

The Alphas forbidden mate

Chapter 3

Isabella's pov

O

I needed to get out of there. My hands shook as I quickly put on my clothes, trying to block out the panic rising in my chest. This shouldn't have happened. I had messed up—big time.

O

I moved as quietly as I could, hoping he wouldn't wake up. When I finally reached the door, I glanced back one last time before slipping out into the hallway. My heart was racing, and all I could think was, Now, I have even more problems to deal with.

O

I gripped the steering wheel, my knuckles white as I pulled up to the house. Every instinct screamed that I shouldn't be here, but I had to gather my things and leave for good. I slipped inside quietly, each step heavy with the hope that Zachary wasn't home. The thought of facing him churned my stomach—not just because he was a lying cheat, but because I had my own secret now, a shame that tangled my insides with guilt.

O

But then, his voice broke through the silence. "I see you finally made it back," Zachary said from behind me, his tone laced with irritation. "Where were you all night?"

O

I turned to face him, forcing my expression blank, trying to keep my emotions buried. "Why do you care? I thought you'd be thrilled. I left you plenty of time to be with the one who makes you feel so good." I gave him a faint, bitter smile.

O

"What do you want me to say, Isabella?" he scoffed. "An apology?"

O

I shook my head, my voice steady. "I don't need an apology. What I need is a divorce."

O

He stared at me, a smug twist to his mouth. “Oh, I know. I got the message from your lawyer. But here’s the thing—I can’t divorce you, Isabella. Not because I love you,” he added with a sneer, “but because I’m the Alpha. I have a reputation, a clan to lead. So, no divorce. You’ll pretend that nothing happened, and we’ll go on as though we’re perfectly happy.”

O

His hands gripped my shoulders, pulling me into a forced embrace. I recoiled, yanking free and slapping him hard across the face. The sound echoed between us, and for a moment, he just stared at me, stunned.

O

“You’re disgusting,” I spat, my voice shaking. “I hate that I wasted so many years on you.”

O

His eyes darkened, fury flickering there. “You dare raise your hand against me?” he growled, stepping closer. But his tone shifted, cold and unnervingly calm. “I’ll let it slide. But you’re not getting a divorce.”

O

I drew in a shaky breath. “Then I’m leaving this house.”

O

“Not a chance,” he shot back, crossing his arms. “And just so you know, I’m hosting a party tomorrow to welcome my brother. My mother won’t want any drama.”

O

My eyes widened, and I felt my pulse spike. “Your... brother?” I stammered, a flicker of fear creeping into my voice. “You said he was out of the country for good.”

O

He smirked, a glint of satisfaction in his eyes. “He’s back, and my mother wants to give him a proper welcome. So, you’ll behave yourself. No one needs to know what happened. You’ll be the good little wife you’ve always been.”

O

He leaned in, pulling me close again, his arms trapping me as I stood frozen. My mind whirled, the weight of everything pressing down until I could hardly breathe. I felt caged, every part of my life on the verge of unraveling.

O

Asher's pov

O

Her taste clung to my lips, haunting me. I'd tried to shake it, bury it deep, but she kept resurfacing, stubborn and inescapable, like she was carved into my mind. In all my years in this world, no one had ever gotten under my skin like this. It was maddening. Why her? Why did she feel so different? I tried to dismiss it, but the unease gnawed at me, unsettling in a way I couldn't ignore.

O

"Asher? Mr. Asher?" The voice cut through my thoughts, grounding me. I looked up, meeting the eyes of the pack members around the table, their gazes wary, as if they'd been watching me drift.

O

"What was that?" I asked, my tone steady, masking the turmoil beneath.

O

"It's about the merger between the companies. We need your signature," one of them replied, sliding the papers forward, his tone careful.

O

I took a breath, forcing myself back into the room. This merger was essential—if only to keep up the charade that everything was fine, that I had everything under control, and to gain the trust my mother would never willingly hand over.

O

I pulled the papers closer, skimming the words, and signed with a heavy hand. "It's done," I murmured, bitterness coloring my voice. "I'm now officially tied to a shared company with my stepbrother." The words left a sour taste. "This meeting is over." I stood, already halfway out the door when my assistant Micheal hurried to catch up.

O

"Sir," he started, hesitation in his voice, "are you sure about this? You've never been... on good terms with them. Why would you come back here to share a company with them?"

O

I stopped, a slow, calculating smile spreading across my face. "Trust me. They won't know what hit them. But first, we're going to the pub."

O

“Sir, tonight’s your welcome party,” he reminded me, a flicker of concern in his eyes. “Isn’t it risky to show up after drinking?”

O

I let out a dry laugh. “There’s no way I’m facing those people sober.”

O

O

Michael’s voice cut through the haze, pulling me out of my thoughts. “You’re looking for someone, aren’t you?” He slid onto the barstool next to me, watching me with a knowing smirk. I hadn’t even noticed I was staring at the door, waiting. “Who is it? Been eyeing that entrance like you’re expecting a damn miracle to walk through.”

O

I forced a smirk and waved him off. “Just drink, Michael. I’m fine.”

O

But he just chuckled, glancing toward a group of women at the far end of the bar. “What you need, boss, is a little distraction.” He nodded to them, his grin widening. “Pick anyone you want. Might do you some good.”

O

I followed his gaze briefly, though none of them could quiet the storm she’d left in my mind.

O

“Fine,” I said finally, trying to match his enthusiasm. “Just find me someone.”

O

With a pleased grin, Michael staggered over to the women, clearly a few drinks past sober, and returned soon after with a woman who looked me over with a bold, confident smile.

O

“You’re in for a great night,” she purred, her fingers toying with my tie as she led me to the back, her touch firm and certain. Maybe this was what I needed, a way to finally push her out of my mind.

O

As soon as we were alone, she was on me, her hands grabbing at my shirt, her lips pressing against mine, hungry and fierce. I responded in kind, hoping to lose myself in her, in anything that might numb the ache. But the more I tried to push her image away, the sharper it cut into my mind, her face haunting me even with my eyes shut.

O

“Stop!” I snarled suddenly, pulling back with such force that she stumbled, her shocked eyes flashing with anger.

O

“What’s wrong with you?” she spat, pushing herself up.

O

“Get out,” I growled, fists clenched, every part of me on edge, the frustration bubbling into something raw and dangerous. My eyes flashed as my other side struggled for control, and the sight was enough to send her scrambling out of the room, wide-eyed.

O

I sank onto the edge of the bed, raking a hand through my hair, my breathing still unsteady. It was useless—nothing could drown her out.

O

Moments later, Michael burst in, concern on his face. “Everything alright?”

O

“Do I look alright?” I snapped, rising to my feet. “Let’s go. This place isn’t helping anything.”

O

The drive to the house was silent, tension thick in the air as we pulled up to the grand party lights spilling onto the lawn. I already hated it—the decorations, the laughter, the crowd—everything felt grating.

O

“Asher!” A familiar voice called out as we approached. “Finally, you’re here!” His voice was bright, layered with excitement. “Mom’s been dying to see you.”

O

I gave a quick nod, my jaw tight, forcing myself to step forward, ready to face a night of fake smiles and stifled anger.

O

“Come on, I have to introduce you to everyone,” he said, gripping my shoulder.

O

“You don’t have to,” I replied, barely masking the annoyance in my voice.

O

“At least meet my wife properly. She’s only seen pictures of you, never in person,” he insisted, nodding toward a group nearby. “There she is.”

O

I turned, following his gaze, and froze. My chest tightened, thoughts colliding in my mind. It was her—the same woman from that night. Standing there, Zachary’s wife. My brother’s wife. Her eyes locked onto mine, widening in shock as recognition dawned between us.

O