

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder

Chapter 230



More Than a Crush

Maeve

Myla pulled the thin straps of her dress over her delicate shoulders, reaching down to smooth the fabric over her belly. "What do we think of this one?" she asked, doing a little twirl.

Gemma looked over at her, a tube of lipstick in her hands. "Oh, I think that's the one. Green is definitely your color, My."

Myla smiled, fluffing her bouncy black curls as she bent closer to the vanity mirror. "Have you decided what you're wearing yet, Maeve? We have to go soon. The train to the Uni leaves in an hour."

I had been standing in the corner of Myla's room, staring out the window that overlooked the sleepy street outside. It was only five o'clock, but the village was almost lifeless. "Where is everyone?"

Gemma smacked her lips in the mirror over Myla's shoulder, pulling her long brown hair forward over her shoulders. "Should I leave it down, or up?"

"Everyone's going to the social tonight, silly!" Myla left the vanity and opened the large wardrobe that took up the majority of her snug little bedroom, rummaging around and pulling out a pair of heels. "What size shoe are you, Maeve? If you wear the red dress, I think I have something that'll match"

"There is NO way she'll fit in your shoes, Myla!" Gemma giggled, pulling her hair back as she turned from the vanity. "Her feet are way too big! Up, or down?"

"Wear it down," I laughed, ignoring her remark, reaching for the blue dress I had laid out on the bed. It wasn't nearly as fancy as what Myla and Gemma were wearing, just a simple silk dress with silver embroidered flowers near the hem and tiny, practically useless spaghetti straps. "I don't think I can dance in this one," I said as I held it up to the light, admiring the delicate flowers. "I think the straps will snap."

Gemma snorted with laughter as Myla reached up, cupping her breasts. "Oh, I wish I had boobs like yours, Maeve."

"That's what you think now," I said, pulling the dress over my head and shimmying into it, the fabric snug around my chest and waist and falling loosely over my thighs. "Imagine not being able to fit into any of those trendy shirts you like... or having to wear a bra ALL the time."

"Oh, please, you never wear a bra!" Gemma pointed out as she sat on the edge of the bed, pulling on a pair of knee-high, high heeled boots.

"Are you guys staying the night?" Myla asked, fluffing her hair once more.

I nodded, but Gemma gave us both a sly look, her eyes creasing playfully.

"Sure, unless I meet my handsome mate to entertain me for the-"

"Okay, okay!" Myla laughed, waving her hand at Gemma in dismissal. "Cleo will be home, and up, if we get separated and you need a place to crash for the night, okay? Let's go, I want to get there before all the food is gone." Cleo was the midwife who had raised Myla. I'd met her a few times.

They walked out the door as I hastily pulled on a pair of white sneakers, taking one last look at my appearance in the mirror before following them out onto the street.

"Sneakers? Really?" Myla asked, giving me a look.

"I'm still taller than you when you're wearing heels, My. I don't want to stick out too much-"

"Sticking out is the whole point!" Myla protested, wobbling in her heels on the gravel road.

I smiled to myself, catching Gemma's knowing glance. Myla would likely find her mate tonight, we thought.

The University of Mirage was at the center of the city, at least twenty miles from the Castle of Drogomor. The main village of the Drogomor, where we were now, used to be entirely cut off from Mirage before a railway had been built between the two towns.

Two decades and a boom in population later, the boundaries of the two towns had bled into each other, creating one sprawling

metropolitan area that covered miles and miles of land. The train was the fastest way to travel, but many people took small boats along the river that snaked through the city, parking their crafts at personal or public docks that stretched along the river's length. I had only taken the train once during the almost four months I had spent in Valoria. Ernest had taken me on a tour of what was now called the Twin Cities, pointing out the major landmarks and new infrastructure that had been built since the war's end so many years ago.

Rowan would love it here, I thought dismally. It was a little too noisy and crowded for my taste.

After nearly half an hour of walking we made it to the edge of Old Town, the old boundary of what was once exclusively the village of Drogomor. A train depot stood in the distance, the platform swollen with people waiting for the next train to the city center.

We could have taken one of the cars from the castle, but I liked to try to blend in, and that would do anything but allow me to do that. The social was being held on the grounds of the University of Mirage, which was its own city in itself. The University opened its arms to students from dozens of packs, and its inclusiveness gave me a level of anonymity I wouldn't otherwise have. I could just be Maeve, at least for an evening.

"Oh jeez, I doubt we'll be able to find a seat," Myla and Gemma walked ahead of me, their purses bouncing on their hips as they reached the counter and bought the train tickets. I stood back, looking around, admiring the stocky stone buildings of Old Town.

The Wisteria vines were starting to bloom, and tiny purple flowers dotted the buildings. Magnolia trees hung heavy with buds of their own, and soon the entire area would smell strongly floral from their large, white flowers.

I followed Gemma and Myla onto the platform, accepting the ticket from Gemma as we struggled to find somewhere to stand.

"Here it comes!" someone shouted, and the platform erupted in excited hoots and laughter as the train reached the station.

I felt a jolt of electricity shoot through me suddenly as we neared the train's door. I felt like eyes were on the back of my neck and I looked around, my stomach tightening. Someone was watching me.

"Maeve, come on!" Myla shouted, reaching out and taking my hand as she pulled me into the train.

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"WHAT?" I practically screamed into Gemma's ear. The music was deafening.

I SAID I'M GOING TO THE BAR ACROSS THE STREET!" she hollered back, a handsome young man standing beside her with a sly grin on his face. I nodded, giving the man a serious "I'll hunt you down and kill you and your entire family if anything happens to her" look, watching as she turned and disappeared into the enormous crowd.

I had lost Myla ages ago, her tiny frame swallowed by the throngs of people dancing and mingling in the crowded event center. Paper lanterns danced across the four-story high ceiling of the massive room, the old stained-glass windows glimmering in the yellow light they cast and reflecting on the people below.

"This is insane," I said to myself as I pushed through the crowd, desperate for some fresh air. I should have gone with Gemma and her boy toy; at least I would've had a chance to escape the fray.

But then I spotted Aaron in the crowd, his arms wrapped around a skinny blonde woman as they danced. My cheeks felt hot, and a painful feeling gripped my chest as I watched them. He looked right at me, his eyes narrowing as he arched his brow, his eyes glimmering with an unspoken challenge. Was I... jealous?

I turned and quickly pushed through the crowd, but not fast enough. He grabbed my arm, twirling me around to face him. "You said you weren't coming," he growled into my ear.

I fought against the chill that ran up my spine as his breath tickled the skin on my neck. "Gemma didn't give me a choice."

"Come dance,"

"What about your date over there?"

"She's not my date," he said, wrapping his arm around my waist as he led me back toward the dance floor. And don't tell me you can't dance. I've seen you at the castle."

I scoffed as he spun me in a tight circle, taking my hands in his and placing one of them on his shoulder. "You've been spying on me?"

"Only on those barre workouts you do in the gym," he said with a sly grin.

"You're drunk, aren't you?"

"Everyone is," he said as he pulled me closer, his hand running down the length of my back. "Haven't you had a drink yet? That's the whole point of these things, isn't it? To get so drunk you can't feel your mate bond."

"Oh? I thought this was about finding a mate," I said dryly, my skin rippling with gooseflesh as his hand pressed into the small of my back.

"I'm sure some do," he said, and out of the corner of my eye I saw his previous dance partner, her face twisted with jealousy. He followed my gaze, then laughed softly as he bent down to speak into my ear. "Don't worry, she's not my mate."

"Have you felt the bond with anyone here?" I asked, dreading his answer.

His mouth lingered near my ear for a moment, then he bent further down, brushing his lips against my neck. I closed my eyes, momentarily losing myself in his touch and the thrum of the music.

"Come with me," he whispered into my neck, breaking away and leading me by the hand through the crowd. We reached the entryway, the massive arches towering over our heads as we walked out onto the busy street, people standing in clusters around the circular fountain in the center of the drive as they drank beer.

"Where are we going?" I asked as he led me away from the event center. We walked along the street for a moment before I pulled on his arm, trying to get him to stop. "Aaron!"

"We're getting out of here. Tonight. We can go anywhere you want. We can go south to the port, take a boat through the southern pass-"

"What are you talking about? What do you mean"

He pulled me into a darkened alleyway between two buildings, his arms coming around my waist as he pressed against me, pinning me against the cool brick wall. "We can go north, Maeve. North across the tundra. No one knows what's on the other side. I could..." He kissed me, fully, his mouth open and lips wide against my own. "I could take you home. Where you'd be where you'd be safe."

I pushed against him. "You're wasted, Aaron. What are you talking about?"

"Don't you feel it too?" he snapped, pulling away from me. His hair was wild, eyes shining in the pale glow of the flicking streetlamp across the alleyway. "Have you not felt it since we met in the market that day?"

"We can't!" I exclaimed. "You know we can't. We have a job to do, Aaron. We have a purpose greater than our feelings!" I did feel something. I knew I did. But I wasn't old enough to feel a true mate bond yet. But what I felt was more than a crush. It was lust.

"So, you don't deny it?" he said, closing the distance between us again. He touched my face, holding my chin in his hand. "You feel it, don't you? You want me as much as I—"

I kissed him, my hand pressing into the back of head to bring him to me, my fingers locked in his hair as he met my kiss with the same urgency. The electric hum of the building behind me quieted and the streetlamp's light flickered away to a dull glow before shutting off completely as Mirage's nightly utility curfew took effect. He kissed my neck as I turned my head to look out over the darkened city, the windows sparking with life as their inhabitants' lit candles that made the cityscape look like nothing more than a field of fireflies.

His hands had moved down from my waist to explore my thighs and I inhaled sharply as his fingers slipped under the hem of my dress.

Oh, this wasn't good. This was very bad. I didn't want it to stop.

"Aaron,"

"Look at what we have here, boys!" came a shout from the other end of the alleyway. Aaron went totally still, the hair on his arms standing on end as he slowly pulled away from me and looked down the darkened alley where four men were walking briskly toward us. "Wow, look at her!"

"Get out of here!" Aaron growled, placing his hands on the wall on either side of me, sheltering me with his body. "This one is mine!"

"She's big enough to share! Look at 'er, Henry! She's taller than you!" One of the men jabbed at his friend as they neared, laughing. "Move aside, fella, there's plenty of drunk women leaving the party now that the powers cut—" The man reached out to Aaron, grabbing his shirt. Aaron spun around, clocking the man right in the nose, sending him flying across the alleyway.

"Get out of here, Maeve!"

Another man ran at Aaron, hitting him in the side. Aaron grunted painfully, swinging blindly as he followed the man into the dark. "Aaron!"

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"I said GO!" I heard another body hit the ground.

"Aaron?"

"Where do you think you're going, b*tch!" A tall, ornery looking man grabbed me by the arm, attempting to drag me into the recesses of the alley,

"AARON!" I screamed, fighting against the man's iron grip.

"Oh, a feisty one," he laughed, swinging me hard against the wall. He grabbed at my dress, ripping the fabric open across my chest. I stopped fighting and went totally, completely still. "Oh, come one, I like it when you fight-"

I punched him in the mouth, his teeth shattering against my knuckles. He screamed, spitting tooth fragments into his hands as he backed away

But I wasn't finished yet.

I kicked him, my sneaker meeting his chest with enough force to send him flying back against the wall. His head hit the wall with a juicy crunch, his eyes rolling back in his head.

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"Maeve! What the f*ck="Aaron was at my side, bloodied, his shirt ripped and hanging from his shoulders. "Did you that to him?"

"No," I said sarcastically, crossing my arms over my chest.

"Then who did?!"

"Obviously I did this, Aaron. There's no one else around."

He blinked several times, looking from me to the man lying on the ground in front of us. "Jeez, Maeve, I think you killed him."

"He's not dead," I said, pointing out his chest. He was still breathing. "We should get out of here."

Aaron coughed, blood spilling out of his mouth. He looked at me, eyes dancing with mischief. "Kinda fun, wasn't it?"

"You look like hell," I said, taking him by the arm. "Let's go home."