

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder

Chapter 221



Volumn 2; Breeder for the White Queen

Chapter 1: The Breeder's Daughter

Maeve

I cannot believe this is the man whose baby I'm supposed to carry.

Thick droplets of rain rolled down the glass as I looked out the far window, my eyes fixated on the lazy patterns of moisture they left in their wake.

I was sitting at one end of the long, immaculately set table in the dining hall like I had done every evening since setting foot in the Alpha's castle three months ago, my plate barely touched and my wine undrunk.

It was no fault of the kitchen, nor that of the servants who had spent their entire evening dressing the table with steaming platters of food. No.

I had a challenging time staying awake during dinner, in fact, forever lulled into half-slumber by the incessant dry conversation taking place on the far end of the table.

Oh, Ernest

He looked every ounce the Alpha, especially with his black hair swept away from his face and his blue velvet dress shirt glimmering in the light from the chandelier above our heads. He was rather handsome too, if one can say such things about a cousin. I can only say so because, well, Ernest and I look a lot alike.

We had the same large blue eyes and high cheekbones, the same sharp nose and wide, full mouth. He was dark where I was fair, however, myself having inherited my mother's softly curling strawberry-blonde hair and freckled skin.

Ernest's physical familiarity had been a comfort upon my arrival in Mirage. Seeing him standing on the terrace, his hand resting on the balustrade and head tilting slightly to the side as he watched me approach reminded me so much of my father. So much so that at first, I thought it had actually been my father standing there, looking like the Alpha he had once been.

But Ernest lacked my father's brooding nature and practiced calm reserve. He lacked the sharp-witted sense of humor and soft smile that made his blue eyes crease at the edges.

Ernest, although brimming with the features of my father's family, was nothing like them. Not in the slightest. He was a bore.

A terrible, terrible bore.

And I was stuck with him.

"Did you say something?" I asked, not looking away from the window.

There would, of course, be no reply. Ernest had said something. He hadn't stopped saying something. He had a strange habit of talking without ever shutting his mouth long enough to hear anyone else speak. He even answered his own questions, and gave himself advice, as though he were talking to an apparition seated at the table next to him, not his only dinner guest down the length of the table. I couldn't stand it.

And for the first time in my life, I felt utterly and completely alone.

In all my time in Mirage, we had barely had a conversation outside of business, what our future held as dual rulers of the pack. I would be Luna, he would be Alpha. I would give him an heir, forever cementing our family's stronghold over the Eastern Territories. I would remain in Mirage until that child was grown, and then would have the freedom to return to my birthplace to eventually lead the Winter Forest pack.

He had become king of Valoria when his parents, Talon and Georgia, decided to retire. They deserved a break after all of their yeats of service to the kingdom.

Ernest was nothing like either of his parents, and I had no idea how that had come about.

Two cousins on the throne was unheard of, of course. I had refused the first time my father told me of the agreement that had been made between Pack Diegomor and Pack Winter Forest But I eventually understood the importance and complexity of my situation Enest couldn't have children, and he had been unsuccessful at finding a mate to rules beside him. I was the only female of the generation in our family, titleless until my own mother died or stepped down from her position. My mother was still young, I had time to assist the family in other matters

And in this case, the assistance needed was a body to carry the child who would eventually unite the packs of the Eastern Territories into one.

I was that body

"Send Rowan!" I had protested, jutting my chin toward the ceiling and crossing my arms over my chest in deance as my father explained the situation.

"And what good would that do, Maeve? Should I have him kill my nephew and take the title from his cold, dead hands? What do you think would happen to the treaties, hmm? Think logically--"

Ah, the treaties. How could I forget, especially since my parents' shenanigans before my birth had required such treaties to be created in the first place?

Oh, yes, the infamous Ethan and Rosalie had created quite a mess back in their youth. But it was peacetime now, and they meant to keep it that way.

I fought them nonetheless. Everyone said Ethan had met his match the day I was born. Even my mother, whom he doted on endlessly, could not achieve the emotional rise I could get out of him.. I enjoyed it, too.

Rowan, on the other hand, was always the sweet, levelheaded boy who had made them want to have another child in the first place.

i was born, however, and there was a reason they didn't have another child after that. My mother always joked that I was the equivalent of four children in one, and said they were tired after my early years, I was not the prim and proper Alpha's daughter or the graceful blessing of the Luna.

I was just Maeve. And apparently, I needed to be humbled.

And oh, was I humbled.

I tried all my tricks on Ernest once the boredom set in during my first weeks in Mirage. I couldn't get a rise out of him, no matter how much I tried. Years of practice tormenting my brother had proved useless against Ernest, who was painfully oblivious to sarcasm and dry, calculated humor.

One evening, sitting across from him at the ridiculously long table, listening to him ramble on about something insignificant, i threw a soup spoon down the length of the table. I hadn't aimed to hit him with it, of course, but the spoon flew so close to his head that the force of it made his hair tremble, the spoon landing with a ringing clang on the tile floor behind his chair.

Iturnd my head slowly, making eye contact with a servant who was standing up against the wall, his eyes wide with shock as I gave him a playful smile.

"You'll never believe what I did, Daddy!" I wrote in perfect scrawl in my nightly letter home after dinner, imagining my father's shock. "Can you believe he didn't even notice?"

"Maeve?"

I looked up from my plate where my vision had eventually settled during my half-slumber, blinking against the yellow glow of the chandelier.

Ernest had never said my name before, at least not that I had noticed. He was staring right at me too, his mouth closed.

"Uh, is everything okay?"

"Did you hear me? I said the breeder is arriving at the end of the week."

"What?" I said stupidly, knowing full well what he was talking about. Part of the arraignment that had secured our family s future and my powerful status came with a catch. I couldn't just produce an heir on my own.

I needed a breeder.

Ernest's brow was knitted into a frown. "Have you been listening at all?"

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"No" i said under my breath, toying with the silk of my emerald-green evening gown under the table. He hadn't heard

"Your breeder. He has been chosen. Quite a process" He rattled on and on about the significance and the history behind the event A male breeder was unheard of, he said. So rare that no one alive today would have borne witness to such a notion.

Breeders were always women. They almost always came from dire situations, regardless of their status within their packs. My mother had been a breeder and an Alpha's daughter. She shared her entire story with me when the details of my future were being pieced together,

She had been sold by her father to my father, who had been the Alpha of Drogomor at that time, in order to pay a debt. Like most breeders, her fate once the child was born was dismal, and in her case, deadly. But by some miracle, a true act of the Goddess herself, my parents were mates.

"His name is Aaron, the son of the Alpha of Red Lakes"

I choked on my own breath. "Who? Did you say Aaron of Red Lakes?"

"Yes, Red Lakes," Ernest continued. "You know, the newer kingdom established in the west that used to be uninhabited forest?"

The blood drained from my face as I looked down the table at Ernest without responding. He was staring blankly at me again.

"I'm sorry," I said, a little breathless. "I know where that is. I just hallucinated. What is the breeder's name again?"

He repeated it. Aaron.

I felt the sudden urge to laugh but maintained my composure, sipping my wine and letting it slip down my dry throat.

"Do you know him?"

"No-barely. I met him once when we were children." I grimaced, taking a deeper drink of wine. Oh, yes, we knew each other, and our first and only interaction had plagued me for years.

"Well, that will make this less awkward then, won't it?" Ernest said with a short laugh as he stood, dropping his napkin on his plate.

He left, not saying goodbye. He never did. It was part of our little routine. I would eat dinner with him, leagues away at the other end of the table, and then I would be left to my devices.

"See ya," I whispered under my breath, then stood to take my leave and retire to my room to write my nightly letter home.

"What the hell were you thinking, daddy!" the letter would begin. "Do you not remember what happened to Aaron the last time I saw him?"

The next day, I exited the castle, taking notice of the city of Mirage. It was sprawling, yet cozy, with its stone buildings and cottages with shining metal roofs. A daily market took place along a wide street, vendors lining the sidewalks with their canvas-covered stalls and selling a wide variety of goods and produce.

It was a short walk from the castle grounds, and I went into town as often as I could, always enjoying the trips as a respite from my dull life within the castle's walls. I could dress how I wanted in town, my jeans and the oversized flanne! jacket of Rowan's didn't cause curious glances like they did in the castle, where everyone seemed to dress as though we lived in a different era, Rowan was probably looking for this jacket, it was his favorite. It was my favorite too. I brought my sleeve up to my nose and sniffed, smiling at the undertones of smoke and spruce that reminded me of home.

There was a dense thicket of trees that separated the town from the castle's grounds. The pathway snaked through the trees, and the old stone pavers cracked and lifted in places where the tree roots had tunneled beneath them.

It smelled fresh and green in the forest, and the cool dampness of the air beneath the canopy of leaves always made me flush with pleasure.

Ah, yes, I needed this today. I needed a moment alone in nature. I needed some time to think, to reflect, to prepare for when I would come face to face with Aaron for the first time in almost eleven years,

I popped out of the woods on the outskirts of town and onto a small winding dirt road lined with shabby cabins. A man volumn: Breeder for the White Queen

was standing in his yard wielding an ax, a pile of split timber at his feet. He nodded at me in greeting, used to my presence as I made this journey almost daily, and went back to his work.

This part of town had very little access to electricity. The wind turbines south of Mirage powered the castle and some sections of town, but not all. Smoke puffed from the chimneys of the cabins I passed as I wandered closer to the center of town, the smoke eventually giving way to the hum of electric heaters as I rounded a corner and found myself in a newer neighborhood, the market visible in the distance.

I approached the market, peering through the crowd and spotting a stall toward the far edge of the market, its canvas roof dyed with indigo. It was Myla's stall, my first, and so far, only friend in Mirage. She sold herb bundles and potted plants, but her real business was in potions and tonics. But, you had to know how to ask, and what to offer, in order to gain access to those goods.

i started to make my way over to her stall, taking my time. I was in no rush. I was actually quite thirsty from my trek, and focused my attention on the bar situated on the left side of the wide street, a crowd of people mingling around the entrance with bottles of beer in their hands.

But as I approached a screech cut through the din of the market as people quickly moved out of the way of a group of men tumbling out of the bar's open doors, their bodies spilling into the street in a tangle.

Other men moved in on the group, throwing punches as they tried to separate the men who were continuing to try to strangle each other, their faces purple with effort.

"Oh, boy," i muttered to myself, my skin prickling with adrenaline as I watched the chaos unfold before my eyes. "I'm glad I didn't stay home today."

But as I watched the fight unfold, more men joined in, and the group suddenly became a riot. Market-goers were frantically jumping out of the way as the men pushed and pulled each other further into the street, one man flying through the air and crashing into a stall, his body absolutely obliterating a table covered in ripe produce.

"Wow!" I said, impressed by the spectacle, resisting the urge to clap as the man stood up, wiping crushed tomatoes from his clothing.

"Move!" came a voice behind me, but I had little time to react. A warrior pushed past me, knocking me to the side as he bounded toward the fray. My ankle slipped off the sidewalk, twisting painfully as I lost my balance and began to fall into the street, my arms outstretched to break my fall.

"Woah, there!"

Someone caught me by the upper arm, stopping me from falling. I turned to face my savior, my mouth already forming a surprised and genuine "thank you" when I was suddenly stunned into silence, my breath catching in my throat.