

# Sold as the Alpha King's Breeder

Chapter 238



## Chapter 18: Guests

Maeve

The Alpha of Greenbriar was not what I was expecting.

I was standing on the platform at the train station, a red cotton frock with puffy shoulder straps draped over my figure and my hair loose and tumbling down my back. It was the only thing I could find in my closet that would be appropriate for the occasion and not shrivel in the intense, muggy heat.

But the Alpha of Greenbriar and his sister stepped off the train in incredibly formal attire, the man himself dressed in a jet- black evening suit with emerald green embroidery along the stitching of his jacket, and his sister wore a matching black dress with heels that made her nearly as tall as myself. I swallowed, feeling suddenly naked in my simple dress. My only solace was the fact that they were both sweating and were visibly uncomfortable in the sweltering heat.

The Alpha stepped forward, and I extended my hand, expecting a handshake. He took my hands and kissed my knuckles, lingering a few seconds too long for it to be an appropriate gesture. I felt a shiver of unease shoot up from the base of my spine, and I stole a glance at the woman behind him, who rolled her eyes and looked away as she reached up to dab a handkerchief along her glistening brow.

"Alpha Julian," he said as he straightened, his icy blond hair cut short and immaculately styled. His gray eyes flitted to the side toward the woman behind him. "My wife and Luna, Opaline."

Opaline was aptly named, I thought, as I looked at her and nodded in greeting. She looked like an opal with her milky white skin. She had the same icy blonde hair and gray eyes, which gave me a bit of a start as I looked from the Alpha to the Luna. They could've been identical twins with their matching, delicate bone structure and thin, sharp mouths. Had Alpha Julian really said she was his wife and not his sister? I bit the inside of my lip, thankful that Aaron wasn't here. He most definitely would have said something inappropriate. I would, however, tell him all about it later.

The tour itself was easy enough. All I had to do was point to things as the sleek but small convertible town car made its way slowly up the street. Villagers had stopped to stare at us as we drove past them at an uncomfortable crawl.

Opaline was uninterested in everything, keeping her eyes forward. Alpha Julian, on the other hand, was more interested in the vehicle than the old buildings leading up to the castle, his long, white fingers touching everything from the fabric of the seats to the red finish of the outside of the car.

"Are there many vehicles here and in Mirage?" he asked, a strange lilt to his voice I wasn't familiar with. Greenbriar was a southern pack, and relatively new, one of those packs that formed shortly after the war over two decades ago. Julian himself was young, probably no older than Rowan and Ernest. He had probably just inherited the title of Alpha.

"No, not really many at all. Fuel is still hard to come by."

"Ah, I see. A shame. I would love one of these," he replied as he ran his fingers over the dash. I was sitting in the back with Opaline while he sat up front with the driver.

"What would we do with it, Julian?" Opaline said with sneer, rolling her eyes again.

"I'd just look at it, dear," he said dreamily, tilting his head back as the car picked up speed as we exited the village and drove up the long, winding road leading up to the castle's ground.

I looked around, seeing the castle in the distance as though for the first time. I never took the road into the village, always the small pathway that led through the greenbelt.

The car rolled to a stop at the entrance to the castle's grounds. Lance was waiting, his tawny brown hair pulled back into a bun at the nape of his neck. I had only met Lance a few times since arriving in Valoria. He was a cousin of Ernest, a nephew of Talon. I could see the resemblance to both Talon and Ernest as he stepped forward and opened the door for the Alpha.

I stepped out, helping Opaline out of the car and holding her elbow as she steadied herself and smoothed the fabric of her dress.

Lance pulled me aside as the strange couple started up the pathway into the front gardens.

"They have to be brother and sister-"

"Probably just... distant cousins, I hope. Greenbriar is secluded, to say the least," Lance breathed, glancing over at them and wincing. "Don't dwell on it. Thank you for fetching them from the station, Maeve. Wendy's not well; I had to wrangle the kids this morning while she went to see Cleo."

"I was thinking of heading to Cleo's house, actually. I'll check in on her," I said with a smile. Lance looked immensely relieved, nodding in thanks. I looked back up at Julian and Opaline, who had their heads bent in conversation near the entrance to the front garden. "Why are they here?" I asked, but Lance only shook his head, looking wary.

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"Did he seem to know what he was doing?" Cleo was sitting at the homely kitchen table, her hands busy organizing herbs into various muslin bags scattered between the three of us. Myla and I were helping, our fingers stained yellow from yarrow and chamomile.

"I mean... he knew where it was supposed to go," I said shyly.

Myla snorted with laughter. Cleo rolled her eyes at Myla and gave me a soft, knowing smile.

"He was right about saying it gets better, you know. It won't hurt as much next time. Was it like you expected?"

"No... I guess not. I'm not sure what I had been expecting, honestly."

"She was expecting it to be like fireworks," Myla began in a teasing tone as she sprinkled fenugreek into a small wooden bowl, "like chocolate, like sugar in your coffee-"

"Well, you're the only virgin here, Myla. How would you know?" I laughed, accepting another bundle of dandelion root from Cleo.

Myla lifted her chin, her dark eyes shining in the vivid sunlight pouring through the windows. "I read the same sappy romance novels you like, Maeve. I know exactly what you were expecting."

"I can't judge my experience on romance novels when, for one, this entire experience is strictly professional, and two, Aaron isn't my mate."

"Professional?" Myla scoffed, looking from me to her mother. "What, are you getting paid for it?"

"Of course not-"

"Aaron is likely getting paid for his services, Myla," Cleo said gently. She turned back to me, a motherly smile lifted on her cheeks. "Do you have any questions for me, darling?"

"I-I don't think so," I said with a blush, looking down at my stained and fragrant fingers. The room was filled with spice and floral scents, and I felt suddenly overwhelmed by the sharp aromas.

Cleo was watching me closely; I could feel her gaze on my skin.

"You need to tell him what feels... good to you."

"How?" I squeaked, not at all shocked that Cleo had been able to peer into my mind. She did it all the time to me and Myla, always able to halt our schemes before we were able to leave the house on some misadventure.

She patted my hand, squeezing gently. "Just tell him."

"That's it?" Myla asked. "It's that easy?"

"Most men will listen." Cleo smiled as she took the bowl of fenugreek from Myla and stood, placing it on the counter before setting a kettle to boil on the stove.

"Speaking of men," Myla said as she began to pick through another pile of loose herbs from their garden, "you'll never believe the story I heard at Johnny's last night."

Cleo gave her a look. "Is that where you were all night?"

"Johnny's is safe, Ma. You can throw a rock from my bedroom window and hit it." Johnny's was the bar across the street on the main drag of Old Town, the same bar where I had fallen off the curb and met Aaron when he prevented me from falling in the street. Myla looked over at me, her eyes alight with excitement. "I met a sailor, and no, he's not my mate-"

Cleo's face fell a little, but she went back to stirring a large pot of herbs over the stove.

"Anyway, he said he had just come from the port of Valoria. Apparently, there was a kidnapping near the Isles of Denali."

"A kidnapping?" Cleo looked concerned but Myla waved her hand in dismissal, her brown-sugar skin stained a deep gold on her fingertips from the herbs.

"I don't think anyone died, per se. Anyway, the crew of the man's original ship from Breles showed up in Valoria a few days ago and the crew was loaded... and I mean LOADED with cash. The port authorities seized the boat to investigate after one of the men started a huge brawl in one of the brothels-"

Myla cast a glance at her mother, who was giving her a look of marked disapproval. "Anyway, the story of the kidnapping came out when the crew was being interrogated about their cash. They were paid off by the pirates-"

"Pirates?" I leaned forward, intrigued.

Myla nodded, her hair bouncing up and down off her shoulders. "Real life pirates. Can you imagine? They had a pirate ship and everything!"

"Maeve, darling, the sun is starting to set. I'm guessing you're expected at supper with Ernest and his guests tonight." Cleo motioned for me to stand and untied the apron I was wearing, guiding me to the sink to help scrub the herb residue from my fingers.

"Do you think the post office is still open?" I asked as she handed me a towel to dry my hands.

"Oh, I doubt it. It's nearly five o'clock."

I sighed, having lost track of time. I wanted to go to the post office myself to check for letters from my family, since they weren't reaching the castle for whatever reason. I looked down at the simmering, golden liquid in the pot on the stove, the spicy smell of ginger and green scent of peppermint wafting from the steaming slurry. "Is this for Wendy?"

"Yes, I'm going to have her drink it before I send her home. She's having a really hard time with morning sickness this time around. I think more than anything she just needed a break and uninterrupted rest from her flock." Cleo smiled at me as she handed me a parcel of herbs, an unreadable twinkle in her eye.

"What's this for?"

"Tea, for you. Drink it every day. It'll help your body... adjust to what's coming."

"Pregnancy tea—" Myla interjected, shaking her head with a smile.

"Oh, thanks," I said, trying not to frown. Listening to Wendy vomit for the past three hours hadn't made me feel confident in what was coming, that was for sure.

"Head straight back to the castle, Maeve. It's getting dark."

I nodded at Cleo, accepting a motherly kiss on the cheek. Myla playfully swatted at me as I passed, and I turned to swat her back, grabbing her fingers.

"Oh, stop it you two. You are grown women! Get out of here Maeve, before you rile her up," Cleo laughed, shaking her head.

I leaned down to hug Myla and then headed for the door.

I took my time walking back to the castle, enjoying the cool evening breeze. I looked up as I approached, shrouded in shade cast by the tall tower rising up over the castle. It had been a long day, and I wondered briefly what else was in store for me.

A sense of excitement and nerves washed over me as I remembered Aaron would be coming to me tonight.

"He'd better bring the turkey baster this time," I said under my breath, smiling to myself.

I looked up at the tower once more before entering the front garden and walking toward the side entrance to the castle, walking through the kitchen garden.

I wondered, as I entered the castle, what Aaron had been up to today. What had been so pressing that he would go against his word to Ernest to help me escort the Greenbriar Alpha to the castle?