

Kings Breeder 337

Sold As The Alpha King's Breeder Chapter 337

Chapter 117: Breeder to the Alpha King

Rosalie

Ethan rose early in the morning, several hours before I finally roused myself and traveled downstairs for a cup of coffee and one of Gretchen's breakfasts. Georgia and Talon had already left for Gemma's house, and the house was quiet, save for the sound of the washing machine running downstairs in the garage.

I tapped my fingers on my coffee mug as I moved from window to window in the living room, staring out at the ice covered inlet with interest.

We had gotten home from Mirage only a day ago, and I expected Ethan to want to rest for a while before diving into our typical duties that had been put on hold for the past several weeks.

But he wasn't in his office. He wasn't in the house at all. And after a short, brisk walk to the castle, I found him to be totally missing altogether.

None of the warriors seemed to know where he had gone, either.

When I returned to the house, I found Gretchen upstairs folding laundry in our bedroom. Apparently, Ethan had risen before Gretchen, who was the earliest riser I had ever met in my life, had even arrived at the house. He had made a pot of coffee and left.

Great, I thought dismally as I descended the stairs to the garage, flipping the light switch. Where the hell could he be? I counted the snowmobiles, the skis, and snowshoes. Everything was accounted for, except for one thing.

A fishing pole.

I went back upstairs and pulled on my heaviest, warmest parka and my boots with the best tread. Gretchen handed me a large metal lunchbox without saying a word, and a thermos filled with beef stew, and I was off to the only place one could reasonably fish in the dead of winter; the lake.

I found him after an almost thirty-minute walk along the base of the mountain the village of Winter Forest was nestled against. It was a small lake, more a pond compared to the sprawling lake in Mirage near the castle, so he was easy to spot as I came out of the trees and stood along the shore.

He didn't look up at me as I approached, but continued to stare down into the hole he had cut into the ice, the auger laying on the ground only a few feet away.

"Anything biting?" I asked as I closed the distance between us. He peered up at me, narrowing his eyes. "Did you really drag the auger all the way out here by hand? It weighs a million pounds."

He stood, taking the lunch box and thermos from me while motioning to the five-gallon bucket he had been sitting on. I shook my head, declining his offer of taking over his seat.

"I just came out here to confirm you hadn't run off into the wilderness, abandoning your family forever." I sat in the snow, finding it soft and thick enough to be comfortable. Ethan sat

back down, resting his fishing pole on the ground while he opened the lunch box and rummaged through whatever snacks Gretchen had packed for him.

"I just wanted a moment to think, that's all," he finally said, closing the lunch box and setting it on the ground next to the bucket. "A lot has happened."

"I know," I breathed, tilting my face toward the sun and enjoying the brightness against my skin, even if there was no warmth to be had. Clear days were much colder than overcast days, and my cheeks were already starting to redden from the chill. "It's quiet at the house."

"We're empty-nesters now. Isn't that what it's called?"

"I believe so, but Georgia and Talon will be living with us for the foreseeable future, I'm afraid." That was true. They wouldn't be able to break ground on their new house in the village until late spring and wouldn't move in until the end of the summer.

But we would have them in Winter Forest as neighbors, and housemates, regardless. Gemma and Ernest as well. We'd get to love on, and spoil, George as much as we wanted. That had to be enough to help fill the hole in our hearts left by Rowan and Maeve.

"I was thinking about visiting Maeve in a few months, in spring, before it starts getting hot in the Isles," I said, watching as Ethan picked up his fishing pole.

"Troy mentioned spending some time up here this summer as well," Ethan replied, glancing over at me. "But we'll all be in Mirage again late next summer, when Rowan and Hanna have their baby."

"I'm happy for them," I smiled, crossing my ankles as I stretched out my legs.

"Me too."

We sat in meditative silence for a moment. I had something to ask him, the question having been nagging at me since the night Hanna took down Tasia at last. I looked at Ethan, seeing his face etched with lines of sadness. He was tired, maybe even somewhat defeated, but overall...

"Were you serious about retiring? About making Rowan the Alpha King in a year?"

Ethan didn't speak for a long while, keeping his eyes on the hole in the ice. Finally, he nodded once, glancing over at me with a knowing look in his eyes.

"Yes, I was. I still am."

"What will you do with all your free time?" I asked, genuinely curious. He arched his brow, continuing to look down into the ice, then waved his hand dismissively.

"Fish," he said simply.

“That’s it? You’re in your fifties, Ethan. What are you going to do with the rest of your life? I don’t like salmon and trout much, anyway-”

“I’ll get that damn truck running,” he said under his breath, then smiled softly to himself, his chest rising and falling in a silent chuckle.

“So you and Soren can drive it off a cliff together? That thing is a death trap, Ethan.”

“Maybe now, but not when I’m finished with it. Plus... who the hell knows where Soren is? Probably at the bottom of the ocean-”

“Don’t say that,” I said hastily. “Soren is alive, and well, I would bet my life on it-”

“No letters, no sightings for ten years now, at least, Rosalie. That’s odd, even for Soren.”

“Maybe he found his mate,” I said, trying not to let my inner turmoil over his disappearance color my cheeks, “and he’s just busy being... in love. With a wife, maybe even with children.”

“I hope so. Old bastard he’d be now

“Ethan, you have been in a horrible, no-good mood for weeks now. What the hell is the matter?”

My words were harsher than intended, but he didn’t flinch. He only rearranged his weight on the bucket, glancing quickly in my direction before looking down at the ice once again.

“Nothing. This is just who I am.”

He wasn’t entirely wrong about that, but still, he was more cross than usual.

“Oh, please-”

“Do you ever wonder what our lives would’ve been like if we hadn’t met?” he asked suddenly, interrupting me. My heart nearly stopped. I looked at him, searching his face for understanding.

“What do you mean-”

“Not that... I didn’t mean I would have wanted it any other way, honey. I just mean, well, I think of what Maeve went through, every moment... I wonder how I could have prevented it, and I am at a loss. I feel like... Goddess, I’m her father. I should have been able to help her from the beginning, before Damian invaded, before she set sail and got tangled up with the people of Dianny, with Tasia, everything-”

“It wasn’t your fault, Ethan!”

“But what if it was? What if this was more of a punishment than fate, Rosalie? I bought you, remember? Looking back on it, on those times, sure. It wasn’t totally out of the ordinary, but if I could go back-”

“I would have been dead in a year, Ethan, easily. Maybe sooner. My father would’ve sold me to the next highest bidder-”

"If I could go back, I would have told you how I felt about you the second I saw you for the first time," he interrupted, his gaze so deep it sent a wave of warmth, and longing, rippling through my core. "I would've taken you out of the hospital bed and put you in mine, nursed you back to health. Married you the very second we had the chance. I should have done it that way, Rosalie, and for that, I am sorry. I am so, so sorry."

I went to him, wrapping my arms around his neck as I settled into his lap. "We made it, okay? Look at the life we've had together for twenty-six years, Ethan. We're fine. The kids are fine. They found their mates, and they are happy. We have

triplet grandsons, for Goddess's sake. This guilt you feel for things that happened almost three decades ago, Ethan. It can't continue to hang over your head. We have too much to be thankful for, too much to look forward to."

I kissed him on the temple, then leaned my forehead against his.

"You let this guilt get in the way of your relationship with Maeve. She is not the same as me, honey. I was weak, I was meek, and fearful, and submissive. Maeve isn't, and never has been, any of those things. And," I pulled away, taking his face between my gloved hands, "you know she would've killed everyone on that ship, including Troy, and steered her way right back to us if she wanted to. She wanted him. She loved him. She would've come home if she felt she didn't have anything to lose."

Thad said the right thing. Ethan relaxed, gathering me in his arms for a moment. I leaned into him, enjoying a moment of intimacy that hadn't been had in a long time.

"Do you think they'll ever send the boys up for the summer?" he said after a moment. I could hear the smile in his voice. It brought tears to my eyes.

"Of course, they will. I'm sure they'd enjoy the break. In fact, I'm sure they're planning on it. We'll have a houseful of children again, Ethan. George, Oliver, Will, and Charlie. And Rowan's baby, whoever that baby will be. They wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for us, you know. Even... even Troy. He wouldn't be who he is if things had been different. He is the best thing that could've ever happened to not only Maeve, but our family. Hanna, too. Now tell me again you have regrets because I do not. I never have, and I never will."

He smiled, his eyes so blue in the faded sunlight that they looked as clear as the glacier hanging over the other side of the inlet. They were the same shape, and color, as our children's eyes. Our beautiful, beautiful children. The greatest gifts the Moon Goddess could've ever given us.

Thad been sold as a breeder to the eventual Alpha King, but my destiny was to be his wife, his mate, and the mother of his children. Together, we had forged a path forward out of the destruction and chaos our early, somewhat tumultuous relationship had seen. We had overcome every obstacle in our paths to not only be together, but thrive, paving the way for the generation that followed to walk a completely different, and peaceful, path.

"I love you," he said, the words a whisper against my skin.

And I smiled.

