

The Alphas forbidden mate

Chapter 18

Asher's POV

O

My feet pounded against the treadmill, breath coming in ragged gasps as I pushed myself harder. Sweat blurred my vision, but I didn't slow down. Not until the sharp scent of smoke hit the air.

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Shit.

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I slammed the stop button and stepped off, chest rising and falling rapidly.

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"Finally," Michael drawled, tossing me a towel. "For a second, I thought we were all gonna burn to death." Amusement laced his voice as he watched me wipe the sweat off my face. I pointed to my water bottle, and without a word, he handed it over.

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I took a long drink before muttering, "Thought you hated working out."

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"Oh, I do," he admitted, stretching lazily. "I'm just here to see if I get stared at like you." He nodded toward a group of women across the gym, their eyes flicking to me before quickly looking away when I caught them.

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I exhaled sharply and turned back to him. "I don't have time for this." My voice was flat. "I don't give a fuck about them."

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Michael grinned. "Yeah, I know. But it wouldn't kill you to enjoy a little admiration once in a while." He caught my glare and held up his hands. "Alright, alright. I'll stop."

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“Let’s go,” I said, grabbing my bag. “We need to get ready for work.”

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Michael swung his arm around my shoulder, grinning. “No need for me to go home. I brought my work outfit.” His teeth flashed. “So, you’re stuck taking me to your place.”

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I scoffed. “Fine.”

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He lit up like a kid getting candy. “You know, I can count on one hand the number of times I’ve been to your place. And I’m supposed to be your best friend.”

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I ignored him and pushed open the gym doors, only to freeze when I spotted the person leaning against my car.

O

Betty.

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She straightened the moment she saw me, a smile tugging at her lips. “Knew you’d be here,” she said, brushing her hair back. “Saw your car parked outside.”

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I kept walking toward the car, brushing past her without a word.

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“Asher, wait.” Her voice softened. “Do you remember? When we were kids, we were always together. You never left my side. I never left yours.”

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My steps faltered. Just for a second.

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I turned toward her, my eyes darkening. “Why are you telling me all this?” My voice was low, sending a flicker of fear across her face.

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“I don’t remember you, and I don’t think I know who the fuck you’re supposed to be,” I added, irritation clear in my tone.

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She took a step back.

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“Let’s go, Michael,” I said, brushing past her.

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“Asher, is it true you’re the father of Isabella’s child?” Her voice wavered with desperation. “Please, tell me if it’s true.” Her eyes gleamed with something unhinged, almost desperate.

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I smirked. “Believe whatever your fuck buddy told you.”

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I got into the car, slamming the door shut. She stood frozen, not moving an inch.

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Michael let out a sigh beside me. “What the hell is wrong with her?”

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“I don’t know, and I don’t care,” I said, turning on the engine and driving off.

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Michael whistled low as we stepped into my apartment. “I know you’re rich, but I never stop being stunned by how beautiful your house is.” His eyes roamed the space, mesmerized.

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I barely paid attention. All I could think about was how proud my dad would’ve been if he were still alive.

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“If you slow me down, I’ll kill you,” I said, my tone serious as I walked away toward my room.

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Michael chuckled but didn’t argue.

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I took a quick shower, focusing on the rush of water instead of the thoughts creeping into my mind. I didn't want to think about Isabella. I knew one thing for sure—she was trouble. And trouble always brought drama, something I had no patience for.

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By the time I stepped out, dressed for work, I was surprised to see Michael ready as well.

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"I still want to live longer," he said with an awkward smile. "Let's go to work, boss." He grabbed my suitcase before I could, making me scoff. But I said nothing, keeping my face unreadable as we headed out.

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Meetings filled the day, mostly with private investors discussing business improvements. I listened, nodding in approval as they presented promising results.

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Then someone brought up Zachary's company.

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"I don't think we need them," I said firmly.

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"You already have a partnership with them, and this will work in our favor," one of the investors argued.

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The others nodded in agreement. As much as I didn't want this, I couldn't let personal matters interfere with business. I had no choice but to agree.

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Just then, the doors swung open.

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Zachary and his team walked in like they owned the place.

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My jaw clenched, eyes darkening with anger.

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How the hell did they just barge in here like this?

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“We’re sorry for being late. We got invited to this meeting at the very last minute,” Zachary said, a smug smile playing on his lips.

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My jaw tightened, fists clenching under the table.

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“I know we haven’t finalized the deal yet,” he continued, holding up a USB drive between his fingers, “but I brought this to show you why working with our company is the right choice.”

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I kept my expression composed. “Go ahead.”

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He plugged in the USB, and the projector flickered to life. A detailed presentation unfolded—strategies, projections, and expansions that could push our business to a global scale.

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I won’t lie. It was a solid plan.

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Zachary turned to me, confidence radiating off him. “I hope my company has convinced you.”

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The room erupted in applause—except from me.

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All eyes shifted my way, waiting for my response.

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I exhaled slowly before forcing a bittersweet smile. “Your company will be included in this project.”

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More applause. Excitement buzzed around the room as the meeting concluded. People gathered their documents, exchanging handshakes and plans for the next steps. One by one, they filtered out—except Zachary.

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“If I had known you’d agree so easily, I wouldn’t have wasted so much effort,” he said, amusement lacing his tone.

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I didn’t bother replying, pushing my chair back to leave.

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Then his voice cut through the room.

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“I’ll be coming tonight... to take my wife back.”

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I froze mid-step.

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A smirk tugged at his lips. “Now I have your attention.”

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I turned, meeting his gaze with barely contained irritation. “Don’t you get it? She doesn’t want to be with you.” My voice was sharp. “I thought you’d finally enjoy your freedom with your mistress.”

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His smirk dropped, replaced by a deep frown.

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“I made a mistake, and I’ll fix it,” he said firmly. “You have no right to keep my wife away from me.”

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“She’s pregnant with my child,” I said, voice unwavering.

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Zachary barked out a laugh.

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“You really expect me to believe that?” He scoffed. “You only agreed to this deal because you want to keep her away from me. I know how much you hate women. You can’t possibly be in love with my wife.”

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I looked away, jaw tightening.

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His eyes narrowed. “I won’t hurt her anymore. So tell her to come home, or else—”

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“Or else what?” I stepped closer, voice cold.

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“The council,” he said, his tone now serious. “You know how they are.”

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Silence stretched between us.

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“I’m giving you twenty-four hours,” he warned. “Send my wife back to me.”

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Then he turned and walked out, leaving me standing there, frustration twisting inside me.

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I raked a hand through my hair, exhaling sharply.

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This is a fucking mess.

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I drive to Isabella's house without a second thought, gripping the wheel tightly. Zachary isn't the type to wait—he could bring the council at any moment, completely ignoring the stupid deadline he gave me.

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As soon as I arrive, I head straight to her room. My eyes scan every corner, searching for her.

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But she's nowhere to be seen.

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My chest tightens.

O

Am I too late?

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"Asher!"

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I spin around at the sound of her voice. Isabella stands there, looking at me with concern. "Are you okay?"

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I don't answer. I just walk up to her and pull her into a tight hug, wrapping my arms around her like I never want to let go.

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Because I don't.

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I can't live without her.

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She is my weakness.

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