

The Alphas forbidden mate

Chapter 8

Asher's pov

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"She's pregnant," I mutter under my breath, my voice low with disbelief.

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"Yeah, she is," Michael confirms, trying to recall. "I heard it from someone... can't remember who exactly."

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"It doesn't matter to me," I snap, my tone cold and cutting. "I don't give a damn. It's better she stays with her loser of a husband. They can play house together—with their pathetic, little family," I finish, bitterness dripping from every word.

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"You seem upset," Michael observes cautiously, his tone tinged with concern. "Don't let her get to you. It's not like it meant anything, right? It was just one time, wasn't it?"

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I shoot him a glare. "What the hell do you take me for? I don't sleep with a woman twice. You know that."

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Michael shifts awkwardly, scratching the back of his head. "Right, right. I forgot," he mutters.

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Before he can continue, I cut him off sharply. "Break's over. Time to get back to work."

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He hesitates, looking like he wants to argue, but eventually stands. As he reaches the door, he pauses.

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"Good day, ma'am," Michael greets politely, stepping aside to let my mother enter.

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I roll my eyes. Of course, she'd show up now.

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"May I come in?" she asks, hovering near the doorway.

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"You're already in, so go ahead," I reply, my tone clipped as I return to my seat, feigning indifference.

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She walks in, her heels clicking softly on the floor. "I know I haven't been the best mother," she starts, her voice heavy with what I assume is meant to be guilt. "There's a lot I need to make up for, but I'm not here for that. This is strictly business." She sits across from me, her expression serious.

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"I heard you signed the contract," she continues. "I'm pleased. I was skeptical you would."

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I let out a dry laugh, leaning back in my chair. "Why skeptical? Surprised I was dumb enough to fall for one of your schemes?"

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"It's not like that, son," she says, reaching for my hand. I pull away before she can touch me, and she flinches at the rejection. "I just want us to have a good working relationship. I want things to be better between us."

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Her sad smile does nothing to soften my irritation.

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"Are you done?" I ask, my tone icy. "I have actual matters to deal with."

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She hesitates, then offers a smile that doesn't reach her eyes. "Your brother is going to be a dad soon," she says, clearly trying to lighten the mood.

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I arch a brow but stay silent as she adds, "You'll be an uncle soon."

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"Congratulations," I manage to say, my voice barely steady. She smiles faintly before standing up.

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"I'm glad you decided to come back," she says, turning to leave.

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Once she's gone, I lean back in my chair, pinching the bridge of my nose. It hasn't even been a week since I returned, and I already feel the weight of this place pressing down on me. Restlessness creeps into my bones, but I refuse to let it show. I can't allow myself to be consumed by distractions—least of all thoughts of Isabella.

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She shouldn't have this power over me, I tell myself. She's nothing more than a fleeting memory, irrelevant now. And yet, the thought of her being pregnant burns at the edge of my mind. My hand pushes through my hair in frustration.

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I exhale sharply, forcing the bitterness to the surface where it feels easier to control. "Focus, Asher," I mutter, my lips curling into a smirk. "I came back here for a reason. Revenge on my so-called mother and brother. Nothing else matters."

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"You know something, Asher?" Michael slurs, the whiskey bottle wobbling in his grip as he pours another glass. "I don't think I've ever told you this, but my life has no meaning without you in it."

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"That's nice, Michael," I mutter, unimpressed, as he hugs the bottle to his chest like it's his long-lost love.

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"You're my best mate," he declares, his drunken smile wide and absurdly genuine.

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"You're drunk. Shut up," I say sharply, irritation rising as he babbles on.

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Michael opens his mouth to respond, but I'm already standing. Something—or someone—had caught my eye. Isabella.

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Without another thought, I stride through the dimly lit club, my focus entirely on her. I reach out, tapping her shoulder, but the person who turns isn't her.

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"Sorry," I mumble, stepping back as the stranger glares at me like I've lost my mind. She brushes past me, leaving me standing there, hands clenching into fists. My hair falls into my face as I shove it back in frustration.

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"Where did you go, brother?" Michael's drunken voice snaps me out of my spiraling thoughts. He's staring at me from across the room, swaying slightly. "Why'd you leave me?"

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I can't help but chuckle under my breath. He looks like a child who lost his favorite toy.

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"Alright, that's enough for you," I say, walking back to him. "Let me take you home."

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Michael mumbles in protest, but he's no match for me. I hoist him up, his arm slung over my shoulder. "Let's go," I mutter, though he's too wasted to respond.

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As we make our way out of the club, someone stumbles into us, nearly falling over.

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"Sorry! I wasn't looking where I was going," a familiar voice says hurriedly.

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When she looks up, my breath catches. Isabella.

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For a moment, I think I'm hallucinating again, but the look on her face confirms it's real. Her eyes are tired, her posture weary, yet she holds herself with that same quiet strength I can't forget.

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"It's you," she says, her tone as cold as ice.

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Before I can speak, she apologizes again and turns to leave.

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"Stop!" I call out, my voice louder than I intended. She freezes mid-step.

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Her gaze meets mine as I take a step closer, my jaw tightening. "Why are you here? In a place like this... in your condition?"

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Her eyes flicker down to her stomach, then back up to me, guarded and unreadable.

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"You should mind your business," she snaps, her tone sharp and cutting.

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I raise an eyebrow, a grin tugging at my lips. There's something about the way she talks to me—so fiery and unapologetic—that always gets under my skin in the most unexpected way. Even now, I can feel heat pooling in my body, a reaction I can't control.

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"Hey, aren't you my friend's stepbrother's wife?" Michael's slurred voice cuts through the tension as he stumbles forward, pointing a shaky finger at Isabella. "Didn't you... didn't you sleep with my friend?"

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My eyes widen at his drunken outburst, and for a moment, the air between us freezes. Isabella's expression mirrors mine, shock flashing across her face before it hardens into a glare.

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"Seriously? You're just going around telling people we had sex?" she bites out, her voice laced with annoyance. "It wouldn't kill you to keep one secret. Just one! Instead, you're out here blasting it for the world to hear!"

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She storms off, her frustration palpable.

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"Wait, don't leave!" I call after her, but Michael is leaning too heavily on me for me to move.

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"Sir, you're here," one of my employees says, approaching us.

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I seize the opportunity. "Keep an eye on him," I order, practically shoving Michael into the man's arms before taking off after Isabella.

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The club is a maze of people, the music pounding in my ears as I search for her. When I finally spot her, she's standing still, her eyes fixed on something—or someone. I follow her gaze and freeze.

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Zachary.

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He's there, leaning far too close to some woman—Betty, if I'm not mistaken. I watch as he whispers something to her before leaning in for a kiss.

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I don't hesitate. Closing the distance, I grab Isabella's hand. She flinches, startled, and immediately tries to pull away, but my grip is firm. Without a word, I lead her out of the club, ignoring her protests.

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Once we're outside, she yanks her hand, glaring at me. "What is your problem? I told you to leave me alone," she snaps, her tone laced with anger. "Stop bothering me!"

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"So, you'd rather stand there and watch your husband have fun with someone else?" I counter, my voice calm but pointed.

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Her cheeks flush with embarrassment, and she looks away, refusing to meet my eyes.

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"It's none of your business," she mutters, her tone defensive.

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"Are you changing your mind about the divorce?" I press, leaning closer.

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She doesn't answer, and the silence stretches between us.

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"I'll take that as a no," I say, smirking slightly.

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She huffs, crossing her arms. "Why? Would you marry a divorcee?" she asks, a faint trace of amusement in her tone.

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"If it were you, I'd do it in a heartbeat," I reply, the words spilling out before I can stop them.

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Her eyes widen, shock evident on her face. To my surprise, I'm just as stunned as she is.

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