

Chapter 19: Hidden Spring

~ Kate ~

"I will miss you, my daughter, but we will see you soon at your wedding," Kate's mother, Alexia, said while hugging her tightly.

After not seeing her mother for over a year, she was saying goodbye again. Of course, the situation brought tears to Kate's eyes. She tightened her hold around her mother and replied, "I will miss you too, Mom."

Alexia pressed her lips against Kate's cheek and whispered, "He may be hiding behind his mask, but he sure has beautiful eyes, and he stares at you with longing. He isn't so bad after all."

Kate's eyes widened, and her face turned red! Just when she thought her mother was done, Alexia added while maintaining the softness in her voice, "Don't you think I did not see how you study him? You are starting to grow interested in him."

"Mom," Kate let out a low growl, but her mother only chuckled.

Pulling away, Alexia cupped her face and said, "Take care. I love you."

Kieran, Kate's father, hugged her too. He said, "Call me if you need anything. Take care, my little princess."

Kate smiled. She was indeed a princess, the only daughter of Alpha King Kieran Stone. Kate's other siblings were both boys.

After Kate, Kieran, and Alexia gave their regards to Sebastian, then to King Henry and his wife. The other alphas who visited were no longer there to send them off because Kieran never batted an eye for them in the first place.

Finally, Kate's parents left with a set of warriors following behind them. After that, it was also time for Kate and Sebastian to return to the Wind Walker Pack.

On the road, Kate was feeling tired. She was slightly drunk the night before, and of course, she recalled how she tried to sleep on top of Sebastian, only to fall flat on the floor. She did get a good few hours of sleep, but exhaustion still kicked in.

"Tired, Luna? You can get some rest. We have a long way to go," Zev

said, looking at her from the rearview mirror.

Kate briefly glanced at Sebastian. He was working on his laptop and not giving her attention. She was a bit disappointed but tried not to show it. She yawned and said, "I think I will do that."

She lay her head back and shut her eyes.

Kate was smiling in her sleep. She was, yet again, engulfed in Sebastian's scent and did not want her rest to end. However, Sebastian purposely woke her up.

"Hey, sleepy head. Do you think I have all the time to become your bed?" Initially, he appeared to be scolding her, but his tone became gentle as he revealed, "Besides, we are almost there."

When Kate woke up, she was surprised to see how she rested against Sebastian's chest. His laptop had been put away. She looked him in the eye and asked, "Did I lean into you?"

Sebastian shook his head hopelessly and answered, "Obviously -"

His reply encouraged a chuckle from Zev. Kate turned to the beta as if asking for clarification, but he choked and replied, "Yes, Luna Kate, you were leaning in from side to side until you settled on the alpha's shoulders, and then you started hugging him like the alpha was a teddy bear."

"Hugging him like he was a teddy bear?" Kate's mouth fell open. She frantically took her side of the car and fixed her hair. She said to Sebastian, "I'm sorry. I was tired."

"Hmmm," that was all that Sebastian said.

Arriving at Wind Walker Pack, Kate saw an unfamiliar older man waiting for them in the driveway. He had gray hair and a big smile on his face. Like Sebastian, he wore a chest armor.

When Kate and Sebastian exited the car, this man approached them and shared a familial embrace with the alpha. Kate immediately understood that this was an important person in Sebastian's life.

"Kate," Sebastian called. He introduced the man next to him, "This is my godfather, Uncle Gabriel Carnell. He used to be my father's beta, and I consider him my second father. He is now one of my advisers."

"Oh." Kate's lips rounded. She extended her hand to the man and greeted, "It's nice to meet you, Mister Camell."

"Stop with the formalities, child," Gabriel said while maintaining his grin. He shook Kate's hand and offered his arm, suggesting he wanted a hug.

Kate reluctantly accepted the hold, but thankfully, she felt a very amiable comfort from this man. When she leaned back, Kate was smiling at Gabriel.

"You can call me Uncle Gabriel, too," the man offered. "Besides, you and Sebastian are getting married! We are family."

"How come it's the first time I have met you?" Kate asked.

Gabriel and Sebastian looked at each other. After Sebastian nodded, Gabriel answered, "Well, you see, when you disappeared over a year ago, we needed to find a way to make Sebastian the suitable one to be king. So, I often travel to further packs and offer aid in the name of the Wind Walker Pack."

"And we kept this quiet so the other alpha candidates would not sabotage our efforts," Gabriel said. "But! With you here, Uncle Gabriel could finally relax - enjoy my retirement! Haha!"

Kate forced a smile and said, "I'm sorry you had to do that because of me."

"No, no, child. Don't blame yourself," Gabriel said. "You have every reason to avoid marrying someone you do not know, but I just wished you had given Sebastian a chance."

"He really isn't the big bad wolf they say he is. Haha!" Gabriel leaned closer to Kate and whispered, "He is just this way because of his family's curse and that his mother left him."

Gabriel then patted Kate's arm and said, "Shall we go inside?"

As they walked in, Kate thought about Gabriel's words. She occasionally glanced at Sebastian, who was walking ahead of her, together with his uncle. She wondered, 'Yes, such a curse could make one indifferent, all the more the abandonment of your biological mother.'

'Could Sebastian have turned that longing for a parent into hate or anger?' Kate sighed.

For the rest of the day, Kate did not involve herself in the meeting between Sebastian and his uncle. She instead spent it by running in her wolf form within the territory.

Kate purposely navigated through the lush and elevated grounds west of the packhouses. It led up to a small mountain, which the warriors had told her was still part of the territory.

She made it a kilometer from the mountain's base when she noticed water streaming out of the ground. It was insignificant, but it suggested that there was a bigger water source nearby. Thus, Kate searched around.

It did not take long for Kate to find a cave. From outside, she could hear the dripping water falling against a bigger pool. The thought suddenly excited her. She went in, walked a few meters, and found a huge hidden spring!

"Wow!" Kate's eyes gleamed. Some crystals illuminated the place, and a few openings from the rocks above gave light so she could still see from inside. "This is amazing!"

Kate touched the water, and it had just the right temperature. She bit her lip, and without thinking twice, she stripped naked, found an excellent place to keep her clothes, and then jumped right in!

"Goddess! Your gift of nature is just amazing!" She exclaimed while swimming leisurely in that pool of clear water.

Kate had probably spent half an hour bathing when she heard footsteps against the rocks. "Shit, someone is here!"

Her first instinct was to hide, which was precisely what she did. She swam closer to where she hid her clothes, and behind a bolder, she stayed covered.

Kate took a peek at whoever was there, and to her surprise, she saw Sebastian! He was taking off his clothes and was about to remove his mask! Kate gasped! She wondered if she would finally see his face!

'Come on. Come on. Let me see,' she muttered in silence.

Her jaws dropped.