

Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder

Chapter 231



Chapter 11 : I'm Not Proud of It

Maeve

The library was cool and shrouded in darkness as I helped Aaron onto one of the couches. He groaned as he shifted his weight, the bruises from our battle in the alleyway already evident on his skin.

He accepted my help, allowing me to peer into his mouth to check for broken teeth. His nose was likely broken, but he had set it straight himself, the crunching sound of it still ringing in my ears.

"Well, I don't think you're dying," I said as I turned from him and crossed the room, rummaging in the bar cart for something strong. I pulled out a dusty bottle of scotch, the wax seal unbroken as I grabbed two glasses and walked back over to where he sat.

"I think the walk home was the worst part," he groaned, peering at me through one eye as I sat the glasses down and used my fingernail to break the wax seal.

"Yeah, that was the longest walk of my life," I said with a little laugh. We had fumbled our way through the city center, getting miserably lost once we left the university's property. We missed the last train back to Old Town and found ourselves shuffling along the river-walk for almost an hour until someone was kind enough to give us a ride upriver in their boat. They took us to the outskirts of Old Town, the walk back to the castle well over five miles in the pitch black of night. I tried to persuade Aaron to shift, thinking he'd have more strength to make the journey that way, but he refused. I wouldn't ask him to carry me on the back of his wolf when he was injured.

He knew I didn't yet know my wolf. He wasn't going to shift without me. It was a gallant gesture, but I knew he regretted it the second he sunk into the couch, his beaten body aching and tender.

I handed him a glass of scotch and he nodded in thanks, drinking the entire pour in one swallow.

"That's a waste," I scolded, pouring him another. "Sip it, don't shoot it. This was probably here during my father's time in the castle." I held the amber liquid in the faint light of the moon coming through the three-story high windows, swirling the scotch in the glass before bringing it to my nose. He watched me; one brow arched.

He brought his glass to his lips, sticking his pinky out as he swallowed it all, again, his eyes not leaving mine.

"You're impossible," I scoffed, sitting down at the end of the couch, my arm resting on his ankles as I leaned my head back on the cushions and looked up at the elaborately painted ceiling and antique chandelier. I sipped the scotch, enjoying the warmth as it slid down my throat. "What a night, huh?"

"You're not hurt, are you?" He tried to sit up but decided against it, falling back into the cushions with his face twisted into a grimace.

"No, I'm not." I brought my hands into my lap, running my fingers over my knuckles where the man's teeth had met my fist. The skin had already healed, thanks to the healing powers in my blood.

"Good, I—I'm sorry, Maeve. I should've stayed by you. I shouldn't have—". —

"I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself," I said quickly, reaching out to pat his ankle. "This is why I didn't want to go. Nothing good ever happens at socials, at least from what I've been told."

"Maeve I shouldn't have... come on to you like that. I was drunk. Really, really drunk. 1—"

The words cut into my heart as he continued to apologize. He might as well have said he didn't mean any of it, not his words or the kiss. Oh, the kiss. It had damn near brought me to my knees. I would have let him have his way with me in the alleyway if we hadn't been interrupted.

"It's fine," I said, forcing a smile even though my heart felt as though it would shatter into millions of pieces. "It's alright, really."

We sat in silence for a moment as I sipped the scotch. I could feel his gaze on the side of my face, and I turned to him, watching a mysterious, unreadable expression cross over his features. I almost asked him about what he had about leaving, going south through the southern pass or up over the northern tundra. I bit my lip, remembering how he had said he was drunk. He probably had no idea what he was saying.

"Did you ever live here?" he asked, looking around the library as he lounged, his hands resting over his chest.

"No, I was born in the North. Rowan spent time here, but he was very young."

"Strange, isn't it-" he said, looking at the ceiling's faded mural, "how old this place is, how many Alpha's have ruled here and will rule here after we're gone."

I followed his gaze to the ceiling, seeing as though for the first time the intricate paintings of the moon cycles set against a smattering of stars. Wolves seemed to be dancing around the base of the chandelier, their necks straining upward as if they were howling to the figure of the Moon Goddess, whose arms were open to them.

"Drogomor is the oldest pack still in existence, from what I understand. My father's family wasn't always part of the pack. It's rare for packs to pass down more than three or four generations of familial Alphas without someone else coming in to claim it. I think my great-grandfather took over the pack at some point, from who I don't know, but I do know my dad was born in this castle."

Aaron continued to look at the ceiling, his eyes glassy from drink and the painfully late hour. It was close to three o'clock in the morning now.

"Do you want to go to bed?" I asked, turning to him.

He closed his eyes, grimacing as he moved his legs. "Can't move. I'm going to have to sleep here."

"Well, I can fetch you some clothes if you want."

"Don't bother, I'll be fine by the morning." He opened one eye, the gray one, giving me a playful look. "That wasn't my first fight, you know."

"I figured as much," I said with a short laugh.

"Was it your first fight?" he asked.

"Uh, no... it wasn't."

"I mean, outside of wrestling with your brother."

"Rowan was always a sorry opponent." I smoothed the fabric of my dress, reaching up to finger the ripped fabric across my chest. "He stopped wrestling me when I was probably five or six."

Played too rough, huh?"

"I just took it a little too seriously, I think."

"Why am I not surprised?"

I glowered at him, but his eyes were still closed.

"What was your first fight, then?"

I sighed, leaning back into the couch. "I was twelve, maybe thirteen. It was over a boy, actually."

Aaron snorted, opening his eyes just enough that I could see them beneath his fan of dark lashes. "Oh? Who was he?"

"Marty Leston," I said with a dramatic sigh. "He was really dreamy, you know. Older, strong, one of those kids from the original families of Winter Forest. He had a real chip on his shoulder. He knew all the girls liked him and acted on it. I had the biggest crush."

Aaron tapped his fingers on his chest. "And?"

"He kissed me once, down by the docks. But then I found out he also kissed Nancy, who was also older and connected to the original families. Rowan and I were kind of like.. outcasts, I guess, even though our mom is the queen. We were always treated differently, as though we had some advantage compared to the other kids, it made it hard to fit in." I took a breath, glancing over at him. "Nancy cornered me one day after school, calling me all kinds of names. She brought her friends, too, all four of them yelling at me at once. Rowan saw; he threatened to tell our parents about it but I made him swear not to." I picked at the hem of my dress. He nudged me with his foot.

"Keep going, I'm not asleep."

"I'm not proud of it, okay,"

"Well now I have to know."

"The next time they cornered me, I egged her on a little. Threw the names she had called me right back at her. She slapped me, and I just went – berserk. I had her pinned to the ground in a matter of seconds. All of the kids came running from the school yard to watch. She started crying, more embarrassed than hurt. Her friends tried to take a few punches but I got them on the ground too."

"So, you beat up four little girls?"

"I was the little girl, Aaron. These girls were at least three years older than me. But I thought my dad was going to kill me. I really thought he would. He spent the evening pacing back and forth in total silence while I sat on the couch, watching him. The next day a man came to our house, a trainer, and I started learning what he called the 'Wolf Arts.' I was a warrior for the pack when I left for Drogomor."

Aaron was staring at me, his eyes wide open. "You were a warrior?"

I nodded, smiling to myself. "I was good at it. There's nothing else I wanted to do, or be."

"And what happened to those girls? Did they mess with you again?"

"No, never. Marty never talked to me again, either, even when we were both in training to become warriors."

"I'm sorry about your crush."

"I'm not," I smiled, looking over at him. He found his mate and has a family now. He grew out of his good looks."

"Ah, I see."

"And what about you? When was your first fight?"

He stiffened suddenly; his fingers splayed out on his chest. I waited for his reply, but nothing came. Instead, his body relaxed again, his eyes fluttering.

I sighed, standing and pulling a blanket off the back of the couch and draping it over him. I watched him for a moment, smiling to myself as I turned away and collected our glasses, returning the scotch to the bar cart.

I left the library with gentle, soundless steps, my blood thrumming in my ears as I made my way upstairs, carrying my now worn out sneakers in my hands.

It was absolutely silent in the castle, every floor quieter than the next.

But as I reached the fourth-floor landing, I felt an abrupt change, my skin prickling as though I were being watched. I looked around, the hair on the back of my neck standing on end as I peered into the darkened hallways on either side of the landing.

A door shut somewhere on the floor above, followed by footsteps coming toward the stairs. I retreated into the darkness, pressing myself against the wall as a figure descended the stairs, a dark cloak pulled over their head as they passed within feet of me.

I held my breath as they disappeared, their footsteps eventually sounding on the third, then second floor. Another door opened and closed, and then I was left in total, deafening silence again.

I walked toward the stairs, looking up to the fifth-floor railing. There was nothing on the fifth floor, only a few old storage rooms and a staircase leading to the servants quarters in the attic. Any servants coming in from a night-time run in their wolf forms would have been coming upstairs, not down.

Before I knew it I was running up the stairs and across the carpeted floor, feeling along the wall in the dark until I came to the end of the eastern wing, where I was sure I heard the figure come from.

There was only one door on this side, a large wooden door with a lock the size of my head. I ran my fingers over the lock, finding the keyhole. The door was locked, obviously, but the handle was still warm from someone's touch. I looked up toward the ceiling, knowing the door could only lead to one thing. The tower.

I pressed my ear to the door, holding my breath. Did I hear a clang, a thump? Like something falling?

"What are you doing up here?"