

Alpha's Rejected 21

Chapter 21 - The Alpha's Rejected and Broken Mate

Amber POV

I was still smarting after last night, storming off to school in a bad temper and scowling blackly at anyone who so much as looked my way. Sophie occasionally cast smug glances at me, but for the most part, left me alone. Darius looked intrigued as to what had me in a bad mood and I assumed that Sophie would rightfully enlighten him because I sure as hell wasn't going to.

I was grateful to have work at the bookstore in the afternoon, almost jogging to it after school. I'd brought my professional clothes in my bag, changing quickly in the bathroom. Doug looked surprised to see me come so early for my shift, but I needed the distraction, the words I'd flung at my parents still crystal clear in my mind. How I hated them both! Sophie as well!

"You're early," Doug said casually.

I give a nonchalant shrug, placing my backpack behind the counter and setting myself up.

Doug gets the sense that I don't want to talk and quietly disappears into the back room to organize and take stock of the inventory and upcoming shipments.

The door opens with a tinkle from the bell and I paste a wide smile on my face and turn to greet them. My eyes widen in disbelief. It's him. My mystery man. He's looking as gorgeous as ever, and I feel myself blushing as I remember some of the dreams I've had involving us both. I clear my throat nervously.

"How can I help you? Did your niece like the books you bought her last time?" I ask in a shrill voice.

He smiles and I melt instantly. With looks like his, it was a wonder there weren't women fainting in the street. God, he was getting me all hot and flustered.

"She adored them. I'm actually here to get more of Tamora Pierce's books if you have any" he adds smoothly.

I nod, my mouth watering at the sight of him. Even his cologne smells delicious, like spiced apple. It's all I can do not to reach out and touch him. God, how I want to touch him.

"Come this way," I say instead and show him where the books are. He hovers, hesitating, occasionally sneaking glances at me. I feel flattered. Is he checking me out? But I don't have the guts to ask the guy out. He's older than me and more sophisticated for starters. I think I would die if he said no. It was best to keep quiet, I decided.

"I think I'll take this one and see if she likes it before I get more," he says firmly, presenting me with a book. I barely even look at it, disappointed that he had taken so little time to decide, and knowing that I would have to serve him so he could leave.

"That will be \$29.99," I tell him quietly.

He flashes me a smile and hands me a fifty-dollar bill. "Keep the change Amber" he advises me. "You deserve it, my niece loves those books."

"Thank you" I say quietly, wrapping up the book to go "is there anything else you need?"

The bookstore is quiet, thank goodness, this man is the only customer. He places his hands on the counter and eyes me with concern. "Is everything alright, you seem a little down" he says lowly "not like the bubbly girl I saw last time."

I give him a shaky smile. "You don't really want to know," I say briskly, but he shakes his head, his eyes piercing mine.

"Oh but I do," he says quietly.

"My parents are trying to marry me off to someone else and get rid of me" I blurt out, then blush.

He seems angry on my behalf "tell them no then. Surely they can't force you" he growls.

I blink in surprise. "They are pretty determined. Part of me is considering it, especially since my family hates me. Maybe going to another place, would give me far better opportunities than I have here. I don't know." I'm confusing myself and babbling.

He grimaces. "I'm sorry about everything you are going through. Maybe I can help" he says mysteriously.

I shake my head again. "Thanks, but I'll be fine. Worst case, I get the hell out of here and make my own way in life. Get my own place and get into college. All without my parent's help."

He looks impressed. "You're stubborn and full of grit," he says with a grin. "I like it."

I laugh despite myself, handing over the book and giving him a wide smile. "Thanks for listening. I hope your niece likes this book just as much" I add.

He nods and then turns, but not before glancing over his shoulder one last time, his eyes narrowing in on my face. "Don't let them bully you into doing anything you don't want" he snarls and then leaves, the door thudding loudly behind him.

Why is he so intent on what's happening to me and why does he care so much? I wonder to myself. It made no sense, but it felt nice to have someone care, besides Maria of course. I lock up that evening on a high note, wishing profusely I'd had the nerve to ask the man his name or about himself. Oh well, he'd managed to get me out of my bad mood and something told me that I hadn't seen the end of him, or at least maybe that was wishful thinking on my part.

I unlock the front door and start towards the staircase, my hand gripping the balustrade when my mother's voice sounds behind me. "Oh good, you're home" she trills.

I roll my eyes. There went my good mood. My shoulders slump in resignation as I turn towards her, my voice cold. "What is it you want now mother?"

She gives me a smile, that doesn't quite reach her eyes. "You're needed in the dining room, for dinner Amber, so don't be so rude" she chides, taking a deep breath and adjusting her clothes.

"I'm not hungry" I snap, turning back around.

"Too bad, now get in the dining room" my father's voice booms.

I consider ignoring him but decide it's not worth the argument. I throw my hands up in surrender and storm into the dining room, stopping in shock when I see that we have a guest sitting at the table. The man is at least father's age, with greying blonde hair and stubble on his pudgy chin, his stomach protruding greatly as he stands up to greet me.

"You must be Amber," he says warmly, as I try not to shudder at his chin wobbling "I'm Marcus, one of your father's business partners."

He reaches out a hand and I shake it, his hand clammy and sweaty. I shake it quickly and then let go, my father and mother coming into the room.

"Sit down next to Marcus" my father instructs before he and mother sit opposite us.

I eye them suspiciously as I sit in the chair. Marcus takes his own seat and smiles widely at me. "You're a real stunner like your father told me," he says unabashedly.

I feel dread rising inside of me. Surely after last night, they wouldn't be doing this to me? But something told me this wasn't just a business dinner.

Maria comes in with the appetizers and places them before us, her own eyes full of anxiety as she takes in the scene. For a moment anger flits across her face, but just as quickly it's gone and she pastes a fake smile on her face as she serves everyone.

I push the appetizer away, my appetite gone.

Marcus gobbles his own down and then turns to me, eyeing the plate. "Are you going to eat that?" he asks and I shove the plate over to him, looking in contempt as he eats that too.

Maria takes the empty plates and cutlery, before returning quickly with the main course. Not even the chicken cheers me up. I just stare at it morosely.

Father is the first to speak. "So Marcus what do you think?" he asks with a suggestive nod towards me "is she exactly like I described?"

Marcus gives an eager nod. "She is, for an undesirable she's rather gorgeous," he says thickly, still chewing his food.

I give my father a sickened look. He ignores me.

Then I feel something heavy on my thigh, giving it a hard squeeze. I glance down to see that Marcus's pudgy hand is resting there. Mother is strangely silent, not looking at anyone and staring hard at her plate. Does she realize what's happening right around her or was she pretending to be in her own little world?

"Please remove your hand from my person," I say between gritted teeth.

Marcus gives a hearty laugh and pulls it away. "Just checking the merchandise so to speak" he drawls. His beady eyes are full of excitement and I grimace as he licks his lips.

"Marcus has offered for your hand in exchange for some more shares in our business" father says coldly, his eyes sweeping over my body which is stiffening as I listen intently to every word "I thought it was more than fair, given your undesirable status."

"I refuse," I say quietly and calmly, the whole table suddenly going completely still. "You cannot force me. I will not marry this huge, repugnant man"

Marcus takes a deep breath, looking shocked. "I thought she was on board with this?" he asks father.

"Well, I'm not," I tell Marcus, before staring at my father "he lied to you."

"Doesn't matter, you will marry Marcus or else" father threatens.

Marcus chuckles. "I do want her to be fair. She's very soft, in all the right places, and her hips are perfect for bearing an heir." His hands reach out and squeeze my ass.

That's it. I grab hold of the knife and turn, plunging it into his privates as he gives a scream, my father bolting to his feet far too late. "I'll be damned if you think I'd marry a man like you. Something tells me you're going to have trouble producing an heir now" I say mockingly.

Marcus screams as I push the knife in deeper. Then I stomp off as father calls for an ambulance, almost frothing at the mouth from his anger.

"Amber" my mother shrieks out, but I don't listen, instead heading directly towards the front door and opening it, my mind awl with the realization that I needed to get away, and right now. I don't have time to grab anything, I just go, running as quick as I can towards the forest. If I'm lucky enough, I can get past the border before patrol even sees me or knows that something's happened. Then I can get away.

But I'm not that lucky. The second they spot me, patrol swarms all over me, Henry, the leader, looking grim-faced as he cuffs my hands behind my back.

"Your father wants you to be confined in the dungeon for now. You created quite a mess for yourself girlie" he says taunting me. "You've really done it this time."

I kick out in anger. "Why can't you just let me go." I plead.

They hurt me, yanking hard on my arms and shoving me forward, so that I was forced to walk back to the pack house, in shame. My father met me at the door, and grabbed hold of me roughly, telling Henry "I have her, thanks."

He pushed me forward, forcing me down to the basement, my legs shaking the entire time.

I was placed in the nearest cell to the door, my father unlocking the cuffs on my hands before shoving me inside. I fall, my knees hitting the ground hard.

"Just so you know, Marcus is healing nicely but no longer wants to marry you" father growls as I feel a small spurt of triumph "but it's still cost me the shares in the business. You will stay down here until you get an attitude adjustment Amber. Because, I'm warning you, the next man to offer for your hand, will be the one you marry, willingly or not."

He leaves without a backward glance, leaving me alone in a small cell that contains nothing but a threadbare cot and toilet. I sink to the floor and begin to cry, wishing that I had escaped when I had the chance, instead of waiting so long. Now my future was looking bleak and it was all I could do not to scream out, knowing it would do me no good.