

# Mated To An Enemy - Chapter 3

[Twenty Minutes Earlier]

The heat that prickled at the top of his skin was a distraction, to say the least. Caleb was barely able to keep focused as the others spoke. If he had any other role to play, it would have caused a problem for him. Luckily it wasn't his first time. Before his father's death, he had trained Caleb to play his part in the offering ceremonies.

The trouble was the siren's call of her heartbeat, the fragrance in the air that made his mouth dry. And the hot prickling on his skin caused him to grit his teeth just to maintain composure.

'Why did she leave?' he wondered.

She was at the dance hall, of that he had no doubt. There had been a lightning bolt of desire, possession, and need that had come over him suddenly. That was when he knew she had found him. But, unfortunately for him, he had not seen her.

'Why did she leave?' The question repeated in his mind, burning brighter this time.

The explosion of fireworks brought his focus back to the present. He stood alongside the other Alphas, wishing each pack a year of blessings and luck. He repeated the words he had said many times before and waved.

Caleb caught sight of his Beta and best friend, Galen. The man seemed just as determined to find their Luna as Caleb was, perhaps even more. He couldn't help but snicker. Galen searched the audience, hoping to spot a woman he had never seen before.

But Caleb already knew that his Luna was not among these strangers. She had run away. He felt the distance between them, and he didn't like it.

The ceremony was over, it was time to hunt, but first, he needed a way to escape these people that insisted on chatting with him.

"Alpha Caleb, I am quite pleased to have this moment to speak with you." A short man with curly brown hair and a wide grin approached him.

"Oh?" was Caleb's restrained reply.

However, hiding the unimpressed expression on his face was an effort he could not convince himself was worth it.

"Yes, I wanted to offer you my compliments on the way you have handled yourself this evening," the short man replied, still smiling.

"In what way have I 'handled myself' that would earn your compliments?" Caleb asked, bored.

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"I am sorry if I have offended you. I only meant to say that you are being very composed and generous."

"To be offended, I would first need to give a damn about you." Caleb's voice remained still. Not even his impatience was audible. "Please get to your point or get out of my way."

The corner of the man's mouth twitched before turning into a wide smile. But Caleb saw it. This man hated him.

"The Winter Pack, sir, I only meant to compliment you on the friendly way you have behaved with them. It seems you have gotten past your misunderstandings."

Kind words were often spoken with a venomous tongue.

Caleb's impatience met with his long-standing grudge, and a growl grew low in his belly. The short, smiling idiot that stood before him suddenly recognized the danger.

"Alpha Caleb!" Galen shouted, drawing Caleb's attention. "It's time we move on."

Caleb nodded and made his way towards Galen. He stopped and looked back at the short man once more.

"We will finish this conversation. Soon."

The short man was not quick enough to hide the fear from showing on his face.

"His name is—" Galen began to whisper as they walked away.

"No," Caleb interrupted. "When I need to know his name, I will. But, for now, there is only one identity I need revealed."

He directed Galen to take his place at the next event. It was only a reenactment of the Goddess blessing the wolves; there was no real need for him to be there. More importantly, he didn't like feeling distracted. It was time to catch his prey.

He followed his senses, allowing them to fill him with that primal need. He felt himself getting closer and closer, inhaling deeply as her scent aroused the wolf within him. PANDA NOVEL

"Damn it!"

Her voice sent a shuddering through his body that made him groan out loud. He braced himself against the wall to keep him steady. Then, he took a step forward, peering around the corner.

Her sandy blonde hair was pulled back. The strands that framed her face, having already escaped the prison of her loose braid. Caleb wondered if it was soft or coarse to the touch. He ached to reach out and see for himself.

Caleb's eyes roamed over the rest of her body. She wasn't tall, but he guessed she could meet his eyes on her toes. She wore a thin dress, green like the leaves of the trees. Her dress was long and flowing, but he could tell that she was a warrior even wearing this.

She had the curves that guided his eye to all the right places but the solid strength of one who placed effort into their training. Preparing for the fight that was always coming. Caleb found himself even more attracted to her at the thought of watching her use that training.

"So, all I have to do is skip every event I promised father I would attend. Then win a twelve-hour game of hide and seek with an Alpha,"

'She's funny,' he thought to himself with a grin.

"Oh, and he's got a built-in homing device on me. Great."

'Ha,' he laughed to himself, watching her frustration. 'So you really are hiding from me.'

"Ashleigh?" another voice called out.

PANDA NOVEL Caleb moved back into the hallway.

'Ashleigh... So that's your name,' he smiled to himself. 'Alright, Ashleigh, we can play your game. I'll even give you a head start.'

[Present]

“It seems that hide and seek is not your best game.” Caleb grinned, letting out a soft chuckle. ρ□□□□□□□

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He had caught up to her, and she had lost the game.

The vibration from his laugh was fuel to the fire that was growing within, threatening to consume her.

He started towards her, his movements slow and predatory. Ashleigh’s body reacted to his closeness, forcing a sharp intake of breath.

She couldn’t move, or more accurately, her body had rejected the idea of moving in any direction that didn’t lead her directly to him.

“Fascinating,” he said, circling her. “You definitely feel it. You know I’m your mate. But you seem to be fighting it. Aggressively.”

Ashleigh swallowed hard; she didn’t trust her voice. Her body was no longer hers. Every inch of her called to him, craved him. Every part except her mind.

“Why?” he whispered against her neck.

A sound she had never heard herself make before escaped her lips, a soft whimper.

Caleb smiled down at her. He was so close she could feel the heat coming off his body; still, he did not touch her.

“Tell me,” he growled painfully.

Ashleigh looked up at him, their eyes meeting for the first time.

She expected to see the same coldness she had seen before. After all, Alpha Caleb was known for it. Everything she knew about him revolved around that barrier of ice he used as a weapon against the rest of the world. She had seen it, hadn't she?

But those grey eyes held nothing but warmth, the kind that came from home, the reassurance of a place she belonged.

"Ashleigh," he whispered.

His voice rolled over her in a wave, knocking her back against her will.

Ashleigh looked away from his eyes and found her back pressed to the wall. He hovered only centimeters from her. Their mouths almost touching, her hand resting on his cheek.

She didn't remember touching him.

"Tell me your reason," he spoke between raspy breaths. "Why did you run from me?"

"I..."

She couldn't focus. Caleb's mouth was so close that painful distance would be closed if she only moved to her toes.

"Ashleigh, please," Caleb called to her, "you must have had a reason. I am doing my best to hold back. Tell me."

His lips, her mind was filled with a desire to touch those lips. She felt herself moving toward him, and then she felt a tear roll down her cheek.

The pull of their bond waned long enough for Ashleigh to feel something else, someone else.

"I..." she struggled to speak. Then, closing her eyes, she pulled forth all her strength, all her will, and pushed Caleb away from her.

Caleb stumbled but caught himself before falling to the ground. He looked back at Ashleigh; tears streamed down her face. He saw the pain in her eyes, and it gave him pause.

Ashleigh took deep breaths fighting with all she had to push away the instinct of her bond to him, to regain her own mind.

"I have already found my mate!" she finally managed to say.

"What?" he replied, unable to hide the anger he felt rising.

Ashleigh held herself up straighter than she had been able to before this moment. She took another deep breath and thought of Granger.

"I already have a mate," she stated.

Caleb growled and moved to her with a speed she had not expected. He pushed her against the wall once more and nuzzled against her throat, breathing her in.

"I am your mate!" he growled into her throat.

Ashleigh felt the swelling ache deep within her, the need and desire for him. Once again, she closed her eyes, pulling on every thread of willpower to push him away. But this time, he held firm. Caleb didn't touch her, only burrowed his nose into her throat, taking in her scent.

"You can't be," she whispered.

"Why?" he asked, not moving.

She swallowed as the fog of their bond once more began to cloud her mind. She could feel her hands trying to move on their own, trying to embrace him.

“My father is Alpha Wyatt of the Winter Pack!” she screamed.

He froze.

‘Alpha Wyatt... of Winter...’ Caleb repeated the words in his mind.

A familiar feeling was rising within him. His hands dropped back down to his side as he took a step back away from Ashleigh.

“Go,” he whispered.

Ashleigh stared at him, tears flowing. She couldn’t move.

“Go!” he snarled. His voice was deeper, thicker, wilder than it should have been.

Ashleigh pushed past him and ran. The last thing she heard was the echo of his bones breaking as he shifted into his wolf.