CHAPTER 11: ALWAYS...

"Uh.. well..." Claire gulped, wondering what to tell Sebastian. Suddenly her eyes lit up as an idea hit her. "Ah, yes. I remember now. A few of your pack members visited us last month, right?" Claire asked excitedly.

Sebastian hesitated a moment but then nodded slowly in response. A few of his pack members had indeed visited the Ashwood pack a month ago.

Claire smiled triumphantly and straightened up from her slouched position.

"I don't remember who but it was one of them that told me. They were saying how Doctor Jordan was a miracle worker and since my father was ill at the moment, I was curious, so I listened. I didn't think much of it at the moment since they said how their Alpha was particular about the doctor treating only people within their pack and I didn't even know you then." Claire grinned at Sebastian. "So I thought there was no chance you would let him treat my Dad. But now we are friends and I know you will help me." She finished excitedly and looked at Sebastian with hopeful eyes.

Sebastian narrowed his eyes, his eyes full of disbelief. Even though his pack members visited her pack, he didn't believe that they would talk so casually about Doctor Jordan who was treated as a pack secret. He had explicitly banned

anyone from talking about him outside their pack and with how loyal his pack was to him; he didn't think that they would disobey him that blatantly. But then, how would Claire know about Doctor Jordan? There was something fishy going on here.

Sebastian looked at Claire, who was staring at him with wide eyes, almost looking like she was begging him to drop the issue. Seeing her uncomfortable look, he decided to leave the matter for now.

"Of course," he replied with a blank face and watched as Claire visibly relaxed, a relieved smile on her face. Certainly suspicious that she was so relieved he accepted her explanation. He would need to do a little investigation and get to the bottom of this matter to know what secret his little mate was hiding from him. Hmm…

"Um… Hello? Earth to Alpha Sebastian!"

Sebastian snapped out of his thoughts and looked up to see Claire staring at him with an amused look. Realising that he had been lost in his thoughts, he gave her an apologetic grin.

"Sorry! What were you saying?"

"No. I was just asking what you wanted to do now that we have sent the two love birds their way. Are you up for a walk or do you just want to go grab some food, Alpha Sebastian?"

Sebastian rolled his eyes at her before flicking her forehead, making her yelp and glare at him.

"Ouch! What was that for, you meanie?"

"Ha! That's more like it. You can tease me, but you still have the audacity to call me by my title, huh?"

Claire blinked at him, and Sebastian sighed.

"If it's too difficult for you to understand, I mean you can call me by my name. Just like you asked me to call you Claire."

Claire straightened up and smiled at him, a smile so bright that it hurt to look at her.

"I can?"

Sebastian blinked to get himself out of the trance he fell in after seeing her hypnotic smile.

"That's what I said."

"Sebastian…" she murmured as if trying it out loud and Sebastian felt goosebumps rise in his body.

"Once more…" he whispered without thinking.

"Sebastian…" Claire repeated, louder this time, and Sebastian closed his eyes, savoring the feel of his mate calling his name. It felt… perfect!

He opened his eyes and looked down to see Claire standing there with a melancholic look on her face as if calling him by his name meant something to her too. But why? For her, he was just a strange Alpha she befriended, right?

"So Claire…"

"Hmm?"

"Can I ask you something?"

Claire raised her brows at him.

"That doesn't bode well for me. What are you planning to ask?"

"Don't worry. It's nothing serious," he assured her.

"Alright. Ask away!"

"When we met at the party, we were just strangers to each other. So why did you ask me to stay in your pack?" Sebastian asked without beating around the bush.

Claire stiffened at the unexpected question and stared at him with wide eyes. Then she bit her lips, looking lost in her thoughts, and then she sighed.

"It's because it felt like I had known you for a long time. Like you were an old friend I was meeting after years. I just felt comfortable with you, like we had already spent years knowing each other, helping each other and having fun together. Does that make sense?" Claire asked. In her case, she was telling the truth because all those had actually happened with him in her past life. But the Sebastian in front of her wouldn't know that…

Sebastian narrowed his eyes, pondering her answer, and

nodded his head.

"Yes, it makes sense. Sometimes our souls just recognise the souls that we are meant to have in our life."

Hearing his words, Claire sighed. She could only imagine his pain trying to keep her from getting hurt after knowing she was his mate. It was agonising to watch him without embracing him and telling him how much he means to her. So it must hurt him more when he could feel their bond that she couldn't. If only she was not foolish enough to fall for Liam, ever...

Sebastian stared at Claire, who stood there with a pained look on her face. He frowned, wondering why she was this friendly to him. Whenever he thinks of their bond, she too gets this sad look, almost like she knows what he is thinking. Like she could feel their bond and what they had lost. But it's not possible, right? She was already marked and she shouldn't be able to feel their mate bond anymore, right?

Even though he knew it wasn't logically possible, Claire's actions had left him in doubt, and he couldn't help but want to know. He bit his lips, wondering if he should ask her. But if she didn't know and was just being friendly, he would reveal to her they were mates and that would hurt her. Should he do it?

In the end, his curiosity got the best of him, and Sebastian opened his mouth.

"Claire, do you feel our bond-"

"Hey guys!"

Suddenly Devin called out from behind them and Claire missed Sebastian's words. They both turned towards a happy Devin who was bouncing towards them merrily, Eunice nowhere in sight.

"Hello Alpha Devin. If I am not wrong, you went with my friend and now you are coming alone. You didn't scare her away, did you?"

"Nice joke, Miss Claire. And stop with the Alpha business. You are making me feel old, like I am a seventy-year-old boss man while you are all young. Call me Devin."

"Alright Devin," Claire replied easily with a smile, and Sebastian narrowed his eyes. She had just started calling him by his name and it had felt like such a special moment for him. And now here this idiot was making her call his name like they were best friends for years. How dare he!

Feeling a certain jealous Alpha's murderous stare, Devin looked around awkwardly before meeting Sebastian's glare. He frowned, wondering what he had done to deserve his wrath, and raised his brow questioningly. Realising that he was being unreasonable, unlike his usual self, Sebastian schooled his face into a blank mask. He had no reason to be angry at Devin when he knew he had a mate whom he adored. It was only that jerk Liam that he had to be angry at.

Getting no response from Sebastian, Devin shrugged him off

and turned to Claire, who was watching Sebastian with an amused smile.

"Eunice and I had a nice time together. We would have spent even more time, heck, even the whole day. But she was called inside by the Head maid to talk about some assignments and we had to cut our date short," Devin said and Claire perked up.

"Oh, so you two are together now?"

"Well, we haven't said so in words, but I think so. She was happy when she left," Devin said smugly, his hand rubbing his lips, which were a bit swollen now that she noticed it. His eyes held a dreamy look as he stood there, probably reminiscing about his time with Eunice.

Claire held back a laugh as she saw the smitten look on Devin's face. 'Looks like someone had their first kiss with Eunice and boy, was he whipped?'

"Alright. So, when is your next date?" She asked when she realised Devin had no intention of snapping out of his daydream.

"Uh? Date? Oh yeah. We have agreed to meet tomorrow morning."

"Good job, buddy!"

"Thanks, girl! And yes, thanks for arranging this date too. I have got to call my Beta now. I will see you guys later," Devin said before walking away, humming a merry tune.

Claire turned to Sebastian with a smile.

"You were saying something before he came, right? What was it?"

Sebastian sighed, deciding that he shouldn't risk asking about the mate bond again. He had rushed the first time, and it was a good thing she hadn't heard him.

"I just said that I will stay by your side."

Claire stiffened, remembering how he had once said those exact same words in her past life and he had kept his promise always.

"I know," she whispered. Always...

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