

## Running Away from mate

Aphrodite:

I waited nervously in my oce, and when I heard the knock on the door, I opened it to nd Noah, the Alpha King's brother, standing there with a warm smile.

"Good morning, Aphrodite," he said, his voice friendly. "Are you ready to meet my brother?"

My heart skipped a beat at his words, and I nodded, trying to hide the nervousness that threatened to overwhelm me. "Yes, I'm ready," I said, feeling sweat drip down my back due to my uneasiness.

I wasn't ready. I barely got any sleep last night as, strangely, my mind was consumed by him, and I don't know why. Crazy, right?

Noah smiled reassuringly and held out his hand. "Come on, then. Let's not keep him waiting." I took a deep breath and followed Noah out of my oce building, my heart pounding in my chest.

As we made our way to his car, which exuded wealth and made me feel poor, I knew I had to get my emotions in check and remain professional. I had only one job today: to nd out what type of man the Alpha King was and the type of woman he wanted. Any mistakes could cost me everything I had.

The journey was long, and I used the silence between us to gather my thoughts. Finally, after what felt like hours, Noah parked his car in front of a beautiful white mansion that seemed straight out of a magazine, which I assumed belonged to the king, tting his status.

We stepped inside, and I was greeted by the sight of a grand entrance hall adorned with luxurious furnishings and exquisite artwork. Despite there being no hint of dust it felt like I was somehow tarnishing the place just by walking around.

It was clear that no expense had been spared in the creation of this magnificent home. Noah led me through the mansion, deep into its depths, until we reached a set of ornate double doors.

I tried to steady my breathing as I followed him inside. The room beyond was even more impressive than the entrance hall, with high ceilings, marble oors, and oor-to-ceiling windows that ooded the space with light. It was clear that this was where the Alpha King spent most of his time.

"Let me go tell him we are here," Noah said, then hurriedly left me alone to fetch his brother without waiting for my reply.

I took a moment to look around, my eyes wide with wonder. Everywhere I looked, there were signs of luxury and opulence, and I could only hope to attain this kind of wealth through my matchmaking app.

Observing every corner of the room, my attention was drawn to a large painting hanging on the wall. It was a portrait of the most handsome man I had ever seen in my life, and I dare say he looked like the man of my dreams.

He had dark, brooding eyes with a hint of red, a strong jawline, and there was a hint of a smirk playing on his lips. I couldn't tear my eyes away from him, feeling a strange uttering in my stomach.

Gosh, he was handsome. Who was he? His beauty was unreal. I was pretty sure Lara would agree with me.

Unconsciously, my hand stretched to touch the painting, and just as I was about to touch it, my phone rang, startling me out of my reverie. I quickly answered it, trying to hide the fact that I had been caught off guard shamelessly admiring the unknown man, and a blush crept up to my cheeks.

"Hello?" I said, my voice slightly breathless.

"Hey, Aphrodite, how's it going?" she asked.

"It's amazing, Lara," I whispered back, glancing around to make sure no one could hear me. "I'm standing in the Alpha King's house, and there's a picture here... He's the most handsome man I've ever seen in my life." There was a pause on the other end of the line, and then Lara's voice came back, lled with excitement.

"Really? Make sure you take a picture!" she exclaimed.

"Everyone here seems to be so handsome, like they were made out of a fairy tale book," I whispered to Lara, trying to keep my voice low. "So why is the Alpha King supposedly ugly and being rejected by women?"

"So, you think I am ugly?" A cold, deep voice asked, sending butteries uttering in my stomach.

I turned around slowly and my breath caught in my throat as I came face-to-face with the man in the painting. The phone in my head fell to the ground while the man stood before me with an amused glint in his dark, brooding eyes and a tint of red.

My mouth went dry, and I found myself unable to speak, unable to tear my gaze away from him. He was even more handsome in person than he was in the painting, and I couldn't control my emotions, feeling a surge of attraction that took me completely by surprise.

As I stood there, speechless, my eyes were drawn to his lips, wishing I could taste them. Then my gaze slowly drifted to the powerful lines of his jaw and to every part of his perfectly sculpted body, as if crafted by the moon goddess herself.

I felt like I was drowning in a sea of desire, and I knew that I was in trouble.

"I'm Asher," he said simply, his eyes never leaving mine. "The Alpha King." His voice was smooth and velvety, like music to my ears, and I wouldn't have minded listening to him all day long.

Wait. Did he just say his name was Asher? The Alpha King?

The desire that had blinded me vanished, and I slowly came back to my senses. I couldn't believe it.

I had thought he was ugly based on what I had heard, but standing before me now, he was anything but. So, why did those women f\*\*\*\*g lie?

His beauty left me speechless and weak at the knees. I tried to nd my voice and form a coherent response, but all I could do was stare at him in shock and desire. This was not at all what I had been expecting, and I didn't know how to handle it.

"You must be Aphrodite, the matchmaker," he said, extending his hand to shake mine. A sudden jolt of electricity shot through me, sending shivers down my spine. It was as if a bolt of lightning had struck between us, igniting a re I couldn't ignore.

But it wasn't just me who felt it. My wolf, who had been silent until now, suddenly began to howl loudly in my head, screaming one word I never wanted to hear over and over again: Mate.

I gasped, the sound catching in my throat, as the realization hit me like a freight train. Asher was my mate. The man standing before me, the Alpha King himself, was destined to be mine.

A surge of conicting emotions washed over me: fear, excitement, desire. But above all, there was a sense of inevitability, as if this moment had been written in the stars since the beginning of time.

As our hands touched, I felt a connection growing between us that was stronger than anything I had ever experienced before. It was as if we were two halves of the same whole, nally coming together after a lifetime of searching.

No. I must stop this if I value my life.

I could see different emotions swimming in his eyes, which surprisingly became darker, just like mine, and before I could even process what was happening, he spoke, his voice low and husky.

"Mate," he whispered, his eyes burning into mine as he claimed me. Before I could respond, he leaned in and pressed his lips against mine, sending shockwaves of desire coursing through my body.

My hands instinctively wrapped around his neck, as if a re had been ignited between us, a re that threatened to consume us both.

I didn't know how long we kissed, but when he pulled away, my legs were wobbly, and I almost fell to the oor. But he managed to catch me with his quick reexes, and his eyes stared back at me with desire, and I knew when I knew I was in deep trouble.

"I've been searching for you all my life," he said, his voice rough with emotion, bringing me back to the reality of my life. Before I could even think, I panicked.

I couldn't be with him—not now, not ever. And so, without thinking or hesitating, I pushed him away and thought of the lie.

"I... I can't," I stammered, my voice barely above a whisper. "I'm married... with ve kids."

The words tasted like ash in my mouth, but I knew that it was the only way to keep him at arm's length, to protect myself from the inevitable heartbreak that would come from being with him.

Asher's eyes widened in shock, and for a moment, I thought I saw a icker of hurt in his eyes. But then it was gone, replaced by a mask of indifference.

"As a married woman who is mated, being in another man's arms will lead to my hands being severed and my eyes being plucked out. You know this as the Alpha King. You made that law."

Asher's eyes narrowed, and I could see the doubt icker in them. "I don't believe you," he said quietly, his voice cold and hard. "There's no mark on your neck from someone claiming you."

My hands unconsciously touched my neck where the mark was supposed to be, and panic surged through me, but I didn't care. I wasn't going to be with him; instead, I would nd him someone else to mate with. Thankfully, he wasn't ugly, so nding him a woman would be a piece of cake.

My eyes gazed at the ground where my phone was, which I had almost forgotten in the chaos of the moment. Without thinking, I bent down to pick it up, and in that split second, I made a decision.

"I have to go," I said quickly, my voice strained.

"I'll... I'll call you later."

And with that, I turned and rushed out of the mansion, my heart pounding in my chest. It wasn't until I was outside, with the cool air hitting my face, that I realized what I had done.

Firstly, I had indirectly rejected the Alpha King, and worst of all, I hadn't ended my call with Lara. My phone had been on the entire time, and my best friend had heard everything.

I felt sick to my stomach as I realised that Lara knew the truth—that I had lied to her, to Asher, and to myself.

Hot tears streamed down my face as I started walking, trying to nd my way back home without Noah's help. One thing was certain: I had a lot of explaining to do.