

Mated To Five Alpha Brothers

Chapter 7

The tension that had knotted itself in my gut slowly began to ease as we rode the elevator to my one-bedroom apartment on the second floor. Having felt a total loss of control all evening, I gladly welcomed the warmth and security that washed over me as soon as we walked through the door. Turning on the lights, I inhaled the familiar scents. The subtle smell of gardenia and freesia from the diffuser filled my lungs and calmed my nerves.

Thomas walked in after me and looked around, his eyes absorbing every detail with great interest. "You have a lovely place, Mia".

I studied his expression to see if he was just trying to be polite. After all, this man was a multi-millionaire who was probably used to mansions and five-star hotels. Not a crowded one-bed place that barely had enough room to move around.

His eyes, however, held nothing but sincerity.

I smiled. "Thank you. It's small but it's home. Come in and make yourself comfortable."

Walking towards the open-plan kitchen, I tossed my clutch on the counter. "Would you like something to drink?"

Just as I said it, I cringed inwardly, suddenly remembering that I didn't really have any interesting options to offer. "Unfortunately, the only options are tea, coffee, or red wine."

He chuckled as he took a seat on the couch. "What? No alcohol? I'm surprised. You seemed to be enjoying your drinks at the bar tonight" His tone was teasing and his eyes brimmed with mirth.

"It was only a few! And what were you doing there anyway? Spying on me?" Although I was only teasing and playing along, I was itching to know how he had turned up at the same place. It's not as if Manhattan had a shortage of nightclubs or something.

He barked out a laugh. "Spy? Now why would I do that?"

I narrowed my eyes at him, warning him silently to quit with the jokes.

Running a hand through his hair he chuckled at my expression. "I was meeting with one of my business associates and spotted you from the booth above and wandered over to say hello. Does that satisfy your curiosity?"

I snorted, remembering how he had "found" me at the club.

"To say hello? Really? Didn't realise that you had to plant your hands and mouth all over the other person just to say hello. Tell me, Mr Carson, is that how you greet everyone you see?"

His eyes flashed with a devilish glint at my question.

"Nope. Just you Miss Sutherland. And the last time I checked you seemed to hold no objection to my particular style of greeting." He emphasized the last word with a flirtatious tone.

I blushed thinking back to what had happened in the club between us. The heat, the lust, all the moaning and the grinding. God! I wanted to die this very instant from the embarrassment but instead, I turned towards the cupboards above the stove and withdrew two wine glasses and the red wine. Raising the bottle, I pointed in his direction. "Wine?"

His lips turned slightly upwards at my obvious discomfort and deliberate avoidance.

"Sure. Why not."

After I handed him his drink, I settled myself comfortably on the armchair facing him. I studied him over the rim of my glass as we made small talk about his business and the company takeover. To say I was unimpressed with his business portfolio would be a lie. They seemed to have a finger in every freaking pie! Hotels, real estate, nightclubs, casinos, mining – the list went on.

"What was the reason for buying a part of Ranford?"

He shrugged. "Good business. Merging it with ours will give us a solid foothold in the east which we have been keen to do for a very long time"

A slight twinge of irritation crept in. How can he be so nonchalant when people I have worked with have been let go without a second thought?

"So, you don't care what happens to the employees as long as things work out fine for you guys?"

His shoulders tensed as his gaze turned scrutinizing at my reaction. Placing his glass on the side table, he leaned forward laying his arms on his thighs and clasping his hands together in front of him.

"It's not that we don't care. We are trying our best to retain as many as we can but there is a business need to fulfil. When employees don't meet that need then they are either moved or let go. It's just business."

I let out an exasperated sigh. I felt like he was missing the point.

"I get that. But do you really see what happens to these people? Most of them have bills to pay, kids to support, and so on. Until they find something else, they are stuck. Severance packages barely cover anything."

He remained quiet.

"Well?"

"What would you like me to say, Mia? That I will change this? Give them back their jobs? Help them out? I can't. There is a lot that goes into making such decisions."

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Before I could open my mouth to argue, he continued, "Besides I'm not the sole authority on things relating to the company. There are others. Partners, stakeholders, and investors. They all have a say. "

He was looking at me intently, his eyes silently challenging me to contradict his point but I forced myself to give up on the argument. What good would it do?

"Fine. I get it."

Yes, I understood the way things worked in the corporate world but that doesn't mean that I have to like it or agree with it. There was a petty part of me that wanted to blame him. But I also realized that I had to tread carefully here. Pissing off my new boss was definitely not on my agenda irrespective of how many boundaries we had crossed tonight.

I was surprised when he suddenly rose from the couch and walked up to me with an unexpected grace in his stride that would be uncommon for a person of his stature. Stunned, I watched as he knelt down beside me and clasped my hands with his own. Lifting them to his mouth, he kissed the back of my hand gently before looking at me.

"I don't want you to be upset with me, Mia. I understand where you are coming from but there isn't much that I can do about it. Let's not let things that we can't control come between us. Yes?"

I swallowed hard. His regretful gaze felt like a knife to my chest. At that moment, all the frustration that I had felt over the situation at work left me in an instant. I felt petty and small for trying to hold him responsible for something that was clearly my issue.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to argue."

Wordlessly, he let go of my hands then and raised himself slightly off the ground. With his hands gripping the arms of the chair, Thomas leaned forward and crashed his lips over mine.