

The Alphas forbidden mate

Chapter 2

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Isabella's POV

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The whiskey burned its way down, leaving a trail of fire that matched the ache hollowing out my chest. I hadn't let myself taste this in so long, pushing away any craving, any impulse that didn't fit into the perfect wife I'd tried to be. But tonight, I welcomed the burn, craving something sharp enough to cut through the rawness left behind by what I'd seen.

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The images wouldn't leave. They flashed across my mind with cruel clarity—the sounds, the movements, each betrayal digging into me anew. I downed another shot, choking back a sob, and signaled for another, a silent plea for the bartender to keep them coming.

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With each drink, the pain dulled, fading around the edges. A numbness started to creep in, a blissful oblivion that slowly replaced the heartbreak. If whiskey could drag me under, away from this mess of memories, then I'd gladly let it. Glass after glass, I drank, each sip pushing the images further back, until everything felt a little softer, a little blurrier.

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The room started spinning, my balance slipping, and I gripped the bar. A laugh bubbled up, rough and wild, surprising me with its force. I could barely remember the last time I'd laughed. And here I was, a bit of a mess, teetering on the edge of the barstool, laughing alone in a crowded room. The thrill of finally letting go was almost intoxicating in itself.

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Reaching for another shot, my hand missed, and I tumbled, nearly sliding off the stool. Instead of embarrassment, a wave of giggles escaped me. I barely managed to right myself, clambering back up to the stool, half-dizzy, half-delighted, and glanced around to see if anyone had noticed. But everyone was lost in their own worlds, drowning in their own glasses, just like me.

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My laughter softened into a chuckle, and I waved for one more drink, letting my head droop into my hand as I waited.

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“You seem... cheerful,” a deep voice murmured beside me. It was smooth, rich—warm, even. I turned, trying to make out his features through my blurry vision and giggling at the sound of him, like he’d just said the funniest thing.

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“And they say I carry Medusa’s curse,” I slurred, laughing harder. “That no one can look at me without turning to stone, because I’m so... unattractive.” The words stumbled out, ridiculous, but I didn’t care.

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He slid onto the stool next to me, leaning in a bit. “You don’t seem cursed to me,” he said, a teasing warmth in his voice. “Because here I am, looking right at you.”

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His face came into focus a bit more, and for a second, something about him felt familiar, a faint echo of recognition slipping through the haze.

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“What do you want?” I muttered, swaying, almost sliding off the stool again. His hand shot out, steadying me with a firm grip, and I felt a flush spread across my cheeks, half-embarrassment, half amusement. I let out another laugh, louder, unable to help it. This whole night felt like some absurd, surreal dream.

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The bartender slid a fresh drink onto the bar, but before I could reach it, the stranger snatched it and downed it himself, his gaze steady on me.

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“What the hell? That was mine!” I snapped, my irritation cutting through the warm haze of alcohol.

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“You’ve had enough,” he said, voice calm but firm, his eyes laced with a concern I hadn’t asked for.

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“Who are you to tell me that?” I shot back, defiance and whiskey tangling on my tongue. “You’re not my husband, and I don’t take orders from anyone—least of all, him. So get lost.” My voice rose, the words tumbling out almost as a dare. I laughed, a raw, reckless sound, almost daring him to argue.

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He nodded to the bartender. “Get her a glass of water.”

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I slapped the bar, defiant. “No! I want whiskey, not water!” I sounded petulant, but I didn’t care. This was supposed to be my night to forget.

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A sigh escaped him, part exasperation, part amusement. He leaned in, voice soft but unyielding. "You need to stop."

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"No one can stop me," I slurred, determined to finish the sentence when his lips brushed mine, silencing me with a firm, unexpected kiss. The surprise pulled me up short, every nerve igniting at the touch, the heat of him suddenly, overwhelmingly real.

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When he pulled back, his eyes held a challenging glint. "Better?"

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For a moment, I couldn't respond, my breath catching in the wake of the kiss. A flicker of desire had surged up, unexpected and intense, drowning out everything else. Without thinking, I leaned in, pressing my lips to his with the hunger of someone trying to erase something painful. He responded without hesitation, his hand finding my waist, pulling me closer, the kiss deepening until my mind was a blur, every coherent thought dissolving.

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He trailed his lips along my neck, leaving a line of warmth in their wake. I gasped softly, unable to hold back as my hand slid down, finding the hard evidence of his own desire. He groaned, a low, vibrating sound that only fueled my own urgency.

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His voice was thick with restraint as he pulled back, his breath hot against my skin. "We shouldn't... not here."

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I gripped his shirt, the words tumbling out before I could stop them. "I don't care."

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He didn't hesitate, lifting me with ease as we navigated the dim hallways, finally finding a secluded room. The door shut behind us, and then we were on each other again, fueled by something that felt wild, almost desperate. He tore at my clothes, hands hungry and unrestrained, as objects clattered around us, each sound heightening the intensity. The cool air hit my skin, but all I could feel was the fire building between us, erasing everything else—if only for a moment.

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The look in his eyes was nothing short of a smoldering flame, a raw, consuming desire that made my pulse race, my skin tingle. I felt weightless, suspended in a dizzying rush that blurred everything but the touch of his hands and the warmth of his breath. His fingers brushed my cheek, then trailed down, each touch slow, lingering, making my heart pound harder, filling me with an ache I hadn't known was there.

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He lifted me, his hands firm and gentle as he lowered me onto the bed, his body a comforting weight pressing down on me. As his shirt fell away, I could feel his heat, his heart pounding in sync with mine, his breath tracing patterns across my neck, each kiss a slow burn spreading along my skin. For the first time, I felt truly wanted, cherished in a way Zachary had never made me feel. With each kiss, each touch, this stranger breathed life into parts of me I'd thought were long dead.

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Leaning close, he murmured against my ear, his voice rich, laced with longing. "Even if you carried Medusa's curse, I'd want to look into your eyes. If I turned to stone, it'd be worth it just to gaze at perfection."

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The words sent a shiver down my spine, setting my pulse racing, my skin warming under his gaze. "I'm all yours," I whispered, a truth I didn't fully understand but felt with every fiber of my being. His eyes darkened, and he claimed me with a passion that left me breathless, our bodies moving together in a rhythm that felt timeless, primal. The rest of the world dissolved, until all that remained was this moment, the two of us surrendering completely.

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As exhaustion overtook me, I slipped into sleep with a peaceful smile, feeling truly alive for the first time in ages.

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When I woke, a splitting headache pulsed through my skull, making me wince. My eyes blinked against the bright light filtering in, my vision clearing slowly. The ceiling above was unfamiliar, stark and strange, and a ripple of unease tightened my chest. I forced myself upright, my head spinning, and looked around, taking in the room—a room that wasn't mine.

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A cold dread washed over me. "Where...where am I?" The words tumbled out in a whisper, and I looked down, the realization crashing over me as I clutched the sheet, noticing my bare skin beneath. A flush of panic surged through me, my heart pounding. What happened last night? My hands gripped the sheet tighter, every detail of the night before rushing back like a tidal wave—his hands, his kisses, the fire between us.

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I heard a groan next to me, and I froze. Turning slowly, I found myself staring at the man beside me, his form relaxed, peaceful in sleep. My heart thudded in my chest, torn between disbelief and regret as I tried to comprehend what I'd done. "I slept with a stranger," I whispered, the words barely audible as I struggled to breathe. Regret twisted in my stomach. What had possessed me to drown myself in alcohol and lose myself like that? I thought of my child, of the risk I'd taken, and a wave of shame surged up, bitter and sharp.

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The man shifted, his face turning toward me, and I held my breath, terrified he would wake. But his eyes remained closed, his breathing even. My gaze lingered on his face, unable to look away. Something about him seemed so familiar, a feeling that tugged at my memory, gnawing at the edges of recognition. And then, like a punch to the gut, it hit me.

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This wasn't just any stranger. The man lying beside me was Zachary's stepbrother.

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