired of pretending it's fine." "He is quite the character. I've never seen someone frown so much in my life." Enzo glanced at his nails. "It's strange to admit that he cares about you, but he does." Doris snorted. "I think he does some of the time, but then he will do something rotten to make me second guess it." – "Ah, young love. I can't say I envy you." "We're not in love." Doris said

quickly. The disgust on his face flashed across her mind again. No man would look at her like that if he was in love with her. Why did he have to drive her so crazy? She only came on this trip to serve him as a maid and so far-it wasn't anything of what she expected. The nights he held her when she was cold and insisted he sleep next to her. Saving her time and time again and hunting down the ones that hurt her. He showed her that he cared in some way, and then he took it away the next day like it was all a game. Enzo raised his brows. She was only glad he couldn't read her disastrous mind and all the things that raced through. "Okay. I suppose I can't tell you what you are but I can tell you what I see." "Do you have to?" Doris groaned and put her head in her hands. "Normally no, but yes today." Enzo said. She could hear a bit of an amused smile in his voice. "I see a man that can't handle what he feels for a woman and takes it out on everyone around him. I see a woman who is learning how to be herself and have a taste of freedom while still being drawn to that possessive man. Neither of you can help it, but the closer you get-the worse it will seem until you admit how you feel. Or, until he does." 8 Doris rolled her eyes. "He's not in love with me. I promise you that." Enzo stood and brushed the snow off his pants before he held out his hand to help her up. "There's always a bit of danger in a promise, isn't there?"