

The Strange White Man 41

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Carpenter saw himself catching the Princess before she would have struck the cold marble floor and injured herself. He brushed the hair off her face and stared, as her beauty was breathtaking. He was still staring when the Princess opened her eyes and looked him dead in the face. She screamed at the sight she beheld. It was the face of her betrothed but now she saw blood running down his cheeks and his pallor was very pale, and she screamed again. He placed a hand across her mouth, and she struggled and kicked against the cold palm across her warm red lips. "Princess, please do not scream again," he implored. "What are you?" she questioned. Before he could answer, there came the sound of many feet heading in their direction. Her cries had been heard and the guards were heading in their direction. Carpenter gently laid her on the floor and fled in the opposite direction. He ran down a few different corridors stopping only to inspect the torch holders, searching for one with three or four fingers of flame etched into the metal. The footsteps and voices were not far behind him. He finally found one next to a large hanging tapestry. He grabbed the holder and twisted it the way he had been shown and a small doorway skillfully behind it opened. Carpenter darted through it and closed the door with seconds to spare before the guards entered the hallway. The captain ordered the men to search all the rooms they passed and to make sure he didn't attempt to steal away behind them. As Carpenter listened he could not believe how sharp his hearing was. He heard the conversations as though he was among them. His plan to reach out and grab a torch to light his path was forgotten when he discovered he could see quite clearly in the darkness. He moved toward the direction of the chapel and found the door that he had used to reach it, he then stopped moving and listened. Princess Lynette's horrified screams brought the prime minister, who was acting king, her father and a group of advisers running to aid her. "Daughter, all you all right? What happened?" he asked as he wrapped his cloak around her and picked her off the marble floor. "I saw Prince Karl," she said in hysterics. "Calm yourself, child. Your eyes were playing tricks on you," the king answered and her father agreed. "No," she answered in a high shrill voice, "I saw him as clearly as I see you." The princess was carried back to her room and the doctor was summoned. He prepared a sleeping draught for her as she repeated the story of her seeing the prince. Although she protested she took the prepared draught and soon she was sound asleep. "Find the wizard Felsar," the king ordered. Carpenter was attempting to make his way back to Felsar's hidden chamber and became lost. He encountered many tunnels that led him to all the rooms in the castle, even his old room, where he took an armful of clothing before returning to the seemingly endless passage ways.

Finally after what seemed like hours he found the wizard's lair. Old Felsar was waiting for him and did not look pleased. "You were seen by the princess," he said and it was not a question. "Yes I was," he answered. "That is not good," came the his solemn response and before he could continue they heard the wizard's name being called as it echoed off the stone walls. "The King must want to see me. Remain here and continue your reading," he said as he departed. Carpenter located the large crock of steers blood and drank deeply. He soon felt better and returned to the stack of books Felsar had given him to read as he waited for the wizard to return. When Felsar finally returned he did not look happy. He poured himself a tankard of ale and took a seat by the prince. "The princess told everyone that she has seen you. I managed to convince all that in her grief she imagined that she saw you, " he informed the prince. "Did they accept your explanations?" he asked. "I hope they did." Felsar sniffed the air and looked at the prince. "You need to bathe." "Where?" he asked. Carpenter was escorted to yet another portion of the wizard's lair and there he discovered a square bathing tub similar to the one in the royal bath chamber. "Just how big is this realm of yours?" Carpenter questioned. "How big is the castle? My chambers run the length and width of it," the wizard responded. Water was drawn from an underground stream stream and heated on the hearth. Carpenter had forgotten how good a hot bath felt. He then dressed in the clothes he had taken from his room, and his reflection showed that he looked like his old self again. "Those books say that I am not supposed to cast a reflection," he told the wizard. "Then the books are wrong," the wizard responded simply. "It also stated that I am repelled by the crucifix and other holy artifacts," the prince continued. Felsar tossed something at him and the prince caught it in mid air. It was a silver cross and it had no effect on him. "Those creatures that attacked us were repelled, yet I am not, " he wondered. "Young sir, I do not have all the answers, but together we will find them. Now I am want for sleep. Please try not to be seen again," Felsar asked. "You did not say to stay here?" "Because I know you won't," Felsar said as he shuffled toward his bed. The prince was already making plans to leave once the wizard was asleep. He had to see his princess again.