
PRIMAL MATE

Alphas of Sandor - Book Two

TABITHA BLACK



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Eclipse Press' or the author's
advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

*For Allison, Michael, Ruth, and Dawn.
Your unwavering support and encouragement have been invaluable.
I love you, and appreciate you so much.*

CHAPTER ONE

It was an exercise in futility but one Clara had to go through every month in order to maintain the charade that was her life. All unattached Alphas from the Hill went down into Sandor town every few weeks to visit the Facility, to inspect the Omegas there and find a potential mate.

After all, procreation was every Alpha's duty, and only Omegas could breed.

Smoothing her streaked brunette hair back into her trademark chignon, Clara sighed and took a step back, appraising herself in the mirror. Perfectly applied make-up. A designer dress in emerald green to bring out the color of her eyes. Just a little, understated jewelry—diamond stud earrings and a dainty gold necklace with a tiny diamond pendant which had belonged to her mother.

Opening the drawer in her nightstand, she once again checked that she had taken her meds. It was almost a compulsion, an act she repeated several times daily. Those tiny green pills were, after all, the only thing standing between her and disaster.

“Time to get this show on the road,” she whispered to herself, slipping a pair of black high heels onto her little feet. Anything to

add inches. She was too small, too slender, too fragile in build. Most Alpha women towered over her, and whenever Clara stood beside an Alpha male, she could only pray that her polished, wealthy appearance and family name would prevent him from really *seeing* her. From noticing that she didn't look like any other Alpha women of their acquaintance, and from wondering why.

If her secret were ever to get out, it would be the end of her life as she knew it. All her dreams and plans for the future would be shattered. Her father would be destroyed.

Inhaling a deep breath, she pasted a smile on her face and left her luxurious apartment, taking the elevator down to the underground garage.

It was a fairly short drive into Sandor town, the capital city of the kingdom of Sandor, named after the royal family. Arius Sandorus had recently taken over from his uncle Deimos as ruler, and everyone had breathed a sigh of relief, for surely now things would settle down. Deimos had been one crazy son of a bitch.

As the only daughter of Neros Pitino, Clara had been invited to the mating ceremony during which Arius had claimed his Omega, Saskia. She'd watched in fascinated revulsion as Arius had marked his new mate with a deep bite to the side of the neck, scarring her for life, branding her forever as his property. Saskia had fainted, and Clara hadn't been the least bit surprised.

Most Alpha-Omega matings were performed in private, usually in bed, so Clara had never witnessed one before. It was only due to Arius's royal status that his had been done with so much pomp and ceremony. After all, his subjects needed to see with their own eyes that he was now mated. That he now had every chance of furthering his bloodline and providing them with an heir.

Steering her car through the narrow, cobblestoned streets, watching a Beta couple hurry past in their brown coats, Clara let out a sigh. Their entire society was based around their biology. Why did it have to be that way? Alphas got to live a life of luxury. Betas were far more restricted in some ways, but had much more

liberty in others, like the choosing of their partners. And Omegas... they had no choice at all. Identified at the age of twelve and rounded up at the age of eighteen, they were all sent to the ugly, squat, red brick building looming up ahead, and forced to wait in a state of limbo until they were chosen by an Alpha for mating.

It was a fate Clara had pitied her entire life because it could so easily have been hers. Luckily, nobody knew the secret she had kept for the past thirteen years and, if she had anything to do with it and the medication she took so rigorously continued to work, nobody would ever know.

Clara was an Omega.

To this day, she wasn't sure how her mother had kept it from her father. As far as Neros was concerned, Clara was a typical Alpha female. She worked as a medical researcher, wore the finest clothes, and went to society functions. She had attended the best schools and, as his only child, had been given every luxury, including the expensive green car she was now parking outside the Facility.

All he wanted in return was for her to find a suitable Omega male and provide him with grandchildren—*Alpha* grandchildren, she corrected herself. Appearances were everything to Neros, and everybody knew that Omegas were weak, pathetic, existed only to be pitied—and forced to breed.

Sometimes Clara wondered how her father had managed to impregnate her Omega mother when he had such a low opinion of her *kind*. It had not been a happy union, in any case, and Neros had seemed almost relieved when her mother had died of a long illness. Clara had tried everything to save her, had worked day and night to find a cure, but she'd failed.

Blinking back the sudden tears, she snapped back to the present and realized she was still sitting in her car. Taking a deep, shuddering breath, she smoothed her hair one final time and exited her vehicle, careful to lock it before walking down the short path to the imposing Facility doors.

A fawning man in a rumpled suit pressed a glass of cheap wine into her hand the moment she entered, then ushered her into the room where the Omegas were all lined up, dressed in white tunics—to better emphasize their virginity, she supposed.

Clara, too, was a virgin, although nobody was aware of that. When out in public, she flirted outrageously with her fellow Alphas, and when rumors began, she encouraged them. After all, just because Alphas could only breed with Omegas that didn't mean they couldn't—or didn't—take fellow Alphas or even some Betas as lovers. It was the done thing, to bed as many as possible and prove their virility. To metaphorically sow their wild oats before finding the right Omega.

“Clara, darling, fancy seeing you here,” said a voice to her right and she turned to see Lucian, one of the many Alpha men she was friends with.

“Very funny,” she said drily, turning her cheek to be kissed. “We're all here every month.”

“Only until we get lucky.” He shoved a huge paw through his short, ice-blond hair and drained his wine in a single swallow. “Has to happen sometime.”

“Indeed,” Clara agreed, nodding to a female colleague as she prowled by. Alpha women had a special way of walking: an aggressive sway of the hips, a ramrod-straight back. It was something Clara had practiced until it was like second nature. “Some of them are very beautiful,” she added, indicating the row of Omegas. “Why not just pick one and be done with it?”

“I've come close a few times,” Lucian said, “but none of them have ever smelled quite right. None has ever sent me into rut. And in the meantime, there are plenty of other stunning girls to play with.” He crinkled his eyes at her and she took a tiny step back, suddenly feeling crowded by his massive, typically Alpha frame.

“No need to rush things, huh?” she said, forcing herself to smile. “Anyway, I'd better...” Trailing off, she waved a hand in the vague direction of the Omegas.

“Good luck. Not many boys, but there are a few.”

It was a strange twist of nature that around eighty percent of verified Omegas were female, although there were also far more Alpha males than women, so it still worked out. Besides, Clara thought as she set her glass down on a nearby tray and headed toward the line of white-clad people, it was just as well. With fewer options, there was less expectation that she would find her mate quickly. Sometimes, in the dark hours of the night, she wondered what she would do when the years slipped by and she was still single. How long before people started getting suspicious? How long before her father ordered her to stop being so picky and simply take an Omega, even if he didn't automatically send her into rut?

She walked slowly down the line, stopping beside each Omega male, making a show of inhaling deeply, trying to mask the pity she felt. When she reached a reed-thin, dark-haired young man who was staring at his bare feet, Clara felt a tingle prickle down her spine. It was unlike anything she had ever felt before and she stared at the Omega, breathing more deeply, all pretense forgotten.

“This one take your fancy?” said a voice beside her ear and she turned to see Evander, the handsome, russet-haired Alpha she saw frequently at parties.

“I...” Clara trailed off as she stared up into Evander's face. The tingling grew stronger, like pins and needles dancing over her skin, and with her next breath, it moved south between her legs. “I'm not sure,” she whispered, clenching her thighs around the sudden sensation.

As if in slow motion, Evander's nostrils flared and she saw with terrifying clarity the way his eyes darkened and his entire expression changed. “Fuck,” he growled. “I feel something. She must be really close.” Pushing past Clara, he stepped up to the nearest female Omega, sniffing carefully.

Clara knew with every fiber of her being that she needed to get the hell out of there, that her worst nightmare was coming

true. Her suppressants were failing and she was going into estrus—right here, in a room full of Alphas. And Evander had noticed. It wasn't any other Omega who was sending him into rut, it was Clara. So far, her known Alpha status had made him blind to the possibility, but it wouldn't be long before he realized what she really was.

Unfortunately, she was frozen in place, rooted to the spot with bone-chilling terror, the growing pulse between her legs making it almost impossible to think clearly.

It wasn't too late to escape. She could bluff her way out, pretend she hadn't found anyone she liked, and saunter ultra-casually back to her car.

With superhuman effort, she forced her body to move and turned toward the exit. There were just a few feet between her and safety. *I can do this. Don't breathe. Just walk. Gods, just walk!*

The room was suddenly filled with a silence so heavy it felt like a weighted blanket, suffocating her, trapping her. Several Alpha men turned to look at her, their nostrils flaring.

Oh, fuck.

Setting one wobbly foot in front of the other, forcing herself to keep her chin high, Clara managed to take several steps toward her escape before huge hands gripped her upper arms from behind like steel bands and a voice growled in her ear, reverberating through her entire being, "It's *you*."



It had started with a slight tingle so faint, Evander had wondered whether he was imagining it. After years of fruitless hunting for his mate, it was logical that he might mistake even the slightest unusual sensation as a sign he was finally going into rut.

But while he had been talking to Clara, the tingle had morphed into a ball of lust which had slammed through his lower belly so violently, he felt winded. Simultaneously, a divine,

musky scent had filled his nostrils, intensifying a deep ache in his groin and putting all his senses on high alert.

After all this time, after all these years of waiting, it was finally happening.

Evander was going into rut.

Barely able to contain his excitement, he had immediately excused himself from the attractive, brunette Clara and examined every single Omega female in the immediate vicinity. Oddly, instead of intensifying, the scent had grown fainter.

Clouded as his mind was with the sudden onslaught of pheromones flooding his system and sending his primal instinct into overdrive, it had taken a moment for him to put two and two together.

But it couldn't be. Clara was an Alpha, like him.

Just to make sure, he'd followed her and, to his complete astonishment, the scent had intensified with every step. By the time he was almost upon her, he was in no doubt as to whether or not it was she he was reacting to so strongly.

Clasping her upper arms from behind so as to halt her forward progress, he spun her around, and one look into her wide, terrified, pleading eyes confirmed it: Clara was an Omega.

Heads were turning in their direction, nostrils were flaring, and in that instant, Evander knew that their first priority was to get the hell out of there. "With me," he growled, propelling her toward the exit before she even had a chance to respond.

He sensed everyone's eyes upon them but nobody made any attempt to stop them. If it looked odd, the way he was tugging Clara—a fellow Alpha—alongside him, no one said anything. Why would they? After all, Alphas were generally permitted to come and go as they pleased.

His best friend Arius had told him once that it was impossible to describe the rut unless you had experienced it yourself. Evander was finally realizing how true that statement had been. He was overwhelmed with sensation, the desire flaring in his chest like a white-hot flame. It was almost impossible to think

clearly, to resist the urge to rip Clara's dress from her body and mount her like a beast.

Once they were out of the building, the light chill in the air helped clear a little of the fog. Evander tugged her around the corner and blinked, trying to find his voice.

Clara wrenched her arm from his grip and spun around to face him, her eyes haunted. "I have to go," she gabbled.

"You're right, we should get out of here."

"No! I mean, *I* have to go. Now. Alone."

"You're not going anywhere without me." As he said it, Evander realized how possessive he was already feeling toward her. The mere thought of her getting into her car and speeding away from him was enough to make him want to beat his chest and roar with rage.

"You have no claim over me!" she said, her eyes flashing. Then, when he once again gripped her arms, "Let me go!"

"You're an Omega. You've been hiding and pretending to be an Alpha all these years, deceiving everybody, probably with your father's help," Evander said in a low voice. "You're not in any kind of position to be making demands."

She stared up at him, looking vulnerable in a way he'd never seen before.

"So," he went on, "you have two choices. Either we go back to the Hill together, and I'll give you a chance to explain yourself, or you leave on your own, and I'll make sure everybody knows about this by morning. I'm sure Arius would love to hear about it. Not to mention what this will do to your father's reputation—"

"Fine," she snarled, cutting him off. "Let's go. I'll meet you in the underground garage on the Hill."

His grip on her tightened. "Nice try. You must think I'm a complete idiot if you think I'll trust you to meet me there. Your car or mine?"

"I'm not leaving my car here!"

"Then we'll take yours. And *I'm* driving." Still holding her firmly with one hand, he snatched her purse away with the other.

A haughty look entered her green eyes. “I don’t know who you think you are—”

“I’m an Alpha,” he growled, tugging her close enough to press the length of his body against hers, letting her feel his straining erection through their clothing. “A *real* one. And it is taking literally every ounce of my self-control not to tear that dress off you and give in to the rut right here, in front of anybody who might walk past. So unless you want that to happen, I’d advise you to get in the car immediately.”

Even in the dim light of evening, he could see the color drain from her face. She was straining to put some physical distance between them but of course he was much too strong for her. “All right,” she said at length. “My car’s over there.”

By the time they’d reached her expensive green vehicle, the fight seemed to have gone out of Clara. She was no longer battling against his hold, and when he unlocked the passenger side door, she climbed in submissively.

She was so short that when he got behind the wheel, he had to push the seat back a long way to accommodate his much larger frame.

“You’re happy leaving your own car here?” she said as they drove off.

“I have other priorities,” he said tightly. “I’ll get someone to help me collect it tomorrow.”

Crossing her arms, she fell silent and turned to look out the window. Evander was glad of the chance to think, to try and formulate a plan moving forward. Her scent was consuming him, making his heart pound and his cock throb painfully.

He knew he had to tread carefully. Hers was a powerful family, and her father not an enemy he would make willingly. On the other hand, there was no denying what he now knew: she was his perfect mate. So surely, if he had gone into rut, she would have gone into estrus? It was known that Omegas in heat were just as powerless in the face of their desire as Alphas in rut. Risking a glance to his right, he saw her sitting rigidly, her

curvy thighs crossed. If she was aroused, she was showing no sign of it.

No matter. He would find out as soon as he got her alone in his apartment. For a moment, he considered cracking open the window. Some fresh air might help diffuse her scent and make it easier for him to think clearly. On the other hand, it would do the same for her and he wanted her as affected by him as possible.

So instead he drove as fast as he dared, thankful when they entered the underground parking lot reserved for residents of the Hill.

Clara remained silent in the elevator. Evander hadn't missed the way she was pressing herself against the far wall, trying to put as much distance between them as possible.

He breathed her in and admired the way her silky dress hugged her body. He'd always found her pretty—everyone did—but as she'd never displayed any interest in him, he'd never made a move, preferring instead to bed willing women who flirted with him openly.

Now, with the rut kicking up his pulse and his senses heightened, he was looking at her with new eyes.

The elevator dinged and the doors opened. Taking her hand, Evander led her to his apartment and unlocked the door.

Once they were inside, he backed her up against the wall, trapping her within the cage of his arms. She was trembling but her expression remained defiant.

Leaning down so their lips were almost touching, he inhaled deeply. "Are you in estrus?" he growled.

She shook her head once, almost imperceptibly. He didn't miss the pulse fluttering in her neck.

"Either you tell me the truth, or I will check for myself."

"I thought you wanted to talk." Her voice was breathless.

"We are talking. Answer my question."

"No, I'm not in estrus."

"You're lying." Unable to resist, Evander reached down and slid a hand up beneath the skirt of her dress. The flesh of her

inner thighs was soft and warm, and he knew it even before he tugged aside the scrap of lace covering her sex. Her pussy was drenched in slick. As he found the hard little nub between her folds and stroked it with a fingertip, she let out a tortured gasp and gushed into his palm. “See?” he said matter-of-factly. “I knew you were lying.”