

# Mated To Five Alpha Brothers

## Chapter 41

I shifted my weight nervously, watching her frown deepen and her lips pull into a thin line. There was a reason my best friend had an affinity for numbers. She was a natural when it came to deciphering complicated problems, making her a deadly marksman at "putting two and two together".

With that in mind, I had spent the last half hour, trying my hardest to dodge her probing questions but judging by the look on her face, Sasha wasn't buying what I was selling her.

"Hold on. This doesn't add up." Her curly hair bounced vigorously around her face as she shook her head. "You're telling me that the reason you couldn't call or answer your damn phone was because you were busy? Seriously? Is that the best you can do?"

I glanced at the camera on the ceiling before looking sheepishly at my friend. "I know it sounds lame but it's a new job, new place, new people... I was just trying to settle in."

"You have been gone for over three months, Mia! And in all that time, all I get are one-word responses to my texts with no explanation, no reason, no nothing!"

Leaning forward in her seat, looking extremely pissed, Sasha continued, "Do you know how it felt when I showed up to work and found out that you had left? To Portland of all places!? You never mentioned anything the day before! No goodbye, No - "oh hey and by the way, I've decided to move to a shithole because I've lost my goddamned mind."

"I understand-"

"No, you don't."

My mouth zipped close as we looked at each other for the next few minutes, a million words passing between us in silence. My heart broke, knowing that she had unintentionally placed herself at risk for the sake of my well-being "Sash, look...I'm doing fine and I'm sorry that I did not get in touch with you..." I raised my voice slightly when she opened her mouth to interrupt. "...And no, I'm not going to give any excuses but I will admit that I've been a lousy friend. Please forgive me."

She lapsed into silence for a while, her frown slowly disappearing but replaced instead with a look of sadness. A slash of guilt cut through me when she spoke, her voice wavering with emotion.

"I didn't know what to think. What to do..." Her eyes which were trained to a spot beyond my shoulder, took on a far-off look. "...One minute you were there and the next you were gone. They said you got a better offer here at the head office and you took it but I didn't believe that. Surely you would have said something to me. Surely..."

She glanced back, her eyes searching mine for some form of confirmation but all I could force out of me was a tight-lipped smile. I wasn't sure what she made of it, but she carried on, "...And when I didn't hear from you, I went to your apartment, hoping to get a forwarding address or something but no luck..."

An image of my place flashed in my mind. My heart yearned for it but most of all it yearned for the person I used to be – free and happy.

Pushing herself forward in her seat, her voice lowered. "...Then it was these weird texts telling me you were fine and not to worry... they didn't sound like you. I mean I know you. You can be boring to talk to at times but you're never vague or dismissive. And you have never not answered my calls for this long. No matter how pissed you were at me. It was all just...fishy."

I couldn't help but feel pride in that moment. Those government bastards who'd pretended to be me had clearly not fooled my friend.

"And after that, all these crazy thoughts started going through my mind. What if you were kidnapped? What if you were locked in someone's basement? Or what if you were dead?" Her hands flew all over the place as she gestured erratically. "...I started to freak out so I went to the cops..."

My façade almost cracked at her so-called "crazy thoughts". She had no idea how accurate her theory was, minus the dodgy basement. "...And I had an officer from the Portland Police Department call me and say they did a welfare check on you and that you were fine and in no immediate danger. And to tell you the truth I was furious with you after that. I mean why couldn't you just pick up the phone and tell me that yourself? Nothing made sense. That is until everything clicked suddenly..."

Confusion swirled through my brain. I had no idea where she was going with this.

"...it was right there all along... Carson and Sons. The bloody company that bought us... him -Thomas Carson."

My stomach flipped at the mention of his name. This "theory" of hers had officially entered dangerous territory and I had no way to signal her to stop. Not with the camera pointing in our direction.

"It all comes back to him, Mia. First, they wanted to fire you and then he has this super-secret meeting with you and you're suddenly back on board? Jennifer who started the whole rumor about the two of you gets fired... nobody shed any tears over that by the way... and then you're suddenly given this fantastic offer which was all hush-hush. The next day you've moved to their head office and I've not heard from you since. That's when I decided to fly here and see for myself. I didn't know where you lived obviously, so the next best option was to see if you really worked here. And honestly I wasn't expecting to see..."

Sasha rambled on, my senses tuning out as my eyes remained glued to the camera above us. Panic set in. This was not how it was supposed to go. I was told to convince her and I was failing by the minute.

"There's nothing going on, Sash!"

Her words died abruptly, her eyes bulging in shock at the clear vehemence in my voice. I softened immediately, but I was still determined to get the point across even if it tore me up.

"...I don't know where all this is coming from but you have got to stop reading into things. Sometimes, it's exactly how it looks and nothing more..." I watched her face fall, my own resolve crumbling on the inside with the words I chose to say next.

"...look, thank you for coming all this way to see me. But I don't want you to worry about this anymore. I am happy and I'm fine."

The words were like acid on my tongue, sharp and putrid. A spark of anger filtered through her petite features. "You say you're fine but you don't sound ok and I'm sorry to say, but you look like shit."

I sighed, not having the willpower to deny or argue her statements. Sasha was not the type to give up easily, especially when she thought she was right.

"Mia, are you in some kind of trouble?"

Alarm bells went off in my head. I knew she would hit the nail on the head somehow.

My stress level spiked along with the strong urge to just give in and let her know that she was right. But I knew deep inside, that by doing that, I would be signing her death sentence.

"Honestly, you need to stop. There is nothing going on. I am fine, I am happy and everything is going great." I looked her straight in the eye, trying to mask my emotions as I continued, "For the first time I have a senior role and I get to call the shots. Management here is really supportive and I'm making more than I've ever dreamed. I truly am happy Sash."

Her mouth opened and closed, her eyes narrowing as she held my gaze for the longest time. The moment seemed to stretch without another word, making me feel extremely nervous and anxious. I wasn't the type to go out of my way to deceive someone, so I had no clue if it had worked.

"Now I feel like the biggest moron in the world. Thanks for that."

I flinched at her tone while trying my best to blink back the tears. My heart sank, knowing that she had believed my story even though that was the outcome I had wanted.

"I just thought we were... never mind..." She stood abruptly, her body stiff as she stared at me with hurt and anger in her eyes. "Sorry that I wasted your time. I'm glad it all worked out for you in the end."

I held my breath, afraid that if I opened my mouth, this masquerade would collapse. I flinched as the door slammed, the dreaded sound solidifying the fact that my best friend had just walked out of my life, taking with her the only genuine relationship that I'd ever had. The urge to run after her was overwhelming but I sat there, my tears finally falling as I witnessed my life fall apart all over again. I knew I had to let her go but it killed me to do so.

My body trembled with the silent shudders, the grief finally taking hold as I gave in. Sobs wracked through me uncontrollably when I thought back to everything that had happened. Of how my life had completely derailed ever since I met the brothers.

I was so lost in the pain that I did not hear the door open nor did I hear the footsteps that followed in after.

"I think that went well."

I stiffened at the sound of Marcus's voice. My tears immediately stalled, my hands balling into fists as he drew close.

"Liam will take you back now and fill you in about the plan for next week."

There was no remorse in his tone, no apology or consideration for the emotional state that I was left in. But then, what did I expect a beast?

Standing up in a daze, with my back to him, I gripped the table hard, my voice cold as ice. A rage like never before, lit deep in my belly, pumping my veins with adrenaline.

"How about you fuck off and leave me alone?"

Turning to face him, I noticed the surprise flit across his face before it hardened. I could sense something powerful stir behind that stoic demeanor. Something, that didn't appreciate my obvious antagonism.

His eyes narrowed while he stood in silence. I felt my body twitch involuntarily, my hands itching to reach out and gouge out his eyeballs even though the rest of my body was screaming at me to run.

And as if he could sense the turmoil, his lips lifted in amusement. "Is that all you would like to do to me...mate?"

Something in me snapped at his words.

My fear and sanity long forgotten, I lunged, aiming for his throat.