

The Alphas forbidden mate

Chapter 17

Zachary's POV

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"You're in love with Asher?" I barked out a laugh, the sound raw and unhinged, echoing in the small space of her apartment. "Is this some kind of joke?" My laughter bordered on manic, as if the sheer absurdity of her words had snapped something inside of me.

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But Betty? She didn't flinch.

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"It's not a joke, sweetheart," she said smoothly, taking a step back, her lips curling into a taunting smirk. "Asher is the perfect man for me—his confidence, his authority, everything about him turns me the fuck on."

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The way she said it, so shameless, so unapologetic, sent a white-hot rage surging through me. My fists clenched at my sides, nails digging into my palm as I tried—really fucking tried—to keep myself in check.

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"All the time we fucked, all the times we made love, meant nothing to you?" I asked, my voice dangerously low.

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She laughed. A cruel, mocking sound that grated against my skin like glass.

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"It was just sex," she purred, her tone dripping with amusement. "You know that. I needed to pleasure myself, and you were convenient."

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She took a step toward me, reaching out, but I slapped her hand away before she could touch me.

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"Don't be so upset," she teased. "But since we're being honest, I should tell you—every single time we fucked, I was thinking about Asher."

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My entire body locked up. That bitch.

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"You're nothing but a trashy whore," I spat, venom lacing every syllable.

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Betty only grinned. "Coming from you? I'll take it as a compliment," she mused. "I mean, I'm not the one who left my wife to sleep around, am I? You wanted your ego stroked, Zachary, and I gave you that. But don't worry—you served your purpose. Now, it's time for me to focus on Asher."

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Her words were like gasoline to the fire already burning inside me.

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I exhaled slowly, eyes narrowing as a smirk ghosted over my lips. "You know," I started, my tone casual but edged with something sinister, "when I got here and you asked who Isabella was pregnant for...?"

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Betty's face stiffened. Her smirk wavered.

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I leaned in slightly, watching her reaction closely as I dropped the bomb. "She's pregnant for your beloved Asher."

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The color drained from her face. "No," she whispered, shaking her head. "That's a lie. You're lying."

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"Am I?" I chuckled darkly. "My so-called stepbrother is screwing my wife and now he's got you too. What a fucking joke."

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Betty staggered back as if I had physically hit her, her lips parting, but no words came out.

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I shook my head, a bitter laugh escaping my lips. "I showed you love, Betty. I fucking cared for you. I left my wife—the one person who actually gave a damn about me—for you. And this...?" My jaw clenched. "This is what I get?"

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Before I could stop myself, my hand shot out, gripping her throat.

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Betty gasped, her hands clawing at mine. "Zachary—let me go! You're hurting me!" she choked, struggling against my grip.

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For a moment, I considered tightening my hold—just for a second longer—but then, I released her.

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She stumbled back, coughing violently, rubbing at her throat as she glared at me with wide, tear-brimmed eyes.

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I stared at her, my chest heaving with barely contained fury, then exhaled sharply.

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"It was my mistake," I said finally, my voice eerily calm. "To think I'd ever be loved by anyone. But you, Betty?" I smirked coldly. "You did me a favor today."

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Her brows furrowed in confusion. "What the hell are you talking about?"

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"You've unlocked something inside me," I murmured. "And there's no going back now."

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The flicker of fear in her eyes was satisfying.

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"I'll make sure your life is a living hell," I promised, my smirk widening as I saw her tense.

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Then, without another word, I turned and walked out.

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As soon as I stepped outside, rage bubbled to the surface again. I let out a guttural growl, loud enough to make heads turn. Pedestrians on the sidewalk glanced my way, startled, but none of them dared approach. They all knew better.

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I reached my car and gripped the steering wheel so hard my knuckles turned white.

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I couldn't go home. Not with my mother there.

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No, there was only one place I could go.

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I rang the doorbell carefully, hesitating for a second before pressing it again. No response.

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I exhaled sharply, debating whether I should just turn back, but just as I reached for the bell a third time, the door creaked open.

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"Zachary?"

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Dorian stood at the doorway, his brows furrowed in confusion. His piercing gaze scanned me, taking in my disheveled state.

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"Are you okay?" he asked, concern lacing his tone.

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Dorian had once been my closest friend—my most trusted packmate. But my own insecurities had poisoned my judgment. I had convinced myself that he wanted to overthrow me, that he was

waiting for the perfect moment to take my position. So, I did what any paranoid, power-hungry Alpha would do—I kicked him out.

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And now? He was the only person I could think of when I needed refuge.

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"Can I come in?" I asked, my voice calm but hollow.

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Dorian hesitated for a brief moment before nodding. "Yeah. Come in."

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His place was modest but well-kept. Living alone seemed to suit him. No chaos. No betrayals. No fake affections.

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I sat on his couch in silence, my mind replaying everything that had happened—Betty's cruel words, Isabella's betrayal, my own pathetic mistakes.

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Dorian sat across from me, watching me carefully. "Is this the part where you tell me what the hell happened?" he asked, curiosity evident in his tone.

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"I... I don't know what to say, man," I admitted, my voice barely above a whisper.

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"You're getting a divorce," he stated bluntly.

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My head snapped up, eyes narrowing. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

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He leaned back against the chair. "Everyone knows."

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I clenched my jaw. "I'm not getting a divorce," I muttered, irritation creeping into my tone.

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Dorian smirked slightly. "Well, I'm glad Isabella decided to forgive you, after you cheated on her."

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My entire body stiffened. My fingers curled into fists.

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"I knew about your affair with Betty," he continued.

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I let out a humorless chuckle. "Don't say her name." My voice was laced with venom. "Betty is dead to me."

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Dorian studied me for a moment before exhaling. "Are you going to tell me what's going on, or should I just start making assumptions?"

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I leaned forward, running a hand through my hair. "Betty was using me the whole time, man," I admitted bitterly. "She never loved me. I was a tool—a fucking joke to her."

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Dorian didn't interrupt, letting me pour out the weight that had been sitting on my chest.

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"I cheated on my wife for a fucking whore." I gritted my teeth, disgusted with myself.

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"I'm sorry she did that to you," he said sincerely.

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I scoffed. "Don't be. I deserved it." I shook my head, my voice filled with self-loathing. "I mean, look at me. Sitting here in front of you after what I did to you. I'm pathetic."

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Dorian shrugged. "You did what you thought you had to do," he said, surprisingly unbothered. "You're the Alpha. You had your reasons."

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I let out a dry laugh. "Bullshit. I was paranoid, insecure, and selfish. I threw you out for no reason."

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"Being alone isn't as bad as I thought it would be," he admitted. "At least now, I have peace."

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I swallowed hard. "I'm sorry, Dorian. I let my insecurities get the best of me."

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He nodded slightly, as if accepting my apology without words. "You can redeem yourself," he said after a moment. "By getting your wife back."

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I laughed bitterly. "She's pregnant for a man that's not me."

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Dorian didn't react—like he already knew.

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I narrowed my eyes. "You don't look shocked."

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He sighed. "Because you are the father, Zachary."

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I stilled. "What the hell are you talking about?"

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"I saw Isabella at the hospital a while back," he explained. "I asked the nurse why she was there, and she told me it was because she was pregnant."

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I scoffed. "That doesn't mean shit. I'm not the father of her child."

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Dorian's eyes darkened slightly. "And who told you that?"

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I clenched my jaw. "My so-called stepbrother is the father."

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Dorian's brows shot up in genuine shock, his composed demeanor faltering for a split second before he quickly masked it.

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"You're telling me," he said slowly, "that Asher is the father of Isabella's baby?"

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"Yes." My voice was sharp. Cold. "And that's why... I have nothing left."

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"Last time I checked, Asher hasn't been around for a long time. He just recently came back, so there isn't any way that he is the father of that child."

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I froze. My breathing slowed.

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He's right.

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I had been so blinded by anger, by betrayal, that I hadn't stopped to think logically.

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If Asher was gone, then how the hell could he be the father?

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I clenched my fists, a bitter taste filling my mouth. Could my mother have been telling the truth this entire time? Had she lied to protect Isabella?

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But that still didn't change one thing—I wasn't the father.

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And yet... neither was Asher.

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"I guess you're right," I muttered, rubbing my face. "I was too angry to even think about this."

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Dorian leaned forward, his expression sharp and unwavering. "Then think now, Zach. You're the Alpha. Go get your wife back. Asher can't keep her away from you."

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My heart pounded at his words.

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Isabella... my Isabella.

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I had hurt her. I had lost her.

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But I would not let Asher take her from me.

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Dorian was right.

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She was mine.

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And I was going to take her back.

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"You're right," I said, my voice filled with renewed determination. "She is my wife. And she is mine."

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I stood up, my jaw tightening as I met Dorian's gaze.

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"I will take her away from him," I vowed. "And I will get my family back... just like it was before I ruined everything."

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This time, I wouldn't fail.

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This time, I wouldn't lose her.

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