

## Mated To An Enemy - Chapter 5

Ashleigh woke in her bed once more. The moment she opened her eyes and sat up, her head started to spin.

“Whoa,” Granger called out as he entered the room and sat beside her on the bed. “Easy now.”

He rubbed her back tenderly. “You know I’m a big fan of your dramatic flair, but one faint is enough for today, don’t you think?”

He smiled at her; Ashleigh reached a hand to his cheek tenderly. He was the comfort and warmth she needed.

Guilt became a familiar friend as a flash of grey eyes and the heat of his skin against her hand played in her memory. She pulled her hand away from Granger.

“Ashleigh, what’s wrong?” he asked, taking her hand in his.

She shook her head and turned away.

He sighed and moved closer to her, wrapping his arms around her until she couldn’t help but lean into him.

“Luna Corrine told me you moved the wedding date.” He spoke softly.

She pulled away once more, not looking at him as she tried to tell the same story she had given her mother. PANDA-NOVEL.COM

“Yea, I just didn’t really think I would have the time to properly plan out the wedding, I’ve got the birthday party coming, and it’s so soon after.”

“Yes, that’s what she told me,” he replied, reaching his hand to her chin and softly encouraging her to look up until their eyes met, “I was hoping you would tell me the truth.”

Honesty, sincerity, devotion, and love. Those were things she felt with him. When his pale blue eyes looked at her, she knew that all his attention and love was hers. He was hers. Her eyes filled with tears, and she sobbed.

“I am so sorry, Granger.”

He held her in his arms as she cried. He asked her nothing and said nothing beyond words of comfort and encouragement until she had calmed down. Then, he wiped away her tears and looked her in the eye.

“You can tell me anything, Ashleigh. Always.” He ran a hand affectionately against her cheek. “Let me share your worries. Tell me what happened.”

Ashleigh hesitated, but she couldn’t hold back anymore, looking into his eyes. She told him everything that had happened to her since they arrived. Granger listened quietly as Ashleigh shared the broader details of her encounters with Caleb. There was no need for further detail about all that she had felt through the process.

He pulled away from her, walking across the room. The distance between them felt as though they were miles apart.

“Do you love him?” he asked her quietly. PANDA NOVEL

“No!” she cried out immediately. “Granger, I only met him yesterday. I don’t want any of this, I swear!”

He didn’t look back. Instead, he stared out the window with his back facing her.

"But you felt him. You felt the mate bond with him." His voice was laced with pain and confusion.

Ashleigh hesitated to answer.

"Yes," she whispered with renewed tears.

His shoulders sagged forward.

"How is that possible?" he asked out loud.

Ashleigh covered the sob that tried to escape her lips. He was crying, she could hear it in his voice,  
and it broke her heart.

"I don't know," she replied. She broke down once more, the tears falling in a flood of guilt and shame. Hugging her knees to her chest, she tried to silence the cries that escaped her throat. ρ□□□□□□□

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His warmth surprised her. She hadn't noticed when he had climbed onto the bed, only when his arms wrapped around her.

Ashleigh lifted her eyes to meet his. She still saw the love and devotion she had known the past two years, even though his pain was evident. He lifted the corners of his mouth in a sad smile.

"Do you love me?" he asked with tear-filled eyes.

She let out a soft cry.

"Yes," she whispered, bringing her hands to the sides of his face. "Only you. I love only you."

He smiled again, and a tear rolled down his cheek.

“That’s all that matters,” he whispered back, his voice trembling from the strain of his unshed tears.

“We love each other. You are my mate, and I am yours. Everything else... we’ll figure it out.”

He leaned in, kissing her gently. She returned his kiss, and they held each other silently.

They remained in her room, holding each other and talking for most of the rest of the day. Then, finally, they agreed that everything should be kept between them, at least until they had a chance to understand what exactly was happening. It wasn’t until Corrine told them they were required to attend the closing celebrations that they finally rejoined the rest of the world.

“Two hours of mingling and goodbyes,” Granger grinned at her, “that’s all we have to get through.

Then, after that, home, and everything goes back to normal.”

Ashleigh smiled for him and even mustered up a small laugh, but she couldn’t help but wonder, ‘will it really be that easy?’

Granger stayed by her side, holding her hand everywhere they went. Having him near kept her calm and gave her the comfort she needed. But at the edge of her senses, she always felt something pulling at her. A soft thumping of Caleb’s heart or a hint of that delicious aroma in the air.

She smiled and talked with those in front of her. She laughed at the jokes they shared, but the whole time she felt him. More than once, she caught herself wondering where he was. But then, Granger was abruptly pulled away by her father. Ashleigh found herself alone, fighting against the pull of her bonds to Caleb.

PANDA NOVEL She looked up, and their eyes locked almost instantaneously.

Ashleigh closed her eyes, breathing deeply to calm herself down. Then, she looked up and found him engrossed in conversation with members of his pack, utterly unaware of her eyes following him.

“Are you ok, my dear?” Corrine asked, reaching a hand to Ashleigh’s shoulder.

Ashleigh smiled at her mother and nodded.

“Yea, I don’t know. I just haven’t felt like myself the past few days.”

“You must have caught something nasty here,” Corrine replied, pressing the back of her hand to Ashleigh’s forehead, checking for fever.

“I definitely caught something,” Ashleigh replied quietly, glancing once more in Caleb’s direction, only he wasn’t there anymore.

Before long, Granger had returned to her side, and they were finally leaving. Ashleigh was surprised to find herself feeling almost entirely at ease. She gazed up at Granger warmly. He caught her eye and smiled back before making silly faces to make her laugh.

Their eyes were on each other. They weren’t paying attention to where they were walking or whose back they were walking into.

“Oh, I’m so sorry—” Ashleigh’s voice caught in her throat as grey eyes came into focus.

Caleb looked down at her, his gaze drawn to the arm draped across her shoulders, joining her to Granger. The coldness she had expected from him manifested almost instantly. Granger pulled her closer against his chest.

“Excuse us, Alpha Caleb, we weren’t paying enough attention.” His words were humble and respectful, yet his tone implied something else entirely. Something that drew the awareness of the blonde man that stood beside Caleb, and not in a good way.

Caleb raised a hand to stop the blonde man’s advance.

Ashleigh instinctively moved to pull Granger away.

The action immediately drew Caleb's attention back to her, and his jaw clenched. He looked her up and down with what she could only describe as disgust before he turned and walked away without a word.