

Chapter 16: Her Parent's Decision

~ Kate ~

Kate's heart was drumming against her ribcage. Her anxiety probably showed on her face when Sebastian grabbed her hand. She turned to him and felt his grip tighten. Never did she expect to receive soothing from this mysterious masked man.

"It's going to be okay," Sebastian assured her.

Kate and Sebastian stood beside the Alpha King, Henry, and his wife. They were at the front of the palace gates, awaiting the arrival of Kate's parents.

Spread on each side were warriors, the other alphas and lunas, and the advisers and other elders of King Henry. The trumpets were blaring while the gates to the palace opened. Several luxury cars arrived, and Kate could somewhat identify which one her parents were in.

Her eyes were glued to the middle car. Her palms were sweating, and her body shivered. Even if Sebastian held her hand tighter, she feared how her father would react. At the same time, the regret of cutting off her parents was swallowing her whole.

Finally, the door to the cars opened, and a friar announced, "The Alpha King of Taplean, Kieran Stone, and his queen, Alexia Stone."

The sound of their names gave her goosebumps. Her eyes fluttered as soon as a woman with the same frame and hair as she stepped out of the car. The woman cried, "Kate, it's really you!"

The Luna Queen of Taplean, Alexia Stone, rushed with her arms wide open. Immediately, tears stung Kate's eyes. Sebastian let go of her hand, and she ran into her mother's arms.

Yes, Kate was the daughter of Taplean's alpha king, another nation southwest of Vottara.

Being a princess, an alpha's daughter at that, she never understood why her father would give her away to a man infamously known as a heartless and unsightly alpha. Her pride got in the way, and she could not see through their reasons back then, all the more when she met and fell in love with Xander Baros.

"Mother, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for everything," Kate whispered in her mother's ears. Her chest was heaving, and tears clouded her sight.

Before Kate could bask in her mother's warm embrace, she heard her father speak. "Kate."

Her father, Alpha Kieran Stone, was a man of few words. He did not let his sentiments show, and Kate saw how he tried to hold back whatever emotion was inside him.

Kate was naturally afraid of her father's reaction. He was the disciplinarian in the family. Fortunately for her, he said nothing in front of everyone. Instead, The alpha king of Taplean pulled her into an embrace. She cried in his chest as her father softly spoke, "Your mother and I are glad that you are alive and well."

The Alpha King and Luna Queen of Taplean were greeted warmly by the people around them. They nodded in respect, but their attention was mostly given to their daughter, Kate, Sebastian, and, of course, to Alpha King Henry and Luna Queen Regina.

After exchanging pleasantries, Kate and her parents were escorted to a private room where they could talk. Sebastian was left out of it. It was there that the family of three poured their hearts out.

"This was all your father's fault. If he hadn't -" Alexia Stone's words were cut off by Kieran.

"It was for the benefit of many nations, and I felt that I owed Sebastian," Alpha Kieran said. He looked Kate in the eye and suggested, "You know how many vampires have come to attack us? Sebastian destroyed all of those vampire rebels for us -"

"But Sebastian did not ask to marry Kate at first," Alexia reasoned.

"I know," Kate cut them off. "I understand now that it was King Henry's request."

"Yes, it was meant to give Sebastian a leverage. You see, it's not entirely King Henry's decision to name the next king. Since King Henry had no heir, the votes from the council of alphas have to be considered, including the elders," Kieran revealed. "And let's just say Sebastian was not a fan of getting along with the other alphas. Very few are on his side."

Kate groaned. Her father described Sebastian accurately.

"Look, Kate, I did not simply make that rash decision. After Sebastian eradicated the rebel vampire groups, there was a suspected uprising from a rebel werewolf group in Vottara - rogues," Kieran revealed. "Our intel suggested many packs secretly supported this group. They were planning to overthrow Vottara's monarch and start a war with the neighboring nations."

"Being in a state of war kills so many lives. So if I could prevent that, I would," Kieran explained. "If Sebastian were king, I am confident that war will never come."

"Aside from that, I had met with Sebastian, and -" Kieran took a deep breath before admitting, "I saw myself in him. That was why I agreed to the arranged marriage."

Kate fell silent and reflected on her father's words. To be frank, she also thought Sebastian was a lot like her father. Sebastian was menacing and strong, but somewhere deep inside, he had a good side of him.

Physically, she thought most alphas were the same, but unlike Sebastian, her father had short hair and was a little leaner. Sebastian was more muscular than her father. Sadly, there was no face to compare since Sebastian covered it well.

"Did we have this conversation before?" Kate asked.

"Yes," both Kieran and Alexia replied.

"But you would not listen," Kieran reminded her.

Kate laughed at herself. She answered, "I - I guess I just did not want to get married back then. I had my dreams, and that included our family, and finding a true mate -"

"Shhh," Alexia hushed her daughter. "We know, and we realized that now."

"I mean, who finds true love in an arranged marriage?" Kate asked.

Kate noticed her parents looking at each other. It was then that her mother disclosed, "We did, sweetheart."

"What?" Kate questioned, puzzled.

"Your father and I were forced to marry by your grandpa Balthasar," Alexia revealed.

"But, I thought you were fated," Kate asked, utterly confused.

"We are," Kieran answered. "But we found that out a little later. I married your mother before she came of age."

"Ah," Kate reacted. A she-wolf comes of age at twenty-one. Male werewolves shift for the first time at the age of twenty. That explained what her father said.

While learning that her parent's marriage was arranged and ended up being fated relieved her, Kate instantly remembered Sebastian's predicament. She said, "But Sebastian and I are not fated. I am already twenty-five. And do you even know about his family's curse?"

Kieran and Alexia looked at each other. Alexia said, "We realized that, dear. And although finding one's true mate has been challenging - almost close to impossible over these years, we understand you now."

"Back then, we just really hoped it would work out," Alexia added.

"So, after careful consideration, your mother and I have agreed to cancel the marriage agreement between you and Sebastian," Kieran said. "You don't have to marry him now."

"You don't need to do anything. We will talk to Sebastian and King Henry. Alpha Henry will be upset, but he will have to find a way to make Sebastian the king without a marriage alliance," Kieran added.

Kate stilled, reflecting on her father's words. "She won't have to marry Sebastian? But what about her agreement with him?"

Dead air fell upon them, and Kate was even more confused. She ended up caressing her forehead and touching almost every part of her face.

Eventually, she stuttered, "I - let me think about it. I owe Sebastian for saving me from my ex-hus -"

Kate paused again and looked at her parents guiltily.

Kieran and Alexia gave her that look that suggested they knew everything. Kieran said, "We will compensate Sebastian for saving you."

"Just say the word, Kate, and we will take you home and see your brothers," Alexia promised.

Kate gulped, she replied, "I-"

~Unknown Pov ~

While Kate had an important decision to make, back at the South Moon Pack, three warriors used their brute force to inject Xander with wolfsbane and push him into the dungeon.

The warrior in charge was Gamma Nate, Sebastian's fourth in command.

"Why am I being locked up? Give me a reason? Isn't it enough that Sebastian already took over my pack - Ahhh!" Despite getting a dose of wolfsbane, the stupid Alpha Xander still resisted the serum. As a result, he tripped inside his cell.

"Alpha Sebastian's orders," Gamma Nate responded. "He said that he had a nightmare where you approached him to kiss his ass. The alpha said it was horrific, and because you entered his dreams, you must be punished for it. You will stay here for ten days!"

"What? What kind of reasoning is that? I don't even control dreams!" Xander groaned as he sat up and leaned in one corner.

"We would not really know that unless we lock you up under the influence of wolfsbane," Gamma Nate said before turning his heel.

"What? That does not make - make sense! Come - come back here!" As Xander used up the last of his strength, Nate shook his head.

Nate had heard about what Alpha Xander did to Kate. He was certain Alpha Sebastian had done this out of vengeance for his future Luna. He could only feel sorry for Xander, for Nate knew his alpha had just begun punishing him.

Author's Notes: To read the story of Kate's parents. Check out The Alpha's Contract Luna.