

# Mated To Five Alpha Brothers

## Chapter 38

Lifting the scrub off the floor, I growled in irritation at the sight of the stubborn stain that seemed to be steadily getting worse. The only noticeable difference that my vigorous scrubbing had achieved was the slight change in the color of the wood and the painful blisters that had begun to erupt on my fingertips.

For fucks sake!

Tossing aside the worn-down scrub, I flopped back down onto the floor and glared at the offending sight.

It had been two days since my last "conversation" with Thomas. Two days since he had taken off and not returned. After working myself into a state of panic and stressing for hours on end, I'd had enough. My nostrils flared with every labored breath while my insides tightened with mounting frustration. The longer I stared at the ugly stain on the floor, the higher it climbed. Trembling wildly, I shot to my feet. Fuck them all!

A sharp sting of bitterness pierced through my heart, tangling with the swirling rage, until the two emotions began to eat me from within. Like maggots devouring decay, the feeling turned everything foul in its wake. There was nothing good left to feel.

Nothing to ground me as the resentment and hate burst out of me in unbridled fury.

FUCK!

My foot connected with the small bucket of water lying close, sending it hurtling through the air to the other side of the room, leaving a trail of soapy water in its wake. Red clouded my vision as I turned to grab the first thing, I could find - a dining chair. Grasping it with both hands, I threw it across the room with force, inciting a loud crash as it collided with the kitchen island.

It wasn't enough. It didn't feel...enough. This did not come close to the devastation I was feeling on the inside. And that needed to be corrected. But just as I turned to grab another chair, my body froze, muscles locking in place at the sound of a booming voice coming from the door.

"Mia!"

Jerking upright, my gaze fell on James who stood slack-jawed with Liam by his side, who also sported a similar expression to his Beta. The sight of them in my home, watching me in a moment of vulnerability only served to inflame the rage as my hands tightened on the chair, raising it off the floor. My jaw ticked, my temper redirecting on the two who dared to intrude on a private moment. First Thomas and now him.

"What does a girl have to do to get some fucking privacy around here?!"

James blinked rapidly, his hazel eyes widening with disbelief while Liam winced and lowered his gaze to the ground. A moment of terse silence passed, my hands twitching involuntarily on the chair as my mind warred between action and restraint. But just as James opened his mouth, the last shred of self-control shattered.

A scream ripped through me as the chair flew out of my hands, heading straight towards the two men who jumped out of the way at the last minute and growled simultaneously.

"GET OUT! GET OUT! GET OUT! GET THE FUCK OUT....!"

In a flash James materialized in front of me, his arms pulling me into his chest as his eyes blazed a dangerous gold. Without breaking eye contact, he spoke calmly over his shoulder. "Liam, wait in the car."

Somewhere past his towering frame, I heard a set of footsteps leave, followed by a soft thud of the door as it closed behind us. But James and I continued to stare at each other.

Unable to stand the heavy silence, I snarled out in irritation. "What are you looking at?"

To my sheer annoyance, James didn't take the bait. Instead, his expression grew contemplative, head tilting to the side as his eyes remained alert, studying my every move. Before I could think of a scathing response to rile him, his hand grazed my face lightly, fingers tracking the path of a stray tear that had spilled out in frustration.

"Don't"

Pausing, he glanced back into my eyes, his hazel depths swirling with regret. Ignoring my resistance, he gently caressed the side of my face. "What's wrong Mia..."

His voice sounded tormented but it did nothing to shake the disbelief that struck me in the moment. I gaped at him, my lips parting in shock at the audacity of the question. "What's wrong? What's wrong? Are you seriously asking me that question?"

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James didn't answer but flinched slightly at the tone of my voice as if he had been physically struck.

"I just want to help."

I couldn't stop the laughter that erupted from my lips, dark and filled with hatred as I tilted my head to the side, my voice laced with mock curiosity. "Do you know? Then where were you when brother dearest went out of his way to make my life a living hell huh? Where the fuck were you when Thomas was screwed over for doing right by his mate? Where were you, James?"

Without waiting for a response, I answered my question with disdain. "Oh, that's right. You were busy feeding him with "ideas" on how better to fuck us over. Ain't that right?"

Hazel flashed bright gold in an instant but James did not retaliate in kind. I realized that it would take much more than words to goad him into an emotive response. This man was a thinker and a strategist. Way too level-headed to act on impulse.

But he answered nonetheless.

"I did what I had to. Given all the ways that this could have ended, I believe this outcome has worked out in everyone's favor."

White hot rage seared through me at his calm and collected response. The bastard! My hands struck out in a flash, fisting the lapels of his suit in a death grip before shoving him out of my space with every ounce of strength left in me.

Aside from the look of surprise that crossed his features, the gorgeous titan just stood there, looking unaffected and not a hair out of place. "Fuck you! The only ones that have benefitted from this are you and your brothers. Not me and certainly not Thomas!"

His hands left my waist to grasp mine. Brows narrowed, he continued in that annoyingly wise tone. "Do you remember the first day you landed here? When Alex ordered me to end you?"

My jaw clenched painfully at the memory. The horror, the heartbreak, and the pain. I glared without giving him a response.

"If I hadn't gone against my Alpha's order and urged him to reconsider, what would have been the outcome? What would have happened if I didn't step in when my brothers wanted to hastily sever the bond? I have helped guide them to make the best out of this situation. From the very first day and every single day after, I have done all I can to not just protect the interests of this pack but also protect you. Do you believe there was a better alternative? I disagree. Because any other option would have ended with your death... and that I cannot not allow."

Momentarily stunned into silence, I tried to digest his words logically rather than inspecting them through the lens of emotion. And I couldn't deny that there was some truth to it. Every time James had intervened, Thomas and I had been spared from Alex's insatiable violence. And that thought made my treacherous heart flutter. A small tug beneath my chest made me feel warm inside. Like I was protected and watched over. He truly was an angel. My angel. Mine.

But in the end, could I trust him? Believe that he had worked behind the scenes to ensure my safety?

"You could have let us go. Thomas and I could have lived out our lives far away from here."

He shook his head slowly, repeating what Thomas had told me two nights ago. "Thomas's wolf wouldn't survive without a pack."

"But what if we could move to another pack?"

He let out a deep sigh. "That would not only raise questions but if the truth ever came out that you were mated to all of us, they could use you and Thomas as leverage. And trust me that is not a position you want to find yourself in."

I glanced down at his hands that gently held mine. A well of emotion threatened to choke me but I swallowed it down. "And you think that living like this...as an outcast, as some kind of dirty little secret is what's best for me?"

Pulling myself closer, my face inches from his, I pleaded. "I can't live like this James. Like a prisoner. Waiting on permission to breathe. To exist. To live with this ache...this...this empty hollowness that I cannot explain...I can't do this anymore"

James drew in a sharp breath, his eyes turning a bright gold as he let go of my hands and held me by the waist, pulling me further into him. I shuddered as a wave of comfort washed over me from him. He was comforting me through the bond! There was something about that, that had my walls crumbling down.

"I don't want this... this bond... but I can't do anything about it. I can't face Thomas and tell him that he isn't enough. That his love doesn't magically make everything better." Leaning my head against his chest, I felt the exhaustion weigh heavily on my chest. I was tired. The emotional chaos that I was struggling to control had thoroughly depleted my reserves. "I don't know what to do. I feel like I'm losing myself...help me... help me, James."

I felt shocked at my own words. Why was I asking him for help and why the hell was I telling him all this?!

I felt a tingle go up my spine as James lowered his face and whispered in a tone of torment and pain. "Do you think this is easy for the rest of us? For me? Every single minute is a struggle. The wolfsbane is the only thing keeping me from going insane... You don't know how much I want you...how much I need you..."

Time slowed as I held my breath for the fear of interrupting him. His words soothed my soul, filling an empty space deep within. Words that I didn't realize that I craved to hear. I took it all in, drowning in the moment as we stood, locked in each other's arms, whispering our desire for one another and throwing all caution to the wind.

It felt taboo and it felt right.

We stared into each other's eyes, mine a whirlpool of desire and his, a blazing inferno of heat. A wild crackle of energy sizzled in the space between us as the bond surged to life, pulsing white hot in retaliation for all the time we had spent denying it. It throbbed and pulsed, longing to be set free through our union.

Unable to take another second, I threw my arms around his neck, my fingers grasping his hair tightly as I murmured throatily.

"Show me."

Golden eyes crazed with feverish desire was the last thing I witnessed before my own eyes shuttered at the sound of his loud groan. And the next thing I felt was his demanding lips, hot and searing against mine. I gasped at the sensation. Suddenly, I felt reborn as the blood rushed through my veins, charging every nerve ending and setting my skin aflame. Every part of my being centered on the angelic face and the heat emanating from his body. The need to give in and drown in his arms consumed every fiber of my mind.

Swaying dangerously on my feet, I leaned into his touch as his hands moved across my back in a frenzy.

Releasing my lips, he trailed kisses across my cheek, tugging at my earlobe before burrowing his face between my shoulder and neck. His body shuddered violently as he breathed in deeply, a low growl slipping past his lips as I mimicked his movements and bit lightly into his neck. His answering moan sent a charge right down to my nether region, my insides clenching desperately as I drew him closer to my body.

Growling possessively, he crushed me to him, his arms tightening around me in a death grip. A whimper passed my lips as the ache bloomed, slicking my pussy with arousal.

His chest vibrated louder in return, the sound resembling a deep aggressive purr as he inhaled sharply.

The bond flared, driving me to act on instinct.

I tugged at his shirt before slipping my hands in and feeling his bare flesh. Corded muscles tightened at my touch, enticing a low purr from him. I traced every line, reveling in the feel of touching what was mine.

My hands went lower, keen to seek out the proof of his desire for this...for me, and needless to say, I wasn't left disappointed. My hand grasped the large bulge through his pants, stroking his impressive length headily.

But the moment quickly came to an end when James grabbed my hand, stopping things from going any further.

"Mia... stop... we can't..."

I froze like I was suddenly doused in cold water, my eyes shooting to his face which appeared to be twisted in guilt and regret. This wasn't what I was expecting. Did he not want me? Did I read the signs wrong?

"Why? I thought you..."

"I do. But..."

"But what?"

"We shouldn't..."

"Shouldn't? According to whom? Your brother?"

A grimace marred his face, features twisting in a show of torment as he failed to respond.

And that's when it struck me.

Wrenching myself from his arms, I narrowed my eyes, my tone accusing. "Oh my god. That's it, isn't it? You don't want this because of some crazy, wolf-loyalty-thing that you have going on with your brother. Is that it?"

Their eyes widened as he stuttered, "No... it's not just... it's complicated."

The sting of rejection and shame hit me like a train. I was a fucking fool to think that they would choose me over their precious Alpha and pack. Emotions thundered within, seeking to bring me to my knees but I wouldn't. I couldn't.

Drawing myself to my full height, I looked over at James, who stood there wracked in guilt. I waited for the emotions to take over, to leave me feeling pathetically sorry for myself but that didn't happen. Because in this instance, looking at him, I could only feel sorry for him. I would never be bound by their rules, their strange need to fall in line and simply follow without question. To deny their need for some greater bullshit. At least, as a human, I had a choice. Perhaps, being an outcast was the best outcome after all.

"Why are you here James?"

He appeared nervous at the sudden change in my tone and demeanor, his fingers nervously fidgeting with the part of the shirt that I had untucked. "We need to go to the head office in the city."

"For?"

A twinge of nervousness crept in as I watched him look everywhere but at me.

"I'd rather not explain now. We're already late. You need to get dressed. Wear something formal..... workwear if you have one. Liam will take you to the office and I'll meet you there."

"If you think for one minute -"

"Please Mia. Don't argue. Just be ready to go. And... make sure you shower."

My mouth dropped open in indignation, but he hurried to explain. "My scent. You are covered in my scent. As I am in yours. Which is why I'm going to shower and change and meet you at the office instead of riding along. Please. Get ready."

"Does Thomas know?"

He hesitated for a heartbeat. "No."

Something in his tone made me pause. I had wanted to scream and tell them all to fuck themselves. To told him I wanted Thomas by my side but I decided otherwise. I was still hurting after my last conversation with him.

"Fine."

With that, I turned around and walked into the bedroom, ignoring the icy numbness that I was feeling on the inside and the longing stare from the man who stood frozen in the living room.